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Emurobome Idolor and the Discourse of Nigerian Art Music: A 60th Birthday Celebration

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Abstract

This article focused on some of the contributions of Emurobome Idolor in the Nigerian music studies. His scholarly contributions cut across different areas of Art Music including Ethnomusicology, Music Composition, Conducting, African Music and Music education in Nigeria. This article identifies and acknowledges the ideological concept of Idolor's Philosophy towards excellence. Also, this article justified and abstracted some musical attributes that he portrayed as a scholar in Nigerian Art music. Empirical method of research was used for this study, through the holistic overview of some of his scholarly publications and two of his art music compositions titled "Glory Hallelujah and Nigeria' Otoro So Owan. Through abstractive analysis of these creative works, younger art composers will learn and acquire divers' compositional techniques that can be used and adopted in promoting African indigenous music.

Key Words: Hard Work, Philosophical Perspective, Art Music and African Music

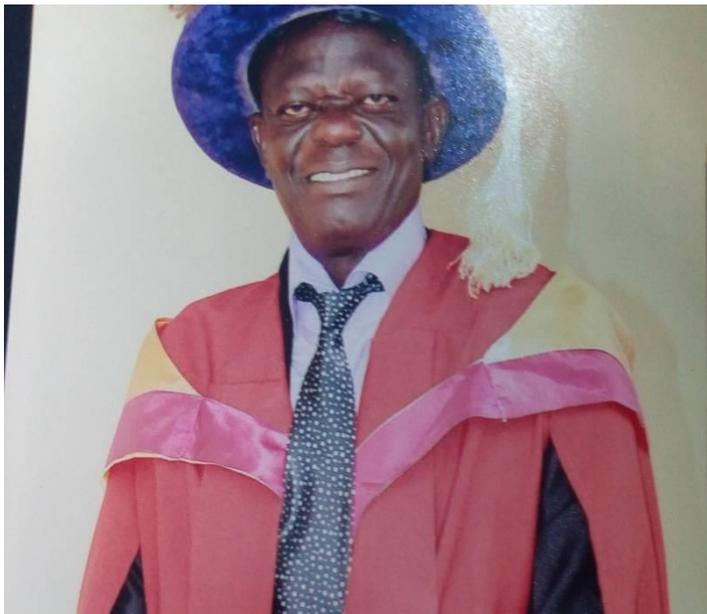
Introduction

The journey of three scores in life is an admirable one that calls for celebration. This kind of journey needs to be celebrated for anyone who has aided the development of education and human capacity building in academia. Also, three scores journey thus far, gives huge opportunities to look into the scholarly contributions of any individual, and appreciate the proportional efforts that such a personality has made to the development and expansion of academics. The remarkable landmark of Emurobome Idolor as he turns '60' in the field of Nigerian Art Music, calls for a distinctive acknowledgment. His 60th birthday provides a unique opportunity to cogitate on his contributions, ingenuity, creativity and un-quantifiable teaching strategies in the academia. In the same vein, a notable saying of his is "Hard Work Does Not Kill, but Makes You Stronger". This truism stands as his driving force in the pursuit

of his musical career. The basic ideology behind his cliché has generated three questions of (who), who was Idolor before now? Who is he now? And who might he be as he journeys in his musical career? In an attempt to explicate the efforts of this scholar, his philosophical view must be investigated through his contributions generally on issues that bother on Nigerian Art music. Likewise, his composition, “Glory Hallelujah to His Name and Nigeria Otoro So Owan were cross-examined in order to establish his school of thought and his ideological stance in promoting African music, using the knowledge of Western arts music as a paradigm.

Short Biography of Emurobome Idolor

Emurobome Idolor was born on December 22, 1955 in Ogiedi-Elume, Sapele Local Government Area of Delta State, Nigeria. He had his formal Education at the Nigerian Baptist Convention Primary School, Ogiedi-Elemu, from 1963 – 1968, Baptist High School, Eku (1970 – 1974); and proceeded to Nana College, Warri in the years 1978 – 1979. He further attended the University of Nigeria, Nsukka where he obtained a Diploma in Music Education (1981 -1984). He obtained Bachelors of Arts degree in Music (1984 -1986), Master degree in Educational Administration (1987 – 1989) and Master degree in Music (1990 – 1993). Between 1995 and 2001, he was at the University of Ibadan for his Doctorate degree in Music, and, thus, was the first to have a Ph.D Degree in Music from a Nigeria university.



Idolor worked as a music lecturer in the Department of Music, College of Education, Warri (1986), College of Education, Agbor (1987-1990) and Delta State University, Abraka (1990 till date). At the Delta State University, Abraka, he was appointed the Associate Dean of the Faculty of Arts from 1993 to 1996, the Head, Department of Music, from 2002 to 2007, Associate Dean of the Postgraduate School in 2007, and promoted to the rank of a Professor of Music in 2006.

Emurobone Idolor and his Creativity

Creativity generally serves as one of the major phenomena associated with art forms. That is to say, the bedrock and fundamental stand of any artistic work, rests on creativity. The contextual concept of creativity in music stands as a major tool used by music composers’ in

producing a new work. Basically, the singular act of creativity has been in existence from time immemorial, and various studies have been carried out and dedicated to this subject matter. According to Guilford (1950), creativity is the process of being divergent through the use of various musical elements, in order to compose and establish a new musical art work. Furthermore, Guilford attributes originality, flexibility and fluency to the act of creativity. Viewing creativity from the musical perspective, Nketia (1975), states that, the creative act of combining different musical idioms is also an identifiable phenomenon within the Sub-Saharan Africa through the display of their common characteristic elements in music, which reveals Africans identity. Similarly, Kratus (1990) opines that, creativity in music evolved around two identifiable acts which include improvisation and composition. Kratus' ideological concepts are synonymous to that of Guilford in view of the three traits of a music creation. In line with this subject matter, Nwankpa (2012), states that, the act of generating and establishing a fresh musical piece, through the applications of musical skill(s) and imaginative thought, serves as creativity. Furthermore, Nwankpa explicates that, the distinctive microscopic vision, originality, inspiration and cognitive capacity of a creator, reveals the fundamental strength of his creativity.

Basically, creativity stand's as one of the capabilities displayed by Idolor in the pursuit of his musical career. His creative ability in art music explicates the dynamism procedures that he used to present, preserve and propagate the aesthetics of his indigenous music. (Okpe Muisic). Also, the pragmatic approach in using Western art music as a constructive model for literacy advancement of indigenous music reveals his opinionated view regarding music acculturation. Though, there are numerous Nigerian art music composers who have used the synergizing approach of Western and Africa idioms in their creative works since the inception of art music in Nigeria. Pre-dominantly, the world of creativity has continued to be part of the driving force for most Nigerian art musicians in presenting the indigenous music of their cultures to the world. Generally, there is no end to creativity in art forms. The act of creativity in Idolor's musical art works reveals his potent ideological concept, which hinged on the paradigmatic school of thought that is attributed to a renowned Hungarian composer and music educator, Bela Bartok. (1881–1945). Through this medium, Idolor promotes the Okpe's folk music. This became an achievable term by using the knowledge of Western arts music to bring to the global world, the folk tunes of Okpe culture, in Delta State of Nigeria. Generally, this has added Idolor's voice to other voices within and outside Nigeria that have used folk songs as a major tool for establishing the imprints of their culture globally. According to Ozah (2013), in cross-examining the musical creativity of Uzoigwe, she asserts that the Bartokian school of taught in promoting nationalistic feature of Eastern European (Magyar) folk melodies serve as the predominant model used by numerous African arts music composers to imprint their cultural music to the scholastic milieu and to the global village. Furthermore, she notes that:

... The Nigerian composer, musicologist, and ethnomusicologist Olatunji Akin Euba (1935), in more recent times, has popularized this approach to music composition through his theory of "creative ethnomusicology," a concept he later expanded into his theory of creative musicology (Euba 1989). While the end product of ethnomusicological and musicological research is typically a scholarly article or book, the terminal result of creative ethnomusicology, by contrast, "is the composition of music in which elements derived from research are employed.

In line with the above, one could come to conclusion that, creative ethnomusicology stands as the solid foundation and prototype on which Idolor patterns most of his indigenous art

compositions. This he displayed through the use of indigenous materials derived from the cultural milieu of Okpe land. Likewise, the philosophical perspective of Emuronbome Idolor stands on the ideological concept of promoting the totality of his indigenous music. In view of this philosophy, he is of the opinion that the cultural identity in African music should not be hidden, but be brought to limelight among other music of world cultures. He achieved this by using the paradigm of practical application of linear harmony in his musical composition “Glory Hallelujah to His Name”. This composition and Nigeria Otoro Osowan will be used as a parameter for discuss in this study.

Abstractive Review of “Glory Hallelujah to His Name”

Glory Hallelujah to His Name is one of the outstanding artistic compositions of Idolor, among his numerous compositions. The medium of expression in this composition is vocal, which comprises Soprano, Alto, Tenor and Bass, (S.A.T.B); with piano accompaniment. Pentatonic scale that is attributed to the Africans, serves as the scale used for the music. The composition is written in the key of D major, in a compound duple time signature; with the total number of 101 measures. The composer presents the harmonic texture of the music in homophonic and polyphonic nature. In his presentation, homophonic harmonic texture was established from the very first measure to measure thirty-three (measures 1-33). However, this was interjected within (measure 15 – 19) with call and response techniques. The use of call and response techniques in this composition reflects and represents the true attribute that characterized most African music. This was followed by a sect-ionization of parts that serves as a call, which was written as duet for the soprano and alto parts. The responsorial answer to the call is given by the tenor and bass parts. Measure 22 through 23 introduced suspension of note(s) in the soprano and the bass parts. This creativity model ushers in different rhythmic pattern of parts which eventually disclosed the polyphonic texture used by the composer. Nonetheless, the general harmonic structure of the music obeys the rules of none omission of the third within the circumference mode of the pentatonic scale.

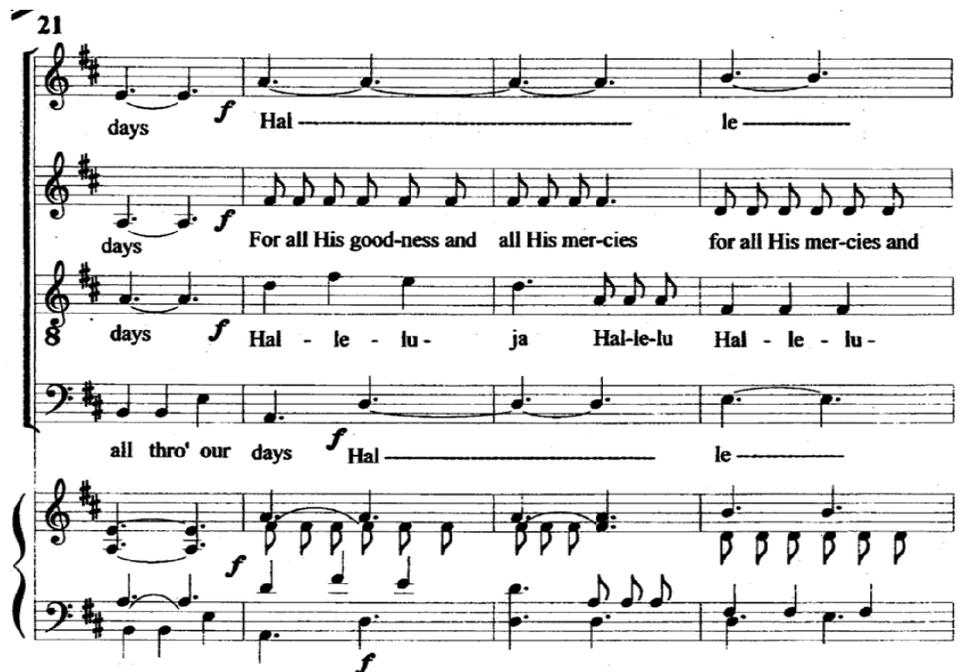


Fig. 1 Measures 21 – 24.

The intervallic distance between the parts obeys the parallel harmonic style of a second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth which are commonly found in diverse indigenous music in Sub-Saharan African and Nigeria in particular. This creative approach justifies the deliberate inclusion of some attributive features that dominates African music generally. Also, in his creative presentation, Idolor uses essential derivative/adoptive technique in transmitting the rhythmic pattern of the music. This could be said to be a derivative method as the result of the skillfulness found in the delivery dexterity of a mother drummer of a dundun ensemble, in Yoruba land. According to Samuel (2005), the effective ability to control and lead every other member of dumdum ensemble, rest in the hands of the mother drummer. Furthermore, he notated that, the effective change in the time signature that may occur in the course of performance, and the pace of the rhythm has to be initiated and set into motion by the mother drummer. This means that, the change in the mode of rhythmic motif in a performance could only be determined by the directive control and coordination given from the leader. Also, Samuel, (2005) buttressed his submission that:

... Where there is the need to effect a change in the music from one *ìsísẹ* (movement) to the other, the drummer never fails to indicate this and immediately provides necessary impetus through appropriate cues, thereby showing the direction to move. A *dùndún* specialist can artistically attain any possible level through notable extemporization in various styles. All these are done to eliminate monotony and boredom.

From the forgoing, the *iya-ilu* Dundun introduces and dictates the tempo of the music or the tempo of a new musical section within the performance context whenever there is change of rhythm in the course of performance. In adopting this style, Idolor uses the soprano part to establish a different rhythmic pattern that present clearly the sonic structure of African musical instruments.



Fig.2. Measure 34 – 36. Establishment of 6-time signature

This changes the rhythmic structural form of the music that has been presented in hymnody form, from measure 1 to 21. However, the composer still retained the initial time signature of the music, (3/4 or 6/8), but introduces a different approach in his rendition, by setting and using the human voice to play the role of different African instruments. This paradigmatic approach gave the entire composition a new shape of instrumental ensemble, rather than the initial vocal choral style. In the same vein, the contextual text used by the composer for the soprano part, depicts a typical sound of a traditional musical instrument (Woodblock clef). This musical instrument usually plays a supportive role in timeline in African musical ensembles. Nketia (1963) affirmed that:

...One of the regular means of establishing and maintaining the beat is the accompanying rhythm played by the idiophone. Any of these [gong, woodblock etc.] provides a *timeline*, a constant point of reference by which the phrase structures of a song as well as the linear metrical organization of phrases are guided.

In line with this, and in the context of this study, it is taken and seen that creative ingenuity was displayed by the composer, in adopting the soprano voice part to capture the reflective sound of a woodblock musical instrument. This he used to set and guide the linear metric formation that gives the new section of the piece of music an established rhythmic structure that characterizes African rhythm. The capturing of musical instrument sound by human voice, as used by the composer is what I refer to as scan singing within the context of this study. Similarly, in providing a supportive rhythm, and at the same time harmonizing the established one by the soprano; measure 38, announces a new rhythmic pattern taken by the alto part. This rhythmic sound pattern captures the sonic indigenous instrument found among the Yoruba of the Western region in Nigeria, known as “*shekere*” (Rattle). The instrument could also be found in other cultures in Nigeria and beyond.



Fig. 3 The establishment of different indigenous rhythmic pattern through human voice

Though, through this unique creativity, Idolor was able to synergize the rules that governs’ the “Western harmonic style of music” under two parts writing; and, with what I refer to as the African intervallic harmonic style. However, the soprano and alto parts could be said to have formed the fundamental basis of the sixth-chord of the pentatonic scale, having the root and the fifth present. This was followed by the introduction of the ostinato rhythmic pattern in (measure 41) by the tenor part, which was used by the composer to capture the role of the main musical timing instrument within the Africans context (Agogo).

In order to achieve the harmonic formation within the parts, the composer presents the movement of the tenor part to be static from measure 42 to 52. This synchronizes the three parts together to form and establish a chord-six of the pentatonic scale. This comprises the root, third and the fifth. But the arrangement of the chord by the composer came in the following order: the third, fifth and the root. This stands to be the first inversion of chord six. It is worthy of note that, notable alteration in the rhythmic pattern and notes establishment for all the three parts occur simultaneously. This act of creativity was cleverly used by the composer in order to achieve appropriate chords formation, and what can be called a linear style of harmony in Africa, and a contrapuntal style of harmony within the Western context.

Nevertheless, Measure 46 of this creative work established the authentication of the complete chord (chord-six) with the emphatic landing of the bass part on the six degree note of the scale. In his logical musical presentation approach, Idolor was able to use the bass voice part to capture the sonic of an indigenous pot drum. The choice of the bass part in capturing the sonic-sound of the pot drum justifies and represents the deep resonance or in-depth pitches

produced by the pot drum. This serves as a reflective creativity on the part of the composer, in ensuring that, the sound of the indigenous instrument is synonymous to the bass voice part.

Generally, creativity is exemplified by the composer in using the human voices to capture four different African musical instruments. These include the woodblock clave, rattle, gong and pot drum; all of which could be grouped under the idiophone musical instruments. All of these display the creativity, dexterity and originality of this scholar and composer in showcasing and promoting the richness of the African music through his scholarly and musical vocabulary. This act of creativity stands as a model, and, as well paved way for the upcoming art composers in knowing how to investigate more on Nigerian art music, and using creativity to promote African music.

Abstractive Review of Nigeria, Otoré Ose Owan” (Nigeria, Our Fatherland)

The act of promoting the indigenous music of the Okpe culture through the acquired Western musical skills by Idolor affirmed the sermonic musical gospel used in projecting his indigenous composition titled Nigeria, Otoré Ose Owan. In this indigenous art music composition, Idolor used the Okpe language as the medium of communication with the combinations of other indigenous musical elements that characterize Okpe culture. First the use of the indigenous melody in capturing the tonal inflection of the Okpe language characterizes the composition, 'Nigeria, Otoré Ose Owan'. In view of this, the identity and characteristic of African melodies that rely on the structural rhythmic movement, the inflection of text in line with the rhythm and tonal qualities within the African context was highly considered and applied by the composer. This attempt stands as procedure that makes his indigenous composition culturally relevant to his culture.

The total number of 150 measures established the indigenous composition Nigeria, Otoré Ose Owan” as a musical piece. The musical work is written for the voice with piano accompaniment. The stylistic features that characterize the uniqueness of African music were predominantly employed by the composer. The music started with an anacrusis beat through a call by the soprano in 6/8-time signature, while the alto, tenor and bass give a responsorial answer to the soprano call from the last three beats of the second measure to the fourth measure. It is of necessity to state categorically that the response given by alto, tenor and bass is what this study tagged as the re-affirmative call or subsidiary call in its responsive pattern. That is to say, the correspondent response given to the call made by the soprano serves a dual role within the context of the composition. Furthermore, the last three beats in the fourth measure serve as the connecting/pick up notes that linked the complete questioning phrase together from measures 1 to 4, and to the second questioning phrase, (measures 5 - 8). Thus, measures 1 to 8 define the complete phrase-logical section as used by the composer in introducing the musical work. The entire section of the composition that comprises of the questioning and answering phrases reflects and represents the African musical feature Call and Response. Moreover, the Western harmonic idiom in homophonic texture was employed by the composer strictly in a procedural principle pattern under the predominant application of diatonic major scale. Within the course of the opening phrase, the composer introduced a shift in tonal centre at the last but one chord of the entire questioning phrase. The shift in the tonal centre proceeds from (F major), the tonic key to (C: Major), which is the dominant to the tonic key, before returning to its original key. However, measures 9 to 21 serve as the answering phrase to the call and the re-affirmative call that was re-echoed by the alto, tenor and bass. Furthermore, the composer approached measure 9 with a full part singing which is taken as communal singing in the African context. There is absence of isolation of any part(s) within the circumference of four-part music composition that involves the soprano, alto, tenor

and bass parts. (S. A. T. B). Likewise, the communal singing of all the parts has a common stylistic rhythmic pattern that characterizes the melodic and harmonic rhythmic movement of the piece in an African pattern. Also, the rhythmic pattern of the soprano stands as the replicable mode pattern that other subsidiary parts imitate strictly in the composition.

The composer redirects and elongates the composition from the use of the first compositional technique, (Call and Response), and introduces a duet section from measures 22 to 43. This gives a contrast to the conceptual style of call and response that was established at the beginning. The harmonic pattern of the duet section did not follow strictly the totality rules of the Western harmony under two-part writing. This can be clearly seen in the second half three of measure 22 which has an intervallic distance of a 7th between the two parts. While the first three beats follow the Western harmonic pattern.

The recapitulation of the motive and the complete questioning phrase of this composition as stated by the soprano in measures 1 to 8 was re-introduced in measures 43 to 51, 86 to 94, 128 to 136. Likewise, the same responsorial answer was given by the alto, tenor and bass in measures 52 to 64, 94 to 107 and 137 to 150. The repetition of the questioning and answering phrase depicts the constant restating of the main idea that characterizes African feature in the context of African musical performance. Furthermore, measures 108 to 128 portray a purely call and response section wherein a solo part was introduced by the composer to take the lead, although the musical notes used for the solo part from measure 108 were borrowed from measures 17 to 21, with slight variation in the rhythm.

It could be said that the act of promoting indigenous culture of a society in Africa lays as well on the responsibility of an arts composer that acknowledges the value system of his/her culture. Similarly, one of the major ways through which an African art composer can achieve this, is to use the indigenous musical materials of his/her culture. In view of this, the indigenous composition 'Nigeria, Otoro So Owan' by Idolor also stands as a unique example among numerous indigenous arts compositions. This perpetual act of this composition could be buttressed through a proverbial saying of the Yoruba that "*Ile lan ti ko eso rode*" Which literally means that, it is from home that prestigious values are presented to the outside world.

Emurobone Idolor in African Music

The conceptual view of any culture is rooted in the indigenous components of its music. This signifies that the way of life of a specific people has a strong relationship with the belief system, custom, dance, language and religious practices that governs the totality of their musical activities. It is a clear phenomenon that the above aforementioned components could be absorbed from indigenous/African music, either directly or indirectly. Speaking of African music from a general perspective, it is the music that characterizes the identity of the black African people. According to Ajewole (2001), African music is a phenomenon that characterized the black people through the aggregate expression of their music, which unraveled the unique and common origin, common basic product and contextual similarities in their relationship. He further elucidated and re-affirmed the philosophical mode of transmitting knowledge within the African context to be through an oral procedure. Similarly, Nzewi (2005) related African music as an art form that lives and that continues living within the context of creativity and performance through the cognitive display of indigenous dance, theatre and cultural belief. This means that, the artistic performance of music of any society presents the fundamental culture of the society. The word African music stands as a phenomenon that has been conceptualized into the semiotic concept that is known as African musicology. This concept of African musicology was invented by Klaus Wachsmann in 1966, which has received a huge acceptability within the circumference of academia, and, has been

viewed from different philosophical points. In an attempt in defining the concept of musicology, Estrella (2012), described it as a scholarly investigation and scientific approach of music. Speaking on the scholarly/scientific approach, this has proven and distinguished the study of African art music from other form of music generally. In view of this, one could say categorically that, art music has brought a huge positive impact to the world of African music at large. Art music generally has created a good platform for Africans to investigate, discover, promote and document the entity of their culture through music.

Through this channel, remarkable contributions have been made by various African art music researchers that had early contacts with art music. Their contributions to African music came through the historical perspective and anthropological view. This has also produced diverse discovery of theories which were propounded by different scholars of African musicology. However, the imprint of Emurobome Idolor has also joined that of the early scholars in the Nigeria arts music, such as, T. K. E. Philip, Fela showande, Ayo bankole, Akin Euba, Meki Nzewi, Echezona, Joshua Uzoigwe, Laz Ekwueme, Omibiyi Obidike, Tunji Vidal, just to mention a few. In his ideological concept on African music, Idolor stresses and advocates for the need of viewing indigenous music/folksongs music through the spectacle of ethnomusicology in order to propagate the cultural identity of African culture to the entire world. Furthermore, he exemplified this by using some folk tunes and aboriginal compositions of his culture. Some of these compositions include “*Omo me Kube, Biko, Hero Tame, Enyeren Kugbe, Nigeria Otore Ose Owan, H’ Ero Suie, Iyere Esiri*” etc. Through this means, Idolor was able to bring to the limelight the musical contexts that are embedded in the indigenous folk tune of the Okpe culture. By so doing, cultural identity and general musical forms and norms that exist within the cultural milieu of the Okpe people set out as a researchable gamut to scholars. Likewise, in his effort in promoting African music through the indigenous music of the Okpe culture, Idolor never fails to acknowledge the enormous impact of Western arts music as it affects and contributes to the development and sustainability of African music. In his intellectual view, he acclaims Western art music as a tool that creates and brought the totality of African music to a stage of accessibility and acceptability in the global village. However, he established the facts that the positive impact of the Western arts music on African music general does not insinuate that high and more concentration should be given to Western art music above the African music. Using the Nigerian art music as a reference point in his submission, he states that, the philosophical perspective of concentrating more on Western arts music than the Nigerian arts music calls for a paradigm shift. Meaning that there is need for the Nigerian arts composers to give more attention and promote their indigenous music.

He buttresses this by stating that, the actualization of African music to be on an equal scale with European music in the global village can only be achieved, if there is proper application of the 21st century information technology for the ad- vocation of the African music. Furthermore, he affirms that the proper usage of the 21st century technology should have positive impact on the indigenous music of the Africans. However, in his continuum research, Idolor discovered that the reverse is the case as Western music and its musical style(s) have dominated and replaced the rightful space of indigenous music within the African societies. This he identifies as the result of the wide acceptability and implementation of Western idioms over the African idioms. This means that, the Western music has been adopted and accepted within the parameter of African society and above African music in Nigeria. In the same vein, he acknowledges a semiotic act that is responsible for this to be the wrong usage of the phenomenon known as modernisms. In view of this, he disclaims the philosophical notion of setting and seeing the Western style of music as a more standardized musical form

than the African music. Rather, he proclaims the necessity of seeing the two musical phenomena in relation to the contextual acceptability, functionalities and roles as it is used and affects individual society. Also, he likens the genesis of the aforementioned problem to the wrong structural foundation in our educational system amidst other contributing factors. He identifies the continued slave cognitive reasoning of ours, (Africans) most especially Nigerians, that has refused to be free from colonization; even when the physical “political freedom” has been proclaimed/given. Nevertheless, Idolor notes that, there is need to redress and to restructure most of the schools’ curricular in Nigeria, by shifting from the Western oriental application, into the indigenous music assertion. In his opinion, there is also an urgent need to readdress the percentage ratio of the African music contents in the educational curriculum system across schools’ level, most especially in tertiary institutions where the Department of Music functions. Through this means, a Nigerian child should/will be able to learn, know and practice the nitty-gritty of his or her culture through the learning of his/her indigenous music right from the childhood. In the same vein, through this means, an average Nigerian child will appreciate African music and culture first, before imbibing other cultures of the world through their music.

Conclusion

The thrust of this paper appreciated some of the unquantifiable contributions of Emurobome Idolor in the field of Nigerian Art music. These areas include African musicology, music education and Music Composition. It is worthy of mentioning that, Idolor has impacted positively to scholarship in Nigerian art music generally, and to the development of human capacity building. This he achieved through the undeniable teaching in different higher institutions in Nigeria. However, in as much as the efforts and contributions of this scholar stand to speak for itself within the academic milieu, and through the numerous scholars that have learnt and have passed through him; it is justifiable to acknowledge that, there is still more ground to cover.

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