**THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF JOHN AINA TO GOSPEL MUSIC IN NIGERIA APOSTOLIC FAITH EXPERIENCE**

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**Abstract**

This paper investigates the gospel music styles of John Aina and its relevance to music education in Nigeria. Consequently, music educators here include anyone who knows or have studied music both formally and informally and passes the knowledge unto others. John Aina studied music informally in churches and under various private tutors and had contributed immeasurably to the development of gospel music education in the area of orchestra development. This study therefore focused on his musical styles, compositions, and the juxtaposition of Western harmonic techniques on the Yoruba traditional folk tunes. The implication of the findings for policy and practice were also discussed. These included among others that the young gospel artistes should emulate his devotion to gospel music. In addition, his gospel musical style of incorporation of local folk tunes to make the gospel music culturally relevant should be adopted in contemporary music composition in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Folk tune, Gospel music, Western harmony, John Aina.

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**Introduction**

Music has been part of worship in Nigeria churches and this goes to show the perfect relationship between music and worship in the Christian religion. This view was opined by Okonkwo (2006) that Christianity is the religion that entwines music with religion as its principal mode of worship and that it creates different atmospheres in worship which includes solemnity, exuberance, joy and thanksgiving. Different people have written and affirmed the introduction of education and music in the process of evangelization in Nigeria. This view was highlighted and elaborated upon by Olusoji (2006) that; the pastiche of styles that have hitherto been associated with popular genre… are now found in contemporary churches, music types such as Reggae, Hip-hop, Jazz, Gospel Waka, Juju Gospel, Highlife, Afro-beat and others have been incorporated into church music (p.181).

The adopted musical genre by John Aina interlinks the western classical styles of music to traditional folk music. In the Apostolic Faith where he was the Choir Director, the knowledge of classical music is inbuilt into their church doctrine and it symbolizes a fundamental acceptance of faith. Therefore, John Aina, being the Music Director and Organist, had a strong impact in the development of gospel music of the church for about half a century. According to Ward (1969), the church Missionary society came to Nigeria in 1842, and established several mission stations in Yoruba land. With this incursion, Vidal (2002) submitted that the embryo of transplantation of Western European musical traditions with consequent revolution influences on the concept and practice of music in Nigeria was born. Alongside the consequent revolution as noted several techniques, or approaches originated in different churches. These were contained in the use of chants, hymns, choruses, anthems, vesicles, vespers, canticles, psalms, motet, cantata, oratorios, spirituals, choreography, dance, theatrical methods, and various instrument accompaniments. Each church has her musical styles peculiar to their doctrines which they practice according to the tradition and rites guiding the practice. This musical practice generally tagged ‘gospel music’ is in variant forms in accordance to the conception of the church founder, congregation, skills, beliefs, and their general worldview about God.

Many scholars have written about the establishment of church music in Nigeria; such scholars are Akpabot (1986), Omibiyi-Obidike (1987), Omojola (1995), Adedeji (2000), Okafor (2000), Vidal (2000) and Olaniyan (2001). However, music in the Apostolic Faith church is yet to be properly researched and documented, it is in this perspective that this paper brought to fore the noble effort and contributions of John Aina to the development of gospel music in Nigeria and its relevance to music education.

**Theoretical Framework**

This study is hinder on the sociological theory to investigate the underlining socio-personal affinity of John Aina to the development of music education. Sociological theory deals with scientific study of development, structure, and function of human society. It examines ways in which social structures, which includes institutions, individuals, family, and community influences each other within the society. Sociological thinking rests on the notion that human beings act according to cultural and historical influences. According to Fogg (2003) to understand why people act as they do we have to understand their socio-cultural background: parental influences, family interactions, peer group influences, religion and general environmental conditions.

Moreover, Durkheim (1858-1917) one of the disciples of the founder of sociology, explains that individuals are products of complex social forces and cannot be considered outside of the context of the society in which they live. Therefore, this study adopted sociological theory to examine the musicological contributions of John Aina to the development of gospel music education in Nigeria. He was a product of church environment that influences his upbringing and his musical prowess and therefore was considered within the relevant socio-musical contexts. Because sociological theory includes all discussions and analysis of the basic concepts that are common within the spheres of social life, Martins and Molntyre (1994) asserted that the social system is so complex that everything influences everything. This is true of John Aina and the church-gospel music, because his life cannot be discussed independently.

**Gospel Music: An Overview**

The concept; gospel music is a complex term often loosely used than it actually appears. Many authors have given the coinage various meanings; some of which are relevant to the focus of this paper. Marshall (1952) broke the term ‘gospel’ into two –‘Gods-spell’, which he simply put as ‘Good tidings’. Marshall went further to explain that gospel is borrowed from the Latin word ‘conspectus’; which means ‘liking at the life of Jesus from a common point of view’. Thus ‘gospel’ from the stand point of Marshall means the good tidings of Jesus as commonly accepted by evangelists. This definition, which is from a theological perspective, treats gospel as a form of preaching.

However, the Oxford Advance Learners’ Dictionary defined gospel as the life and teaching of Jesus Christ as recorded in the first four books of the New Testament. It went further to define it as; things that may be believed with confidence; principle or set of principles that one can set upon or believes. This and the previous definitions confirm the postulation that gospel has something to do with religion, that which pertains to the life and teaching of Jesus Christ.

Besides, from an ethno-musicological point of view, Attah (1992:16) submitted that gospel music is a spiritual music used by most Pentecostal churches to prevent losing their youths to other churches’. Glennon’s (1980) definition of music as a part of living that has the power to awaken in us sensations and emotions of spiritual kind. This definition actually sums up what gospel music is all about; it is a brand of music used by Christians in their mode of worship to lift the spirit of the congregation. Looking at ‘black gospel music’, Jones (1975) opined that ‘it is a synthesis of West African and Afro-American music, dance, poetry, drama, a body of urban contemporary black religious music; which is a celebration of Christian experiences, salvation and hope. It is a declaration of black selfhood which is exposed through the medium of music. He concluded his postulation by describing its style of performance as being characterized by a colorful Kaleidoscope of black oratory, poet, drama and dance. This description is very true of the contemporary gospel music in Nigeria today.

While Marshall (1952) and Attah’s (1992) definitions of gospel music can be condensed to mean a brand of music which deals with the life and works of Jesus Christ, Jones (1975) view gospel song in the context of folk song that are composed in indigenous idioms, transmitted through oral method, though individuals add their own improvisation which in turn depends on their respective powers of oratory and poetry. It is in the context of individual improvisation and churches’ doctrines on musical presentation that this paper discusses gospel music of the Apostolic Faith under Rev. John Adelaja Aina.

**John Aina and his Music Career**

John Adelaja Aina was born on the 14th of October, 1938 at Ibadan to the family of Pastor Jacob Adesanya and Madam Ojuolape Aina of Ijebu-Ode in Ogun State. In 1947, he was enrolled in Igbagbo Aladura primary school as a pupil in standard one and also as science student in Ibadan Boys High School. He grew as the organist of his father’s Church where he could vamp on the organ but could not read musical notes. Notwithstanding his inability to read music, he had a high sense of aural perception as he could play by hearing and transcribe songs into tonic solfa notation.

He later met Miss Joan van de Puije, a Ghanaian and on the 10th of July 1971 at the Apostolic Faith Church, Abossey Okai, Accra in Ghana. It will be interesting to know that the four members of John Aina’s family were all musicians’ in the choir and orchestra of the Apostolic Faith. The wife is a violinist with his daughter Jossy and Jerry the boy is a flutist. He was selected in 1959 with four other young men and trained as organist for about eight months; he eventually became the principal organist at the Apostolic Faith Church headquarters in Lagos in 1963 and as Music Director. He toured round Africa and beyond for Concert presentations. The Orchestra performs music written by Western Classical Masters including Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, Haydn, Schubert and others. Rev. John Aina did all he could to build up the Music Department. He was very regular and punctual at the practices of the Choir and Orchestra.

**Organizational Structure of Music School**

John Aina was instrumental to the development of the Apostolic Faith School of Classical Music which later produced good instrumentalists. According to Ekwueme (2005) the greatest contribution to music education by the Apostolic Faith in Nigeria is the production of good orchestra instrumentalists. Many of these instrumentalists have been very useful in many music institutions in Nigeria. Under the leadership of John Aina, the music school runs different graded classes from rudiments of music to advance music studies.

The rudiments of music grade is the foundation to the serious study of basic theory of music that takes one year to complete and those who passed proceeds to musical instrument class. The voice class is the next stage of teaching the basic methods of sight reading. These classes run concurrently with the first stage of the instrumental class. At the end of the class, test is administered to students and only those who passed move to the second stage which is the Art of Singing class. This class runs concurrently with the second stage of the instrumental training.

The advance orchestra examinations pieces are; concerto, sonata or the instrument part of a symphony. In all, it takes a minimum of three years to pass through the music classes to become a member of the choir and orchestra. All members of the choir are also members of the orchestra; there is no singer without at least a musical instrument.

**Gospel Music Style of John Aina**

The gospel music style of John Aina is very impressive and it accounted for the wonderful performance of gospel music in the Apostolic Faith. The gospel music techniques in the organization knit Western musical forms to the performance of African folk music. Apart from the full choir that performs the Anthems, there are other smaller groups; the semi choir, male choir, morning star choir, double octet, octets, mixed quartets, male quartets, trios, duets and solos. There are also instrumental groups like the chamber orchestra, string orchestra, string quartets, wind orchestra, brass orchestra, trios, duets and solos, the combination which forms the biggest orchestra in Nigeria. He was also futuristic hence, the encouragement and development of the junior choir. The junior choir and orchestra have been so effective in preparing young people for senior choir and orchestra. They are made to perform fairly difficult pieces to get them ready for more difficult ones. This group features in the Sunday Schools, Youth Services and Youth Rallies.

John Aina is probably more popular as a conductor than any of the areas we mentioned in the entire paper. He has his own special style of conducting that is captivating and you cannot loose concentration while he is on the rostrum conducting, he has a way of taking absolute control of his choir and the orchestra. He has used his personality to draw people from all over the place for the presentations he organized three times in a year. He is always the personality to watch out for in any of the concerts.

The two special areas of John Aina are music arrangement and medley. He arranged songs for orchestra performance such as; ***“Ife Nla”, “He’s a miracle-working God”, “Victory of Jesus”, “E fun ‘pe na kikan” and “E ba mi gbe Jesu ga”.*** He also arranged for voices like ***“Mary’s Boy Child”, “Idahun Re l’a nreti”, “Gbo ohun awon angeli”, “Mary Don’t you weep”, “Amin”.*** Also to his credit is a solo arrangement for Violin, ***“B – I – N – G – O”.*** Medleys include ***“Bi awon Oluso agutan”,*** ***“Onigbagbo E bu sayo”*** ***“Gospel Hooked-On Favourites”*** and “***Victory Hooked-On”.*** On few occasions, he used a particular song to intersperse a set of different tunes as in ***“Ayo ‘baye”***.

**Analysis of His Musical Works**

This section presents the analysis of selected few of his musical arrangement: gospel medley of six different songs in the key of D for four-part full choir with a short instrumental intro. The time signature is 4/4. Four-bar of male unison was introduced at bar 117 to start the last song. It was reintroduced at bar 153 before the chorus of the last song to reach the climax.

***Amin*** – is a Yoruba song adapted to ‘Amen’- a Negro Spiritual. It is written in Key of G and has eight-bar instrumental introduction with a Lead voice – Solo. It is a five—part choir arrangement. The time signature is common time. The words of another Yoruba song, *E fun’pe na kikan* is given to the solo voice while others only repeat *amin* throughout the piece.

***Onigbagbo E Bus’ayo*** (Rejoice, Christians) is Yoruba words adapted to some selected tunes. It is a medley of three different songs with an instrumental introduction of seven bars. The first two songs are in F and also in common time. Instrumental interlude is also introduced before the third song at bar 35. The interlude came in on the key of B flat and ¾ time but in slow movement. Ralls is introduced at bar 50 and suddenly changed to a lively movement at bar 51. The key signature changed immediately to E flat and the time signature also changed to 4/4 time which continued to the end of the piece.

***Ayo B’aye*** (Joy to the World) is an arrangement in Yoruba for the Christmas season and it is a medley of five songs of varying time written in the key of D. The centre point of the medley is Ayo b’aye which intersperses the other songs. This song is co-arranged with Femi Adeola.

***E Ba Mi Gbe Jesu Ga*** (Lift Jesus Up with Me) is an arrangement of a Yoruba Air for the strings and the flutes. The arrangement is in G and 6/8 time. The first seventeen bars of the piece is an introduction to the piece. The first eight bars are played in unison for all the instruments for emphasis and the section contains a lot of modulations from G to A, then to B and then to C. The harmony started at bar nine and settled back to G at bar 9. There are pockets of modulations within the piece. The theme of the piece started on bar eighteen. An interlude was also introduced at bar 35 which lasted till bar 46. The theme again started at bar 47 and ran to the end of the piece which is in the form of A – B – A’.

***E fun ‘pe Na Kikan*** (Blow Ye the Trumpet) is an arrangement for the full orchestra. The key signature is in D and the time signature is 6/8. It is a short piece of 16 bars aimed at serving as an accompaniment to the vocal singing.

**Conclusion**

This study has brought to fore the bi-musicality of gospel music styles and its analysis of John Aina. A special kind of gospel music rendition that appropriated both external and internal musical styles that serves the congregation mentally, spiritually and appealed to their traditional sensibility. The findings of this paper show the organizational strategy and it effectiveness in orchestra formation. The varieties of John Aina’s musical styles were analyzed and could be incorporated into academic gospel music repertoire. The study also reveals the source of inspiration and cultural relevance of John Aina which may also serves as motivation to young gospel musicians.

It is therefore recommended that in other to make the practice of gospel music to be culturally relevant, John Aina’s style of incorporating local folk tunes should be adopted. The composers of gospel music should endevour to document their music through notation; this in essence will help to build up the gospel music collection in Nigeria. For Nigeria gospel music to be globalized, it should incorporate foreign elements in the presentation while retaining traditionally unique elements. It is recommended that composers of gospel music should make their music available so that it can be used in other churches apart from where the writer worship. Further study on the discovery of some other gospel music legendaries in order to assess and document their contributions to the development of music in Nigeria is also recommended.**REFERENCES**

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