

Innovative Discourse of Heterophony in African Music Theory

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Abstract

This work captures the heterophony as applied in African musical performances. Heterophony appears in Western music practice and the African musical performances as well as performances in the other musical practices globally. However, the diversifications in its application can be traced. These diversifications are based on the musical fabrics within the musical performance involvement of the interlocking principles of notes. In Africa and elsewhere, the fabrics of musical notes in any harmony depend on the instrumentation, utilization of the musical instruments including voices in any ensemble. This paper has realized different types of heterophony in African musical performances to include soloec heterophony, duetic (duoec) heterophony, trioec heterophony, quartetual heterophony, quintetual heterophony, sextetual heterophony, septetual heterophony, octetual heterophony and nonetual heterophony. The instrumentation for any performing group should always be considered as important as the performance itself. The performers in any musical group of African descent should be gathered based on knowledge and experience.

Introduction

Heterophony is a significant aspect of musical performance in Africa. It is unique especially in African music where you have a particular instrument performing an ostinato (descant melody or melodies away from the other melodies for the various parts performed by the other musical instruments within the musical performance). It is also important to note that, the extent of the responsibilities of taking or performing the heterophony line is also associated with the African music performance (e.g. in an instrumentation where the instruments are playing, then another instrument plays above the other instruments and it becomes heterophonic. It also appears in a form of fugal example, soloec heterophony, duetic (duoec) heterophony, trioec heterophony, quartetual heterophony, quintetual heterophony, sextetual heterophony, septetual heterophony, octetual heterophony and nonetual heterophony.

It is interesting to know that repetition may occur in higher or lower register in the course of the performance. Some are fifth above the original tonal centre, some are fourth below and some are octave above or below. Imitation can be in the form of response or refrains when the exact melody is imitated. It is in response when the exact melody of one instrument is imitated by another instrument in exact form. Refrains occur whereby a fixed melody is heard over and over after each announcement of new melodic entries.

The heterophony in African music discussed here is deduced from the chamber music in Africa. The various type of the heterophony discussed here are soloic heterophony, duetic or duoec heterophony, trioec heterophony, quartetual heterophony, quintetual heterophony, sextetual heterophony, septetual heterophony, octetual heterophony, and nonetual heterophony.

Carriers of the culture or group beliefs were always preferred for correct interpretations of the music at any point. If any performer was not a carrier of the culture or group belief, such performer was led through rigorous training in order to imbibe the knowledge of the meanings of the musical ideals before being allowed to perform.

Soloec Heterophony

Means one instrument playing above all other instruments allowing other instruments to perform the harmonic embellishment. Here, the solo instrument does the ostinato (descant melody or melodies away from the other melodies for the various parts performed by the other musical instruments within the musical performance). The solo instrument does not surrender this role to any other instrument. It was observed that the other instruments apart from the solo instrument were involve in some peculiar contrapuntal entries exhibiting their impact in the performance while the solo instrument comes in with improvisatory dialogue, which were responded to by the other instruments giving rise to a call and response, and at the other times given answer to in varied melodies resulting call and refrain.

Duetic (Duoec) Heterophony

This means two instruments exhibiting the heterophony together in this case the instrument may do it in contrapuntal technique as in Alleluia Chorus in Handel's Messiah and, as found at the passages of 'and he shall reign forever' in the same Handel's Messiah, also are examples of heterophony. It was observed that the voices may be equal in vigour, and in some cases one takes over the vigorous identity while the other is mild. Mild expressions were also exhibited by the two instruments simultaneously in some cases. These varieties of mild and vigorous exhibitions where characteristic of the other heterophony segments but more substantive in duetic (duoec) heterophony.

Trioec Heterophony

This means that three instruments exhibiting the heterophony. Here, the unique interplays of the various instruments are maintained. The three instrument leading on top above the other instruments. These three instruments play various melodic lines. It means multi sound however it is notably that in this polyphony; all the individual parts are meant to be independent. The fugal entries in polyphony and the contrapuntal (independent parts) entries of the various melodies.

Quartetual Heterophony

This means that four instruments exhibiting the heterophony. Here, the unique interplays of the various instruments are maintained. The three instrument leading on top above the other instruments. These four instruments play various melodic lines. It means multi sound. However, it is notably that in this polyphony; all the individual parts are meant to be independent. The fugal entries in polyphony and the contrapuntal (independent parts) entries of the various melodies.

Quintetual Heterophony

This means that five instruments exhibiting the heterophony. Here, the unique interplays of the various instruments are maintained. The three instrument leading on top above the other instruments. These five instruments play various melodic lines. It means multi sound. However, it is notably that in this polyphony; all the individual parts are meant to be independent. The fugal entry in polyphony and the contrapuntal (independent parts) entries of the various melodies.

Sextetual Heterophony

This means that six instruments exhibiting the heterophony. Here, the unique interplays of the various instruments are maintained. The six instrument leading on top above the other instruments. These six instruments play various melodic lines. It means multi sound. However, it is notably that in this polyphony; all the individual parts are meant to be independent. The fugal entries in polyphony and the contrapuntal (independent parts) entries of the various melodies.

Septetual Heterophony

This means that seven instruments exhibiting the heterophony. Here, the unique interplays of the various instruments are maintained. The seven instrument leading on top above the other instruments. These seven instruments play various melodic lines. It means multi sound. However, it is notably that in this polyphony; all the individual parts are meant to be

independent. The fugal entries in polyphony and the contrapuntal (independent parts) entries of the various melodies.

Octetual Heterophony

This means that eight instruments exhibiting the heterophony. Here, the unique interplays of the various instruments are maintained. The eight instrument leading on top above the other instruments. These eight instruments play various melodic lines. It means multi sound. However, it is notably that in this polyphony, all the individual parts are meant to be independent. The fugal entries in polyphony and the contrapuntal (independent parts) entries of the various melodies.

Nonetic Heterophony

This means that nine instruments exhibiting the heterophony. Here, the unique interplays of the various instruments are maintained. The nine instrument leading on top above the other instruments. These nine instruments play various melodic lines. It means multi sounds are rendered. However, it is notably that in this polyphony, all the individual parts are meant to be independent. The fugal entries in polyphony and the contrapuntal (independent parts) entries of the various melodies.

Conclusion

The discussion on heterophony as deduced from the chamber musical form has been done here. The innovation was necessary hence the broad value of the African harmonic concept has been projected. It was discovered musical endeavours in Africa is likened to communal activities in a particular place. In some occasions an individual is listened to making a complaint or a defense as the case may be. In other occasions the individual interacting with a member of the community sometimes with a younger person or older person and other times with person of the same age group. It is notably that the interactions with person within the same age group appear most prevalent.

In some other occasions an individual interact with a group of persons or groups of individuals. Some of the groups may be homogenous whereby the people involve are all male or all female or mixed group(s) of male and female as the case may be. The interaction grouping is always determined by the nature of agenda, events, activities desired at any particular time. The condition of age determinant in group(s) interaction(s) are informed by the agenda, events and activities of the group member, which are also bonded by interest. It was discovered that membership of some groups were made open based on interest while membership of other

groups were determined by cultural synthesis. However, it was discovered that groups built on merely interest determinant were social determinant while the others were ritualistic determinant. There were also groups determined by social emulsification with ritual orders interwoven.

It was discovered that forcing group membership on person or person was not permissible at any time. Musically, soloec endeavours, as well as soloec cum other interactive components were found to harness musical lines, contours and fabrics for wholistic realisation of musicality of a particular people at any given time. Furthermore, the strong rhythmic essences embedded in the various music of African descent were always emphatically observed in the musical performances.

Adapting the heterophonic involvement in art music composition, the ideality of the musical activities should be reflected in the compositions. This should be so, in order to project the cultural impetus of the African peoples, and to sustain the cultural life of the various peoples within any community, and the inclinations of the belief system as persuaded by individuals or individuals within and among the various peoples and within and among the various communities, points and places as the case may be.

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