A Chronicle and Structural Analysis of Dayo Oyedun's Opera

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Abstract

Opera is defined as a dramatic work where the action is performed through singing. It is a musical theatre; an art in which vocalists and instrumentalists perform a theatrical work combining text and music scores. This paper aim at preserving and promoting existing compositions on African Art Music composers. The paper narrates one of Dayo Oyedun's opera compositions and gives a structural analysis of the plot. This paper adopts primary and secondary sources of data collection in the form of interviews, a review of related literature and observation. The findings show that Dayo Oyedun has composed 5 African operas for trained choirs but this paper will be limited to one titled 'The Moon and I'. In the course of this research, it was discovered that Dayo Oyedun's style of composing Opera is very elaborate, consisting of all the compositional attributes of a Western opera. Opera patronage has decreased in the last century in favour of other arts, media, and social media, and this paper is focusing on using this medium to fill the knowledge gap. 'The Moon and I' is discussed under the following captions: introduction, chronicles, structural analysis and conclusion. Dayo Oyedun's operas, are composed for special occasions like anniversaries or celebrations of an event and are performed at event places that have the technical features desired for such performances.There is need to further study works of a growing number of African composers who are creating operatic works that blend Western operatic traditions with indigenous African musical elements, languages, and themes.

Keywords: Opera, Africa, Dayo Oyedun, The Moon and I.

Introduction

Opera according to Grout is a part of Western classical music tradition that started in Italy at the end of 16th century with Jacopo Peri's lost Dafne, produced in Florence around 1597 and soon spread within the rest of Europe; Schut in Germany, Lully in France, and Purcell in England helping to establish their national traditions. Italian opera continued to dominate most of Europe, except France, attracting foreign composers such as Handel. Opera S*eria* (serious) and opera *Buffa (comic)* were the most prestigious types of Italian opera.

The first third of 19th century saw the high point of Bel Canto style, with Rossini, Donizetti and Bellini, all creating works that are still performed till date. This century also witnessed the "golden age" of opera, led and dominated by Wagner in Germany and Verdi in Italy.

The 20th century saw many experiments with modern styles, such as Atonality and Serialism (Schoenberg and Berg), Neoclassicism (Stravinsky), and Minimalism (Phillip Glass and John Adams). One of the features of 20th century opera is the emergence of contemporary historical operas, on contrast to the tradition of basing operas on more distant history, the re-telling of contemporary fictional stories or plays, or myth or legend.

Musical entertainment developed into full 'native operas' and where taken out of church into public glare where they became folk-opera and alternative to the European classical opera of European composer.

Opera was introduced to Africa during the colonial period, primarily by European settlers and missionaries. It initially served as a form of entertainment and cultural expression for the colonial elite. Over time, African composers and musicians began to integrate indigenous African musical elements, languages, and themes into opera compositions. This integration aimed to create operatic works that resonate more deeply with African audiences while maintaining elements of Western operatic traditions.

Opera is a drama set to music, sung with instrumental accompaniment by singers, usually in "elaborate costumes". It involves recitative or spoken dialogue which

separates the numbers. The essence of an opera is that the music is integral and not incidental. It is a musical theatre; an art in which vocalists and instrumentalists perform a theatrical work combining text and music scores (Kennedy 20017). Opera incorporates many spoken theatre elements, such as costume, scenery, acting and sometimes dance. An opera performance is typically given in a theatre or opera house.

Appraising the beginnings and fruition of Western art music in Nigeria, Holland (2011) traces the historical development of opera within the Nigerian context to examine how composers and performers have embraced and reinterpreted this art form to resonate with local audiences. She vividly paints a picture of the diverse and vibrant landscape of opera in Nigeria, showcasing the fusion of cultural influences, artistic innovations, and creative expressions that have shaped the evolution of opera within the country. McDaniel-Hutchings (2014) supports the above on the emergence of opera in Africa and its evolution.

Duro-Ladipo and Kolawole (2007) spotlighted the significant contributions of Duro Ladipo as germane to the continued development of opera performance in Nigeria. Ladipo is renowned for incorporating traditional Yoruba elements into his operas, creating a unique blend of Western opera and indigenous Nigerian culture. This supports Oni's (1997) submission in his work on "tradition, Innovation, and change in contemporary Nigerian theatre" where he examined the transformations in Nigerian theatre, emphasizing how opera has evolved as a form of artistic expression. He discussed the fusion of traditional Nigerian performance styles with Western opera techniques, leading to the development of a distinct Nigerian opera genre.

Discussing the various aspects of Nigerian theatre, Ogunleye (2000) corroborates Beier (1961) that highlights the growth of folk opera within the Yoruba community in Nigeria, also exploring how opera has been adapted to reflect Yoruba cultural traditions, storytelling, and music, contributing to the rich tapestry of Nigerian opera. Ogunleye's insights into the diverse landscape of Nigerian theatre also agree with Strehl's (1970) conclusion that Yoruba Opera which represents the entire Nigerian dispersion of the art, developed from both the age-long masquerade tradition and the permeation of the European theatre in the country.

Musical entertainment developed into full "native opera" and was taken out of the church into the public glare where they became folk operas and an alternative to the European classic opera of European composers (Vidal 2012). Early *oratorios* composed by Ogunde, Ògúnmọ́lá and others were developed and this gave way to more theatrical forms of the opera. These theatrical music forms were not part of any religious worship, but they provided the community with a social outlet for musical expression in contrast to the religious outlet available at divine services. They were meant to entertain and amuse the community. Omojola (2014) in his review of Kubik Gerhard's "Theory of African Music" also traced the root of Folk opera in Nigeria to the creative efforts of thespians from South-Western Nigeria.

Ogunde produced his first opera entitled '*The Garden of Eden*' in the year 1944 and his other *operas* include, *Israel in Egypt, Nebucadenezar's Reign, King Solomon,* and *Worse than Crime* (Clark 1979). Ogunde according to Vidal 2012 established a structural format for Nigerian opera through his tripartite form of an 'opening glee', [where the audience is told the storyline], the 'main body of the opera' and a 'closing glee'. Considering the title of Ogunde's early opera mentioned above, it is evident that he made use of biblical stories, with western musical styles of narration. His production was said to have caught the attention of many people in its departure from the strictly musical oratorical forms to the more theatrical operatic forms through its use of costumes, dialogue, and dramatic action.

This new operatic music flourished in Nigeria between 1940 and early 1960. As the form grew and became popular as a medium of entertainment performances, it moved from the church to the public arena and the patronage also shifted from the church to public venues. The themes became philosophical and social ones. The composers therefore began to replace foreign elements in their compositions with those of African elements which were part of them from the beginning before the influence of the western world. Foreign rhythms were replaced with indigenous African rhythms, traditional drums and chanting were also introduced as well as ritual poems and folktales.

Ògúnmọ́lá made use of the structural form established for Nigerian opera by Ogunde in his opera composed for his group named 'Ògúnmọ́lá's Theatre' Party. Members of his group were all Christians and had some level of primary school

education. His opening glee contained a summary of the main themes of the play as well as the moral lesson to be learnt. His themes were more mundane and less philosophical and Biblical than those of Hubert Ogunde and often centered on human vices such as love, pride and jealousy (Beier 1954). His productions include 'Joseph and his Brethren', a biblical story, and Love of Money.

Adam Fiberesima introduced the Western operatic style as the basis for composing operatic music in contrast to the folk style of Hubert Ogunde and others. He built on Fẹlá Ṣówándé's contemplative style of music by making use of his ethnic melodies from Okrika in Rivers State. His operatic compositions include: 'Orokoro', Opu Jaja, Fantasis in 1963, and The Wind of Change in 1966.

According to Vidal (2012), Sam Akpabot was a musician with multiple talent and creativity. He was another composer of Western operatic and musical styles and he had several compositions to his credit, examples of which include Jaja of Opobo in Efik, English and Ibo composed in 1972.

Although, African opera composers and performers face challenges in gaining recognition and support for their works both within Africa and on the international stage. Efforts to promote African opera through festivals, collaborations with international opera companies, and educational initiatives persist. African composers continue to innovate within the opera genre, exploring new themes, styles, and storytelling techniques that reflect contemporary African experiences and challenges.

The Chronicles

In the case of Dayo Oyedun, the main composer of this narrative, his opera compositions, were built on the western operatic style he met at The International School, Ibadan where he was first exposed to an opera. The forms, techniques and presentations were Western, and this is because he was influenced by Italian operas from his early years, one example being Barber of Seville by Giashianon Roseinne. The storylines were basically on happenings around him at each time of the compositions. The themes were secular and romantic motives, not restricted to the church, and therefore, could be performed at any public or event venue. The instrumentation is mostly vocal, trumpet and piano accompaniment but the

rhythmic content usually wave towards African rhythm, making it more interesting with the use of syncopations at intervals.

Both melodic and harmonic lines were in western diatonic scales as well as the tone colour. The costumes used were all Western and the language is English even though there were Italian names like Claudio and Glen. Dayo Oyedun, an African art music composer, has written five opera compositions namely;

1. The Moon and I
2. Pyrate of Badagry
3. Juliano
4. The Shadow of a lonely heart, and
5. The Prisoner of love

Inspirations behind "The Moon and I"

'The Moon and I' is a romantic opera composed in the year 2008 to mark the 10th anniversary of UCH SINFONIA in Ibadan. The list of principal characters includes Claudio, Glen, Beatrice, and Auntie Vic. The opera narrates the ordeal, search and success of Claudio, a young countryman who, after making so many failed attempts at securing a lover, was advised by his friends (Glen and Pedro) to seek help from a magician. The magician gave him a magic goggle which would charm and attract the heart of the desired lady. Early the next morning, Claudio went to hide behind a rock along the usual route of his desired lady, Beatrice. Unfortunately for Claudio, Beatrice forgot the keys to the farm that morning and had to turn back home midway.

Unknown to Claudio, a mad woman was coming through the same direction Beatrice went and it was at this moment that Claudio jumped out of the rock where he was hiding and had a glaze of the mad woman with the magic goggle. The magic goggle charmed the mad woman instantly; she fell in love with Claudio, and started chasing him around. On reporting back to his friends, he was advised to still go back to Beatrice and try asking her out again. This he did the following day as Beatrice was walking by with her friends. In the process, Beatrice Aunty walked passed them and overheard their conversation as Beatrice turned down Claudio's request singing "Men are deceitful".

On getting back home, Beatrice's aunty advised her to give Claudio a chance as he is handsome and suitable by her judgments. Beatrice then regretted her earlier response and wished it could be reversed. Just then, Claudio showed up again, repeating his request and this time around Beatrice gladly said yes and they both danced ballet as they moved out of the stage.

Claudio went back to his friends with the good news amid the celebration, the mad woman showed up still madly in love with Claudio. Following his friends' advice, Claudio poisoned the mad woman. The mad woman at the point of death placed a curse on whoever got married to Claudio. The curse caught up with Beatrice who woke up the following morning blind and short (dwarf).

Claudio on receiving the news of what happened to Beatrice decided to seek help from the magician. The magician told him that the only solution is to go get a golden ring from the land of monsters which is a land of no return. After writing his will with the lawyer, in case he did not return, he set out to the land of the monsters. In the land of the monsters, Claudio's late mother appeared to him in form of a moon and helped him secure the golden ring.

On returning home, the magician applied the golden ring and Beatrice regained her sight and height instantly. This called for a celebration and in the process; a poisoned drink bought by a wicked woman to be used on her rich husband was accidentally served to Beatrice and Claudio. The two of them died after taking the drink. While mourning, the Moon appeared again and sprinkled the moon powder on Claudio and Beatrice. They were resuscitated by this powder from Claudio's late mother. Claudio and Beatrice got married and lived happily thereafter.

Opera patronage has decreased in the last century in favour of other arts and media (such as musicals, cinema, radio, television and recordings), and social media, and the advent of studio recordings has supported the popularity of many famous singers. This decrease is the gap this paper is filling by narrating the opera composed by Dayo Oyedun, a 20th-century Art Music Composer to enable composers, researchers, and even lovers of African Operas to get an impression of the scenes in the opera.

The list of songs in the" The Moon and I' includes:

1. Searching For A Lady
2. Proposal Song
3. The Magician
4. What A Wonderful Day
5. Gossip Song
6. I Saw A Mad Woman
7. Hey Sweet Lady
8. Men Are Deceitful
9. Oh Beatrice Beatrice
10. Oh My Love Please Come To Me
11. Incidental Music "Dance of *Agama* Lizard"
12. I'm Placing A Curse
13. Aunty Vic
14. "I need your help"
15. Lawyer's Song
16. Farewell Song
17. Incidental Music "The Trembling Mountain"
18. Ballad of thr tree
19. Fear not my son
20. I bid you
21. Dance of the dolls
22. Laughter

Structural Analysis of The Moon and I.

This music section is scored for vocal, trumpets, and piano accompaniment, it includes 2 acts and 10 scenes while the plot of the opera goes thus;

Act 1

Overture: Piano Introduction.

The plot opens with an overture which is in three movements. The first movement in 4/4 time; bars 1-22 is written for the piano in allegro pace but intended for a full orchestra in the future performance according to the composer. The movement in bars 1-8 has an introductory royal trumpet herald for 2 trumpets. There is a modulatory transition from Bb major to B minor from bars 18 to 32. The rest of the

first movement features a running bass line. There is a transient change in tempo in bar 50 to create a sweet reflective segment which runs up to bar 67. The second movement is in Waltz style. It begins with an intermezzo between bars 68 and 70 and followed by the development of the waltz segment in ¾ time which runs through to bar 106. The third movement begins with a recap of the first section in bars 107 to 122, followed by a transition in bars 123 to 133 and in minuet form running through bars 133 to 144.

Scene 1: Searching for a Lady

This plot titled 'Searching for a Lady' opens with a tenor solo in F major by Claudio, narrating his ordeal. The song starts with exposition between bars 1 to 17 and 18 to 21, development of ideas in homophonic nature from bars 22 to 45. The solo degenerated into a sorrowful mood in bar 46 when Claudio broke down crying with a reflection by a change of key to D minor, a new key well suited for the consolatory song by Glen change in tempo to larghetto coupled with march-like chords on the left hand of the accompaniment from bars 50 to 51. There is a recapitulation of the idea and change of key to F major from bars 62, Pedro's assuring line from bars 69 to 75 is repeated by Claudio in bars 76 to 84 and the scene ends with humming of the theme song from bars 77 to 93.

Scene 2: Proposal Song

The exposition presented two ideas in two tonal areas of F major in bars 1 to 4 and C major in bars 5 to 12. This comes in a bouncing piano rhythm to which Claudio and his friend Glen bounced as they approach Linda to propose to her. The vocal comes up in C major, as Claudio stammers through his proposal lines in bars 13 to 17, closely assisted by his friend Glen. The developmental section started in C major, on a ¾ time signature, in a polyphonic texture, within bars 18 and 20. Bars 21 to 37 witnessed the presentation of another idea with a swift modulation to F major in homophonic and passacaglia form. The second idea from bar 47 introduces a change in style to waltz and a change in tonal area to C major from bar 54 to bar 82. Linda's negative response from bar 30 was interrupted by Claudio stammering segment (repeated notes in bars 38-40). The last segment is in F major and it comes in a free lyrical lines accompanied by broken chords and in a bouncing piano rhythm, which suites the encouraging advice given by Glen. It runs from bar 83 to 119 with a stable tonal area.

Scene 3: The Magician

Though on F major tonal centre and 4/4 pace, it started with a piano introduction from bars 1 to 12, demonstrating fast alternative semiquaver notes which reflects the fantasy associated with a magic house. The opening vocal introducing an idea started with the magician from bars 13 to 20 in a 4/4 time signature. A second idea between bars 21 to 45 was introduced in D major with a duet and a change of time to 3/4. The first line meant for Claudio initiated a theme which was repeated and there was a counterpoint by Glen complementing Claudio at the second running. By bar 46, another change of tonal area occurs to D minor, and change of pace also to 3/4, this run to bar 83. A shift in tonal area and pace occurred in bar 84 to Bb major and ¾ time, drifting in a waltz movement and polyphony. It drifted back to 4/4 time pace in bar102 and this run to the end of bar 123.

Scene 4: What a Wonderful Day

A 6 bars piano introduction, having syncopated notes on the right hand and a scalic structure serving as leading notes for the coming in of the vocal idea by Beatrice constitute the exposition. Identification of triplets in bar 14, simulation of sounds from bars 15 to 18 indicating sounds of hyena, cat and cock (kpo kpo kpo, miaun and cock-a-doodle-doo). Bars 19 – 30 was a rhythmic sound effect for a lunatic formation.

Scene 5: Gossip Song

Exposition between bars 1 and 12 in Bb major, the eagerness on the part of the storyteller (Sussan) and the listener (Florence), reflected by the swinging style of the accompaniment. The developmental section runs between bars 13 and 39 in Bb major. Word interruption and melodic alternation between Susan and Florence in bars 58 to 59 and 66 to 67 is characteristic of gossiping, having a retartando at the last three bars of the song (70- 72). There is a stable tonal idea from the beginning to the end of this scene.

The remaining scenes in Act 1 were done in a tabular form below:

Act 1, Scene 6 I saw a mad woman

EXPOSITION	1-7	Bb Major	Introduction of an idea.
DEVELOPMENT	8-27 28-36	Bb Major Bb Major	3/4 common time Waltz
RECAP	37-56	Bb Major	Common time movement.
CODA	57-84	Bb Major	Passacaglia, End.

Act 1, Scene 7 Hey Sweet Lady

EXPOSITION	1-5 6-13	F Major, 4/4 time F Major, 3/4 time	Introduction of two ideas.
DEVELOPMENT	14-37 38-49	F Major F Major	3/4 flowing movt. 4/4 walking pace.
RECAP	50-57, 58-65,66-69	F Major	Repeat of some earlier sections.
CODA	70-73	Major	End.

Act 1, Scene 8 Men are Deceitful

EXPOSITION	1-5	C Major	Introduction of an idea.
DEVELOPMENT	6 -14 15 -25	C Major C Major	
RECAP	26 -31 32 -35	C Major F Major	Repeat of some sections.
CODA	36 -39	F Major	Passacaglia, End.

Act 1, Scene 9 Oh Beatrice

EXPOSITION	1 -4	F Major	Introduction of an idea.
DEVELOPMENT	5 -12	F Major	

RECAP	13 -20 21 -32	F Major F Major	Repeat of some sections.
CODA	33 -36	F Major	End.

Act 1, Scene 10 Dance of Agama

EXPOSITION DEVELOPMENT	1-17 18 -31 32 – 38 39 – 46 47 -50	Bb Major Bb Maj. chromatic Bb Maj. Bb Maj. Different movt. Bb	Introduction and a repeat of an idea in waltz movement. Introduction to development.
CODA	51 -59	Bb Major	

Conclusion

The development of opera within Africa is a rich and evolving story of cultural adaptation, creativity, and innovation. African opera composers continue to shape the genre, blending Western operatic traditions with indigenous African music and themes, contributing to the diversity and vibrancy of global opera. There is a growing number of African composers who are creating operatic works that blend Western operatic traditions with indigenous African musical elements, languages, and themes. These composers are exploring diverse narratives and storytelling techniques that reflect contemporary African experiences. Opera festivals and performance platforms dedicated to African opera are gaining prominence. These events provide opportunities for African composers, singers, and musicians to showcase their work and collaborate with international artists. Educational initiatives aimed at promoting opera within African communities are expanding. They focus on training young opera singers, composers, and musicians, as well as educating audiences about the richness of African opera traditions. Nigerian composers and musicians are actively involved in creating and promoting Nigerian classical music, which incorporates operatic elements. Initiatives such as

the UCH Sinfonia by Dayo Oyedun contribute to the preservation and promotion of Nigerian opera.

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