



THE ORGANIZATION OF MELODIES IN *EBIBINDWOM*: A CASE OF JEHOVAH NISSI AWOYOW GARDEN, WINNEBA

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ABSTRACT: *Some centuries ago, the contact that was established between Ghanaians and the Europeans aided the creation of some hybridized musical types using the existing traditional tunes such as Asafo, Adenkum, Adzewa, Ɔmpɛ and others as the main source materials for such creations. Ebibindwom, an example of such hybridized musical types has evolved over the years due to the melodies that drive the music. Using a case study as a design, this paper sought to examine the melodies in Ebibindwom, focusing on how they are organized with texts. With the Donald F. Tovey's descriptive communicative type of formal analysis as the analytical stance, the paper sought to analyse the Ebibindwom melodies under specific boundaries of analysis for academic purposes. Interview and observation are the main instruments for data collection. Indeed, while some melodies of Ebibindwom are dependent on the speech surrogate and the rhythmic inflections of the spoken language of the indigenous people, some are not. Due to the simplistic nature of the Ebibindwom melodies, children play songs and simple instructional materials can be composed out of the compositional elements for educational purposes.*

Keywords: Ebibindwom, Jehovah Nissi Awoyow Garden, Hybridized Musical Types, Creative Ethnomusicology.

INTRODUCTION

The contact with Ghanaians by the Europeans in the Seventeenth Century aided in the creation of new social and musical values. In effect, these new values were the representations of both the Ghanaian and the European socio-cultural values. One researcher emphasized that, “the *Ebibindwom* as a musical genre is therefore one of the products of the Ghanaian-European socio-cultural interaction” (Mensah, 1966, p. 3). These contacts, according to Turkson (1975) "have very often resulted in both new musical hybrids and recreation of entirely new musical types such as the *Akan* sacred lyric” (p.5).

In fact, *Ebibindwom* has evolved over the years with its melodies serving as the underpinning driving force. It is however interesting to know that composers in the *Awoyow* church spontaneously compose with both biblical and societal texts without going through any critical cognitive process. For them, it is a spiritual exercise, and that, God gives the music as a gift. Due to this ‘spiritual process’ of composition in the *Awoyow* church, some *Ebibindwom* melodies follow the speech contour and the rhythmic inflections of the texts whilst others do not. This has resulted in some level of inconsistencies in the melodic organisation of the *Ebibindwom* when juxtaposed with tones of the melody set to the texts. Indeed, music educators in Ghana have been creating songs over the years for use in the classroom. Our general view of such compositions clearly shows how difficult some of the



melodies are. It is upon this background that this paper sought to analyze the melodies of *Ebibindwom* to determine how the texts are organised. It is imperative to state that delving into the analysis of *Ebibindwom* melodies shall give a clearer insight into the musical genre regarding the organization of the melodies in the *Awoyow* church music and its simplicity to be used as resource materials for educational use.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Over the years, *Ebibindwom* has been seen as one of the products of the Ghanaian-European socio-cultural interactions. In relation to this, Amuah and Nyamful (2014) made an assertion:

In the Methodist church, Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman, an African American, in 1835 at Cape Coast Methodist church encouraged the non-literate older women to sing Christian scripture to traditional tunes because they could not participate in singing of the English hymns. He therefore encouraged members to sing biblical texts to traditional tunes. (p. 65)

The assertion above suggests that *ebibindwom* emanated as an attempt to set biblical texts to traditional tunes. This process of setting biblical texts to traditional tunes requires a certain level of creativity. One researcher primarily accentuated that, “the nature of creativity can be discussed in the perspective of confluence” (Sternberg, 2006, p. 87). Sternberg propounded the investment theory of creativity which is imbedded in the confluence theory to entirely support his discussion. According to Sternberg (2006) “the investment theory of creativity is a confluence theory according to which creative people are those who are willing and able to 'buy low and sell high' in the realm of ideas” (p. 87). In other words, creative people are those who can initiate unknown ideas and convince people to accept, and then move on to the next unknown ideas: An act of novelty. Sternberg's investment theory of creativity discusses six distinct resources which are interrelated and also serve as the fundamental basis of comprehending the nature of creativity. They include;

- a. **Intellectual skills:** This is the individual's ability to mentally revolt from the normal ways of doing things. In order to give an in-depth elucidation of the concept, Sternberg in 1985 suggested three intellectual skills that are predominantly significant:

The synthetic skill to see problems in new ways and to escape the bounds of conventional thinking, the analytic skill to recognize which of one's ideas are worth pursuing and which are not, and the practical – contextual skill to know how to persuade others of, or to sell other people on the value of one's ideas. These principles serve as a model for evaluating one's intellectual skills. The levels of intellectual skills are highly individualistic. (as cited in Sternberg, 2006, p. 88)

- b. **Knowledge:** This is the acquisition of information on a field of study. It is very important to have acquaintance of a field in order to improve upon it. On the other hand, the acquisition of information can make a person dogmatic, restricting his or her creative skill and eventually making him or her think 'in the box'. This is to assert that knowledge can be both advantageous and disadvantageous.



- c. **Thinking styles:** These are the ideal traditions with which one's creative skills are utilized. It requires one's mental processes to decide on how to use his or her creative skill in a new dimension. In view of this, Sternberg in 1988 and 1997a asserted that, "with regard to thinking styles, a legislative style is particularly important for creativity" (as cited in Sternberg, 2006, p. 89).
- d. **Personality:** Simply put, the traits of a person define his or her personality. Sternberg (2006) stated that, "willingness to overcome obstacles, willingness to take sensible risks, willingness to tolerate ambiguity, and self-efficacy are attributes of a creative person" (as cited in Sternberg, 2006, p. 89). A creative person must think unconventionally so that he or she can stand out.
- e. **Motivation:** This is one's impetus for accomplishment. Motivation is affected by both internal and external factors. A person's intuition hugely encourages creativity. Amabile in 1983 suggested that, "intrinsic motivation is very important for creative work, and that people rarely do truly creative work in an area unless they really love what they are doing and focus on the work rather than the potential rewards" (as cited in Sternberg, 2006, p.89).
- f. **Environment:** This is the setting of the creative product. An environment should be more conducive for creative works. Without an encouraging and rewarding environment, one can lose creative skills, though he or she has all the requisite internal resources for creative works.

In order to produce a creative work, all the six resources must be judiciously utilized. A creative person must have all the six creative resources because they complement each other. Creativity is achievable with a good and creative decision by the creative person who is able to decide on conceiving new and unknown ideas which in turns defy the conventional principles of doing things.

Contextually, the organisation of the *ebibindwom* melodies is ethnomusicologically creative. Ferguson (2013) defined creative ethnomusicology as "the definitive practice of employing the results of music research into composition" (p. 230). It is a general knowledge that Ephraim Amu is the father of Ghanaian art music due to the fact that he had pioneered the process of 'indigenisation' of the genre. His creative way of composing with indigenous musical elements became a model for other Ghanaian art composers to follow. Ferguson (2013) further emphasised that,

In the field of orchestral music, notable Ghanaian composers that have employed this approach to composition include Philip Gbeho, Kwasi Aduonum, Nicholas Nayo, Ken Kafui, George Dor, Nana Danso Abiam and Ato Quayson. In this process, these composers have usually searched for melodic, rhythmic, performance practice and related perspective in our indigenous music. Their backgrounds in Western music education become a point from which these elements are organised and creatively blended to produce compositions for orchestra like Nayo's '*Fontomfrom* Prelude'. (pp. 230-231)

Stressing on the correlation between field research and original composition, one researcher asserted that "deriving valuable information from ethnomusicology — observation, transcription, and analysis of African music and music-making, based on first-hand



involvement and participation; these resource materials provide a platform for inspired, inventive artistic expression" (Temperley, 2000, p. 66). Brukman (2017) reiterated the clarification given by Agawu (2014) on the above assertion:

There is no easy formula for determining the ultimate shape that indigenous influences take within an individual composer's psyche. Depending upon the intensity and integrity of the exposure, the composer may acquire a groove-oriented metrical attitude, a store of modal melodies, a syllabic approach to word-setting, a network of distinctly shaped and timbrally specific rhythms (including time lines), and modes of simultaneous expression that preserve a heterogeneous sound ideal. (p.144)

One important element of the organisation of the *ebibindwom* in the *Awoyow* church that must be looked at is the relationship between sound and text, since the *ebibindwom* is a vocal musical genre. The predominantly used texts in the *Awoyow ebibindwom* is the Akan language (Ghanaian Language), more especially, Fanti. It is believed that an Akan word has direct relationship with sounds because its meaning is dependent on the intonation involved in the spoken word. For a better elucidation, Acquah and Amuah (2014) emphasised that, "undoubtedly, the meaning of a word in the Fanti language depends on the composition of the word as well as the intonation involved in the speech" (p. 120). It is also evidently clear in Acquah et al. (2014) that some Fanti words have the same vowels and consonants but have different meanings depending on the tone and the context. They gave the following examples to explain their claim:

↑ ↓
Pa pa (Father)

↑ ↑
Pa pa (good deeds)

↓ ↓ ↑
Pa pa (fan).

Apart from the above examples, we can also consider the following as Fante words with the same vowels and consonants but with different meanings:

↓
Bra (come)

↓ ↑
Bra (menstruation).

Again, it is imperative to state that Fante texts can be set to melodies depending on the speech tones and the rhythmic inflections of the texts. Example 1 is an illustration.



the research site” occurred during the performances of *Ebibindwom* at various events such as rehearsals, divine services, funerals, weddings, festival of fasting and thanksgiving, mid-day prayers and Friday spiritual exercises. The essence was to gather some of their repertoire for the analyses. In this regard, songs were collected and recorded with voice recorder and video camera (audio-visual recording tools) during performances at the various events. The recorded songs were transcribed and thoroughly analyzed to determine the organization of the melodies.

Data collection formally started on 1st July, 2019, and we concurrently did interviews and observations though more observations were done during the process. On the first day, we interviewed the prophetess of the church to find out from her how the *Ebibindwom* melodies are organized with texts in the *Awoyow* church. Our next encounter with her on the 4th July, 2019 gave us more insight into the organization and performance of the *Ebibindwom* and its sustainability with reference to the spiritual and ritual exercises of the church. We had the opportunity for the first time to observe the *Ebibindwom* performance at the Friday spiritual exercise on the 12th July, 2019 during which we video recorded the performances for transcription. On the 14th July, 2019, however, we observed the *Ebibindwom* performances at the Sunday divine service. After another observation section of the Friday spiritual exercise on the 19th July, 2019. There was a triangulation to ascertain the credibility of the data collected. For instance, the prophetess of the church was also contacted to enable us crosscheck some of the information. We also observed further the performances of *Ebibindwom* at the festival of fasting and thanksgiving from 23rd to 25th August, 2019, and a funeral service on the 21st September, 2019. On the 10th and 12th January, 2020 respectively, our final observations occurred to serve as a confirmatory test.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

As indicated from the beginning of this paper, the concept of *Ebibindwom* emanated from some of the musical ensembles of the *Akan* community which include *Asafo*, *Adenkum*, *Adzewa* and *Jmpɛ*. Actually, it was an attempt to set biblical texts to the already existing traditional tunes. Like Amuah (2001, p. 65) emphasised “*Ebibindwom*, therefore, arose from the attempt to set Christian lyrics to existing traditional tunes such as *Asafo*, *Adenkum*, and *Jmpɛ* musical traditions”.

The prophetess of the Jehovah Nissi *Awoyow* Garden has a different account regarding the *Ebibindwom* in the *Awoyow* church. According to her, the *Ebibindwom* started with the founder of the church, Prophet William Wade Harris as a spiritual gift from God. In a conversation with the informant, *Ebibindwom* was originally sung in the Kru language together with specific spiritual instruments for accompaniment: *Karbas* and *Donno*. This event happened in Greebo around Cape Mars in Liberia, and in the year of our Lord, 1909. She however commented on the origin of this musical genre in Ghana:

The founder trekked from Liberia to Atoabo in the Western region of Ghana, converted two fetish priests (John Nacaba and Grace Thani) and made them his disciples in 1914. He gave these two disciples all the spiritual and ritual training, and later disappeared. John Nacaba and Grace Thani who became prophet and prophetess respectively of church helped to translate the Kru Ebibindwom into Nzema and Fante.



Again, in the *Awoyow* church, however, our observation revealed that the texts used are predominantly short phrases for easy memorization. For instance, a phrase like, ‘*medze moho ma wo’oo, fa me ye*’ which literally means, ‘I give myself to you, use me’, can easily be learnt and memorized by the congregation. Even though the composers (prophets and prophetesses) of the melodies in the *Awoyow* church do not consider compositional techniques when composing, it is still important to state that when setting music to the texts above, the speech surrogate and rhythmic inflections of the texts must be considered since the language of the indigenous people is tonal. To support this assertion, Acquah et al. (2014) described the *Akan* languages as tonal, and gave a further elucidation on the direct link it has with music:

Akan languages are tonal and in tonal languages speech melody becomes part of communication. The expressive quality of speech melody therefore, has musical relevance. Thus, in *Akan* languages registers of syllables are observed for the proper understanding of the language. Since music is therefore closely related to language, melodic lines have to follow the natural intonation of words. (p. 120)

In a similar situation, As cited in Acquah and Amuah (2014) Catlin explained the unique musical systems of the Hmong, and stated:

The Hmong have a number of unique musical systems for presenting verbal texts in non-verbal or para-verbal form. Listeners must puzzle out the underlying verbal content in order to understand and enjoy these coded semantic messages, sometimes responding in kind during spontaneous dialogues. (p. 117)

It is also important to state that some of the *Ebibindwom* melodies in the *Awoyow* church follow the speech contour and the rhythmic inflection of the texts whilst others do not. This is due to the fact that composers in the church spontaneously compose with texts without going through any critical cognitive process. Ekueme (1974) explained how the African unconsciously organizes his music, and stated:

[the African] is utterly unconscious of any organized theory behind his music. He makes his music quite spontaneously and it is with interest and the delight of discovery that the more educated African will listen to a demonstration of the basic principles which underlie his musical practice. (p. 35)

Example 1 is an illustration of an *Ebibindwom* melody in the *Awoyow* church which follows the speech contour and rhythmic inflections of the texts. The arrows on top of the texts below indicate the contour: *me-dze mo-ho ma Wo’oo, fa me ye*

↓ ↓ ↑ ↑ FA ME YE ↓ ↑ ↑

Me - dze mo - ho ma Wo 'oo, — fa me ye.

Example 2: Melodic phrase of *ebibindwom*



Using the same text above, and following the speech contour, different melodies can be composed. Example 2 is an illustration of a different melody with the same text.

FA ME YE

Me - dze mo - ho ma Wo'oo, — fa me ye.

Example 3: Second Melodic Phrase of *Ebibindwom*

Example 3 below is an *Ebibindwom* melody which does not follow the speech surrogate and the rhythmic inflections of the texts.

M'EGYAPADZE

M'a - hye - hye m'e - gya - pa - dze wo sor'oo!

Example 4: *Ebibindwom* melodic theme which does not follow the speech contour

According to the texts which literally mean 'I have in stock my treasures in heaven', the suggested contour would be as follows: *M'ahyehyε m'egyapadze wɔ sor'oo!*

Based on the speech contour of the text above, Example 4 is a suggested melody that follows the speech contour and the rhythmic inflections of the text.



M'AHYEHYε

M'a - hye - hye m'e - gya - pa - dze wo sor'oo!

Example 5: *Ebibindwom* melodic phrase with speech contour

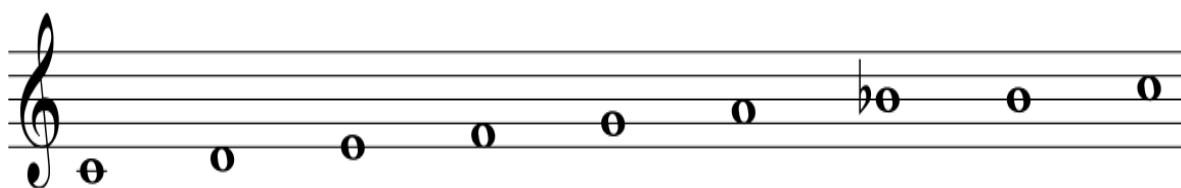
General Analysis of *Ebibindwom* Melodies in the Jehovah Nissi *Awoyow* Garden

The Donald F. Tovey's descriptive communicative type of formal analysis (Bent, 2005, pp. 88-90) was generally used to analyze the *Ebibindwom* melodies in the *Awoyow* Garden. In this regard, an in-depth description of some of the common musical features of the *Ebibindwom* music of the *Awoyow* Garden in Winneba was given for a better comprehension and appreciation. Forney and Machlis (2007, p. 12), defined melody as "a succession of single pitches that we perceive as a recognizable whole". It is generally seen as that element in music that appeals most unswervingly to the audience. The *Ebibindwom* melodies were therefore analyzed under the following boundaries of musical analysis; Scale, Pitch, Rhythm, Intervallic structure, Song Texts, Tonality, Form and Structure. These boundaries were selected based on the fact that they present themselves as characteristics of melody.

- a) Scale: The predominantly used scales in the *Awoyow* church are the hemitonic heptatonic scale and the diatonic modes especially, Dorian and Phrygian modes. The hemitonic heptatonic scale actually defines the tonal centre of the Ghanaian Akan and Northern Ewe traditional folk songs. Since *Ebibindwom* melodies are derived from these indigenous musical resources, it is appropriate to use such scale. Similarly, Dor in 1992 explained the scale used in Amu's *Alegbegbe* as hemitonic heptatonic and asserted:

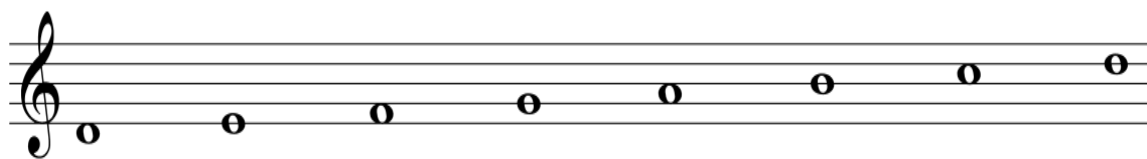
In *Alegbegbe*, Amu uses a hemitonic heptatonic scale as the source of his tonal matter. With seventh degree of the scale where the minor seventh from the tonic is interchangeably used with the major seventh, the mode and the scale can best be described as practically identical to the major. This alternative use of the major and minor seventh in the melody bears similarities to the elements of the melodic minor and the ancient Greek modes. Most importantly however, Amu's source of tonal matter hangs partially on the type of scale used in the traditional music of the Akan speaking people and the Northern Ewes both of Ghana. (p.42)

Example 5 below is an illustration of the hemitonic heptatonic scale.

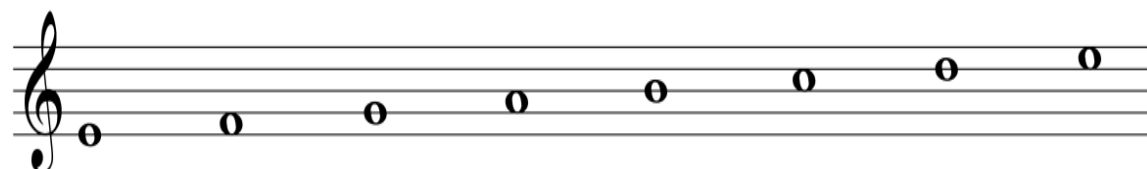


Example 6: The hemitonic heptatonic scale

The diatonic modes on the other hand are scales which have interval patterns that are rotations of one another. They are called diatonic because the rotations are derived from the interval pattern represented by the successive white keys on the piano. According to (Ramos et al., 2011, p. 166), "the main feature of the modes is that each is built from the fixed set of seven tones (C, D, E, F, G, A, B), and, consequently, on the same set of pitch intervals". See examples 7 and 8 for illustrations of the Dorian and Phrygian modes respectively. The Dorian mode starts on the reference note D whilst the Phrygian mode begins on the reference note E.



Example 7: The Dorian mode

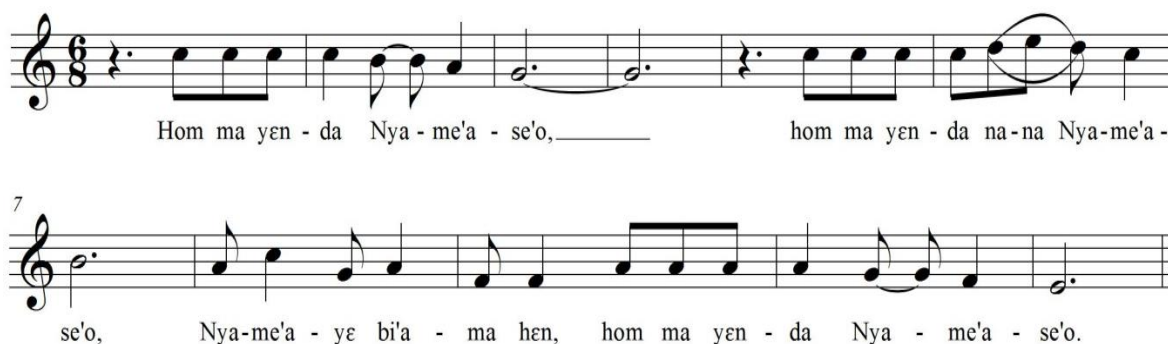


Example 8: The Phrygian mode

- b) Pitch: Oxenham (2012) defined pitch as "the perceptual correlate of the periodicity or repetition rate, of an acoustic waveform (p. 32). In other words, it is primarily the relative highness and lowness of a sound. *Ebibindwom* melodies in the *Awoyow* church are chiefly organized with pitches within an octave though few melodies exceed the octave by a tone or two. Example 8 is an illustration of *Ebibindwom* melody organized with pitches within an octave.

Example 9: *Ebibindwom* melody organized with pitches within an octave

It is important to note that the *ebibindwom* melodies that exceed the octave are mostly variations of the original melodic lines performed by the cantor as call. For instance, a variation of example 8 may have some few pitches exceeding the octave. See example 9 for illustration.



Hom ma yen - da Nya - me'a - se'o, _____ hom ma yen - da na-na Nya-me'a -

7
se'o, Nya-me'a - ye bi'a - ma hen, hom ma yen - da Nya - me'a - se'o.

Example 10: A variation of melodic line with pitches above octave

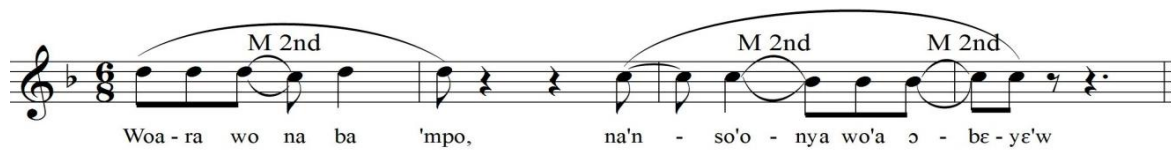
Making reference to example 9 above, the three quavers in the circle in bar 6 namely D5, E5 and D5 exceed C5, the octave of the C scale.

- c) **Rhythm:** It is basically the arrangement of long and short sounds and silences in music. One researcher emphasised that "rhythm is thus reduced to a skeletal frame, a simple pattern of attacks, something that can be represented entirely by clapping, for instance" (Kaminsky, 2014, p. 47). The *Ebibindwom* melodies in the *Awoyow* church are mostly set to duple and triple rhythms. The melody which starts with a recitative is always in free rhythm without any feeling of a regular basic pulse. The rhythm that follows the recitative is in strict duple or triple time, and is usually danceable. The durational values of the notes correspond to the rhythmic inflections of the syllables in the texts since the melodic rhythm matches speech rhythm while the melodic contours move as the speech contour. To support this assertion, Nketia in 1974 stated:

African songs embody two types of rhythms; free rhythm and rhythm in strict time. In the former there is no feeling of a regular basic pulse no hand clapping or suggestion of a metronomic background. Movements done to such music are based on the performer's subjective choice of pulse rather than on a pulse derived from the music itself. Songs in strict time, on the other hand, are designed over a regular basic pulse. (p. 168)

- d) **Intervallic Structure:** Interval is the distance in pitch between two notes. Russo and Thomson (2005, p. 1068), emphasised that, "a musical interval is created when two tones are sounded simultaneously or sequentially". Basically, the *Ebibindwom* melodies in the *Awoyow* church employ shorter intervallic structure of predominantly seconds, thirds and fourths. It is actually dependent on the speech contour of the texts. For instance, Example 11 below uses only seconds in the construction of the melody.

WOARA WO NA BA MPO



Woa - ra wo na ba 'mpo, na'n - so'o - nya wo'a 'o - be - ye'w

Example 11: Intervallic structure of seconds

Upon a critical analysis of the above melody, it is realised that the intervallic structure is made up of predominantly major seconds (M 2nd) as indicated with circles in the musical score. The continuation of the melody however, is made up of seconds, thirds and a fourth. Example 12 below is an illustration.



O-nye'w k'o'oo, na'o-nye'w ba'o, na'n - so'o - nya wo'a 'o - be-ye wo'oo!

Example 12: An intervallic structure of seconds, thirds and a fourth

- e) Song Texts: The *Ebibindwom* as a vocal type of musical genre requires texts otherwise called lyrics for a better comprehension and appreciation. Aleshinskaya (2013, p. 431) highlighted that "text is a product of social activity, a result of interaction of social practices and social agents". In the *Awoyow* church, the *Ebibindwom* music text is derived from both religious and social events. According to (Sackey, 2017, p. 69), "the original concept of *Ebibindwom* depended on the biblical texts. However, and with the event of time, the *Ebibindwom* song texts of the *Awoyow* church are also dependent on social and religious issues". The examples below are illustrations of *Ebibindwom* with both religious and social texts.



JUDAS, OWO NYI?

Ju - das, o - wo nyi? o - wo nyi? e - yi m'a - ma'o,
 5 Ju - das, o - wo nyi? o - nam si - ka 'n - sti e - yi m'a - ma'o!
 9 Ju - das, o - wo nyi? o - wo nyi? e - yi m'a - ma'o, Ju - das, o - wo nyi?

Example 13: *Ebibindwom* with religious text

WOARA WO NA BA MPO

Woa - ra wo na ba 'm - po, na 'nso o - nya wo'a o - be - ye'w,
 5 o - nye'w ko'o, na'o - nye'w ba'o na 'nso o - ye wo'o,
 9 woa - ra wo na ba 'm - po, na 'nso o - nya wo'a o - be - ye'w.

Example 14: *Ebibindwom* with social text

- f) Tonality: Gutiérrez (2006) opined that "tonality is primarily used to denote a system of relationships between a series of pitches (forming melodies and harmonies) having a tonic, or a central pitch class, as its most important (or stable) element" (p. 16). *Ebibindwom* songs normally have a single tonal or modal centre, though they sometime

alternate between other modes at various cadential points. Example 15 below, is an illustration.

BRA'OO



Example 15: *Ebibindwom* in Phrygian Mode

- g) Form: Hamilton (2006) defined form as "a way of describing the structure or shape of a piece of music - i.e. the way it has been constructed from various smaller sections" (p. 1).

Ebibindwom form is a bit intricate; though the songs that are drawn from the traditional source materials rely on the basic call-and-response form which is a characteristic feature of African indigenous music in general. The form of *Ebibindwom* in the *Awoyow* church however is mostly strophic, and sometimes, through-composed. In most cases, the same melodic theme is used as a call by the cantor, and a response by the chorus.

CONCLUSION

This paper has generally discussed the organization of *Ebibindwom* melodies in the Jehovah Nissi *Awoyow* Garden, making emphasis on the use of texts in the construction of the melody and giving an elementary analysis of the melody for proper understanding and appreciation. It is evidently clear that the *Ebibindwom* melodies are mostly organised with texts drawn from biblical and societal passages. Even though composers (prophets and prophetesses) of the *Awoyow* church spontaneously create melodies as and when they are led by the spirit, some melodies are dependent on the speech surrogate of the texts whilst some are not. *Ebibindwom* in the *Awoyow* church is basically shorter melodic lines which are organized with the intervallic structure of predominantly seconds, thirds and fourths. It is therefore recommended that children play songs and simple instructional materials for educational purposes are composed from *Ebibindwom* melodies due to the simplistic nature of its compositional elements.



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