AN APPRAISAL OF THREE SELECT COMPOSERS/ARRANGERS OF IBIBIO VOCAL MUSIC

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Abstract
Tonal languages are common in Africa; the Ibibio language is no exception. Over the years, non-native speakers of the Ibibio language have shown interest in composing vocal music (solo songs and chorales) in the Ibibio language but fail to appreciate the lingual tone used in the language partly due to non-natural vocal configuration. This study seeks to appraise the extent of faulty linguistics structure by performers and composers of Ibibio songs that are not Ibibio, proffer basic guides on how to utilized tonal inflection of Ibibio culture for musical performance by non-native speakers. To achieve this, qualitative research method through non-participant observation was used in collecting data for the study. Results shows that Ibibio vocal music performance is characterized by extremely poor and faulty linguistic pronunciation, and this is as a result of lack of commitments to learning the Ibibio language. The paper, suggests that guides that will aid effective usage of Ibibio language for songs or other vocal performances and compositions should be provided and studied before any Ibibio vocal performance is embarked on.

Keywords: Language, Choral, Linguistics, Composition, Performance.

Introduction
Choral music is music usually performed by a choir comprising of two or more voice parts, and is mostly written in tonic solfa or staff notation. It is a popular traditional form that has interested some young African students to study music formally at higher institutions (Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 2001). Choral music is one of the several musical genres subject to misunderstanding because of false historical perspectives or misinterpretation occasioned and created by unresolved semantic problems. According to Nketia (1969), the analysis of scale, modes, melodic direction,

intervals, harmony etc., provides one type of meaning to those accustomed to thinking of music in those terms. To the African performer and his collaborators and 'listeners', the music means much more than these, for it is part of a way of life. The text in choral music is language behavior rather than musical sound but they are all integral parts of music, and there is clear-cut evidence that the language used in connection with music differs from that of ordinary discourse.

Nwamara (2010) defined language as 'the system of sounds and words used by humans to express their thoughts and feelings.' Writing on Ibibio oral poetry Akpabot (1998) noted that oral poetry of Ibibio is mainly found in song text, and the language used in song texts differs many times from that of ordinary discourse (this means that it is possible to say things in a song that cannot be said in ordinary discourse).

It is observed that existing literature has concentrated attention almost exclusively on Yoruba and Igbo choral music compositions, there appeared to be quasi (partial) silence about the choral music from other ethnic groups of Nigeria, however, recent studies have shown that the state of Igbo folksongs in the twenty-first century is not encouraging. It is instructive to note that a few Igbo musicologists arranged some of the folksongs, transforming them into art music of some sort, the music has been to a great extent neglected and relegated to the background by the present generation, especially the youth, such that it may eventually become a lost heritage (Nwamara, 2017). In the same vein, many non-Ibibio composers have composed in the Ibibio language, applying wrongly Ibibio language's accent thereby creating inflection problems, the misuse and misinterpretation of song text in Ibibio choral music composition were evident at musical performances. This paper addressed shortcomings, misuse and mis-representation of Ibibio language in vocal music, it offered guiding principles on Ibibio choral music composition that will aid vocal performances.

Adopted for this work is 'SongText', as defined by Akpabot in his 'Foundation of Nigerian Traditional Music (1967). He described songtext 'as text that can act as historical commentaries or cultural indicators'. The text of a song serves a special function, and as such finds expression in Ibibio musical culture. Akpabot (1998),

further describes song text as 'Tune and Text', he explained that the text of a song is more important than the tune. Qualitative research method was employed in this work. Interviews, fieldwork, informant, non-participant observation, and discussion were employed during the field work to gather data. Three non-Ibibio composers' works were critically analyzed to highlight the lingual inflection problems. These compositional works were: 'Yak I kom Abasi' by Oyadiran K. E & M. K. Amisa; 'ISANTIM' by Okechukwu Ndubuisi, and 'Nnam Fin-So' by Albert Oikelome. Findings of the scrutinized works are discussed in the finding and discussion section.

The Ibibio People and their Music

According to history, the Ibibio and Efik tribes were found in Cross River State in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. During the first half of the 17th century, Creek Town - Duke Town and Calabar were the first established settlements that were in existence. Calabar developed into a major trading center from the 17th to the 19th century, exporting palm oil in return for European goods. The name: '*Agbisherea'* was first used by the European explorers in the nineteenth century to describe Ibibio inhabitants, but died soon after. The linguistic affiliation is *Efik-Ibibio*, a language of the *Kwa* branch of the Niger-Congo family, though the official dialect is the Ibibio language amidst other dialects. Ibibio is a tone language and each syllable is assigned a tone unit. The syllable structure in Ibibio comprises vowels and syllabic nasals. Tone contrasts meaning in the words, phrases and sentences of the language. (Mba and Rosemary 2017).

The name Ibibio was coined from the word: *'ibio-ibio',* which means - short and brief. It does not have anything to do with the height of the Ibibio as mischievously portrayed, it was given due to the Ibibio brief way of doing things. The musical arts of Ibibio people are unique. Music, dance, and symbols, plays important roles in the lifestyle of the Ibibio. Most Ibibio melodies are simple and often based on the three-note-melody-the Tritonic Scale and they are either used for ritual or non-ritual purposes. The latter is purely for entertainment while the former is used for the praise of deities and ancestral gods. Their melodies are more of improvisation and

humorous done through joint efforts of the people. Music among the Ibibio are performed or played at social gatherings such as marriage feasts, coronations, and birth among other social activities. It is also used as a means of communication, warning, abuse and treatment. The Ibibio are more conversant with the ensemble type of music, their performance are symbolic in nature to the people.

Epkpa A. E. (2012), states the: To the Ibibio music and life is inseparable. There is music for many of the activities of everyday life as well as music whose texts express his attitudes to life: his hopes and fears, his thoughts and beliefs.Given the uniqueness of Ibibio music or songs, non-natives usually fail to vocally appreciate the tonal structure and or inflection naturally inherent in the Ibibio dialect due to the fact that most of them do not understand Ibibio language, cultural norms and values. Nwarama (2019), explaining the attribute of Igbo musician in Igbo community states that: Other qualities of Igbo musician include good ear, being dramatic on stage, ability to compose or create music, ability to concentrate, ability to be sensitive or show a general awareness of current situations, clarity of mind among other qualities. In addition, he/she must be at home with the oral literature and history of his community. These important attributes are vital as lack of knowledge results in poor performances. In other to correct these anomalies, suggested salient guides capable of guiding future non-natives in composing, arranging and performing Ibibio traditional songs or music are proffered in the work.

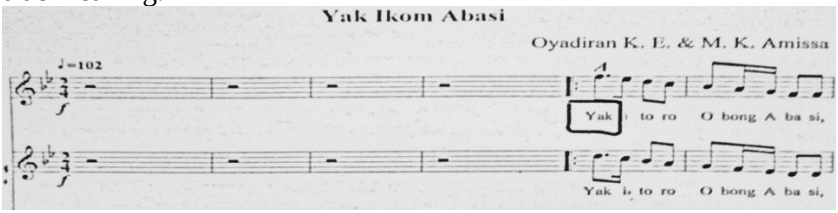
Findings

The relationship between music and language facilitates composition and performance appropriate to the community context. How a specific text is treated evolves not only from the phonemic features of the language but is inspired by the importance of the song as an avenue of verbal communication. Highlights of lingual inflection problems found in the selected works are presented and discussed below.

1. ‘Yak I komAbasi’ by Oyadiran K.E & M.K Amisa

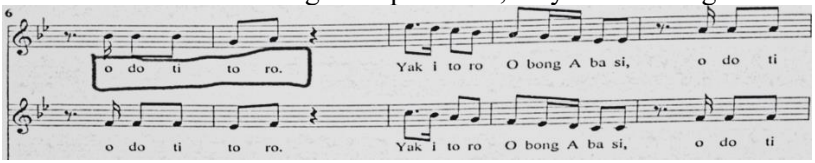
Performers were heard pronouncing ‘Yak’ as ‘Ya’ silencing the ‘k’ thereby rendering the ‘Yak’ which in Ibibio means ‘Lets’,

meaningless. Every first and last letter of Ibibio words gives it its true meaning.



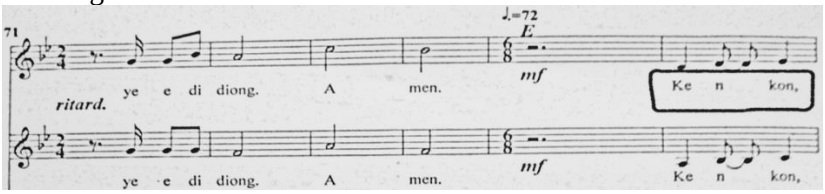
Ex.1

The downward movement of the melodic shape is sustained with a logogenic concept of speech borne which is engraved in the response as 'o dot itoro'. Only that the composer though managed to express the melo-genuity of the words, misused the linguistic inflection as 'o do titoro' against 'o dot itoro' according to the melodic shapings or contours, can be ascribed as wrong use of song text. The response 'o do' and 'titoro' are the linguistic problems, they are meaningless.



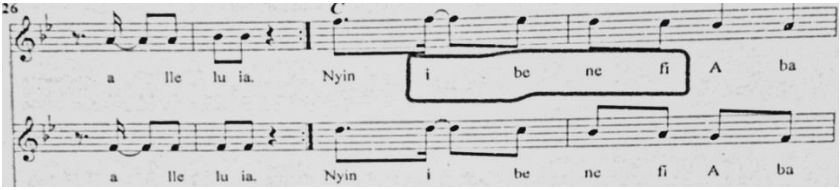
Ex. 2

The appropriate treatment of this word is 'o dot (the 't' pronounced as 'd') i-to-ro'. NB. It is spelt as 'o dot itoro' but pronounced as 'o doditoro'; which translates as 'He deserves praise'. Another linguistic inflection problem was observed at the point the music changed to 6/8 at bar 75 to 76. The response 'ke n kon' does not correlate with Ibibio song text thus, does not communicate any meaning.



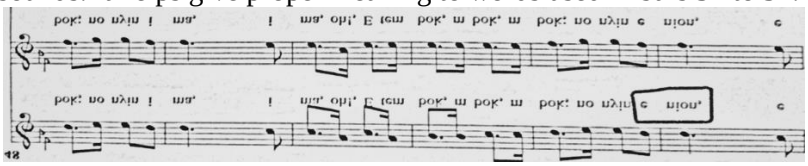
Ex.3

The appropriate phrase ought to be ‘ke n kok’, ‘ye ekomo’, ‘ye nkukuak’, ‘keunek’, ‘keikwo’ and all translate as ‘in pride’, ‘with small drum’, ‘with percussion’, ‘in dancing’, ‘in songs’. At rehearsal C, measure 28 as seen below, the appropriate text should be ‘ibeng’e fi’ and not ‘i be ne fi’. The word ‘ibe’ in Ibibio means ‘bitter’. The /ŋ/ accent sound which represents the /ng/, in ‘ibeng’ is a strong linguistic inflection in Ibibio.



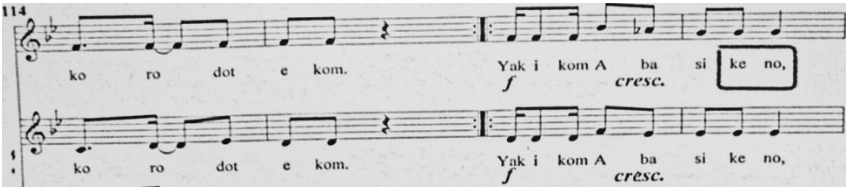
Ex.4

No word exists as ‘enion’ in the Ibibio language. The appropriate word ought to be ‘oniong’, which means ‘intellect or wisdom’. The first letter is pronounced ‘or’ that is ‘c’ turned the other way /Ɔ/. While the ‘ong’ after the ‘i’, is pronounced as ‘orng’ that is, the ‘or’ and ‘ng’ are joined together as /Ɔŋ/. Ibibio accent places a strong emphasis on every first and last word especially that of their vowel sounds. It helps give proper meaning to words used in bars 51 to 52.



Ex.5

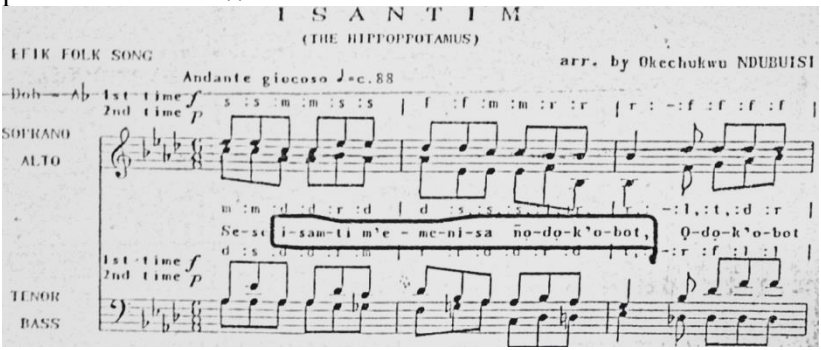
In bar 116, ‘yak ikomAbasike no’, ‘ke no’ does not depict a word in Ibibio. It is either spelt as ‘keeno’ or with an apostrophe between the ‘k’ and ‘e’ that is ‘k’e no’, which can then mean ‘for his gift’. Also, ‘kon’ is spelled as ‘kong’. It is an onomatopoeia sound in the Ibibio language used to depict the sound of a drum; the same applies to ‘tim’ and ‘kpom’ alike.



Ex.6

2. ‘ISANTIM’ BY OkechukwuNdubuisi

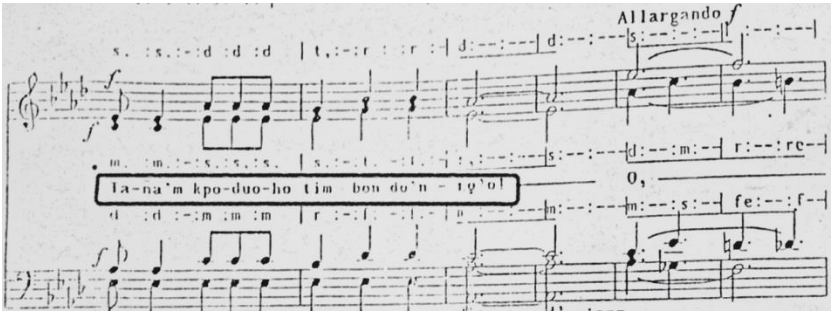
In the first line, the text ought to be ‘Se seisan..’ not ‘isamti..’, from bar 2: ‘mo - ni - sa - no - do
k’o - bot’ (with dots under the zeros) is not Ibibio. This is a wrong use of language and does not exist in Ibibio language. The appropriateness of these ought to be - ‘se seisantim amen isangodokobot’ which is made to fit the tonemic shape as used in the work as ‘se - se i- san tim a men - i sang o -dok- o - bot’ which translates as ‘see hippopotamus embarking on climbing the mountain’. NB, the ‘o’ in ‘o-bot’ remains while other ‘o’ are pronounced ’or’ /ɔ/.



Ex.7

From the 2nd system, ‘u - na - m’efe - no - siom -kpo’, ‘e - te - ke’i - dio -kunam’, ‘o - du -kikot o’ does not depict any meaning in Ibibio rather, it ought to be - ‘unamefeheesiomkpo’, ‘etekeidiokunam’, ‘aduk - ikot o’; and are shortened to fit tonemic contours as - ‘u - nam - e - feh’e - sio’m - kpo’, ‘e - te - k’i - diok - u -nam’,‘a - duk - i -kot o’; and it translates as ‘Animals ran screaming, saying that evil animal, has entered the bush’. In the Ibibio language ‘Ta - na’mkpo

du - ho' portrays no meaning, it ought to be 'anammkpooduoho', which is shortened as 'a - na'mkpo - duo - ho' which translates as 'to let some things pour. But in the context of folklore in which the work is taken, it translates as 'to scatter a gathering'. While 'tim bon do'n - no o', as used suggest no meaning in Ibibio language; it ought to be 'tim bono nno', which will fit as 'tim
bono'n no'.



Ex.8

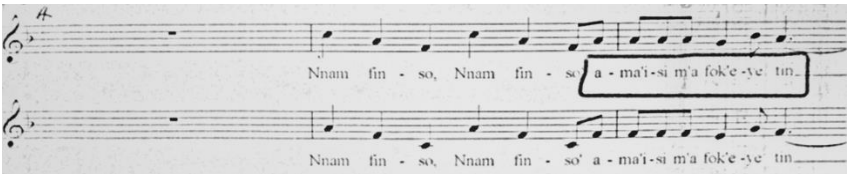
3. NNAM FIN-SO by Albert Oikelome

The title of this work wrong, its meaning is vague and confusing. The - 'FIN' is either written as 'fien' or 'fi' which means 'you'. Hence, the title could have been 'Nnamfi'n so', which translates as 'what have I done to you.'



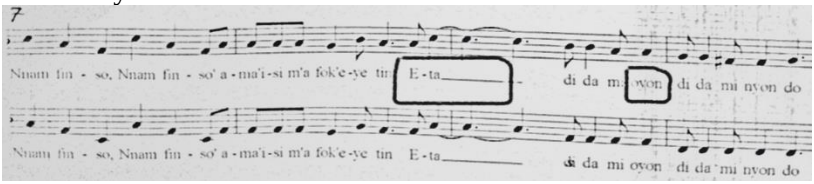
Ex.9

It is pertinent to point out that the arranger did not clearly articulate the linguistic properties in this work. The accented words, their spellings and pronunciations are used and sung to convey and communicate different meanings. In bar 5 going to bar 6:



Ex.10

'a ma'i - si m'a - fok'e ye tin' is meaningless in Ibibio. It ought to be 'ima'i sim ufok eye ting' and will fit the melodic shapings as: 'i - ma'i - sim - u - fok - e - ye -ting' or 'a - ma - sim - u - fok - e - ye - ting' not 'tin' as no word exists as 'tin' in Ibibio. Please note that the 'ng' in Ibibio is pronounced as /ŋ/. Also, in bars 8 and 9, the word 'Eta' as used means 'chew', which is out of context and creating a confused meaning in the songtext. It ought to have been 'Ete', which means 'father'. Similarly, no word exists in Ibibio as 'oyon'. This is another linguistic problem as used in the work 'di da mi oyon' does not portray any meaning in the Ibibio language. The writer meant 'di da mi yong', which translates as 'come take me away. It was observed that less attention was paid to the songtext of this work as the song completely depicts a non-appreciable sound in terms of lyrics and communication.



Ex.11

Guide(S) to Ibibio Choral Music

It is observed that less attention is paid to the songtext (words), leading to a number non-appreciable sounds in Ibibio songtexts. Suggestions or guides to help non Ibibio composers are provided below:

- Vowel sounds common with the Ibibio are - **a, e, i, o, ɔ, u, ŋ.**

  a: (short 'a' sound) as in hard. It is pronounced as /ae/; examples are - afo, abasi, akan, awo etc.

e: (short ‘e’ sound) as in hate. It is pronounced as /e/ without dot(.) underneath;
examples are - ebot, ewa, edim, edi etc.

i: (long ‘Ee’ sound) as in heel. It is pronounced as /i:/;
examples are - inua, iwo, ikwo, idem, idip, etc.

o: (short ‘o’ sound) as in go. It is pronounced as /o/;
examples are - owo, odudu, obu, obot, etc.

Ɔ: (long ‘Oo’ sound) as in born. It is pronounced as /Ɔ:/ ‘c’ turned the other way;
examples are -obong, ofong, otong, ofiong, etc.

u: (long ‘Uu’ sound) as in school. It is pronounced as /u:/;
examples are - uwem, utom, udua, ufok etc.

ŋ: (combination of ‘n’ and ‘g’ sound - ‘ng’) as in hung. It is pronounced as /ŋ/;
examples are - akang, mbang, abong, ikpang, abang etc.

NB:
The /e/ sound is with a dot(.) underneath is not part of Ibibio vowel sound; while the /Ɔ/ is a ‘c’ turned the other way; in Ibibio language, it is pronounced like the /or/ sound which is similar to that of the Yoruba ‘o’, with a dot(.) underneath, sound. Very important to also note, is the fact that the Ibibio /Ɔ/and /ŋ/ when combining sound as /Ɔŋ/ as in ‘orng’. Examples are mmong, atong, ikpong, ukpong, etc. and they coexist in the language of the Ibibio. See examples:

ƆbƆŋ	as	o – bo – ng
ƆfƆŋ	as	o – fo – ng
ntƆŋ	as	n – to – ng
afƆŋ	as	a – fo – ng
abƆŋ	as	a – bo – ng

Others are the 'a' and 'ŋ' combined as /aŋ/ as in 'ang'. See example

abaŋ	as	ab – ang
mbaŋ	as	m – bang etc.

In Ibibio language, a word can mean several things and also open to different meanings and interpretations. Inappropriate use of words in Ibibio music composition creates confused tonal inflection especially when the words are not properly accented. Some words spelt and pronounced are to be thoroughly thought of as they can mean and sound different things. For instance, there are some words in Ibibio that end with the letter 't' when spelt, but in pronouncing them the 't' is changed to 'd' thereby replacing the 't'. See example:

Ebot	is	pronounced	as	Ebod
Ikot	is	pronounced	as	Ikod
Itiat	is	pronounced	as	Itiad
Idot	is	pronounced	as	Idod
Aret	is	pronounced	as	Ared
Ufot	is	pronounced	as	Ufod
Mbot	is	pronounced	as	Mbod
Edet	is	pronounced	as	Eded

Also, see some of the tonal contrast (that is words that have more than one meaning in the Ibibio language):

Obong could mean lord, cane or mosquito.

Edet could mean name or teeth.

Edi could mean to come or pig.

Ofiong could mean moon or month.

Obu could mean dust or crayfish.

Obot could mean hill, mountain or creator, among others.

The above analysis depict the common errors as found in the works of non-Ibibio composers and arrangers of Ibibio vocal music. The outcome of this research shows that to express and communicate with Ibibio choral music, composers should devote himself/herself to the study of Ibibio idioms, phrases, and concepts of musical arts. This is in line with Omojola (1999: pp. 44-59), he views that an understanding of the conception of music among communities in Africa would have to derive from a combination of factors such as the words used by the people to describe music, the contextual music performance, the organized procedures associated with music, the nature of the musical expression itself and the meaning intended in a musical performance.

Conclusion

Composing choral music in the Ibibio language by non-Ibibios will require at least an understanding of the ethnic's language. This is because the music of the Ibibio is based majorly on songtext (which is the bedrock of this work), tonal inflection (contour), and accent among others as all of these are characterized in Ibibio musical styles and culture. In the analysis, like other African music, it can be inferred that Ibibio music is tonal (speech rhythm), it employs all theoretical constructs necessary associated with contrasting mood, rhythm, pitches, and variation, it uses its idioms, phrases, and concept to convey the message and also through the use of call and response pattern. Peculiar to the Ibibio are their vowel sound and pronunciations which differentiate Ibibio from other ethnic groups in Africa. Conclusively, application of Ibibio lingual intonation is paramount to outstanding musical performances in the Ibibio dialect.

Recommendations

The study suggests and recommends the following:

- Non-Ibibio composers should aspire to learn the culture and language of Ibibio either directly or indirectly to consult before and during composing and also performance.
- Inter-language learning should also be strongly encouraged, as this will among others, help tune the ear of non-Ibibio composers and performers alike.

- Parents should allow and encourage their wards the opportunity to learn the basic dialect and culture of Ibibio and/or other dialects at a tender age. This will stimulate keen interest should the desire to compose in Ibibio music arises.

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