

NEGOTIATING SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES THROUGH AFRICAN ART MUSIC: A
READING OF DAYỌYÈDÚN‘NEPA’

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Abstract

The Social and economic aspects of music compositions remain unexplored in the intercultural compositions of Nigerian art music composers. Akin Eúbà states that composers have the obligation to create music that is relevant to their own people and all people at large. Eúbà’s pronouncement includes modern art compositions that are relevant to the Nigerian situation, but extend beyond cultural and religious spheres to social, economic, and political issues in such a society. ‘Nepa’, an acronym for National Electric Power Authority, is the institutional structure responsible for coordinating and maintaining electricity supply throughout the Republic of Nigeria. Due to the inefficient and unreliable services of this sector over the years, the Nigerian government in 2005 settled for privatization to unbundle power utility across the states. However, power outages remain the norm in the country. Even though the sector has ceased to exist as ‘Nepa’, a majority of the Nigerian populace persists in calling the power sector by the name ‘Nepa’, which has become a signifier of this inefficiency. DayọOyèdún, a Nigerian composer of art music, addressing the corrupt practices of the electricity sector, has composed a choral cantata piece with the title ‘Nepa’. ‘Nepa’ is a satirical piece that critiques the corruption in the Nigerian power sector. Through this composition, Oyèdún stages a kind of activism by taking this discourse from the political realm into the concert hall. Effectively, he projects and reflects a ‘national voice’ for the masses through the music. This paper examines the tensions and resolutions articulated in this music through a close reading and textual analysis of the music. It identifies compositional techniques (hocket, modulation, word-painting, etc) that convey social meanings, and investigates the manner in which music functions in creating meaning in broader social contexts in Nigeria. This piece particularly, exemplifies Eúbà’s call for a socially relevant African art music.

Keywords: African art music, socio-economic challenges, close reading, social meaning, intercultural music.

Prologue: Eúbà’s philosophical underpinnings

For over four decades, Akin Eúbà consistently stressed the importance of making art music accessible to mainstream African audiences. This, he says, can be achieved by bringing society closer to an understanding of such works. Eúbà asks: ‘... why have the composers of neo-African art music so far failed to take advantage of the traditional popularity which music enjoys in Africa?’ (2014:79). This question is a precursor to his explanation of the far-reaching effect and the acceptance of traditional music in the Yorùbá culture. He writes:

...traditional [Yorùbá] musicians do those things with which their audiences are familiar and which are likely to win the approval of those audiences. I think that modern composers should learn from their traditional colleagues and have the same relationship with their audiences. [...W] hat I am saying is that African composers should take account of the expectations of the audience in the society in which they live, when choosing the idiom of their music. Failure to do so could alienate their potential audience (2014:78).

He continues to write about aesthetic judgements and African values, linking advocacy for African art music to his theory of creative musicology:

Traditional music is to Africans what art music is to Westerners, and in the African society, traditional music is what is regarded as of “great and lasting value” and the reason is obvious. What members of the African society identify with is traditional music, not art music. African composers should want their music to aspire to the status of what society sees as something of great and lasting value, but this cannot happen unless they can produce music with which society can identify. To achieve this, they will need to study and adopt the methods of traditional musicians who have proven expertise in how to create music that society can identify with (2014:81,82).

When, in 1992, Eúbà considered the development and improvement in contemporary Nigerian church music, he still turned to traditional and cultural values. He wrote as follows:

[N]ot only do they express the feelings of average people (their hopes, aspirations, anxieties, and fears) but they also mirror a philosophy of life that is very similar to the customary philosophy of the Yorùbá people. [...T]he literary quality of the texts reaches towards lofty heights of traditional poetry, and their style is often directly based on traditional forms. [Also,] the imagery of the texts is derived from the day-to-day experiences of modern Yorùbá(Eúbà, 1992: 56).

Since then, a corpus of compositions (both choral and instrumental) by Nigerian art music composers has built on Eùbá's position. This entails, essentially, individual compositional choice expressed in the use of musical language, the integrity of the composition, as well as the consideration of the immediate environment and the relevance of the music to society. A composer must, in Eùbá's words: 'create music for his own people and for all people at large and must act as an interpreter between the two' (1975: 49). Eùbá's consistency in addressing the issue of understanding and relevance of what could be called intercultural/bi-cultural/syncretic (Western and African) composition, is a strikingly consistent philosophical point of departure. Even though Nigerian composers have adopted, to various degrees, these values in sacred and secular compositions, social, economic, and political realities in Nigerian society are not often engaged with musically. Dayò Oyèdún's 'Nepa' is an example of a secular composition that does this. In this satirical work, Oyèdún addresses societal issues through the assimilated styles and techniques of various musical traditions by adopting a creative form that appeals to a modern African sensibility.ⁱ

Introduction

'Nepa' is the name of an original composition written by Oyèdún in 2008 as a loose-standing number in his *University Cantata*. An acronym for National Electric Power Authority, Nepa was responsible for coordinating and maintaining electricity supply throughout Nigeria. Due to the inefficient and unreliable services of this sector over the years, the Nigerian government in 2005 settled for privatization in order to unbundle power utility across the states after adopting the Electric Power Reform Act, changing the name of the central electricity company to PHCN (Power Holding Company of Nigeria). Since 2013, when PHCN ceased to exist, NERC (Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission) began to control Nigeria's electricity, and various private companies and organizations called LEDC (Local Electric Distribution Companies) have since assumed responsibility for power provision in different Nigerian states, but power outages remain a norm in the country.

In a recent report published by the United States Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) on 4 October 2018, it is noted that the current electricity situation in Nigeria is a fundamental barrier to its prosperity, and if left unattended, Nigeria is likely to become a dangerous source of global threats because a deficient electricity sector will significantly constrain economic growth and development. The CSIS directors referred to the findings of a recent World Bank study and noted that 'electricity shortages reduced a person's chance of finding a job by 41 percent' (Devermont, Judd & Moss, 2018). Their report further reveals that Nigeria currently uses 80 percent less electricity compared to countries with a similar income level. In addition to the shortage of electricity supply, CSIS also notes that even the few transmission networks in Nigeria are not maintained and this results in huge energy loss: 'Nigeria's transmission network is decrepit and its utilities are largely bankrupt' (*ibid.*).ⁱⁱ

Although 'Nepa' has ceased to exist as an entity, the name has stuck in day-to-day language, becoming a signifier of the inefficiency of the Nigerian electricity sector. 'Nepa' has been given numerous backronyms, such as: Never Expect Power Always, Please Light Candle (NEPA Plc), No Electric Power at All (NEPA). The exclamation 'Up Nepa' has become a cliché, so that children and adults all around the country exclaim 'Up Nepa!' whenever light is restored to express their delight.ⁱⁱⁱ While most people still referred to PHCN as NEPA, backronyms were also created for PHCN: Problem Has Changed Name; Please Hold a Candle Now. 'Nepa' has therefore become a trope of unreliability and dysfunction.

This might explain Oyèdún's choice to adopt the title 'Nepa' for his composition in 2008, three years after the name had been replaced by PHCN in 2005. According to Oyèdún, after he witnessed the corrupt practices of some electricity officials in his neighbourhood, he was motivated to compose about it (Oyèdún, 2017). The result was 'Nepa', a satirical piece that critiques corruption in the Nigerian electricity/power sector. In this piece, Oyèdún attempts to project a 'national voice' for general Nigerians. Even though he writes about the typical power situation in Nigeria and the corrupt practices of staff in this sector, at the end of the piece, he also turns to address the public on their civic responsibilities, namely, to fix the electricity sector by paying bills regularly and not defaulting.

In this paper, the author asks if Oyèdún succeeds in writing a kind of African art music, as Eùbá envisioned, that effectively communicates about a national crisis to its audience. The author considers also how the performance of 'Nepa' could be argued to create the platform and space for conversations that can transform people's ideological positions or dispositions with regard to large-scale and complex national problems like electricity supply.

Methodology

This study employs a close reading of selected examples from the music score, textual interpretation, and contextual reading of Oyèdún's cantata 'Nepa' to examine how compositional techniques convey socio-economic meaning. Close reading is a hermeneutic approach of a detailed reading of a musical work that is usually not based on a pre-selected list of analytical criteria but on a detailed reading of the specific text with close attentiveness to the nuances and interrelationships in their contexts. The descriptive analyses of Oyèdún's 'Nepa' presented here are selected examples from the more extensive reading done in the author's doctoral

dissertation, and the musical examples here, takes seriously the basic tenets of musical content analyses and subsequent interpretation of the musical and extra-musical (social) considerations in this work.

A Reading of ‘Nepa’

The narrative of ‘Nepa’ is carried by the voice of the masses (SATB choir) expressing their dissatisfaction about the electricity crisis. The music begins with a monologue describing the frustration brought about by power failures. The narrator laments how much mosquito bites have infested the skin and drained the blood due to the usual light-out experienced at night, likening the situation to being in a ‘kirikiri prison cell’.^{iv} Subsequently, he describes the transient excitement experienced whenever electricity is restored, encouraging people to iron all their clothes and be hasty about it because Nepa’s electricity supply is not reliable. He continues to describe electricity fluctuation as the waxing and waning of light that is eventually extinguished, with the composer portraying the fluctuation by the use of staccato-like sound effects.

A follow-up narrative in another section of the music features a different character, a woman, who relates her experiences and travails with Nepa officials. The woman invites everyone to hear her story and come to their own conclusions. She starts by expressing her surprise and confessing that the things the eyes have seen, the mouth cannot say. She was asleep and suddenly awakened by a neighbour who informed her that she had a visitor, a ‘slim and ill-fed’ man who introduced himself as ‘a Nepa boss’ before requesting her electricity payment receipt, which she presented to him. He then proceeded to explain to her that she was in debt and that he would disconnect her electricity. But the Nepa boss went further, asking for a bribe. In this scene, Oyèdún writes that bribery and corruption should be rejected and denounced. The line of the text translates as ‘don’t give or collect bribes, let us all reject and desist from corruption’ (*Emá fun emágbaowóehìn...ejékájùmòko, owóehìn*).

Soon, the narrative continues, and the character who was visited by the Nepa official implores members of the public to warn the Nepa official not to disconnect her electricity supply. Hinting at an unusual spiritual power, she declares that if the Nepa official dared to disconnect her electricity cable, he would be electrocuted. Oyèdún ends the narrative with a directive to the public, namely that they should pay their electricity bills regularly and not defraud the service provider, but come together with a sense of responsibility to fix ‘Nepa’ (*E ɔsan ’wóinádédé, e másejibiti, e san ’wóinádédé o; e jékátuñ Nepase*).

‘Nepa’ has a three-part structure, beginning on F major with several modulations and metre changes and ending on B flat major (see the table below). Each section of the music commences with key and metrical changes not confined to structural divisions.

| Section A – Bars | Section A | Tonality |
|---|--|---|
| A – bars 1-16 A ^I – bars 17 -52 | Simple quadruple time key signature Rhythmic effect bar 26 -50 | F major |
| B – 53 -103 | - Change of time and key signature, to compound duple bar 53 - Song form with folk-like melody bars 53 to 86 - Transitory passage to sub-section bars 86-90 - Change of meter to $\frac{4}{4}$ for speech/spoken rhythm effect bars 87-97 - Refrain 91-100 | Eb major G minor/ Eb major |
| C – 104-150 | - Change of key and time signature $\frac{12}{8}$ bar 104 for a new musical material - Modulation - bar 108 - Modulation - bar 112 - Modulation – bar 116 - Sub-theme bar 120-123 - Sub-theme extension from bar 131 - Modulation | F major Bb major Eb major Ab major Bb major |
| Coda 151 -163 | New musical material used as a coda | Bb major |

Oyèdún’s ‘Nepa’, even though it is predominantly African in character, is very structural, bearing a strong elemental feature of Western/European tonal music with respect to its form, harmony, and tonality. The piano accompaniment is meant to be largely improvised, as the composer only writes accompaniment for selected bars in sections where he regarded it as essential to fix the harmonic, rhythmic, and melodic unfolding of the music. Oyèdún’s piano accompaniments in his cantatas are often very simple and are usually derived from the choral parts. In this piece, various compositional techniques are used to create effects that enhance both the musical and extra-musical significations of the music. Some of the most prominent techniques are:

1. Rhythmic effects like the bouncing rhythms in bars 17-26 are used to portray the instability of electricity. It starts with tenor and bass voices singing a third apart with the melody in the tenor (bars 19 to 20), while the two other voices are silent (**Error! Reference source not found.**). This is followed in bars 21 to 22, with the sopranos and altos taking over with a minor coloration, also mostly a third apart, while the tenors and basses are silent. From bars 23 to 24, a dotted rhythm is introduced in the active voices (altos, tenors, and basses) and in bar 25 Oyèdún writes a single line accompaniment (all voices are silent here), echoing the preceding dotted rhythm in the right hand of the piano, with the music reaching a cadence on the first three beats in bar 26. It is one of the rare instances in this music where the sketchy accompaniment actually performs a structural function, leading the voices towards a cadence.

The musical score for Example 1, 'Nepa', spans five systems. The first four systems are vocal parts for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The lyrics are:
 System 1: e lo o e lo
 System 2: e lo o e lo da ku da ji ni na Ne pa o Ó di pi
 System 3: i na de e ka so si ta o da ku da ji ni na Ne pa o Ó di pi
 System 4: i na de e ka so si ta o da ku da ji ni na Ne pa o Ó di pi
 System 5: INTERLUDE (piano accompaniment)

Example 1: Bars 17-26, 'Nepa', (Oyèdún 2008:2, 3).

2. Contrapuntal techniques like a very pronounced hocket technique in bars 26-34 that depicts the fluctuation of electricity with vowels 'a' and 'o'. Oyèdún effectively creates a very pronounced rhythmic effect to depict electricity fluctuation from bars 26 to 34, employing a hocket technique, whereby the altos and tenors alternatively present the rhythmic and tone-patterns (often on single pitches, emphasizing the rhythmic effect of the exchanges). The alto voices start on the last beat in bar 26 on the vowel 'ah aa', and continue to bar 28, while the other voices are deftly interspaced on the vowel 'o'. The tenors then assume the lead from the last quaver in bar 28 and continue through to bar 30, with the altos regaining initiative from the last quaver in bar 30 through to bar 32 and handing back the lead to the tenors from the last quaver in bar 32 through to bar 34. In this way, altos and tenors exchange the lead role back and forth (see yellow markings below). The other voices harmonize the exchanges between the two lead voices, with the harmonic progression also passing echoing the undulating effect in a movement from tonic to dominant and back again (see **Error! Reference source not found.** below)..

26

SOPRANO

ALTO

TENOR

BASS

31

ó di pi o o ó di pi

Ah a a a a a a a a ó di pi o o ó di pi a

o o ó di pi ah a a a a a a a a ó di pi

o o ó di pi lo lo e ya ra o

a a a a a a a a ó di pi lo lo e ya ra o

o o ó di pi e tè tè e tè tè sa re e ya ra o won

o o ó di pi lo lo e ya ra o

Example 2: Bars 26-34, 'Nepa', (Oyèdún 2008:3, 4).

- Antiphonal and sequential gestures as are found in bars 35-41 (example 3). Here, continuity is assigned to the tenors, with various forms of interchange and response between the other voices;

34

SOPRANO

ALTO

TENOR

BASS

39

a è yí ga a è yí ga o ó ga o

eh eh a a eh

won m'ú ná lo o won m'ú ná lo o won m'ú ná won m'ú ná won m'ú ná lo o won

eh eh a!!! a!!! eh!!!

a è yí ga a è yí ga o Ah_ Ne pa

eh eh a a Ah_ Ne pa

m'ú ná lo o won m'ú ná lo o won m'ú ná won 'ú ná i na o Ne_ pa

eh eh a a Ah_ Ne pa

Example 3: Bars 34-42, 'Nepa', (Oyèdún 2008:4, 5).

- The writing of folk-like songs, as happens in the melody in the B section, where Oyèdún employs a pentatonic scale (bars 53-86). The text here is a descriptive narration of the ordeal of the woman with the Nepa official, recounted earlier. While the soprano voice sings the folk melody, other voices are given tones (minor and chromatic coloration) that paint the mood of the story. In example 4 below (bars 69 – 86), the yellow-marked phrase is built on a two-bar sequential structure with the composer using rests to separate the sequences and to depict the disconnection of an electric cable (the text 'ja' translates as 'cut or disconnect' and 'na' as 'electricity'). Oyèdún also assigns some chromatic

coloration, implying a minor tonality to the altos and basses from bars 80 to 84, adding a harmonic effect of foreboding to the text that concerns the disconnection of the electricity cable by the Nepa official (see red markings).

Example 4: Bars 69-86, ‘Nepa’, (Oyèdún 2008:7, 8).

5. The use of speech tone and chromatic alterations in the transitory passage. Oyèdún’s piano writing through this transition coincides with a change of time signature ($\frac{4}{4}$) and is characterized by a strikingly chromatic chord (F# Bb Eb, yellow markings) on the first beat in bar 87 (example 5). He then launches into the speech tone, which he assigns to all the voices on the next two beats while the piano is silent. Although the speech tone is directed by the chords in the piano, the piano remains silent when the voices intone ‘settle me’ (the sopranos and altos are asked to speak on the tonic pitch, while the tenors and basses are instructed to anchor their speech on the supertonic pitch, thus creating a jarring dissonance. In this way, the Nepa official’s request for a bribe is harshly judged musically, with the chromatic writing for the piano depicting the disruption and shock that accompanies the corrupt official’s request for a bribe. In bars 89 and 90, the piano introduces this fight against bribery, taken up by the voices after this section.

Example 5: Bars 86-90, ‘Nepa’, (Oyèdún 2008:8, 9).

6. Modulation in descending fifths in a progressively darker warning expressed to the same melody with a text that contains a stern warning to the Nepa official not to disconnect the woman’s electricity (bars 104-119). Oyèdún recycles the same musical material through successive descending fifth modulation cycles: from F major to Bb major to Eb major to Ab major. From the musical example 6 below (bars 104 -111), the tenors introduce the theme, with the basses joining in bar 104. Bar 108 starts with a modulation to the key of B flat major with the same two voices alternating, but this time led by the basses, reiterating the exact melody sung previously by the tenors. The tenors now alternate with the basses, ending with a flattened leading note that swings the key down another fifth to E flat major (bars 108 to 111), which also signals the entry of the altos in the bar following (bar 112).

The image shows a musical score for two systems of staves. The first system covers bars 104 to 107, and the second system covers bars 108 to 111. Each system has four staves: two for tenors and two for basses. The lyrics are in Yoruba and are written below the vocal lines. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and bar lines.

Example 6: Bars 104-111, ‘Nepa’, (Oyèdún 2008:10, 11).

7. Extensive use of word-painting on the syllables ‘aganpa’ (he’ll be electrocuted).Oyèdún varies the word tonally and rhythmically, and the shift in the tonal inflection creates different levels of meaning in the Yorùbá language. The word ‘aganpa’, first issued by the altos, tenors and basses as their unison response to the soprano calls in bar 132 and sung continuously up to bar 137, is now intoned by all four voices in a harmonized, homophonic manner with several tied tones ensuring an off-beat setting of syllables (see example 7 below). Oyèdún effects word painting by varying the word and its musical setting rhythmically. In this case, placing emphasis on different syllables of the same word creates different meanings because of the tonal inflection. Accompanying this variation in setting the word ‘aganpa’, Oyèdún also modulates between each six-bar phrase. In the first set of six bars (bars 139 to 144), he modulates from A flat major to A major; in the second, he moves from A major to B flat major (bars 145 to 150). The modulation to key centres a semitone apart illustrates the words of sudden shock. For example, the text in bars 139 to 144 is ‘Áganpa, áganpa, ágan, ágan, àganpa; Áganpa pa pa, áganpa’ (he’ll be electrocuted, electrocuted, shocked, shocked, electrocuted; he’ll be electrocuted, killed, killed, electrocuted). Oyèdún’s rhythmic breaking up of the word ‘aganpa’ into syllables creates distinct meanings in Yorùbá. The intensity created by the inexact repetition of accents, meaning, oscillation, and key shifts harnessed to a single event manages to communicate something of the instability and disruption that characterizes a situation that is nevertheless not unusual, a constant of Nigerian life. This section of the music ends in bar 150 on a weak cadence evolving out of an extended tonic chord, again a reinforcement of the tension that has built up in the text and music between unresolved corrupt practices and attempts to rectify them.

139
yá á gan pa á gan pa á gan a gan á gan pa á gan pa pa pa á gan pa á gan pa
á gan pa á gan pa á gan a gan á gan pa á gan pa pa pa á gan pa á gan pa
á gan pa á gan pa á gan a gan á gan pa á gan pa pa pa á gan pa á gan pa
á gan pa á gan pa á gan a gan á gan pa á gan pa pa pa á gan pa á gan pa

145
á gan pa á gan pa á gan a gan á gan pa á gan pa pa pa á gan pa á gan pa
á gan pa á gan pa á gan a gan á gan pa á gan pa pa pa á gan pa á gan pa
á gan pa á gan pa á gan a gan á gan pa á gan pa pa pa á gan pa á gan pa
á gan pa á gan pa á gan a gan á gan pa á gan pa pa pa á gan pa á gan pa

148
á gan pa á gan pa á gan a gan á gan pa á gan pa pa pa á gan pa á gan pa
á gan pa á gan pa á gan a gan á gan pa á gan pa pa pa á gan pa á gan pa
á gan pa á gan pa á gan a gan á gan pa á gan pa pa pa á gan pa á gan pa
á gan pa á gan pa á gan a gan á gan pa á gan pa pa pa á gan pa á gan pa

Example 7: Bars 139-150, ‘Nepa’, (Oyèdún 2008:15- 17).

8. A coda that balances the discourse (bars 151 – 163). Uncharacteristically for such a closing section, Oyèdún introduces new musical material over the course of the next sixteen bars (see example 8). In this final part of the setting, Oyèdún effectively balances his critique of Nepa by making an appeal to consumers (in other words, the audience) to pay their electricity bills regularly, not to defraud the system, and to be part of the solution to the electricity crisis. The altos, tenors, and basses start homophonically in bar 151, and they are joined by the sopranos with a sweetly singing melody before the end of bar 151. The setting suggests a vocal accompaniment (altos, tenors, and basses) to a solo melody (soprano). This initial statement is repeated (bars 151 to 155), with a movement towards G minor from bars 155 to 158, marked red. Oyèdún brings the music to a conclusion by asking the sopranos to sing the highest note they have yet sung in the piece (the second B flat above Middle C), which is sustained for four bars above the altos, tenors and basses who harmonize pitches belonging to the tonic chord, in effect weakening it by its inversions and even a late chromatic alteration (Db E Bb, yellow marking) that resolves to the tonic in root position. This cadential gesture is repeated in bars 161 and 162 (example 8, marked blue). The register chosen for the altos, tenors, and basses distances them from the sopranos, which is cadentially a strengthening device, but could also contribute to signifying something of a purity unsullied by the corruption and problems expounded in the piece. The weakened tonic cadence is not the first of its kind in this piece, and it might suggest a less-than-optimistic view that solutions are, in fact, possible (example 8, marked black).

132
 Ah o re e lo san wo eh e san wo i na e san wo i na de de
 E san wo i na de de e san wo i na de de e san wo i na de de e san wo i na de de e san wo i na de de
 E san wo i na de de e san wo i na de de e san wo i na de de e san wo i na de de e san wo i na de de
 E san wo i na de de e san wo i na de de e san wo i na de de e san wo i na de de e san wo i na de de

137
 o e san wo i na de de o e san wo i na e san
 o e ma se ji bi ti e san wo i na de de o e ma se ji bi ti E san wo i na e san
 o e ma se ji bi ti e san wo i na de de o e ma se ji bi ti E san wo i na e san
 o e ma se ji bi ti e san wo i na de de o e ma se ji bi ti E san wo i na e san

161
 wo
 wo e je ka tun Ne pa Oh e je ka tun Ne pa Ah e je ka tun Ne pa se
 wo e je ka tun Ne pa Oh e je ka tun Ne pa Ah e je ka tun Ne pa se
 wo je ka tun Ne pa Oh je ka tun Ne pa Ah je ka tun Ne pa se

Fine

Bars 151-163, ‘Nepa’, (Oyèdún 2008:17- 19).

Conclusion

The use of these techniques, this paper suggest, indicates the conscious employment of compositional devices to convey social meaning in the manner the author understands Akin Eúbà to have advocated. This paper suggest that the performance of a piece such as ‘Nepa’ in a concert space creates a viable platform for conversations on social and political issues like corruption and law-abiding principles of citizenship. Oyèdún confirms this in an anecdote of an exchange that took place after his choir performed ‘Nepa’,

[u]nknown to me, the general manager of the organization was in the audience. After the performance, the woman walked up to me and said, “Well, even though you abused us and alleged all sorts, the part I like most is, you told the people to pay their bills”. Then we both laughed over it (D. Oyèdún, personal communication January 30, 2017).

‘Nepa’ occupies a unique position of a functional/utilitarian music divorced from socio-economic concerns. Oyèdún may have been more subtle and measured in challenging deep structures of the Nigerian economy, but his engagement of societal challenges and structures in his music is indisputable. Oyèdún allows us, therefore, to consider African art music as a socio-politically engaged mode of creative activity that makes the contemplative space of the concert hall a potentially transformative space to negotiate, mediate, or intervene in Nigeria’s socio-political and economic issues.

Oyèdún’s satirical music provides one example of a musical engagement that takes seriously what can be called the aesthetics of African art music, as well as an ethics that reaches back to what Eúbà described as traditional music’s relational quality with its audiences. Although I donot think it is possible to illustrate here

that the music actually changes social circumstances or ideological convictions, Oyèdùń's 'Nepa', and his secular cantatas in general, provide a window on what kind of African art music could fulfil the requirements of a socially aware ethics.

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