

## **The Growth and Development of Musical Talents in Nigeria: The Musical Society of Nigeria (Muson) Experience**

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**Abstract:** Musical talent is a gift of nature and a matter of aptitude not instinct. Some people are born with greater aptitude and they develop skills on musical instrument much faster than do others and rise to ability to consistently and doggedly work to improve, usually in tiny increments in all areas of musical talents. In the minds of many people this skill is unnecessary because you either have it or you don't. This paper has carefully traced the trend of growth and development of musical talents in Nigeria as is anchored in the activities of the musical society of Nigeria. It x-rayed in details one of the talented products of Muson, Tunde Jegede, a composer and multi instrumentalist in contemporary classical African and pop music Earlier on an in-depth analysis of the 53 number titles of the music of George Frederick Handel, Handle's Messiah was done and later Tunde's version which he called "African Messiah" was shown. It drew in particular on the sounds of the Kora-the West African harp lute and music in the griot tradition which is emphasizing the re-birth of Africanism in music. This has marked a turning point for African identity in music through nationalistic movements.

**Keywords:** African Messiah, Musical Talent, nationalistic movement, Africanism.

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

#### **Music:**

Various definitions of music have been put forward by eminent scholars all over the world. In the concept of the west, it is strictly the result of purified, organized and systematically combined sound that emotionally appeals to or pleases the ear. In other world's view, music cannot be defined outside the cultural implications as it is in itself a culture indicator.

According to Blacking (1973);

Music is a synthesis of cognitive processes which are present in culture and in the human body: the form it takes and the social experiences of human bodies in different cultural environments. Because music is a humanly organized sound, it expresses aspects of the existence of individual's society.

Just as Blacking through the above quote convincingly helped to point out the hidden facts about music and man and his life, Omideyi (1987) referred to it as just not a combination of sounds, but a mysterious force, which throughout the ages exerted a powerful influence on man". Bergethan (1979) also admitted that "music is a force within our daily lives and is part of our heritage that provides means of aesthetic expression".

Ordinarily, music be it popular, religious, folk or art is a product of a creative process that takes place in man on daily basis and simply dictated by events measured in time, circumstance and place.

#### **Musical Creativity:**

Musical Creativity is an expression or act gravitated from the society's conflicts and reactions with a view to present situations to the appreciations of its citizenry to the non-verbal sense. Talking on this, Barret (1979) said that "the creative act establishes the standards by which its effectiveness can be measured through the nature of its link with public experience and relative reality". He further expressed the opinion that creative form and creative expressions are usually reflective in method, but at the same time they assure (through the establishment of their relationship to the audience as subject), the nature of an effective method of public liberation". Therefore, musical artistes while serving as a public mirror of the society in one hand, aims at injecting meaningful ideologies and values that can ignite, galvanize and sustain development in the society.

Therefore as an emotional art and expression, it desires order and form, the strife of men or the struggles of the state, notwithstanding. Thus, in such a situation, that synthesizes reason and feeling, the music

composer dwells and operates on a definite cause aimed at ennobling and lifting the emotions of man (Chukwuka 1998)

#### **Musical Talent:**

Musical talent like all other talents is a gift of nature-inherited not acquired. As far as a musician has the natural ability in music, he has been born with it. Perhaps natural ability of a high order is not so very rare, for modern psychology has demonstrated that a surprisingly small portion of our talents are allowed to develop and to come to fruition and thus giving greater reinforcement to the expression that many men “die with all their music in them”. From the point of view of measurement, the latent power is as tangible as the developed and is often of greater interest. The measurement of musical capacity, therefore concerns itself mainly with inborn psycho-physic and mental capacities as distinguished from skill acquired in training.

Talent, like the dream, has been thought of as peculiarly illusive and intangible to be observed. Yet the science of individual psychology to-day virtually “dissects” the genius, analyzes and measures talents, sets out limitation’s, diagnoses the possibilities, and directs the development of the individual. (Seashore, 1915)

Musical talent is not just one thing but amounts to anything in which there must be a hierarchy of talents sufficiently related to working together. Hierarchies of talents may present entirely different organizations in different individuals. Reasonably the analysis of musical talent aims first to locate the dominant traits and then to determine quantitatively and qualitatively the composition or characteristics of each group or hierarchy of traits. The term musical talent is therefore used here in a collective sense.

It is quite possible to make a fairly exhaustive classification of the essential traits of musical talent. This may be done by first considering the characteristics of sound which constitute music and secondly the mental powers which are needed for the appreciation of musical sounds.

#### **Guides to Musical Talent**

The underlisted steps had been suggested as guides to the discovery of musical talent in individuals or groups. These elements if followed tenaciously could yield great dividend in this discovery.

1. **Absolute pitch:** It is often referred to as perfect pitch. It is the holy grail of musical talents
2. **Discipline:** This is the most important gift from which others may grow. It is the ability to consistently and doggedly work in order to improve gradually in all the areas of musical talent.
3. **Endless bragging about musical talent:** This is not really much of a skill but is sometimes considered as an ample substitute to everything else.
4. **Plying by the seat of your pants:** This is a sort of catch musically for all.
5. **Hearing music in the head:** It consists of two musical gifts. One is the ability to hear the music of other composers, hear the original compositions many times and being able to memorize and write it down to make it handy. The other is to hear by looking at the notes.
6. **Improvisation:** Here we deal with the language in three ways namely by reading it, writing it and speaking about it
7. **Memorization:** Trying to reproduce the music off-hand.
8. **Playing by the ear:** That is listening to a piece of music and then being able to play it without writing it down.
9. **Sight Reading:** This is the ability to sit down with a piece of music, one had never seen nor practiced and been able to perform it adequately.
10. **Transposition:** The act of moving a piece entirely up or down into another key in order to suit a particular voice or instrument. (Seashore, 1915)

#### **Music and Society a National Viewed**

Music closely viewed has been found to be a utilitarian art in the life of man. There is no single event worth mentioning such that draws people together without a musical involvement, to help create an atmosphere of belonging, brotherhood and love. It is that multi-dimensional art which is not only encouraged as a companion of the society at any spot but also valued as an essential ingredient or tonic to the life of every living soul and as a mouth piece for the masses. According to Komar (1980) “music is a social lubricant, hardly any type of group interaction exists without it”.

When we recall the activities of the early nationalists, we will remember a great nationalist like Herbert Macaulay who is credited as the father of Nigerian nationalism and the founder of the first political party in Nigeria. He, it was, who encouraged and sponsored a lot of musical jingles and slogans for parties as he was known to be one of the earliest music practitioners of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Other parties followed his footsteps and in no distant time almost all the parties had their musical slogans valued preciously as a veritable tool for reaching out to the grassroots and as a means of spreading their manifestos.

Thus, music had played an important role at the dawn of Nigerian independence. Supporting this, Turino (1999) said;

People in many societies intuitively recognized the emotional power of music in their personal family and community life. If ethnomusicologists have come to agree on anything over the last decade, it is that music is a key resource for realizing personal and collective identities which in turn, are crucial for social, political and economic participation.

In performing these roles, the composer may be inspired by concepts and idioms of those societies and will be incorporated in his compositions especially in the treatment of texture and sound. In consonance with the above, Nettle (1999) said;

A composer might be characterized as one who defines a recognizable body of music that attempts to be both original and unique. However, specific characteristics attributed to a composer also are culturally defined by the community, context and people's expectations of what a composer ought to be.

He then went further to say that factors external to music which is brought about by war and revolutions can influence a composer's method of work. Some deal with the politics of governments and individual communities while others deal directly with music, music performance and the ramifications of technology.

### **The Development of Musical Talents-Worldwide**

Music, according to Chukwuka (1997) is seen "as the voice of the voiceless at crucial moments especially in nationalistic events". Manley (1974) defined music as "an art that was rooted in a commitment to justice as it bespoke an idealistic vision of what we might accomplish". This was in recognition of the role played by music in the transformation of Jamaica. Manley saw music as an organ that directly or indirectly communicates, educates, inspires and corrects anomalies to bring about an egalitarian society. The singers of their folk, art, reggae, bespoke the tragedy and pains, the hopes and the aspirations of the ghetto. Jamaicans through this, advocate the training of the reggae artists and their young musicians in the discipline of Western classical music to be communicated together with the folk art in the interest of transformation and development. In a society, music traces and records historical events for future reference. As a culture indicator, music helps the society in political lives as a vehicle to interpret the ideals of a party to the grassroots in their native language. Portnoy (1973) then supported this when he said;

Nationalistic symbols in music are to a nation what hymns and chants are to a religion. Music of this kind is educational as well as entertaining. During the classical and Romantic eras in music, composers used their scores to further nationalistic causes.

The musical significance of this is undoubtedly great and marvelous and is still in practice presently. This reminds us of the many operas of Mozart that reflected on a lot of social and political issues of the classical period. Franz Liszt also acted as the champion of the working class while Richard Wagner enlivened the German state through his Operas. Glinka played an active role with his works in the Russian political upheaval of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and recorded in his works like "A life for the Szar" and "Russian and Ludmilla", elements that triggered nationalistic movements.

Some overtones of the communist revolution were also found in Prokofiev's "Cantata Alexander Newsky" and in his opera "War and Peace". We also learnt that the same kind of patriotic pride inspired Glinka and Prokofiev to write for their country as was contained in "Finlandia" for the oppressed nation which was later banned due to its incendiary political character by the Russian government in Finland. The communist countries, thus firmly hold the view that the value of music is not only "to amuse and titillate the senses" but to serve the state-to educate and enlighten the masses.

On the African Scene, we readily recall the emergence of a new South Africa after a protracted racist regime. From all fronts, music acted, unarguably as the nonverbal communicational tool with which the downtrodden could air their views and be represented in the scheme of things. Musicians from all walks of life continued composing and bemoaning the tragedy of the apartheid regime until the "wall cracked and justice prevailed". Examples of such music is "Fire in Soweto" and a lot more from Miriam Makeba.

### **The Nigerian scene**

Back home in Nigeria, there are a lot of popular and traditional musicians who had developed their skills of composing and performing in a way that they had changed the cause of injustice in the society. Their messages had changed the trend of events in the political area and for those in the corridors of power. These changes are usually on the positive side, heightening emotions at rallies and public gatherings. Merriam (1973) makes one to believe that "an important function of gathering for community singing was to emphasize values stressed by the culture. Songs in praise of chiefs fastened political solidarity and songs in praise of place expressed for the land".

Examples of such are outlined below;

- i. Fela Anikulapo Kuti in his **Zombie (1976), Fear for man (1977), Sorrow, Tears and Blood, Unknown Soldier (1979), Vagabonds in Power (1979), International Thief, Thief (I.T.T) Expensive Shit etc.**

- ii. Sonny Okoson in his “Freedom, The Hidden Agenda (Babangida’s Political Game) and “Nigerians Unite” “Which way Nigeria”
- iii. Nelly Uchendu in her “Nigeria Amaka” (Nigeria is Good)
- iv. Sonny Oti in his “Nigeria must Survive”

There are also other art musicians who had written such nationalistic music. These include **Sam Ojukwu and Chukwuka** in their “Eze Gbapere agbape” (the broken teeth) and “Leenu” *Nigeria ka on a anwu*” (behold Nigeria dying). We also have Ozoemena Nsugbe, Morroco Nwa Maduka and Obiligbo whose ministerial melodies are at home with the grassroots in the sub-urban areas. Music according to one school of thought is said to be “the weapon of the future”.

### **Budding Talents in Nigerian Music Scene**

The Musical Society of Nigeria (Muson) has been on the vanguard for the promotion of young talented musicians in Nigeria. This is done through the organization of concerts, music festivals and competitions. During one of the concerts organized and performed at the Agip Recital Hall in April 1999, Adeniji (1999) said “the interesting thing about tonight’s show is that most of the artistes though already known faces, are young talents who will bring to bear the energy, creativity and zest of the youth”. He went further to comment that it was a practical demonstration of MUSON’S commitment towards encouraging talents and also expanding the scope of classical music enthusiasts.

On another occasion was the parade of Muson Choristers directed by Emeka Nwokedi and Uche Nwamara, with a host of pianists and other accompanists. Here it was noted that the bond between Femi Akinugbe and Opinmiri Akinkugbe had gone beyond family ties. Adeniji (1999) then explained thus; ..both have exploited to a great extent the strong musical tradition of their family while the older Akinkugbe is renowned for her sonorous soprano/alto voice, the younger is gradually emerging as an unignorable pianist who started playing piano at the age of 4 and at 8 is already playing duets and performing regularly at the music conservatoire in Dares-slam.

Other regulars at Muson Concert include Ayo Bankole (Jnr), Dupe Akinola, and Tunde Sosan. It was reported that Sosan in 2004 temporarily suspended his physiotherapy classes at the University of Lagos School of Medicine to learn the art of playing piano. Then later he graduated from the Muson School of music where he passed both grade 4 theory and grade 7 piano examinations.

The Muson in 2000, successfully hosted the arts and music festival for two weeks from May 12- 27. The festival made adequate provision for the development of the youth both in the area of art and music in terms of discovering new talents. Consequently, youth competitions and performances formed part of the programme of the activities tagged “New Nigeria”. In the music area, preliminary talent competitions were organized for two days for twenty (20) young musicians. There was also a developmental programme for the youth featuring special concert and a music concert by the Muson orchestra which featured violin, viola, flute, clarinet, corno ensembles. The importance of these expositions was expressed by Idonije (2000) when he said; By this way the crop of musicians that now abound on the scene would become relevant in that they would sound more musical in their performance of indigenous music idioms than the army of talented musicians who are presently musically static and unable to make any noticeable progress in the industry because they do not possess the musical knowledge to enhance their talent.

In addition to his, some pentecostal churches across the country had also been contributing to the growth and development of musical talents in the area of choral and classical music.

### **Background to the Work**

The musical society of Nigeria (MUSON) was founded as a result of the interaction and commitment of some friends who love and appreciate classical music. These included Misters Akintola Williams, Louis Mbanefo, Chief Ayo Rosiji, Chief Rasheed Gbadamosi and Mrs. Francesca Emmanuel along with Sir Mervyn Brown, the then British High Commission officer in Nigeria and Lady Brown. These distinguished Nigerians stimulated the interest and awareness of other Nigerians especially in Lagos, of the richness and elegance of classical music.

### **The objectives of the musical society of Nigeria are:**

1. To promote the understanding and enjoyment of classical music.
2. To promote the education of children in the performance and theory of music.
3. To promote interaction between Nigerian and Non-Nigerian musicians.
4. To promote the performance of serious music with emphasis on classical music.
5. To provide facilities for the realization of the above mentioned objectives
6. To raise funds from persons and organization for the realization of these objectives.

7. To raise by way of gifts, loans, debentures or overdrafts from any bank, financial institutions or persons such amounts as the society may require from time to time for the purpose of carrying out its above-mentioned objectives.

The mandate of Muson with regards to its core activities are as listed hereunder.

- ❖ Training and inspiring of professional musicians and anyone interested in learning how to play a musical instrument.
- ❖ Organizing classical music concerts and staging of the annual Muson festival (which has featured performance for Grammy Award winning jazz exponents like Earl Klugh, Jimmy Dluclu and Nigeria's own Lagbaja to mention but a few).
- ❖ Establishment and running of the Muson choir since 1995. The choir performs regularly during the Muson festival and during the society's concert season.
- ❖ Establishment and running of the Muson symphony orchestra since 2005. The orchestra performs regularly at the Muson festival and during the society's concert season. Both the Muson symphony orchestra and the Muson choir perform outside Muson on invitation.

### **Performances**

The choir under the direction of Emeka Nwokedi, a renowned music arranger and conductor organizes the annual Passiontide and Christmas concerts. In 2012 the choir hosted the Muson choir Extravaganza-a remarkable event that featured several performances by other choirs around the country. They also performed at the annual Muson festival. Its repertoire ranges from African contemporary works of the great music composers to folk songs of various World Cultures, cantatas, oratorios, and choruses. They played a major role in the three-time production of the Magic Flute, an opera by Mozart which was performed alongside with the Muson symphony orchestra. With several notable performances at concerts carols, weddings, funerals and more, the choir has carved a niche for itself.

### **The Muson Symphony Orchestra**

The Muson symphony orchestra (MSO) was founded in July, 2005 with 40 members who gave its debut concert later in the same year under the direction of Paul Konye – the pioneer conductor. The founding of the orchestra was one major achievement on the list of MUSON'S planned artistic development.

The orchestra is Nigeria's only professional symphony orchestra and it is carving a niche for itself because of its high performance standard and its varied repertoire of works from Europe, through America to the music of African origin. It has recorded more successes under the direction of the artistic director and orchestral conductor, Thomas Kanitz. It also played a very prominent role in the recent staging of Mozart's Magic Flute, which was performed in German. The performance was so well received that it was staged three times within a period of six months due to popular demand.

The MSO in collaboration with Christ Church Cathedral, Lagos performed two memorable Christmas concerts in 2012 and 2013. The orchestra also performed at the 2013 Oil Industries Award Ceremony of the Petroleum Technology Association of Nigeria (PETAN).

### **Muson Choir**

The Muson choir was established in 1995 when Francisca Emmanuel and Emeka Nwokedi, two members of Muson Artistes committee were charged with the responsibility of grooming a choir for the society. They perform at the Muson annual festival with its repertoire ranging from African contemporary works of the great masters to folk songs of various world cultures.

### **The School of Music**

The Muson school of music started in 1989 as an institution to train school aged children and members of the general public in various instruments and voice. The school runs on part-time basis with a cream of renowned part-time staff drawn from local Universities and schools. The school was granted permission from the Ministry of Education in 2002 to Award Diplomas in music. The diploma department is a full time post – secondary institution which started in 2006 with 21 students at inception. The requirements for entry into this course is similar to those for the University entrance with the addition of music theory and performance which is assessed through a rigorous interview and auditioning. The course is performance based so that each student is required to perform in the chamber music ensembles and solo recitals. In recognition of the high standard of the students, the MTN foundation granted each of the students on their roll full tuition free, books and scholarships. In 2008 the MTN expanded the scholarship benefits by offering an increased amount of money to 30 students and also added a 6-day travelling allowance for each of the students. Presently, the Muson School of music is in two sections namely the Basic section and the Diploma section.

### **The Basic Section.**

This section offers part-time music training to children and members of the general public on musical instruments which include piano, violin, cello, trumpet, trombone, saxophone, clarinet, flute, guitar, voice and music theory. Other basic school activities are Muson graded theory and practical examinations offered two times a year; teacher training workshops, annual school's competition and winners concert for children in choirs. Included also are solo voices, solos and duets for piano and recorder basic students concerts and Suzuki violin classes for young children of ages three- six years. The basic school has supplied the Diploma section with students seeking for advanced music training leading to a career in music. Three of their students recently embarked upon an international performance career overseas. Muson represents the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) in Nigeria and has been offering ABRSM theory examination twice a year since 2007. Also the practical examination resumed in Nigeria in 2011.

### **The Diploma Section.**

The Diploma course is a full time two-year course offer in advanced training in music with the following majors; piano, organ, violin, viola, cello, double bass, flute, clarinet, saxophone, trumpet, trombone, percussion, classical guitar and voice. Students are also required to take two terms of an instrument in the minor other than their major instrument family. All the voice students must pass the vocal techniques examination and all must belong to the Muson choir.

To perform in the orchestra is a requirement for all the string majors while all the wind and percussion majors must belong to the band. Others who may not be majors are also welcomed for auditioning for the orchestra and the band.

The goal of Muson is to produce well rounded thoroughly educated musicians who would qualify for direct entry as transfer students into the Universities to fulfill the remaining requirements for an undergraduate programme comparable to those found in conservatoires in Italy, Britain and America. (Muson Festival Booklet, 2005)

### **Muson's Efforts at the Development of Music in Nigeria.**

According to the chairman of the planning committee of the 2005 edition of the Muson annual festival of the arts, and music, the 9<sup>th</sup> edition, they introduced a "brand new Muson Symphony Orchestra which was found in 2005". In addition they presented a number of youth music programmes meant to inspire the youth to develop their musical talents. In line with this, Akinsanya (2005) said;

We have a new director, director of the Muson School of music... who has spearheaded the repackaging of our youth musical offering, NEW FACES now comprising a celebration concert which will, going forward be highlighting promising new faces discovered from a bespoke pre-festival talent hunt organized by the sub-committee on youths.

He went further to say,

As we approach the festival's 10<sup>th</sup> year next year thoughts of how to ensure the long term survival, constant renewal and continuing improvement of this important annual musical and cultural event have been dominant in our minds...one year it will be orchestra music, another, choral music, another drama, another the visual arts; and so on.

Later on Muson celebrated the "New Faces: Young Talent concert and Awards" on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 2005. The new faces youth came from primary and secondary schools who are instrumentalists and vocalists. It also showed the achievements of Muson's first Diploma scholarship winner, CHIKA NWANKWO (Soprano) of Queens College Lagos. Contained hereunder are the music concert calendar of Muson school of Music from June – December, 2015.

- ❖ New horizon concert series 4: Testimony, A music of two worlds. Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2015 6pm featuring Tunde Jegede and Samadhi Ensemble.
- ❖ Musical moments Tunde Sosan in concert performance works by Bach, Ravel Rachmanioff, Mendelssohn, Benjamin Britten, Uche Nwamara violin, Tunde Jegede cello, Ranti Illimoyan Trumpet
- ❖ Musiquest Talent Hunt – youth concert/competition Muson festival June 2015
- ❖ Muson/Christ Church Catholic organizes concert Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2015. Samadhi Ensemble Tunde Jegede, Emeka Nwokedi and Muson choir will bring on stage African Messiah by George Frederick Handel and other various Easter songs.
- ❖ Summer Workshop and seminar, Muson in Collaboration with Muson School organizes summer workshop and seminar.

Target: Musicians, Composers, Singers, Teachers, Scholars, Choirmasters.

Date: Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> August 2015 the Alumni Association of Muson school of music invites musicians entrepreneurs, directors, teachers, music scholars and lovers of music to a one – day workshop/seminar on Saturday August 29<sup>th</sup> 2015.

Subsequently in the Daily Nigerian News headline of 11<sup>th</sup> January, 2017, Oluwajumi, B.P et al in a news article titled “Muson gears up for classical Music Festival” said “Muson is known for playing classical music and it is not elitist nor is it for Europeans, rather it is for lovers of classical music including Nigerians”. Quoting the Muson chairman is said;

I believe that the pursuit of classical music is an important discipline for our youth and a source of spiritual fulfillment, not to mention employment, throughout their lives. We have held concerts with regularity over the past 32 years with Nigerians and foreigners attending. Secondly we have developed a school of music to provide music education in the theory and performance of musical instruments for Nigerians of all ages especially the youths.

According to him the youth concert was the grand finale of a Talent Hunt by the school’s faculty of music. Confidently one can say that **“if one looks at the Nigerian music scene, it is without doubt that the Muson school of music is the music success story of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century”** (sunnew online, 2017)

### **The Glorious History of Handel’s Messiah**

The Messiah, an oratorio by Handel was a musical rite of the holiday season, typical of the Baroque era but still sends waves through the spines of listeners 250 years after the death of the composer. G. F. Handel’s Messiah was originally an Easter piece for offering which later burst onto the stage in 1742.

Initially the audience were small but later they swelled to a record of 700 as ladies heeded to the pleas by the management to wear dresses “without Hoop” in order to make room for more spectators in the Musick, Hall. During the performances Handel’s super star status was not the only draws of attraction, but many also came to cast a glimpse on the contralto solo, Susannah Cibber and her “embroiled voice” in a scandalous divorce. The men and women in attendance sat mesmerized from the moment the tenor followed the mournful string overture with his piercing opening line” Comfort ye, Comfort ye my people, saith your God”. The soloists alternated with waves of the chorus until near the midway point when Cibber intervened with “He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquired with grief”. It was reported that Rev. Patrick Delany leapt his feet and cried out! “Women for this, be all thy sins forgiven thee”. “But Handel didn’t hang around palace antechambers waiting for his lordship or royal” according to Jonathan Keates (2002) in (the man and his music)

Now of course, Messiah is a regular fixture of the Christmas season. Woe to that concert hall in the United States or Britain that fails to schedule the piece for performance during that holiday period. For many amateur choirs, the work is the heart of their repertoire and the high point of the year’s rendition.

Enthusiasts of Handel’s (New) Italian operas cast their lot with the German-born composer and the partnership that was captured in 1725 verse by poet John Byrom; when he said; “Some say compared to Bononcini. That Mynheer Handel’s but a Ninny; others aver, that he to Handel, Is scarcely fit to hold a candel” ([www.smithsonianmagazine](http://www.smithsonianmagazine), December 2009).

This is in consonance with the Roman Catholic tradition of holding candles during the celebrations.

### **Theoretical Framework:**

The theoretical framework for this article is the “Messiah” which is an English Language oratorio composed by George Frederick Handel in 1741 with 53 movements in three parts. The Messiah was first performed in Dublin in 13<sup>th</sup> April 1742 and later received its London premiere after one year. After an initially modest public reception, the oratorio gained popularity eventually becoming one of the best known and most frequently performed choral works in Western music.

Nevertheless, in an effort to update the orchestral accompaniment of the Messiah, the orchestration was revised and amplified by W.A Mozart among other composers. The most recent is the revised edition of 1942 by Ebenezer Prout and published by Novello and Company Limited. In the late 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries the trend has been towards reproducing greater fidelity to Handel’s original intentions in his original scores. Although “Big Messiah” productions still continue to be mounted, a near-complete version was issued on 78rpm discs in 1928 and since then the work has been recorded many times. George Frederick Handel completed the Messiah in 24 days.

### **Analysis**

The “Messiah” the most popular oratorio composed by G.F. Handel has 53 movements arranged in three parts. It is usually performed using the following instrumental accompaniments;

2 Trumpets, 2 oboes, 2 violins

1 viola, 1 Basso continuo

1 Timpani, with an SATB choir, Duet and a solo.

Part 1 has five scenes with titles of the pieces which ranges from numbers 1 – 21 as shown below.

Part I Scene 1- Isaiah’s Prophecy of Salvation 1 -4

Scene 2 – The Coming Judgment 5- 7

Scene 3 – The Prophecy of Christ birth 8 – 12

Scene 4 – The annunciation to the shepherds 13 – 17

Scene 5 – Christ’s healing and redemption 18 – 21

Part II has seven scenes with titles ranging from numbers 22 – 44 as stated below

Part II- Scene 1 – Christ’s Passion 22 – 30

Scene 2 – Christ’s Death and Resurrection 31 – 32

Scene 3- Christ’s Ascension 33

Scene 4- Christ’s Reception in Heaven 34 – 35

Scene 5 – The beginning of Gospel preaching 36 – 39

Scene 6 – The worlds rejection of the Gospel 40 – 42

Scene 7 – God’s ultimate victory 43 – 44

Part III has four scenes with the titles ranging from numbers 45 – 53 as stated below.

Part III Scene 1 – The promise of Eternal life 45 – 46

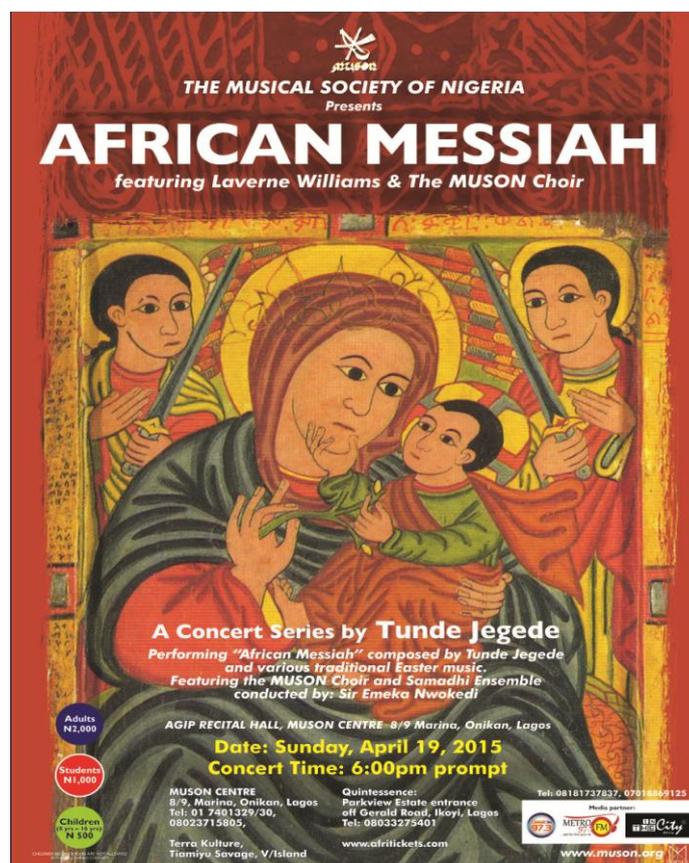
Scene 2 – The Day of Judgment 47 – 48

Scene 3 – The final conquest of sin 49 – 52

Scene 4 – The acclamation of the Messiah 53

Handel’s music for the Messiah is distinguished from most of his other oratorio by an orchestral restraint, a quality which the musicologist Percy M. Young observed was not adopted by Mozart and other later arrangers of the works of this great master. The work begins quietly with an instrumental overture and solo movements preceding the first appearance of the chorus, whose entry in the low alto register is muted. It is then followed by a recitative “Thus saith the Lord” The characteristic genre of Messiah from part I – III is recitative, air, and chorus. There are only (two places numbers 1 and 13 where the composer employed instruments termed overture and the pastoral symphony respectively. Also part III number 50 tagged “O death, where is thy sting is the only duet in the whole of the Messiah oratorio.

The Muson choir has been in the forefront of performing various works from the Messiah oratorio as shown above and this had led to the adoption of a version of the Messiah termed “AFRICAN MESSIAH” composer by Tunde Jegede, a composer and multi instrumentalist in contemporary classical and African pop music.



African Messiah by Tunde Jegede is an African experience of Handel’s Messiah, a classic opera. It is a new work by the composer and multi instrumentalist Tunde Jegede combining themes and melodies from

Handel's oratorio with African musical traditions. The work draws in particular on the sounds of the kora (west African harp lute) and music in the griot tradition and brings together international singers including Josephine Amankwah, musicians and ensembles in a unique performance. In his performance of 2012, Deloitte Ignite was curated by artist Yinka Shonibare. His African weekend is a celebration of traditional African music and avant-garde arts and culture. The events included cinema, visual arts, dance, music, food and a club night.

#### **Analysis:**

The artistic expression in the African Messiah portrays the joy of motherhood, her meekness, humility and the love of a mother as can be vividly seen in the gift of the olive branch which she is giving to the child. About the two maidens by her sides, they are also humbled by the love of motherhood. On their faces are the expression of awe. At the background one will notice the hallow round her head which shows heavenly perfection, reverence and honour. The hallow is also on the new born showing his extraordinary nature.

At the background is the background motif, masks and bull heads. These are typical of African Community Symbols, Nigeria to be specific. We have the Nigerian "Uli", "nsibidi" and "ono". These are indigenous signs that depicts its African nature. The "Uli" sign is of Igbo community "nsibidi" Akwa Ibom and Ono of the Yoruba. These artistic expressions show that the art is truly Nigeria (and Africa) as the name African Messiah depicts.

Also at the background one will notice the rays of light that is covering the mother and child. The busy background portrays the many challenges in the world while the strokes in the different directions means that the changes can come from different angles. The maidens are also hallowed which means that they are guardian angles who guard the Messiah and the mother. The interwoven nature of the fronts typify shield and the strength of unity.

In summary, in everything in the work love and humility reign supreme.

#### **Music of Africa**

The music of Africa is as vast and varied as the continent's many regions, nations and ethnic groups. The African continent comprises approximately twenty percent of the world's land mass and has a population of roughly 934 million. African music as diverse as its cultures and peoples and has flowered in many indigenous forms as well as been shaped by foreign influences. Although there are many different varieties of music in Africa, there are a number of common elements to their music especially within the regions.

The concept of music in Africa especially in the sub-saharan Africa bears a difference from other regions and cultures. The roles of music and dance are tightly woven together in sub-saharan Africa and music intersects with every aspect of life and expresses life through the medium of sound. By helping to mark the important movements of life, music helps to underscore the divine and eternal value of human life. Africa music helps to reinforce peoples' commitment to support each other and the community towards mutual health and prosperity. Another crucial role of music of Africa is as a mode of communication. Talking drums, signal drums, songs, and the sagas of the historian griots, each communicates various types of information.

#### **Yoruba Music**

The music of the Yoruba people of Nigeria, Togo, and Benin Republic are perhaps the best known for an extremely advanced drumming tradition. This is especially with respect to the use of dundun, hourglass and tension drums. Yoruba folk music became perhaps the most prominent kind in the West African region. This type had adopted the Afro Latin and Caribbean type of style. Yoruba music had left an especially important influence on music in "Lukum" practice and the music of Cuba. This is the type that Tunde Jegede had adopted in his African classical music Ensemble.

#### **African Classical Music Ensemble.**

African Messiah is a new opera composed by Tunde Jegede based on the themes and melodies published in June 28<sup>th</sup> 2013. The profile of the composer is outlayed hereunder.

**Name:** Tunde Jegede  
**Birth:** 28<sup>th</sup> January, 1972, in London  
**Residence:** London, England, Abuja Nigeria  
**Nationality:** British Education, Cello (music)  
**Almamater:** Purcell School of Music, Guildhall School of Music  
**Occupation:** Composer, Producer, Cellist, Kora player  
**Active years:** 1976 – present  
**Organization:** Xiom Music  
**Style:** African classical music

Tunde Jegede, born in 1972 is a composer and multi instrumentalist in contemporary classical African and pop music who was born in England and as a child travelled to Africa to learn the art of the KORA. He is a producer, songwriter and has worked across several genres both as a performer of (cello, kora, piano and percussion) and producer. He is a master kora player who specialized in the west African classical music tradition that dates from the period of Sundiata.

His sister Sona Jobarten is the first female kora virtuoso to come from a griot family and his father Emma Taiwo Jegede is a Nigerian artist.

### **Apprenticeship:**

Tunde's apprenticeship in African music began in 1978 and he had further development in 1982 when he went to the Gambia to study the ancient griot tradition of West Africa with Amadu Bansang Jobarteh master of the kora (west African harp-lute). His appreciation of western classical music began with his grandfather's love of Bach's music and by observing his works as a church organist. He also studied cello at the age of eight and was taught by people from the classical world such as Alfia Bekova, Elma de Bruyne, Joan Dickson and Raphael Wallfisch at the Purcell school of Music.

In 1988 he became fascinated with jazz and worked and toured with the ex-members of the jazz warriors founded by Courtney Pine and Cleveland Watkiss. He formed his own jazz Griots with the purpose of exploring the connections between African and African diasporic forms of music. In 1991 he pioneered African classical music in the United Kingdom with the first ever national tour of the African classical music ensemble. This actually nurtured his credentials as a burgeoning composer. In 1995 a British Broadcasting corporation Television documentary named "Africa, I Remember" was produced on Tunde's music which focused on his orchestral work. In this programme he performed a new composition alongside the London Sinfonietta conducted by Markus Stenz.

Over the years he has kept his creative diversity intact by working closely with singers, vocalists and spoken words artist. These are from a wide range of traditions including opera, pop, ragga, hip hop and jazz. In 2002 he started Africa classical music production with the primary goal of creating accessible quality products across a small spectrum of music genres namely urban, pop, classical and jazz

### **Cultural Influences**

Since Tunde was born to a Nigerian father and an Irish mother, he had to learn how to balance different cultures and carve out an identity from an early age. Music therefore became his refuge.

In Gambia he found a sense of home and belonging in a place according to him, "where my inner and outer voice began to merge". He was shown that music is a way of life, and an integral part of the society.

In parallel to studying Kora, he also studied cello in the western classical tradition but played these instruments in isolation from each other. Only later, after a quest for a universal truth in music that took him through improvisational jazz and musical collaboration, did he finally find the space that allowed him to weave together all his musical threads. He usually said, "Living between worlds allowed me to form my identity, embrace my path of a normad".

His albums and sound tracks are as follows:

**Albums:** 1995 Lamentation;  
1996 Malian Royal Court Music  
2007 Still Moment  
2009 There was a time,  
2009 How many Prophets  
2014 Heritage;  
2014 Testimony

**Soundtracks:** 2001, Hopes on the Horizon  
2005, 500 years later;  
2006, Tunde  
2013, Truth and Art

**Source:** (The Griot tradition Diabate Arts 1994)

### **Titles of African Messiah.**

In an effort to bring to bear his African experience in the African way, Tunde named his own version of Handel's Messiah – African Messiah.

There are series of works in which he combined the themes and melodies from Handel's oratorio x-rayed in the African way using the kora tradition and instruments. He composed and performed Handel's Messiah using the underlaid titles including the ones in the French language.

1. Handel Messiah Halleluja AFRICA Mauricio romero – March 29<sup>th</sup> 2010, 3.40mins
2. Orchestre Prelude de paris – world’s largest virtual Halleluja chorus 4.24mins
3. Hande – Messiah, For Unto us a Child is Born (Version en francais) 3.38mins
4. Halleluja – Messiah – Handel 4.16
5. Silent Monks Singing Halleluja 2.58
6. Royal choral Society: Halleuja chorus from Handel’s Messiah 4.23mins
7. Celine Dion and the Canadian Tenors Halleluja 5.15
8. Handel Messiah/king’s College Cambridge choir 2.16
9. Haendel le Messie Hallulujah 4.3
10. Le Messie de Haendel ä St Antonie I Abbaye 4.35
11. G. F. Handel: Messiah HWV 2.17:17
12. Haendel Alleuia – Patrick Wilwerth 3.38
13. Alleluia Haendel in HD

### **Theoretical and Analytical Framework**

The use of features derived from indigenous traditional genres in art music can involve a conscious attempt to revitalize the past. This actually implies the revitalization of local cultural practices that were heretheto suppressed during the colonial times’ Tunde Jegede has adopted this by his use of the “kora” which is a 21-string lute – bridge harp instrument used extensively in West African region.

It is very important to point out that people revitalize their past primarily because they realize that these old practices still have relevance or meaning in their present day lives. Tunde Jegede formed his own jazz Griots with the purpose of exploring the connections between African techniques and the conventional techniques of the western classical music. He has done a lot of pioneering work in this respect as could be seen in this extensive work on African Messiah which has thirteen different titles.

Since the early twentieth century, composers in many parts of Africa have cultivated art choral music both secular and Christian devotional, in which they combine local and western features. These distinctive national art styles have emerged in diverse African languages drawing on musical forms, poetic models and performance practices situated in specific ethnic or regional cultures. These pieces range from simple, catchy, short, danceable or bodily movement –oriented works as is found Nigeria, Ghana, Mali etc and other African countries (Dor, 2005: 441)

## **II. CONCLUSION**

I conclusion , the first half of the twentieth century – the pre-independence era of African countries saw the rebirth of Africanism that marked a turning point as the quest for African identity and self-redefinition were intensified through nationalistic movements. Therefore to reclaim this identity, composers of art music then resorted to indigenization of their approach by turning to the folk tradition as the source from which they drew materials for the creation of their new works. (Dor, 2003:50). This was what Tunde did in his works quoted above and even in his other works captured in his present works titled “Opera Music Theatre” containing eight works.

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