



MUSIC ANALYTICAL PRESENTATION OF NEWLOVE ANNAN'S MƆBƆ DAWUR (I WILL TELL IT TO THE WORLD) (CHORAL COMPOSITION)

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ABSTRACT

MƆbƆ Dawur (I will tell it to the world) is an SATB work of Newlove Annan, a Ghanaian prolific choral music composer and organist. In Annan's MƆbƆ Dawur, he explores varied choral compositional styles. In this paper the writers attempt to provide an analysis of MƆbƆ Dawur using musical analytical parameters such as; scale, melody, vocal ranges, harmony, rhythm texture, form, compositional techniques, dynamics and text, to unravel the various compositional styles that have been utilized by the composer. The outcome of the paper is to provide an analytic presentation of a choral piece that utilizes varied compositional dimensions to serve as the basis for the study and composition of choral works.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Ekwueme declares that he and Jones debunk the contention that: “the African is utterly unconscious of any organized theory behind his music. He makes his music quite spontaneously, and it is with interest and the delight of discovery that the more educated African will listen to a demonstration of the basic principles which underlie his musical practice” (Ekwueme, 1980). This paper comes to confirm that whatever Annan has put in his composition, *MƆbƆ Dawur, (I will tell it to the world)*, has consciously been written recognizing and applying formal principles in theory and composition.

The paper presents three sections, devoting the first section to highlighting on Annan's profile. The second section presents a systematic musical analysis of Annan's composition, *MƆbƆ Dawur*,

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using analytical parameters such as Scale, Melodic Organization, Vocal Ranges Harmony, Rhythm, Texture, Form, Compositional Techniques, Dynamics and text. All examples will therefore be taken from the composition after a critical analysis had been done. The final section; the conclusion and suggestion point out portions of the music which attract attention and suggest dimensions for a progress.

2. ANNAN'S PROFILE

Born on 20th March 1973, Newlove Annan began his career as a musician when his father procured a harmonium to teach him informally. At the age of 6 he had memorized few hymns his father used to play during the period he was tutoring him. This was the same period Newlove Annan was featured on Ghana Television (GTV) in a programme in 1979 for which his father applied culminating in receiving an award from the *Kukurantumi*¹ traditional chief. His mother was equally responsible for his proficiency as she always challenged him with pieces she had learned at choir practice and discussed works of great Ghanaian composers with him. The period he enrolled in Ghana's Achimota School can be described as a "period of maturity" as illustrated through the time he fine-tuned his organ playing.

After Achimota School, Newlove Annan sought to continue his music education at the University of Ghana and learned of the indigenous compositional writings of Amu, Nketia and Amissah. Later he travelled to America for his dual Masters programme. Currently Annan is pursuing a Ph. D degree in Musicology at the Claremont Graduate School in California, United States of America. He founded the Methodist Evangel Choir² and came out with albums. A number of his compositions written for groups to perform have been published in the United Methodist Hymnal.

Newlove Annan is a versatile musician, composer, and multi-instrumentalist. He has contributed immensely to Church music life in Africa and in the United States. His interests include Theology and music in Christian Education.

3. ANALYSIS

Mɔbo Dawur is a choral piece primarily written for SATB preferably to be sung by church choirs. It addresses the issue of acknowledging God's greatness and kindness to the entire world and admonishes Christians of today to be appreciative, as a reciprocal to what God has done for mankind by screaming to tell all in the world.

4. SCALE

A scale is defined as "series of pitches arranged in order from low to high or high to low (Kwami, 2011). These arranged pitches may be major, minor or pentatonic (5 tones), heptatonic

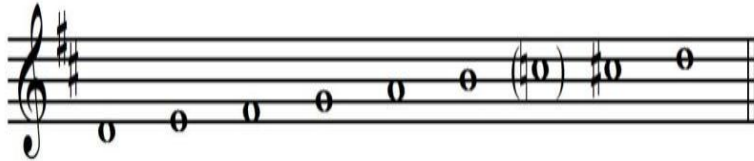
¹ A town in the Eastern Region of Ghana.

² A choral group founded by Newlove Annan in Ghana.

(7 tones) depending on the number of notes within the scale or the intervallic structure of the successive notes.

In *Mɔ̀bɔ̀ Dawur*, Annan uses a major scale as the source of his tonal matter. With the seventh degree of the scale where the minor seventh from the tonic is interchangeably used with the major seventh from the tonic respectively, the mode and the scale can best be described as practically identical to the ‘major’.

Fig- 1.

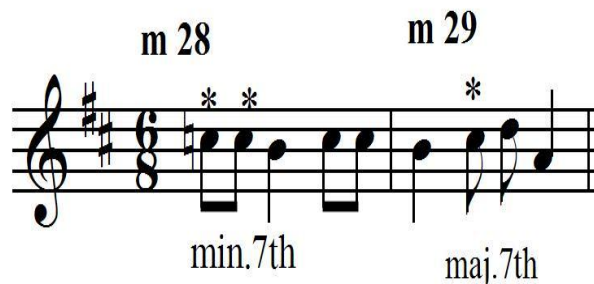


4.1. The scale used in *Mɔ̀bɔ̀ Dawur*.

Thus, the pitch content reflects the use of the heptatonic scale, which is the prime tonality of the language used, Akan. The melodic rise, utilising sequences to a higher pitch in bars 12b-16a, underscores the assertion and the reminiscent of the text used. A better understanding will be achieved with the illustration below.

In the illustration below, Annan employs both versions of the leading note i.e major and minor sevenths from the tonic. One noticeable feature here is that Annan’s descending progressions from the seventh degree is always from the minor seventh while all the ascending progressions from the seventh degree are from the major seventh.

Fig- 2.



5. MELODIC ORGANIZATION

[Kamein \(1994\)](#) defines melody as “series of single notes which add up to a recognizable whole. It begins, moves, and ends; it has direction shape and continuity. The up- and- down movement of its pitches conveys tension and releases, expectation and arrival ([Kamein, 1994](#)). Melody is also defined by [Mereku \(2005\)](#) as “a succession of notes varying in pitch, which have an

organized and recognizable shape” (Mereku, 2005). This attests to the fact that melody accounts here for the units of structure, the motion and the curve.

The melodic organization in *Mɔbɔ Dawur*, in addition to what has been identified by Kamien and Mereku will also account for African compositional techniques with regard to musical statements as units of structure or perceptual units (phrases, themes and motifs) combining or juxtaposing “statements” within a defined framework marked by periodic closures (sometimes called cycles), use of expressive or syntactic devices such as prolongations, interpolations, extensions, and relationship between compositional forms and performance procedures. (Nketia, 1966; Kongo, 2011) In the quoted references, all the parameters are considered within an African context, and it is within this same context that they apply in this paper.

The composer uses few chromatic notes. There is the use of raised fourth and fifth in the melodic structure of *Mɔbɔ Dawur*, they should be considered as preferred notes only and not as chromatic notes of the scale. In the singing culture of the Methodist church such are bound to occur, this rather shows the influence of Western hymn singing and playing of the keyboard that has existed in the Church since its inception. Annan, by his background, falls a victim of one of such composers and keyboard players.

Fig- 3.



In addition, the segment begins with a stepwise descent from D5, to a lower pitch, D4 in measure 4 and rises to the dominant to complete the beginning sentence in bar 6. The melody outlines a usage of all the diatonic notes within the octave (Tonic to tonic) in D major.

The melody has incessant repetitions of rhythmic and textual materials which are motives of the initial sentence. These rhythmic repetitions can also be observed in the construction of motives and phrases in the various sections of the music as in bars 29-33. Annan has been repetitive because he tries to show his “Africaness” in this piece of writing. Agordoh informs about repetition as “a feature which is inherent in African traditional music by citing Amu’s way of writing. He states that “Amu is repetitive-repeating the same word, phrase or sentence several times, which is an essential part of traditional African music” (Agordoh, 2004). On the same subject, Agawu asserts:

Order emanates from repetition and [it] is from doing the same thing” over and over again that the Northern Ewe find meaning in life. Ritual orders both “life” and “art”. Repetition gives

Northern Ewes assurance of the known and the familiar, enables them to take stock of what has been achieved, and provides a forum for creative interpretation and reinterpretation of culture (Agawu, 1995)

There is frequent distribution of the melodic line among the parts. In bars 23 to 32 and 38 to 40, the melodic line shifts to the bass part. It rises by increasingly large intervals to a climactic pitch as found in measures 88 and 90, where the highest pitch is found.

Annan keeps his intervallic movement in the soprano within seconds, thirds, fourths and occasionally fifths, and the smooth bass line with occasional leaps of fifths at cadential points.

The melody is built on three main themes,



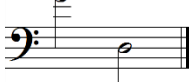

- a. *mɔbɔ dawur akyerɛ aman* as in measure 1-2
- b. *mɔbɔ ma aman atse bi* as in measure 3-4
- c. *Nyame ye, Ɔsɛ ayeyi* as in measure 5-6.

See Fig. 4 above

6. VOCAL RANGES

Vocal ranges accounts for the use of pitch level intervals for the various voice parts in a composition. In this music, registral expansion and contraction complements and creates contrasting timbres. Annan explored the registral and timbral possibilities of the capabilities of the various voice parts ranges. He operated ranges between intervals of eleven (11) for Soprano, ten (10) for Alto, eleven (11) for tenor and twelve (12) for the bass part. See the illustrations below.

Fig. 4

Soprano range	Alto range	Tenor range	Bass range
			

The ranges used in the music were very favourable as it depicted the right choice for both women's voices and males' voices as well as voice ranges for youth choral groups.

In *Mɔbɔ Dawur*, Annan has been quite conscious of ranges for the various voices. The piece starts on d^2 for soprano and alto and d_1 for tenor and bass. The soprano operates within the range of one and half octave in register hitting g^2 , the highest tone in the entire piece in measure 75, 76 and 90.

7. HARMONY

Kennedy and Kennedy (2007) state that harmony is the simultaneous sounding of notes, giving what is meant by vertical music contrasted with horizontal music. The harmonic organization in

asymmetrical phrases, contrasting textures, dynamics, and tempos frequently underscore some of the sections of the music. The textural parameters in this paper focuses on the combination of melodic and rhythmic lines.

The content of the music is full of responsorial form peculiar to most of the indigenous songs of the Akan people of Ghana where there is usually a cantor against the chorus. It is also known as antiphony. There is usually a leader announcing an antecedent and responded in the chorus (Ekwueme, 1999).

Annan uses this style to display varied textural densities in the music. There is also the frequent use of solo, duet and three-part writings apart from the four parts and five parts characterising the music. (see measures 21, 23, 49-69, 82-87, 91-92, 99-108).

There is the use of homophonic textures animated by imitation; facile changes between monophonic, homophonic, and polyphonic textures emerge as a sign of Annan's mature style. The textural and dynamic palette which serves an expressive purpose was extended through the use of silence among some of the parts.

Section C (measures 99 to 131) of the music is also texturally expansive exchanging roles of baritone and mezzo soprano against the chorus part creating a full five-part chord.

Generally, the texture of *Mɔbɔ dawur* is polyphonic with intermittent homophonic sections. Textural variation is one of the means by which Annan achieves contrast and generates interest in the piece. This was not done only through the variation of textural density but also through the difference in the fabric of the different sections of the piece.

10. POLYPHONY

Mɔbɔ dawur exemplifies on stylistic feature of Annan's contrapuntal (fugal expositions) and sequential writing. In this piece, he treats "fugue" in his own way; and has totally been unconventional. He writes in a style to imitate fugue but has failed to bring to bear all the elements of a fugue. Perhaps he writes in such a style to provoke composers on what he seeks to invent. In consideration with conventions in the writing of a fugue, he has totally been out of the trend, because he does not state the theme in all the voices of the polyphonic texture. There is no evidence of movement to any opposing key and the reestablishment of the tonal center. He does not apply the elements to the fullest as exemplified by Randel who informs about fugue in the New Harvard Dictionary of Music as "the most fully developed procedure of imitative counterpoint which the theme is stated successively in all voices of the polyphonic texture, tonally established, continuously expressed, opposed, and reestablished also the genre designations for a work employing this procedure" (Randel, 1986).

It should be noted that there are some measures in which the voice parts are completely independent. For example, in measure 115-129, each voice has its distinctive rhythmic pattern with different syllables or words but have the same harmonic structure. Worth taking note of, is the response technique employed in the fourth section. Call and response is a musical form that is well

organized in Akan vocal music. Annan has therefore utilized an Akan expressive element in this piece.

11. FORMAL STRUCTURE

Form is about the structure and design of the composition. With the formal structure, the study examines the conformity of the pieces with responsorial and other alternating proceedings in the build-up of structural units.

The structure *mɔbɔ dawur* is through composed with the form scheme ABCD and a Coda. The first section (A) has a 6 measure opening in unison. All parts break to their homes at measure 7 moving through “a” minor and “b” minor using shifting tonality at measure 14-16. Measure 21 to 33 is a call by soprano which is responded to by alto, tenor and bass in homophony. This is followed with all the parts in homophony to measure 47 with a perfect cadence, establishing the home key, to mark the end of section A.

A 13-measure theme begins the B section by soprano from measure 49-60. There is an exact imitation by altos of only the first 4 measures of what had been done by sopranos after which alto breaks away. Whilst alto imitates soprano, the latter provides a countermelody to the rhythm. Tenor enters at measure 69 on the dominant with in the same pitches and rhythm for only 2 measures. Bass enters at measure 70 with completely new rhythm and text. At measure 82 tenor and bass move in a long rising sequence in thirds until m 88 and descend in the same way till measure 92. Alto provides a counterpoint to this sequence until soprano joins at measure 89 to end this section at measure 98.

Measure 99 marks the beginning of Section C. Soprano begins this section with a new theme. Alto joins at measure 105 with an imitation of the theme except that few notes have been altered in the alto part; the parts moved away from chromatics in measure 104. Tenor enters at measure 109 imitating only the rhythm of the theme. At measure 115 there is a change of tempo from compound duple to simple duple demonstrating polyrhythm in this part of the section until measure 131 ending with a perfect cadence of the relative minor (b). Measure 132 is resumption to tempo primo. This part of section C is a repetition of measure 19-48 of section A.

Section D is in five parts, bass solo changing hands with tenor solo and a chorus. This section is typical of music of Africa because of its call and response nature. Themes from this section are extracts from the previous sections. Apart from the call and response nature, the chorus is quite homophonic. There is a coda of only one bar to round off the piece. The call and response can be likened to Western style in its usage. [Amuah \(2012\)](#), commenting about Badu’s composition in respect to his transformation of traditional music elements and blending with harmonic ideologies, he states: “Badu writes five parts; a tenor/alto solo against SATB. In the traditional set up, music making has primarily been call and response but confined to solo against two parts either in thirds or sixths ([Amuah, 2012](#)).

This has also been likened to the performance of the dirge, as Agawu puts it as “the standard form of the dirge follows the traditional call and response pattern. A lead singer intones the call or

introductory segment (a), to which the chorus responds (B). The A-B pattern is then repeated a number of times; the usually ends with B” (Agawu, 1995). With Annan’s knowledge in Western music and his application of western theoretical and harmonic concepts has written in five parts to depict the African choral music performance. The following gives the summary of the form of the music.

1. Section A (m1-48) Apart from the first six bars which seeks to portray the composers intention to bring out the meaning of the text thereby writing in unison the rest of the first section is a combination of polyphonic and homophonic textures and less contrapuntal
2. Section B (m 49-98) is quite contrapuntal. The latter part is polyphonic with parallel movements in two and three adjacent parts. For example tenor and bass moving parallel thirds from m 82-92
3. The C section is also quite contrapuntal. The middle part of this section which is written in simple duple is also polyphonic. The movement of parallel thirds exists quite often amongst tenor and bass. (see measures 82 to 88)
4. Section D is in five parts which makes use of call and response in its technique in most parts of the piece and briefly homophonic getting to the end of this section.

12. COMPOSITIONAL DEVICES AND CADENCES

The composer uses sequences and contrapuntal passages (fugal expositions) extensively as his main compositional techniques. Syncopations, transient modulations, polarity, repetitions, meter changes, imitations of the head motives however pervade the entire movement of the piece. Cadences used were quite extended. Interrupted cadences were frequently used to move from dominant to the submediant and to dominant. There were other cadences used to give harmonic flavour at the ends of the musical sentences. Some of these cadences were imperfect, perfect, plagal and Phrygian. The variety of cadences was extension intended to expand the harmonic palette of the work. The following cadences have been established in the piece:

Table-1.

Measure	Cadence
15-16	Interrupted Cadence (V7 of vi-vi)
19-20	An imperfect Cadence
47-48	Perfect
97-98	Imperfect
130-131	Interrupted Cadence
150-151	Perfect
153-154	Interrupted Cadence
157-158	Perfect Cadence
159-161	Cadential extension (Perfect)

The first time he used sequence was at measure 13-16. The second time from measure 55-59. Then again at measure 65-69. Tenor and Bass also enter in a sequence at measure 82-89 and falling sequence measure 90-92.

13. DYNAMICS

The piece has no dynamic marks at all. The writers surmise that the composer left this out deliberately so that each music director could apply his/her own musicianship on how to punctuate and interpret the piece with dynamics.

14. TEXT

The Lyrics in this paper were examined in terms of their contours in relationship with pitches and in terms of the texts. Newlove Annan is one of the prolific Ghanaian composers who believe in the fact that one of the best ways to render a choral piece using a local language like Akan is to observe the doctrine of close relationship in between speech and music as Nketia exemplifies:

When texts in tonal languages are sung, the tones used normally in speech are reflected in the contour of the melody. Thus melodic progression within a phrase is determined partly by musical consideration. Sequences of repeated tones and the use of rising and falling intervals of flexures (rise-fall fall-rise patterns) in melodies may reflect the intonation patterns used in speech (Nketia, 1974).

In this piece, he tries to manifest this phenomenon by ensuring that as much as possible there is little or no deviation of melodic contour from the spoken contour and rhythm of the text. As very good speakers of the language, the writers have observed that the composer has greatly succeeded not only in replicating the speech tone inflections and contour of the language or words used, but also their rhythm. He further ensures that the length and ordering of note values arranged and situated by the relative lengths of the spoken version with the text. This has been demonstrated earlier using a four-line staff to indicate the reflections under rhythm and meter.

There is no melismatic singing in this piece. In other words there is no colouring of any one syllable. Singing is generally syllabic.

15. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

In this composition, three levels of segmentation have been identified; the word, the phrase and the entire line level. It is noted that the phrase level and the word level provide the clearest and most relevant indication of the relationship between speech tones and melody. This is what Annan uses hence his success in this direction. In one-to-one correspondence between speech tone and melody, the melody could be regarded simply as the translation into pitch of compositional contour of language. Annan used compositional techniques such as polarity, unison, modulations, counterpoints, sequences, repetitions of rhythmic motives and meter changes, however, a question

may remain whether scholarly attention has been paid to musical analysis. The present study of Annan's *Mɔbɔ Dawur* (choral music) expands knowledge of his compositional style, and may establish the need for a comprehensive study of other works created by him. In the treatment of fugues, the composer did not do justice to fugue and its conventions.

Such a lengthy piece should have had more than three modulations. His modulations restrict to b minor the relative minor of the key, and later to the dominant in Section D.

One aspect of *Mɔbɔ Dawur* is overused sequences which creates monotony in the work. Sequences of 5-6 steps could have been shared among voices of the same category. For example sequences with soprano could have been shared with tenor or sequences with alto could have been shared with bass.

If a research and analysis of his compositions continue to an ongoing re-examination, the other stylistic development will elucidate a deeper understanding of his music and his contribution to choral music in Ghana in particular, and Africa in general. The present study has shown the development of Annan's positive self-concept as a composer and his success as a prolific composer within the Ghanaian society and in the West African sub region.

Display of simple but repetitive rhythms, diatonic harmonies, imitative and homophonic and polyphonic textures, varied repetition of melody, harmony, and formal elements, diminished sonorities and chromaticism, which foreshadow the harmonic complexity of the musical piece, are worth emulating. There is a revelation of his persistent curiosity, the acquisition of new techniques, and the development of varied voicing in one composition—SATB with baritone solo, SATB with mezzo soprano solo, ATB and others demonstrate exploration of the timbral and registral potential of his choral music. Emulation of African traditional singing style displays his familiarity with the Ghanaian choral styles.

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