Social commentary in the song "Chineke doo" by Sam Ojukwu

Sunday Ofuani & Comfort Onyekachukwu Ofuani

Social commentary in the song "Chineke doo" by Sam Ojukwu

Early art music in Nigeria was not based on nor conceived as a medium for social commentary. However, through cultural reawakening, contemporary Nigerian-Igbo composers now deliberately utilise social commentary themes in their music. This practice enhances their musical works as social-cum-functional art—a notable essence of music in traditional Africa. There is a dearth of studies on Igbo art music composers and social commentary. In this study, we focus on Sam Ojukwu and his composition "Chineke doo" (A prayer for Nigeria) to explicate the compositional utility of social commentary themes in the Nigerian-Igbo context. The selection of the piece is based on its social relevance and the composer's creativity, output, and consistency in social commentary art music. Textual data extracted from the piece and an interview with the composer provided the primary data for the study. Altogether, we discuss the contemporary Nigerian socio-political ironies recreated in "Chineke doo". Through the socio-cultural context, along with suitable musical text examples, we deepen the understanding and appreciation of how social commentary in music relates to specific social and political issues in Nigeria. The study is significant in the evaluation, appreciation, and justification of Ojukwu as a music-composer-social-commentator and poet who thrives in social commentary art music compositions for the sake of societal engineering and transformation.
Keywords: Sam Ojukwu, Nigerian-Igbo art music, social commentary, composer-poets.

Introduction

In this article, we study the song "Chineke doo" (A prayer for Nigeria) by the art music composer Sam Ojukwu. Firstly, we provide some general background to the phenomenon of art music in Nigeria before focusing specifically on 'composer-poets' who write the lyrics to songs themselves in order to be fully independent and to imbue their works with social relevance. While we extensively discuss Ojukwu, brief references are made to other notable Igbo composers engaging in social commentary through art music. We then analyse the various instances of social commentary in "Chineke doo."

Social commentary in Nigerian (art) music

Art music (as introduced to Nigerian society through Christian missionaries, colonialism, and Western education) was not based on nor conceived as a medium for social commentary. Consequently, the composers did not really feature such themes in the early periods—rather, they focused on the creative, aesthetic, and contemplative objectives.[1] Cultural reawakening among contemporary Nigerian-Igbo composers led to the deliberate utilization of indigenous music concepts that would enhance their art music as social-cum-functional art—a notable essence of music in traditional Africa.

Music composers are creative personalities saddled with the responsibility of putting sounds and other sonic elements together as their medium of expression. Scholars such as Norman Demuth, and Lazarus Ekwueme

Sunday Ofuani is lecturer in the Department of Music, Faculty of Arts, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria.
Email: ofuani@delsu.edu.ng
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8175-9849

Comfort Onyekachukwu Ofuani is lecturer at the Institute of Education, Faculty of Education, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria.
Email: comfortofuani@delsu.edu.ng
https://orcid.org/0009-0009-5937-4377

DOI: https://doi.org/10.17159/tl.v61i2.16454

DATES:
Submitted: 10 July 2023; Accepted: 11 December 2023; Published: 17 December 2024

("Composing contemporary African choral music: Problems and prospects" 17–8) agree that how composers create their music largely depends on their individual skill, knowledge of the art, music form, cultural exposure, audience, context, and state of affairs in society in which the composer lives.

Composing vocal music involves a fusion of two disciplines (music and textual language). Consequently, composers usually rely on specialised text writers for lyrics of their musical works. However, this is different from the Nigerian-Igbo tradition where, according to Ekwueme, the composers are also text writers of their respective music ("African music in Christian liturgy: The Igbo experiment" 19). This study hinges on Femi Adedeji's concept of "transformative art music composition" (4) and Ekwueme's creative textual theory which says: "In true Igbo tradition, the music composer is also the poet, for he/she has to create his/her own words to his tune" ("African music in Christian liturgy" 19). Drawing from Ekwueme's theory, which hitherto exists in practice, any Nigerian-Igbo art music composer who doubles as the text creator of their music is, in this study, conceptualised and categorised as 'composer-poet'.

There has been a notable movement that involves a deliberate appropriation of indigenous music concepts among contemporary Nigerian-Igbo art music composers. The composers now draw conceptual, creative, idiomatic, and stylistic inspirations from their traditional music practices. For example, Grace Lawrence-Hart (463) studies the traditional music practices of the Bonny people; Sunday Ofuani ("Application of the commentary role of ine festival songs of Aniocha people to contemporary social issues" 42–53) examines social commentary among the Aniocha; and Justice Okoro and Ofuani (283–4) identify the Abigbo traditional music of the Mbaise people as social commentary in essence. These scholars indicate that musical commentary on social issues is not new in Igbo culture as most of the lyrics of their various traditional festival songs and some other folk music are largely based on social commentary. Thus, social commentary in Nigerian-Igbo art music compositions provides a focused study of appropriation and cultural continuum in contemporary African music-making. All of the above entails that the Nigerian-Igbo music composer should be able to take the responsibility of creating social commentary texts and appropriate them in music to scrutinise the society, satirise defaulters of social norms and values, and negotiate for societal transformation.

Studies such as those conducted by Sjaak van der Geest and Nimrod Asante-Darko, Phua Chye and Lily Kong, Annemette Kirkegaard, Cherry Muhanji and Jack Straton, Isaac Idamoyibo, John Mizzoni, Albert Oikelome, Olukayode Eesuola, and Juliet Hess confirm that social commentary is a prominent phenomenon among some pop musicians. For example, Fela Anikulapo Kuti, a Nigerian Afro-beat musician, is notable in the art of socio-political commentary, so much so that his music was banned by the federal government of his time (see Oikelome; Eesuola).

Ingrid Byerly confirms the art of social commentary in the South African art music composition context, especially with reference to apartheid and post-apartheid pieces, but avers the composers are mostly interested in the aesthetical and contemplative values. However, Adedeji recommends that African composers should focus more on creating works that address social issues. Hence, he conceptualises the "transformative composition theory" (4) and strongly encourages African composers to create works that would transform society and its social challenges in order for them to be more relevant and valued by society (4). Adedeji's theory and recommendation are in tandem with music-making in the Igbo performance context where transformative music seems to be more valued than the mere entertainment types. This claim is strongly justified by Christian Onyeji and Elizabeth Onyeji's hierarchical order of the value of music *vis-à-vis* the "philosophy of African [Igbo] music practice and creativity" in which entertainment is found and considered to be the very last in the value ranking. According to them, "Although entertainment is a significant aspect of African music practice, it seems to be ranked the lowest in the hierarchy of value in African [Igbo] music" (28) while "[t]he philosophy of humanistic commitment" (21–4); "the philosophy of education, enlightenment and moral force" (24–5); "the philosophy of social and political order" (26–7); and "[t]he philosophy of communal therapy and spirituality" (27–8) are ranked higher.

The primary function of music is to involve people in shared experiences within the framework of their socio-cultural experience (Blacking 21). So, the common axiom "music is a human phenomenon" (21) probably stems from its social, political, cultural, communicative, and emotional traits. Composers of such music are usually also creative in text writing and function as social poets and activists. For, rather than depend on the subjective opinions of the specialised poets, the Nigerian-Igbo music-composer-poets take it upon themselves to create texts that are inspired by society. By this compositional practice, some composers of Nigerian-Igbo art music fulfil the "transformative composition theory". Therefore, the composer-poets' efforts to comment on social

issues through music in order to be relevant in their immediate society and the paucity of specialised text writers in Nigeria are some major factors that motivate Nigerian-Igbo art music composers to double as text writers.

The relationship between language and music

Neurological studies have shown that language has an important and complex function in humans. Its perception involves a number of brain regions. However, the same brain structures are responsible for music and language perceptions. For example, Kunert Richard, Roel Willems, and Peter Hagoort's neurological findings indicate that "[t]he neural pathways for language and music share a crossroads" (1). While music communicates through sounds, words are its vehicle for disseminating intelligible information. Thus, the communicative, intellectual, aesthetic, and emotional efficacies of music are maximised where it fuses with its sibling—poetry.

Isaac Idamoyibo says the limitation of textual communication in social commentary contexts is that the real meaning of the information strongly depends on the socio-cultural and/or socio-political context of the immediate environment it was created for. So, such a piece of music would definitely generate mixed reactions among listeners due to differences in language, socio-cultural backgrounds, environmental experiences, and associated imageries (144). This suggests that natural knowledge of all the aforementioned differences is required in understanding textual music that is rooted in a people's language and socio-political milieu. For example, social commentary music written in a Nigerian language will appeal more to the immediate society than it would to speakers of other languages in the same country. Therefore, the art music composers' social commentaries could be considered local art for local consumption as the pieces are most efficacious and best appreciated by participants and observers involved in the issues commented on; otherwise, others listen to it for mere aesthetical, recreational, and touristic reasons (145).

The interdisciplinary relationship of music and poetry is the hallmark of African musical practices (Agu, "Foundations of pragmatics: The primacy of language in African music theory, practice and education" 11). Thus, as a pure vessel of expression, African music unambiguously communicates through human language, various musical gestures derived from speech, and some musical instruments that are capable of surrogating spoken words ("Foundations" 11). Although instrumental surrogates for words such as drumming and abstraction of sound can be encountered in some Nigerian traditional music-making, as explicated by Nzewi, Anyahuru and Ohiaraumunna (94); Josephine Mokwunyei (353); and Atinuke Idamoyibo (135), the art of intelligible narratives eludes the instrumental medium. Even the sonically coded messages from musical instruments are sometimes ambiguous, especially to non-members or foreigners in a given culture. More so, Ekwueme asserts: "The human voice is the only instrument which can transmit intelligible language unequivocally to an audience. All other forms of meaning ascribed to or ascertained from non-vocal music are subjective and vague, ambiguous and imprecise" (Ekwueme, "Composing contemporary African choral music" 18). Also, Desmond Sergeant and Evangelos Himonide's empirical study of music and intelligible meaning affirms Ekwueme's assertion. Therefore, instrumental music cannot, for now, match the intelligible, communicative, and emotional powers of textual music made from the human language (Ekwueme, "Composing contemporary African choral music" 18).

Poetry allows humans to express things (such as social commentary) in indirect ways (Rexroth 4). For Kenneth Rexroth, poetry makes language a more effective tool for controlling and appreciating physical and abstract experiences. It communicates the experiences of a highly developed view of society. It weighs value and takes cognisance of its purpose and significance. Poetry also functions as a symbolic criticism of value. It reorganises and restates the entire value judgments of society in a manner that more clearly inspires awareness of what is interesting and dull, what is lovable and mean, what is beautiful and ugly, and most importantly, what is good and bad. It increases and guides our awareness of immediate experience (4).

Music penetrates where spoken words (such as poetry) have failed. Julian Fernandez affirms that music has the command of triggering human emotional neurons towards a thoughtful state of mind as well as exciting ecstasy (98). For, while music subtly attracts attention, it inherently entertains, informs, educates, softens, and holds spellbound the hard-hearted. We are conversant with the statement: "If music is the food of love, then play on [...] so that my appetite [...] may sicken to death" (William Shakespeare, Twelfth Night, Act 1, Scene 1). Dan Agu defines music as "[...] a language of emotions analogous to speech" ("Foundations" 13).

These emotional and communicative efficacies imbued in both poetry and music are more heightened when the two arts fuse. A common example of this amalgamation is the hymnody, which is efficacious among Christian congregations (Eniolawun 468–9).

Socio-cultural and political contexts of social commentary art music composition

As Chinua Achebe observed, "The Igbo are a very democratic people. They express strong antimonarchy sentiment—*Eze bu ilo*. Their culture illustrates a clear-cut opposition to kingship, because, I think, Igbo people had seen what the uncontrolled power of kings could do" (246). Igbo communities are fortified with several traditional music media and institutions that fight against unacceptable social acts (Okoro and Ofuani 387). One such example is the "spirit-manifest cult", loosely called "masquerade" (Umoh 102), which directly confronts and arrests perpetrators and unleashes consequential punishment on a culprit: "Apart from entertaining the public [with music and dance] during their outings, masquerades were crime detectors whose main task was making public the identities of perpetrators of social ills. Even chiefs indulging in criminal and obnoxious activities could not be spared the masquerades' chastising whips" (Umoh 102). Thus, Igbo people are culturally characterised by the "fight against social ills".

In recent decades, contemporary Nigeria could be considered as being saddled with rising corruption (Akindele; Nmah); unemployment (Virk, Nelson, and Dele-Adedeji); the dilapidation of social amenities such as the educational, healthcare, power and energy, transportation (roads), and pipe-borne water sectors, which also lead to labour unions' industrial action on a regular basis; extreme poverty (Ucha); ritual killings (Salihu, Isiaka, and Abdulaziz); internet scams (Ayodele, Oyedeji, and Badmos); public protests (Goteng; Ikalewumi); illegal migration to developed countries around the world —especially the English speaking countries—this type of migration is termed "japa" in Nigerian parlance (Okunade and Awosusi); ethnic militancy (Osabiya) and ethno-religious violence (Salawu); extreme insecurity of life and property (Odalonu); and a non-inclusive governmental system informed by ethno-religious bigotry (Salawu). Consequently, social, economic, and political problems regularly loom in the country (Dajo and Akor). Meanwhile, intercommunity wars over landownership and boundary disputes are also overwhelmingly prevalent (Ibeogu, Abah, and Chukwu). Furthermore, the struggle for the protection of lives and properties, economic survival, ethnic identity, and resource control have led to unconventional community policing and militancy (Osabiya).

Ojukwu and other Nigerian-Igbo art music composers such as Agu, Joe Onyekwelu, Izuchukwu Ewulu, and Ofuani, whose personalities reflect Igbo cultural attributes deploy their compositional art of social commentary towards negotiating for an ideal society in the interest of humanity as observers and participants in these situations. For example, the consequence of the aforementioned socio-political problems in Nigeria is the disappearance of peace and peaceful coexistence in the country (Salawu). This endangers progress, meaningful development, and the fundamentals of modern civilisation. For example, insecurity discourages foreign, and even local, investors (Dajo and Akor). Based on this situation, in his composition titled "Udo amaka" (Peace is Supreme), Agu comments on the importance of "peace" in all spheres of progress, development, and civilisation and advises that peace should reign in all. Agu considers peace fundamental to attaining national unity and development.

Ofuani's "Pụta k'anyi dozie obodo anyi" (Come, let's rebuild our country) (*Oka Abu—Nigerian Solo Songs Vol. 1* 31–7) comments on the collapse of social amenities in Nigeria and appeals to everyone to arise and rebuild them. Another composition titled "Ndi okọli" (Gossipers) (*Oka* 46–55) laments the fact that sycophants and gossipers have destroyed kings, leaders, governments, friends, marriages, and peoples and subsequently warns perpetrators to desist from these acts.

In his folk-opera composition titled "Reconciliation", Onyekwelu takes up the theme of inter-community war arising from landownership and boundary disputes. The lyrics present a fictional, persistent inter-community war over landownership and boundary disputes that lasted for over a century. Peace is eventually achieved through a decisive intermarriage between the prince and princess of the warring villages. It is interesting that the young prince and princess secretly planned the marriage to weaken their warring fathers' persistence and compel them to embrace peace.

Generally, the composition "Reconciliation" implies that contemporary Nigerian youths can strategise a friendly social integration framework and harness peaceful ways (such as decisive rejection of their fathers' preoccupation with ethnic bigotry and intercommunity wars) to abate these issues. "Ije ụwa" (The journey of life) by Ewulu laments the ups and downs of life, with reference to the unbearable socio-economic, political, and insecurity situations in Nigeria, and consoles listeners to remain positively focused despite these situations. In another composition titled "Anya fụlụ ugo" (The eagle on the iroko tree), Ewulu appeals to people, particularly the wealthy, to always uphold the ideals of "live and let live". In the piece titled "Jide nti gi eka" (Be warned), Ewulu advises Nigerian peoples, leaders, and governments of various levels to always heed good advice. His

ISSN: 0041-476X E-SSN: 2309-9070

piece "Oruasi" (The Talkative) criticises talkative personalities who—like the character of Squealer in Orwell's *Animal Farm*—swiftly upturn situations and propagandise issues through alluring speeches. The song warns such persons to be good and sincere to all. He also created a composition titled "Eje, ana" (To and fro—the ultimate), which stresses the importance of safety and consideration for others while traveling. "Dim Onyalagu" (Onyalagu my husband) by Agu and "Di nta" (The great hunter) by Ojukwu speak about the theme of domestic violence against wives; "Ikemefune" by Ojukwu bemoans the evils of child molestation and highlights the suffering of mothers in such circumstances.

Analysis of Ojukwu's "Chineke doo"

Ojukwu (12 November 1940–19 May 2024) from Nnewi, Anambra State, was a Knight of St Christopher, a profound and eminent Nigerian choral composer of Igbo background. He composed based on the concept of "intercultural creativity" as delineated by Akin Euba (116–7). It enabled him to fuse European and Igbo indigenous music traits with his works which were dominantly written in the Igbo language. This creative mixture was inspired by his exposure to Igbo musical culture, Western music education, and Western music traditions in the Anglican church, where he developed his early musical skills. Ojukwu's preferred medium in composition was SATB Chorus—an outright influence of his church music background. Although indigenous church anthems constitute the highest number of his compositional outputs, his social commentary works are also quite notable (as shown above). He was also a refined organist, choral director, and conductor.

Ojukwu composed the text and music of the anthem of the University of Nigeria in Nsukka while in the second year of his undergraduate studies in music (1962). On graduation in 1965 he received the Fela Sowande Academic Award, a music award from the University of Nigeria.[2] He also won the Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Academic Excellence in Music Composition. In Nigeria, musicians and music audiences alike call Ojukwu the "Handel of Africa". And according to foreign music theorist Carter-Ényì: "Another one of Sam Ojukwu's pieces Jehova Eme Wo has been described to me as the African Hallelujah Chorus" (480). He lectured in music from 1975 at Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri, Nigeria and retired in 2005.

"Chineke doo" is the most popular and socially appealing of Ojukwu's compositions on social commentary themes and, perhaps, the most popular in Nigerian-Igbo social commentary composition repertory in terms of its performance rate and public appreciation. It holistically addresses multiple extant issues that affect Nigeria socially, economically, and politically. The text is a blend of prayer and commentary, and the music is a quasi-simulation of Igbo highlife style.[3] Some other social commentary compositions of his include "Udo, ebele ụmụ ụwa n'emem" (Peace, I pity the people of the world) in which he pities the entire human race for the ceaseless anarchies and wars all over the world; "Were ire gi gụo eze gi ọnụ" (Be mindful of your action) demands that people should strive to maintain a positive attitude in society; and "O ko to ko Nigeria" (an Igbo sound allusion or metaphor which means big for nothing—implying that "Nigeria is big for nothing"), composed in 1968 during the Nigerian Civil War, mocks the Nigerian Army for their loss to the Biafran Armed Forces at Abagana. The piece was performed by Ojukwu's choir at the Biafran Armed Forces barracks during the war period several times. The composition date of "Chineke doo" (1984) shows that it predates Adedeji's proposal for social commentary in African art music by almost three decades.

Our study of Ojukwu's social commentary pieces reveals that he created his music in such a way that it would be effective and unambiguous. Nevertheless, some aspects of the texts are usually masked with fables, figures of speech, local adages, and parables which assisted him to enhance his lyrics with indigenous impetus. Also, in relation to a prevailing textual theme, he expressed or enunciated unhappy moods or sad imagery by crafting the music to sound subtle, gloomy, and melancholic through the creative use of relevant expressive tonal effects, harmonic idioms, rhythmic patterns, and/or dynamic shadings. Consequently, the creative conception of the music developed from the textual content (the poetry). This implies that text inspired the necessary musical idioms, styles, and devices he utilised in his compositions on social commentary. Thus, in this compositional concept, text and music are analogous, which necessitates strict creative matching of the natural tone properties of words. Ojukwu crafted the works to be culturally relevant through the adoption of Igbo music elements, instruments, and structural forms. The following textual explication of "Chineke doo" divulges the extant socio-political and humanistic relevancies of the poetic texts.

It is noteworthy that Ojukwu deployed the 'prayer technique' to mask the textual theme of "Chineke doo", hence the English translation of the title: A prayer for Nigeria. According to him, once any form of threat came

his way with reference to the textual music, he simply claimed: "I only prayed for Nigeria, my country" (Ojukwu and Ofuani).

Indeed, the major socio-political problems that disillusion the people of Nigeria are encapsulated in "Chineke doo". Ojukwu composed the text and music in 1984 when the country was morally, economically, politically, and socially far better off than it is today (Ikelegbe 490; Oludele). Thus, the words of the music are considered more relevant in present-day Nigeria. The poetic text places Ojukwu as a prophet, visionary, and social commentator. This is so, at least, for the fact that all of the societal ills he commented and lamented on (in the music) are arguably normal and acceptable to some extent in contemporary Nigerian society. Those who are involved in some of the ills are celebrated by society—even some religious bodies in the country celebrate them. It appears everybody (including those who indulge in some of the ills) utter prayers similar to lines one to eight (which is regularly recaptured as a refrain in the composed music):

Chukwu nna biko,
Nụr'aririọ anyi o.
Onye kɛr'ụwa,
Nụr'a kw'ụmụ gi o.
Mgbe'ọnwụnwa n'amaghari'a nyi
K'ebili miri.
Chineke doo, Zọpụt'anyi o!
O chi moo!

God our Father, please,
Hearken to our prayers.
Creator of the universe,
Hear your children's cry.
When temptation blows us up and down
Like ocean waves.
God, please, deliver us!
Oh my God!

In verse two, the reasons why the country is not working effectively are captured. It is necessary to note that sonic imagery is onomatopoeically figured as "*Kpo ko lo*" (empty dangling tin) and "*Pi jom*" (more you look, less you see) in lines 10 to 14 to represent the seemingly unstable and deceptive state of the country. An empty tin makes the loudest noise and is easily kicked about with insignificant strength. On the other hand, "*Pi jom*" suggests a lack of truthfulness, a phenomenon that Nigerians commonly refer to as "More you look, less you see". Ojukwu creatively deployed "*Kpo ko lo*" and "*Pi jom*" as what we can term "onomatopoeic imagery syllables", "sound syllables" (Ofuani, ""Nonsensical syllable"? An inquiry into its rational in Sub-Sahara African music-making" 139–62), or "impressionistic syllables" (Nwamara 32–5).

Nekene k'obodo anyi si ada
Kpọ kọ lọ
Pi jom

Behold, how our country is falling
Empty dangling tin
More you look, less you see

That some officeholders and political leaders orchestrate inhuman obstacles for others could be considered to be widespread in the country (see Achebe 76). It seems that those who pay unlawful allegiance to them are illicitly promoted and controlled by them, too (lines 15 to 18). According to Achebe: "The ploy in the Nigerian context is simple and crude: Get the achievers out and replace them with less qualified individuals from the desired ethnic background so as to gain access to the resources of the state" (76). This attitude hinders many developmental achievements and constitutes several fundamental problems such as the promotion of ethnic bigotry, mediocrity, youth restiveness, dominance, dictatorship, possessiveness, fundamental human rights infringements, and all sorts of corruption, among others.

In the song, the social issue of orchestrated hindrance is considered the reason certain governmental policies, programmes, and entitlements are scraped after those in power have enjoyed them. As the practice has escalated into all sectors of the country, some people have found consolation in the slogan "It shall be my (or my relation's) turn one day". Thus, this predicament can be likened to a relay race in which the baton is expected to be transferred to the next sprinter, implying that the issues may not be abated soonest. The hindrance syndrome and its associates are encapsulated in an Igbo proverb, which Ojukwu creatively adopted. Although the proverb literally means, "After one has attained success, he/she constitutes a hindrance on the ways of others". The proverb is followed by other statements which explicate it further:

Onye gafe ogwe:
Ọ si ogwe jisisia kpam kpam!
Onye gafe ogwe:
Ọ si ogwe gbajisia.

After one has crossed the bridge:
One tells the bridge to collapse completely!
After one has crossed the bridge:
One tells the bridge to break-up against others.

In verse three the issue of negligence of African traditional philosophy, norms, and values of siblinghood is raised. Ojukwu comments on the concept of 'survival of the fittest' as it is contrary to the African traditional tenets of brotherhood/sisterhood which demand that someone cannot be wealthy while his/her people are hungry and suffering. Functionally, this type of brotherhood/sisterhood is not necessarily informed by biological, communal, socio-political, religious, or ethnic factors but rather by deep humanistic emotions.

Again, Ojukwu laments the situation using an imagery technique, wherein he skilfully utilised the Igbo fable proverb "*Oke n'ọhia: Ngwele n'ulo*" (Rat runs to the bush, lizard to the house), which literally means "Everyone on his/her own way: nobody cares for one another" or "Everybody has scattered home and abroad: Nobody cares for others". This factor could be considered a major cause of the lack of value for human life and human rights, scanty philanthropic projects, and rare non-beneficial social work and community development by some wealthy citizens in the country. Wealth seems to be mostly accumulated by some powerful individuals who in turn unduly use it to influence communal and national politics and perpetuate injustice to suit their selfish desires:

Nekenenụ na nwanne amagh kwa Nwanne ya;
Nekenenụ na nwanne amagh kwa Nwanne nke ya o.
Oke n'ọhia: Ngwele n'ulo.
Oke n'ọhia: Ngwele n'ulo

Behold, relationship is no longer a thing of value
Oh, behold, blood is no longer thicker than water
Rats run to the bush, lizards to the house.
Rats run to the bush, lizards to the house.

In verse four, social challenges such as untruthfulness, sycophancy, deceitfulness, and betrayal are exposed. Beginning from family to public justice systems up to the official social justice systems in the country, disillusionment brought about by dishonesty seems to be the order of the day. Access to social justice is often largely determined by social influence and wealth (which Nigerians refer to as "connection"). Here again, Ojukwu laments the circumstances using an Igbo proverb, which means, "Oh, behold! There is no honesty in our country: Friends become enemies at one's back". This attitude seems very common as a means to access power, promotion, and success of any type. It is mostly explored by the mediocre and it often works for them (see Achebe 76). Some professionals and honest people suffer at the hands of mediocre and dishonest people who are already at the

helm of public affairs. For this reason, some of the compatriots do not dedicate their time to execute their careers proficiently. Mediocrity as a shortcut appears to be mostly preferred:

Nekenenụ n'eziokwu adigh kwa n'obodo anyi;
Nekenenụ n'eziokwu adigh kwa n'obodo
Melemele n'iru: Gwọmpiti n'azụ
Melemele n'iru: Gwọmpiti n'azụ

Behold, there is no more truth in our country!
Oh, behold, there is no more honesty in our country!
Friends become enemies at one's back.
Friends become enemies at one's back.

In verse five, ill means explored by some people to make money are exposed. Recently, this social challenge seems to be escalating excessively among a good number of people. Scams ("419s" in Nigerian parlance), armed robbery, money rituals, diabolism, ritual killings, sorcery, kidnapping, human trafficking, and rape are very common, especially among youths who are already restive. People probably indulge in these acts for survival or to acquire formidable wealth, power, recognition, influence, and connection that can launch them into a network of political monsters:

Nekene k'ụfọdụ si achụ naira
n'ụzọ di njọ;
E zute ori, A gwọta nsi
E gbunyereya mmadụ.

Behold, how some people make money
through evil means;
They rob, they diabolize,
They even kill human beings on it.

In verse six, the unstable state of the country is restated as in verse one but extended with the addition of other social ills that characterise the country, namely, greediness, jealousy, hatred, and unnecessary arguments and propaganda:

Any'uku,
Ekworo,
I kpọ asi
Okwu n'ụka
A karila n'o bodo anyi o.

Greediness,
Jealousy,
Hatred,
Unnecessary arguments and propaganda
Are too much and unbearable in our country.

Conclusion

In this article we have shown that Ojukwu deliberately implemented social commentary in his song "Chineke doo". This enhances the status of this song as social, political, cum-functional-art—a notable essence of music-making in some traditional sub-Saharan African settings. The exploration of the socio-cultural and socio-political contexts, along with detailed examples, deepens the understanding of how social commentary in music relates to specific social and political issues in Nigeria. In turn, this suggests that the Nigerian socio-political environment is responsible for the appropriation of social commentary themes in art music compositions to help expose the prevailing social issues in the country. Ojukwu spotlighted socio-political issues as a form of edutainment. Instead of imposing the truth, he preferred to creatively help people understand it through his compositions, leaving them to make their own choices afterwards. This particularly endows Ojukwu with the role of social commentator and makes him socially relevant beyond the aesthetic function of his music.

ISSN: 0041-476X E-SSN: 2309-9070

We further found that the creative use of traditional speech idioms such as proverbs creates apt imagery in "Chineke doo". The use of fables, proverbs, parables, and figures of speech not only enabled Ojukwu to capture a wide array of messages in a succinct way but also helped him to indigenise his lyrics.

Notes

1. The term "art music" denotes high-art music compositions that are primarily created for aesthetical and contemplative purposes. And, as opposed to traditional and pop music-making (which are oral arts in Nigeria), art music is essentially conceived and presented in written tradition—using the staff notation and/or the likes. In this study, such a musical work/piece is referred to as "art music" and the composer as an "art music composer".
2. Fela Sowande (1905–1987) was a Nigerian pioneer art music composer and organist who was famous around the globe.
3. "Highlife" is an intercultural indigenous pop music genre developed and popularised in West African countries such as Ghana and Nigeria. Indigenous instruments, idioms, and styles of the individual musician's ethnic background are strongly emphasised in the music. Thus, the music is often deployed by the musicians and societies to assert their various identities of ethnicity/place.

Works cited

Achebe, Chinua. *There was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra.* Penguin, 2012.

Adedeji, Femi. "Transformative musicology: Recontextualizing art music composition for societal transformation in Nigeria." *Revista Electronica de Musicologia* vol. XIV, 2010.

Agu, Dan C. C. "Foundations of pragmatics: The primacy of language in African music theory, practice and education." *Journal of the Association of Nigerian Musicologists* vol. 4, 2010, pp. 10–8.

____. "Udo amaka." *Songs of Life*, edited by Femi Adedeji & Alvan-Ikoku Nwamara. Timade Ventures, 2017, pp. 17–27.

Akindele, Sunday T. "A critical analysis of corruption and its problems in Nigeria." *The Anthropologist* vol. 7, no. 1 2005, pp. 7–18.

Ayodele, Austin, Jonathan K. Oyedeji & Huthman O Badmos. "Social construction of internet fraud as innovation among youths in Nigeria." *International Journal of Cybersecurity Intelligence & Cybercrime* vol. 5, no. 1 2022, vol. 23–42. DOI: https://doi.org/10.52306/BUVC2778.

Blacking, John. *How Musical is Man?* Faber & Faber, 1976.

Byerly, Ingrid B. "Mirror, mediator and prophet: The music *Indaba* of late-apartheid South Africa." *Ethnomusicology* vol. 42, no. 1, 1998, p. 1–44. DOI: https://doi.org/10.2307/852825.

Carter-Ényì, Aaron. "Contour Levels: An Abstraction of Pitch Space Based on African Tone Systems." Diss. Ohio State U, 2016.

Chye, Phua Siew & Lily Kong. "Ideology, social commentary and resistance in popular music: A case study of Singapore." *The Journal of Popular Culture* vol. 30, no. 1, 1996, pp. 215–32. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0022-3840.1996.00215.x.

Dajo, Ugba & Linus Akor. "Impact of social unrest on Nigeria's socio-economic development." *International Journal of Public Administration and Management Research* vol. 7, no. 4, 2022, pp. 16–27.

Demuth, Norman. *A Course in Musical Composition.* Bosworth, 1998.

Eesuola, Olukayode S. "Explaining political agitators: Socialization and class in the making of Gani Fawehinmi and Fela Anikulapo Kuti of Nigeria." *Unizik Journal of Arts and Humanities* vol. 17, no. 3, 2016, pp. 1–29.

Ekwueme, Lazarus Nnanyelu. "African music in Christian liturgy: The Igbo experiment." *African Music: Journal of the African Music Society* vol. 5, no. 3, 1974, pp. 12–33. DOI: https://doi.org/10.21504/amj.v5i3.1655.

____. "Composing contemporary African choral music: Problems and prospects." *African Art Music in Nigeria*, edited by Mosunmola A. Omibiyi-Obidike. Stirling-Horden, 2001, pp. 16–57.

Eniolawun, Olusola I. "The value of singing hymns in Christian worship." *Music in and Out of Culture*, edited by Femi Abiodun & Alvan-Ikoku Nwamara. Malthouse, 2021, pp. 459–75.

Euba, Akin. *Essays on Music in Africa 2: Intercultural Perspectives.* Elekoto, 1989.

Fernandez, Julian C. "Cultural and religious unification through music in Desert Rose's *Silence of the Music*." *Journal of the Musical Arts in Africa* vol. 8, 2011, pp. 87–100.

Goteng, Tongshinung. "A critical discourse analysis of ideologies in Twitter posts on #EndSARS and Nigeria's 2023 general elections." *Madonna Journal of English & Literary Studies* vol. 4, no. 1, 2023, pp. 67–97.

Hess, Juliet. "Singing our own song: Navigating identity politics through activism in music." *Research Studies in Music Education* vol. 41, no. 1, 2018, pp. 61–80. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1321103X18773094.

Ibeogu, Aloysius S., Emma O Abah & Ogo N. Chukwu. "Inter and intra community conflicts in selected communities in states of Nigeria, implications to socio-economic development of the areas." *Journal of Business and Management* vol. 21, no. 10, 2019, pp. 730–80.

Idamoyibo, Atinuke A. "The media, the reconstruction of drumming, and the tradition of the dùndún and bàtá ensembles of the Yorùbá in South West Nigeria." *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde* vol. 51, no. 1, 2014, pp. 132–41. DOI: https://doi.org/10.4314/tvl.v51i1.12.

Idamoyibo, Isaac O. "The Musician as a mass communicator: The voice that leads the way to national development." *Abraka Studies in African Arts and National Development*, edited by Sam Ukala. Kraft, 2006, pp. 141–48.

Ikalewumi, Felix. "Youths protests in Nigeria: The endSARS in perspective." *Wukari International Studies Journal* vol. 6, no. 1, 2022, pp. 1–44.

Ikelegbe, Austine. "State, ethnic militias, and conflict in Nigeria." *Canadian Journal of African Studies* vol. 39, no. 3, 2005, pp. 490–516. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/00083968.2005.10751327.

Kirkegaard, Annemette. "Remmy Ongala—Moderating Through Music." *Sounds of Change—Social and Political Features of Music in Africa*, edited by Thorsén Stig-Magnus. Edita Sverige, 2004, pp. 57–69.
Lawrence-Hart, Grace. "Music: Tool for expression among the Bonny people of Rivers State." *Icheke: Journal of the Faculty of Humanities* vol. 12, no. 1, 2014, pp. 463–70.
Mizzoni, John. "Teaching moral philosophy with popular music." *Teaching Ethics* vol. 6, no. 2, 2006, pp. 15–28. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5840/tej2006622.
Mokwunyei, Josephine N. "Vocalization as paradigm of musicianship—The voice of the *akpele*." *International Journal of Music Education* vol. 26, no. 4, 2008, pp. 352–62. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0255761408096076.
Muhanji, Cherry & Jack C Straton. "Activism through music." *Inventio—Creative Thinking about Learning and Teaching* vol. 7, no. 1, 2005, pp. 1–27.
Nmah, Patrick E. "Corruption in Nigeria: A culture or retrogressive factor?" *Ogirisi: A New Journal of African Studies* vol. 13, 2017, pp. 116–31.
Nwamara, Alvan-Ikoku O. "Towards Africanizing lyrical contents of compositions." *Mekism and Knowledge Sharing*, edited by Young-Sook Onyiuke, *et al*. Rex Charles, 2011, pp. 32–5.
Nzewi, Meki, Israel Anyahuru & Tom Ohiaraumunna. "Beyond song texts—The lingual fundamentals of African drum music." *Research in African Literatures* vol, 32, no. 2, 2001, pp. 90–104. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1353/ral.2001.0057.
Odalonu, Boris H. "Worsening insecurity in Nigeria and its implications on governance and national development." *African Journal of Humanities and Contemporary Education Research* vol. 5, no. 1. 2022, pp. 31–49.
Ofuani, Sunday. "Application of the commentary role of ine festival songs of Aniocha people to contemporary social issues." *Awka Journal of Research in Music and the Arts* vol. 8, 2011, 42–53.
____. ""Nonsensical syllable"? An inquiry into its rational in Sub-Sahara African music-making." *African Musicology Online* vol. 7, no. 1, 2017, pp. 139–62.
____. *Oka Abu—Nigerian Solo Songs Vol. 1*. Stirling-Horden, 2016.
Oikelome, Albert. "Yesterday, today, and tomorrow: Fela's prophetic lyrics in light of twenty-first century realities." *Education, Creativity, and Economic Empowerment in Africa*, edited by Toyin Falola & Jamaine Abiodogun. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, pp. 203–11.
Ojukwu, Sam. & Sunday Ofuani. Telephone interview. 28 Aug. 2021.
Okoro, Justice C. & Sunday Ofuani. "The social responsibility and aesthetic efficacy of abigbo music." *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* vol. 51, no. 2, 2020, pp. 275–300.
Okunade, Samuel Kehinde & Oladotun E. Awosusi. "The *japa syndrome* and the migration of Nigerians to the United Kingdom: An empirical analysis." *Comparative Migration Studies* vol. 11, no. 27, 2023. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-023-00351-2.
Oludele, Solaja Mayowa. "Social change in contemporary Nigeria: A theoretical discourse." *Research in Social Change* vol. 12, no. 1, 2020, pp. 57–83. https://sciendo.com/article/10.2478/rsc-2020-0004.
Onyeji, Christian & Elizabeth Onyeji. "A perspective on the philosophy of African music practice and creativity." *Awka Journal of Research in Music and the Arts* vol. 8, 2011, pp. 19–31.
Onyekwelu, Joe. "Reconciliation—A Folk-Opera Composition." Unpublished composition performed in Department of Music, U of Nigeria, 19 Jun. 2003.
Osabiya, Babatunde J. "Ethnic militancy and internal terrorism on Nigeria's national security." *International Journal of Development and Conflict* vol. 5, no. 1, 2015, pp. 59–75.
Rexroth, Kenneth. *The Function of Poetry and the Place of the Poet in Society*. New Directions, 1987.
Richard, Kunert R., Roel M. Willems & Peter Hagoort. "Language influences music harmony perception: effects of shared syntactic integration resources beyond attention." *Royal Society Open Science* vol. 3, no. 2, 2016. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1098/rsos.150685.
Salawu, Blessing. "Ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria: Causal analysis and proposals for new management strategies." *European Journal of Social Sciences* vol. 13, no. 3, 2010, pp. 345–53.
Salihu, Habeeb A., Monsurat Isiaka & Isiaka Abdulaziz. "The growing phenomenon of money rituals-motivated killings in Nigeria: An empirical investigation into the factors responsible." *UKH Journal of Social Sciences* vol. 3, no. 2, 2019, pp. 32–44.
Sergeant, Desmond C. & Evangelos Himonides. "Gender and music composition: A study of music, and the gendering of meanings." *Frontiers in Psychology* vol. 7, 2016, 411–45. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00411.
Ucha, Chimobi. "Poverty in Nigeria: Some dimensions and contributing factors." *Global Majority E-Journal* vol. 1, no. 1, 2010, pp. 46–56.
Umoh, Dominic. "The reality behind the mask in Ekpo Ikpaisong in Annang culture of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria." *Journal of Communication & Culture* vol. 2, no. 1, 2011, pp. 101–8. http://icidr.org.ng/index.php/Jcc/article/view/988.
Van der Geest, Sjaak & Nimrod K. Asante-Darko. "The Political Meaning of Highlife Songs in Ghana." *African Studies Review* vol. 25, no. 1, 1982, pp. 27–35. DOI: https://doi.org/10.2307/523990.
Virk, Amrit, Ediomo-Ubong Nelson & Ini Dele-Adedeji. "The challenge of youth unemployment in Nigeria." *Journal of International and Comparative Social Policy* vol. 39, no. 3, 2023, 319–29. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/ics.2024.4.