

DOCUMENTATION OF PERFORMANCE STYLES IN YORUBA DUNDUN

DRUMMING

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Abstract

It is an established fact that indigenous knowledge precedes colonization and any creativity in musical arts is traced to indigenous system of African music making. One cannot deny the fact that some efforts have been made in the past to integrate aspects of collectivism in musical arts but the truth remains that creativity in its whole is yet to be fully explored by the present generation, especially, in the area of performance within instrumental ensemble. In those days, indigenous performance style of drumming have specific styles such that whenever it is played, people around understand the style and dancer knows exactly what to dance to it; but presently, it is observed that the lead instrumentalists of many traditional performance on drums are not actually identified with any particular style due to little or no knowledge they possess about the instrument they are handling. Therefore, this paper intends to document indigenous styles of drumming pattern of dundun drum by showcasing the musical scoring of some of these indigenous styles for proper documentation of Yoruba culture; believing that it will expose more roles and the indigenous styles of playing dundun drum in typical Yoruba way, and also to enlighten the 21st century traditional performer of dundun drum on the co-ordination of traditional ensemble. The writer uses documentary, historical method, unstructured interviews, and participant observation to source for data for the paper. In conclusion the paper traced the origin of indigenous knowledge in music performance in Yoruba land, and the performance style of dundun pattern culturally and also recommends the possible ways of preserving and expanding this knowledge.

Keywords: Dundun Ensemble, Performance style, Indigenous knowledge, Dance style.

Introduction

Yoruba people comprises of many semiautonomous ethnic groups that occupy southwestern part of Nigeria. Music, to an average Yoruba man, is an essential part of human race and a potent means of communicating, and entertaining varieties of human condition. It has always been a means of

alleviating poverty as noted and understood in the pre-colonial African societies. Scholars like Adesokan (1999), Omojola (1995), and Omibiyi (1987), to mention a few over the years, reflect that there is a wealth of resources in African traditional music. Rattray (1923:) stated that “there is hardly any other west African art or custom that has arouse more widespread wonder and curiosity, nor any concerning which such almost universal misconception still prevail, as that connected with the wonderful west African drum language. Of all aspect of Yoruba music, evident of research shows that it is drumming that has been discussed most extensively in the academic literature as evident in the work of Jones that says “ a rhythm is to the African what harmony is to the Europeans”. It is largely believed that most of these cultural resources and elements have remained untapped due to external influences and cultures. It is also noted that the curriculum designed for schools is not balanced and lopsided as not much importance is attached to the teaching of African traditional instrument.

Yoruba music is mostly associated with songs; percussion instruments sometimes playing supportive roles at vocal performances. The rhythm of the drum ensemble performed by Yoruba master drummers have been found to be inspiringly repetitive, heightened by improvisation and lots of variation. (Adeleke, 1997). Olaniyan (2011) described a professional traditional musician as one whose creativity is based on thorough acquisition of performance skills. Olaniyan further asserts that professionalism in Africa music implies proficiency in the playing of drums. He concludes that drumming is a specialized art that requires long periods of training according to the traditional method of apprenticeship (Adeleke,2008). It is observed that the father of the would-be talking drummer is usually his first teacher, and the training is mostly in three progressive stages: observation and listening, imitation and reproduction as solo artiste (Babalola 1981). From the foregoing, it is quite obvious that teaching-learning process is an established procedure among the Yoruba, irrespective of who the instructor is. The focus of this paper therefore centers mainly on how to propagate and document the indigenous styles and practices of performing traditional instruments especially the dundun in Yoruba land.

Although writers such as Omojola (2006), Olaniyan (2008), and Adeleke (2005) have written on dundun drum as one of the Yorùbá major instrument, the focus of their discussions is more on the

historical features, constructional process, and general performance of the instruments. There is a gap in the information; concerning the indigenous styles played by the instrument. For example, there is no proper documentation of the performance styles in dundun drumming, and the musical notations for the performance styles were not documented. This paper therefore, tends to stipulate the documentation of performance styles for indigenous dundun drumming, in order to bridge the gap between the modern styles and the indigenous way of playing dundun drum. Conclusively, the study attempts to shed more light on issues on nomenclature of the indigenous styles of dundun drumming. The study also made an attempt to score some drum patterns for the performers to know the proper ways of playing the styles, and also all the scored music can be easily kept in the archive for cultural preservation, now that most of the ace players that know how to play such style are gradually vanishing. The study, therefore, recommends that the art of musical documentation in particular and the scoring of performance style of traditional instruments in general should be given utmost concentration in order to guide up-coming drummers through proper ways of playing indigenous musical instruments..

DUNDUN DRUM

Dundun drum, characteristically, is a type of Yoruba traditional drum that features widely in varieties of social contexts both religious and secular. According to Omojola (2006), the Yoruba musician and drummers usually belong to the families that have a tradition of specialist musicians known as “AYAN” families, the drumming abilities of such family is such that is transitional. This is done when they have been specially identified by their deity to continue in the family drumming tradition.

Dundun drum pressure, double membrane hourglass- shaped drum of the Yoruba people of southwestern Nigeria, is capable of imitating the tone, glides of the spoken language, and is employed by a skilled musician to render ritual praise poetry to a deity or king. The drum is suspended from the player’s left shoulder; the left hand manipulate the leather tensioning thongs that connect the two membranes, while the drum is beaten with stick held in the right hand.

According to the Yoruba belief, Oduduwa is the father of the drum. Groits tales have it that when Oduduwa came back from Mecca, he settled down in Ile-Ife, as at that then, there was only one traditional musical instrument called Gudugudu, which was used then for entertainment.

Then, Oduduwa was said to have a friend named “Ayan”, they both played the drum as usual and they discover that the drum produce only two tones, together they made research on how to improve the drum after much work; they came up with a bigger drum that could produce different tones. The name *dundun* was given to the drum because when the drum is been played it produced the sound *dundun*.

Dundun drums set are hour-glass shaped and they are also referred to as the talking drum, because of its ability to mimic human speech. The dundun ensemble consist of four (4) talking drums of the same shape, and gudugudu which is originally adapted from bata drum family and of a different shape; been conical. The ensemble includes:

- i. Iya ilu dundun
- ii. Kerikeri/aguda
- iii. Omele Isaaju
- iv. Omele Atele
- v. Gudugudu

Iya Ilu Dundun

This is the mother drum and the first among the dundun talking drum set. The iya-ilu dundun is also the biggest in size compared to all other members of this family. It is usually beaten with a curved stick, in one hand while the second hand is used to grip the leather string/thong so that by tightening or loosening the thong, the pitch tone of the drum can be heightened or lowered respectively. This will then produce different tones by which various messages can be communicated just as in Yoruba language, which is tonal. The iya ilu dundun is the only dundun drum that has small bells fixed round it surface, which jingles as the drum is beaten, thereby, adding to the melody and rhythm of the iya-ilu dundun when it is being played.

It is called the mother drum because it is the first in its ensemble and due to the fact that its size cannot be compared to all other members of its family. Dundun drum is made of a piece of carefully carved “apa” wood to form a hourglass – like frame with two ends covered with membranes of animal skin which are also carefully joined by some strings made of goat skin. The iya ilu dundun is the only member of dundun family that has little bells called “Saworo” fixed round it surface which jingles as the drum is beaten thereby adding to the melody of the drum beats. The iya ilu dundun in it ensemble leads, as it talks, dictates the pace, determine the song and gives clues and prompts, with a deep audible sound, while the other members of the ensemble follows. The saworo (brass rings) adds percussion effects to the tune of iya ilu. The master talking drummer of the iya – ilu must be versatile in other to be able to skillfully lead while the accompanying drummers follow.



Kerikeri

This is the second biggest drum after the mother drum iya-ilu dundun. Its shape is also similar to that of the iya-ilu dundun but the shape and circumference is bigger than other members of the family. Also, It does not have the jingling small bells fixed round the surface like the iya-ilu

dundun. The kerikeri is also known as “AGUDA” it’s a middle muted pitched drum, mostly it provides the bass line in the dundun ensemble.



Kerikeri or Aguda

Omele Isaaju

This is another member of the dundun drum whose wooden frame is smaller than that of the iya-ilu dundun and kerikeri. It always play a kind of alternating movement with omele atele to form a steady rhythmic pattern. At times kerikeri guide or lead other drums in terms of whether the beat will be fast or slow. The more the isaaju is tighten the higher the pitch.



Omele – Isaaju or Ako

Omele Atele

This is a member of the dundun drum whose wooden frame is bigger than the omele isaaju but not as big as iya ilu. It performs almost the same function of the isaaju only that it comes after

the isaaju. The Atele is a low pitch dundun, by tightening it tension throng; it produces a pitch that is lower than isaaju.



Omele – Atele or Abo

Gudugudu

Gudugudu is also one of the main members of dundun ensemble, as a matter of fact it is referred to as the father of dundun ensemble. This fact reflects itself in the worship of ayangalu where gudugudu always take the centre stage with other family surrounding it. Gudugudu is a single face drum beaten with pair of leather straps and not curved stick like others, it is being hung on the neck with long leather strap and not on the shoulder and most importantly its very limited “speech competence”.



Gudugudu

Performance Styles Of Dundun Drumming

Etikeeti

Etikeeti is an earliest dundun performing style. It is more of a graceful dance unlike the other styles. The style is full of proverbs, idioms and varieties of poetic verses played by the lead drummer. The work load of etikeeti music lies more on the lead drummer with other drums playing accompaniment and at the same time serve as the backup singer for the lead drummer. The performance of etikeeti is a call and responsorial style of movement. This pattern manifest itself as the lead drummer plays a particular verse and other drummers will sing out what the lead drummer plays. For example, etikeeti style starts with an adage that says

Lead/ Call (i)

*“B’igun ba je, b’igun bam un, when the vulture eat and drink,
igun a siju a w’orun a le o”. it looks up at the dawn light.*

Immediately after this call, other instrument in the family will join at the same time to give a rhythmic response to the call of the lead drummer. Other proverbs such as

Lead/Call (ii)

<i>Olorun Oba ni e be sii,(2x)</i>	Beg him in the name of God
<i>Eni taa se ta o ro to nbinu eni,</i>	Someone that continue to persecute you without cause
<i>Olorun Oba ni ke be si.</i>	Beg him in the name of God

The lead drummer will continue to play series of proverbs while the members of the ensemble sing out what the leader plays.

Gbandikan

Gbandikan is another ancient dance style that is still common now a days performance style. It's more of energetic dance style in nature. According to Olaniyan (1993), gbandikan performance style evolved in the early 1950s, when young cocoa farmers became successful and wealthy from proceeds of the sales of their products especially after experiencing unprecedented boom and bountiful harvest. They always requested for a special vigorous dance steps that would enable them to display some youthful exuberance. It was in response to this demand that led into the composition of gbandikan dance style. Gbandikan make use of commonly used folk lyric to establish its motif movement with a lot of punctuations called "eja".

Mo sa keke, mo mu regbo ifa----- gbandikan da di, da di, da di, gbandikan
Mo k'abaja, mo mu redi ope----- gbandikan da di, da di, da di, gbandikan
Ope mi titi, mose b'ojo lo ro----- gbandikan da di, da di, da di, gbandikan
Ojo pa'gi lapa kan o dapa kan si----- gbandikan da di, da di, da di, gbandikan
Ojo pa mi o ma se p'o ree mi ----- gbandi dada din papapa, dada din papapa
Pon, pon, pon, dada did a, pon.

I make keke, I took it to the forest of ifa

I make abaja, I took it to the palm tree

The palm tree was shaking I thought it was rain

Rain, beat the tree on one side and leave the other side untouched

Rain beat me, but don't beat my friend.

This and other tune follows like

boba se pemi ni iwo ni, n'ba f'apa jo

If i am like you, ill dance with my hands

boba se p'e mi n'iwo ni, nba fese jo

If i am like you, ill dance with my legs

boba se p'e mi n'iwo ni, nba fi gbogbo ara jo

If i am like you, ill dance with all my
body

Ageere

Ageere performance style is the fastest rhythmic movement of all the earlier discussed performance style. The dynamic movement is more of allegro, and very common style among

the hunters especially during Ogun festival or during isipa – ode. The lyric of ageere is more of a warning text that passes messages to non member of the cult. The lead drummer always takes the lead at the beginning of the music by using his drum to sing:

Eda wariwari jo (2x)

Make him to be afraid

B'onile ko, bob a ko ti o gbo

if the house owner refused, if he refused to listen

Eda wariwari jo.

Make him to be afraid

Immediately after this pronouncement other drum join in creating a fast rhythmic movement leaving iya – ilu with improvisation passages like:

Woru o, woru oko, woru o, woru odo

Woru p'oka f'eye je, mo dele mo ro fun baba,

Baba lo ro fun yeye,

Labe ogede, labe oronbo, o ti se d'abe ata,

Ide wewe ni t'osun, oje gidigba ni t'osa

Sekeseke ni t'ogun, ebawa k'ilo fun bale

Ko bawa fi woru wa a le, gbogbo wa l'ogun jobi

Paaya! Oloko de.

Ijo – Oge

This dundun performance style is more of a maiden dance; it is often overlaid with various resource materials such as proverbs, and varieties of traditional folk songs. This musical style employs embellishments of all sorts, characterized by vulgar and nonsensical syllables on the lead drummer.

Conclusion

In this paper, the composition and performance practice of dundun drummers was appraised in order to establish it as a source to understand the styles and technique used in the playing of

dundun drum beyond the usual modern day's system. This would preserve the genre from possible discontinuity, and that further research and creative composition can spring from the performance styles. The spontaneous creative ability of a lead drummer is also noteworthy, considering how they perform without any written aid. Furthermore, song texts in Yoruba dundun drumming are philosophical and humorous. They are used as historical commentaries, culture indicators, especially "etikeeti" style. The texts can be used to regulate the social order, to educate people of the essential quality of life.

Based on the forgoing, it is concluded that performance style in dundun drumming is a well established Yoruba culture that can be notated, recomposed and performed anywhere else apart from the already known occasions.

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ETIKEETI

Fadipe Olawole

1

Isaaju
Atele
Aguda
Iya - Ilu

B'i gun ba je b'i gun ba mun i - gun a si ju a wo run a le o

5

Isaaju
Ate
Agu
Iya

bo ya O-lo-run a se bo ya O-lo-run a se bo ya O-lo-run a se

9

Isaaju
Ate
Agu
Iya

bo ya O-lo-run a se e-ni-kan a so - ro to j'e nu ba-ba e lo bo ya O - lo-run ase

25

Isaaju

Ate

Agu

Iya

ta-hun a te-jo e-ran ji je o e bi e n pe mi ni e mi ni

29

Isaaju

Ate

Agu

Iya

bi e n pe mi ni e mi ni e mi na a ko O-lo-run O - ba ma ni be n pe mi ni e mi ni

Gbandikan

The musical score for "Gbandikan" is presented in four systems. Each system consists of four staves, labeled on the left as Isaaju, Atcle, Aguda, and Iya - Ilu. The time signature is 12/8, indicated at the beginning of each system. The notation includes various note values (quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes), rests, and bar lines. The first system is marked with a '4' above the staff, and the second system is marked with a '7' above the staff. The score is written in a standard musical notation style, with a key signature of one flat (Bb).

Ageere

Allegro (M.M. ♩ = c. 120)

The musical score for 'Ageere' is presented in two systems. The first system includes the parts for Isaaju, Atele, Kerikeri, and Iya-ilu. The second system includes Om. Is, At, keri, and iy.ilu. The tempo is marked 'Allegro' with a metronome marking of ♩ = c. 120. The time signature is common time (C). The notation includes various rhythmic patterns such as eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and dynamic markings like '5'.