

***MUSIC, AESTHETICS AND CULTURE IN FEMI OSOFISAN'S SELECTED
PLAYS***

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Abstract

Most of Femi Osofisan's plays can be described as plays pleasant. This is so because of the judicious use of music in the plays. Culture is the totality of way of life evolved by a people in their attempts to meet the challenge of living in their environment which give order and meaning to their social, political, economic, aesthetic, and religious norms and modes of organisation. Using the aesthetic theory, this essay investigates patterns of music (vocal and instrumental) in Osofisan's selected plays against the backdrop of the culture the plays dramatize. The essay finds that music encapsulates two rites of passage (marriage and burial), abuse, and ancestral worship of the Yoruba culture represented in these plays. We conclude that music is a means of creating beauty and a veritable tool of culture expression in the dramaturgy of Osofisan.

Key words: *Osofisan, Music, Aesthetics, Culture, Rites.*

1. Introduction

Femi Osofisan is a prominent member of the generation of Nigerian writers after Achebe and Soyinka. A prolific writer, popular playwright, actor and an accomplished theatre director, Femi Osofisan is, perhaps, the most significant playwright to have emerged out of Africa after Wole Soyinka. As explained by Muyiwa P. Awodiya (2000) Femi Osofisan's plays have become the most performed on Nigerian stages by both amateur and professional troupes. This is due mainly to the fact that his plays have socially relevant concerns. However, as E. B. Adeleke (2011) explains, it is not just the relevance of the plays to society alone that makes Osofisan such an engaging playwright. The means by which he presents his materials is also delectable. One of the means that Osofisan uses to instruct and delight is music.

Although the basic function of music is entertainment, yet, that music plays other important functions in the life of a people is also incontrovertible. As J. H. Kwabena Nketia (1974:29) rightly observes:

On ceremonial and ritual occasions, music making may similarly go hand in hand with set sequences of symbolic actions, performed with or without props by specified people playing given roles. These actions, which are dramatic in character, take place in the presence of some participants or spectators. Music may be integrated with the event, either to set the mood for the actions or to provide an outlet for expressing the feelings they generate. It may also be used to continue or heighten the dramatic action; hence, it may punctuate statements of prayers or provide a continuous background of ordered sounds.

The observations made in these lines are quite appropriate to our analysis of the music in Osofisan's plays under study. As we shall explicate in this essay, music in our selected texts is used to set the mood of events and help in expressing the playwright's feelings.

Aesthetics in art denotes the creation and appreciation of beauty and the beautiful. According to William Harmon and Hugh Holman (2012:7), aesthetics is 'the study or philosophy of the beautiful in nature and art.' Furthermore, both explain that aesthetic study of the arts 'concentrates on the sense of the beautiful rather than on moral, social, or practical considerations.' M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham (2012:4) also see aesthetics as 'the systematic study of all the fine arts, as well as of the nature of beauty in any object, whether natural or artificial.' Aesthetics examines our affective domain response to an object or phenomenon. Aesthetic judgements usually go beyond sensory discrimination because sensory discrimination is linked to capacity for pleasure. For Immanuel Kant, as explained by Zangwill Nick (2021), "enjoyment" is the result when pleasure arises from sensation, but judging something to be beautiful has a third requirement: sensation must give rise to pleasure by engaging our capacities of reflective contemplation. Judgements of beauty are sensory, emotional and intellectual all at once. From these observations, aesthetics is basically concerned with the concepts of beauty and the beautiful. However, our usage of aesthetics in this essay encompasses both the

moral and social dimensions. This is inevitable because, as Eruvbetine (1990: 7) rightly observes, the aesthetic and utilitarian functions of literature should favourably co-exist: one should not jeopardize the other. In the same vein, Olu Obafemi (1977: 7) on his part explains that "literature reflects, represents and refracts the reality of the world across age and time." By this he means that literature is not just a work of imagination aimed at giving pleasure. It contributes more concretely and more materially to the creation and appreciation of human condition. Our focus is on the aesthetics of Yoruba music (vocal and instrumental) embedded in Osofisan's plays that give pleasure and have utilitarian and cultural values.

Culture, according to P. O. Olatunbosun, (1967:313), is 'advanced development of human powers intellectually, physically and spiritually by training and experience.' In other words, children's culture development is tied to the formal and informal training received from the home and society. They learn the nuances of language, the lores and mores of the community and learn to respect the way of life of their community. Children grow up with these virtues embedded in them and are able to relate with all these as they navigate life as adults in the society. As Olatunbosun further explains, people show evidence of culture acquisition in art, music, literature, religion and science.

Therefore, in this essay, we shall examine the use of music to create beauty and express culture as exemplified in Osofisan's plays selected for this study. These plays are *Morountodun* (1982), *Once Upon Four Robbers* (1991), *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels* (1991), *Yungbayungba and the Dance Contest* (1993), *Twynngle Twangle* (1995), *Tegonni* (1999), *The Engagement* (2002) and *Women of Owu* (2006). Unarguably, most of the plays are set, symbolically though, in Yoruba land, so, the culture discussed in this essay is Yoruba culture. The aspects of culture that we shall look at are the rites of marriage, the rites of burial, abuse and ancestral worship.

2. Music and Marriage Rites

One of the basic aspects of Yoruba culture shown in the music of Osofisan in his plays is marriage. Marriage in Yoruba land is an elaborate celebration that involves singing, dancing and general merry making right from the time of the man asking for the hand or

the consent of the bride to the eventual escorting of the bride to the husband's house. There are various songs to accompany each event.

In *Morountodun* (1982:82), Marshal has asked for the hand of Titubi in marriage and has come to see her. However, the women have formed a human barrier between him and Titubi. So, he pleads:

Ebun mi l'ono lo (Please let me pass)
while the women who have formed a ring round Titu respond:
Ono o si! (No way).

Often times, the song reflects the obstacles the suitor has to contend with before obtaining the consent of the bride (and / or the family members). In *Twingle—Twangle* (1995:31), Taye has to contend with a formidable opponent: a bowl of hot stew. The stew, brewed to boiling point, has been specially prepared as a test of the prowess of the man who would marry the Princess (Aanu). The mood created in this scene is very tense because there are dire consequences for failing the hot stew drinking test. The repetition of the word 'keremiti' in the song that follows accentuates the danger inherent in the venture. Although keremiti has a foreboding of 'danger if you dare', yet, the onomatopoeic word also adds to the beauty of the song. Before Taye, a wealthy businessman, an officer in the armed forces, a university don and a Moslem Mullah had tried and failed. The ordeal of these failed suitors is captured in '**The Competition Song**':

Too ba fe l'aya	keremiti
Too si ko l'aya	keremiti
Koo bo s'agbo ko dara	keremiti
O ba tete bo s'agbo	keremiti

Translation: If you want a wife:/Come out and dare!
And you claim to be brave:/Come into the circle to display your prowess!
Quick, into the circle! /Here's where you must show your worth!

When it is Taye's turn to drink the stew, he borrows a leaf from the tortoise (the trickster figure of Yoruba folklore). What does he do? The playwright answers the question in '**Efundunke's Stew-Drinking Song**' (39-40):

Ai mowo we, lai b'agba jeun / Tayelolu m'owo we, o si maa b'agba jeun
Ai lejuba, laitagba se o / Tayelolu ti juba, o ti lo le ogbon
Ai mo'fa / te, la n woke kiri / Eni ba mo'fa te ko le ma kololo
Ai m'ori sin, ta n t'osi kiri / Eni ba m'ori re, l'oko re n gunle rere

Translation: Who cannot wash his hands well, will not eat with elders

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Tayelolu can, and will eat with elders
Who cannot greet properly, cannot take the role of an elder
But Tayelolu has been to the house of wisdom

Who cannot interpret *Ifa*, searches the air in confusion

But the initiated has no need to stutter
Who cannot worship his head, wanders aimlessly in life,
But who knows his head sails home happily always.

The trickster, Taye in this case, is accompanied by his faithful servant, Efundunke, who sings the “stew-drinking song.” The employment of the trickster figure from oral tradition adds to the beauty of the song. The repetition of ‘Ai’ (who cannot) also adds to the beauty because it aids the rhythmic pattern of the words. This also deepens the pleasure the audience gets from the song. The lesson from the song is also clear: when one is in a tight corner, one only needs to use one’s brain and the way out of that tight corner becomes plain. The Elenon (41) puts this more appropriately by saying:

Elenon: (*Dancing*). My people! / This is surely a great day!
It will go down in our legends! /What the rich and the learned failed to do.
What the strong and the devoted could not,
accomplish, this unknown man, / this young man untried in politics,
he alone did it with great cunning!

The rich, the learned, the strong and the devoted refer to the four characters mentioned earlier (i.e. the businessman, the don, the army officer and The Mullah). The implication of the song is that these other characters are not wise or clever or crafty. Therefore, they are unable to unravel the mystery of the hot stew. The reference to *Ifa* is also instructive. In Yoruba mythology, *Ifa* is the repository of wisdom, therefore, whoever wants wisdom must ask *Ifa* for it. It must be noted at this point that the references to ‘trickster figure’ and ‘*Ifa*’ must be interpreted by the audience for real pleasure to come from these. This is what Kant refers to as aesthetic “ought” that binds all the people involved in this performance because they share the cognitive faculties that it takes to have the pleasure in question (qtd in Zangwill, Nick 2021)

An aspect of the rites of marriage in Yoruba land is what is called *itoro* (the ‘asking’). It is the duty of the groom’s parents to ask the bride’s family for her hand in marriage to their son. After the asking by the groom’s parents and the acceptance of the offer by the parents of the bride, the members of the groom’s family must sing and dance to show

their happiness. This is what we have demonstrated in the following song from *The Engagement* (2002:42):

	E mu 'yawo jade / Aya atata to moyi oko
	Elemude fe l'aya / Oko atata to moyi aya
Translation:	Bring out the bride / The good wife who values her husband
	Elemude is about to wed / The good husband who values his wife!

The following song from *The Chattering and the Song* (1977:8) also shows the happiness of the members of the bride's family because their daughter has found a good husband:

	Yajin o to n rele oko / Se lon dan gbirin bii goolu
	Egba owo ko je ka mo t'ese / Yajin kowa bi e ti n s'oge
	Yajin o to n re le oko
Translation:	Yajin o, going to her husband's home/Shining brighter than gold
	Hand and Head beads competing / Teach us how to shine like you.

This same happiness is demonstrated in 'The Women's Song for Princess Tinuade' in *Twingle-Twangle* (:40-41):

	Tinuade tir'oko	E wo 'yawo
	Wundia jojolo	“
	Iri omo opese	“
	Eleyinju foforo	“
	Alalake ti r'oko	“
	Bebe oju peu peu	“
	Bebe idi poin poin	“
	Tinuade ti r'oko	“
Translation:	Tinuade has found a husband:	ah, see the bride!
	Our smooth-skinned virgin!	“
	We like the offspring of dewdrops	“
	Look at her deep-set eyes!	“
	See how full like the moon!	“
	Child-of-fondness has husband!	“
	See how her eyelids are winking!	“
	Oh see how her hips are shaking!	“
	Tinuade has found a husband!	“

In Yoruba tradition, even the bride praises herself. This is referred to as *ekun iyawo* (bride's "lament"). In *Tegonni* (1999:35) this is what Tegonni does in the song:

Jigi ati pauda/ni mo ko r'ode o
 Awure oja osun/ni mo ro w'aye
 Gele asoasiko/ni mo fi s'oge
 Sanyan to p'awo l'oja/ni mo ro f'oko
 Tegonni dadelebo/o f'oko s'aso
 Iyawo ni pauda/oko ni jigi

Translation: Mirror and powder /I'm carrying with me
 The magic wrap of fertility/Came to the world with me.

The most fashionable in town /Is the head tie I'm sporting
 The market's finest *sanyan*,/I wear to meet my husband.
 Tegonni's become a wife/The man who weds Tegonni
 Is the luckiest in town!

Not only does the bride praise herself; the in-laws also praise her as shown in the following song from *Morountodun* (1982: 82):

Iyawo n l'ota/ileke n s'aso
 Ileke ma s'aso mo/je ki 'yawo l'ota

Translation: The bride washes clothes

The waist beads murmur and disturb

Quiet! beads and let the bride wash.

The groom himself praises his bride and expresses his joy and happiness at having found her. This is demonstrated in Elemude's song to his beloved Ronke in *The Engagement*, (1995:11):

Iye apa mi to yegere / Ese mi to ta gangan
 Ke k eke ti mo fegbe rin / Oju koro ti mo fi nwo e
 Igbadun ni

Translation: The features of my wings open out / My feet stand in tip-toe
 I am dancing, dancing sideways /
 Looking at you with the corner of my eyes / All for your pleasure.

From our analysis thus far, we can see the marriage culture of the Yoruba demonstrated in the music that accompanies the different aspects of the marriage ceremony. For most Africans, every aspect of life is a celebration. Death, birth, naming of a new baby, "house warming" etc. all call for celebration. The occasion of a wedding, especially, is an occasion for merriment and joy. This is reflected in the music that accompanies the various aspects of marriage rites in Yoruba land. The various songs used here, as we have shown, are an aesthetic and cultural artefact. They foreground the different stages and thematic concerns in the art of marriage among the Yoruba of Southwest Nigeria.

3. Music and Burial Rites.

Every society has ceremonies to dispose the body upon the death of an individual. However, of all the aspects of funeral ceremonies, Arnold van Gennep (1969: 146) explains that 'those funeral rites which incorporate the deceased into the world of the dead are most ... elaborated and assigned the greatest importance.' This is so, perhaps, because, no matter how long the body is kept, it surely must be committed to 'Mother Earth.' Burial (putting the body six feet under) is, thus, the final stage of physically separating the dead from the living. This aspect of Yoruba indigenous culture is showcased in the various music identified in our selected plays. The dirge (a spontaneous and tearful overflow of chants and songs) is the medium that aptly shows the grief that accompanies the death and burial of people in traditional Yoruba societies.

In *Tegonni* (1999:49), after the death of Oyekunle, a Prince of the land, the mourners dirge softly:

Igi wo/Igi ma woo
 Oyekunle la n pe/ Ta lo bawa ri ?
 Ajanaku rinrin ajo/ Ko dehin siju o
 Oyekunle p'awoda/ Igi wo l'ule

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Translation: The tree has fallen! Oh the tree has crashed

We are searching for Oyekunle/Who has found him for us?

The elephant went on a trip/And has not returned to the forest

Oyekunle has changed skins/The big tree has fallen!

In this dirge, Oyekunle is the one metaphorically referred to as 'the tree' and 'the elephant'. In Yoruba culture, an important male is referred to as 'opo mu'le ro' (the beam that supports the house). The elephant is also a symbol of strength and royalty. Both show how important Oyekunle is and why his demise is lamentable. Similarly, in *Once Upon Four Robbers* (1991:4), the robbers raise a dirge for Alani (one of them who has just been executed by firing squad):

Eni lo s'orun kiibo/Alani o di gbere, o d'arinako o
Eni lo s'orun, aremabo o/Alani o di gbere, o d'ojuala o
Ohun won n je lorun ni o ba won je/Ma j'okun, ma j'ekolo

Translation: The traveller to heaven never returns

Alani, goodbye, till we meet over there!
The journey to heaven/ is a one way route
Whatever is food in heaven / You will share

In *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* (1986:76), after the sudden death of Adigun, the following dirge accompanies him on his journey to the land of "our silent ancestors."

Iku boro o /Iku f'akikonju lo, yepa!
Iku boro o /Iku o nitiju o.
Gbese, gbese / Ni oro iku.

Translation: Death has brought grief /Has taken the brave one away.

Alas! /Death has brought grief//Death has brought us pain
Has taken away the brave one, /Alas!

The atmosphere of sorrow and sadness occasioned by the demise of a loved one is discernible. However, the tragedy is much deeper when it is the entire community that is affected. Such a tragedy is what befalls the people of Ereko in *Twingle-Twangle*. The people of Etido have declared war on them and because the "Erekoans" know that they cannot win the war, they decide to abandon their town and run away. This is the tragedy that is shown in "Dirge of Ereko Citizens":

Farewell to you, Elereko, it's so sad

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Softly softly the rain falls on leaves
 Furiously the storm shakes the forest, child,
 Furiously it uproots trees!
 Don't cling to me, war is approaching: softly softly
 Everyone give way, what a calamity!
 Elereko, owner of abundance, farewell:
 War is coming, oh what a calamity! Softly. (76-77)

Again, in *Many Colours Make the Thunder King* (1999: 92) the sorrow and anguish the people feel at the demise of their prince is shown in the following dirge:

O lo-o-o /Adeloro lo-o
 O digbere o e-e-e /Sun-un re
 Omoba sun-un re / O darinnoko o!
 O lo-o / Ye-e, ye-e, o lo
 Orun a-re-ma bo /O lo-o

Translation: He's gone / Adeloro is gone
 Farewell to you / Sleep in peace
 Prince, sleep well /Till the next world
 He's gone / Oh alas, he's gone;
 He has departed / To heaven of no return

The greatest sorrow is expressed when it is a deity that is being mourned. Some Yoruba great kings and rulers were deified and worshipped as gods and goddesses after their demise. These gods and goddesses lived among the people like ordinary men and women. But, because of their exemplary lives and, perhaps, political or patriotic zeal, such men and women assumed larger than life positions. It was normal, then, that people bemoaned the death of these people. Notable among such men/women turned gods/goddesses are Shango (the thunder god), Oya (his wife and river goddess), Ogun (the god of iron) and Osun (another of Shango's wives and also a river goddess). In *Many Colours Make the Thunder King*, (238). Oya is forced to commit suicide. Amazingly though, after stabbing herself, instead of blood, "water begins to gush out from her breast. The outpour turns into a river (and) flows." The death of Oya is mourned in the following dirge:

Oya nsoda lo / O tun digbose
 Oju kii ri ku
 ko tun woorun mo
 oya nra-remabo
 Oya nlo sile

Translation: Oya is crossing over / It's farewell

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The eye which sees death
Does not see sunlight again
Oya is going on a journey of no return
Oya is returning home.

In *Women of Owu*, (2006:69) Anlugba is a former Owu leader, but has now been deified as a god. The dirge "Atupa gbepo n le felepo" (Lamp, Yield Your Oil to the Oil Seller) sums up the distress felt by the people on account of his death

Atupa gbepo nle felepo

Refrain

The stars are down, the sun retired,
The moon's refused to light
ale le le?

Alejo lo de loganjo oru

Refrain: Irawo wo etc

Alaganran lo k'oja re de o

Refrain: Irawo wo etc

Oja oro re lo ma ko de o

Refrain: Irawo wo etc

Oro iku de ni t'Alaganran

Atupa gbepo felepo

Refrain: Irawo wo etc

Translation: Lamp, yield your oil to the oil seller

Refrain

The stars are down, the sun retired,
The moon's refused to light
the night

A stranger's come in the dead of night

Refrain: The stars are down, etc...

Alagangan has come with his wares

Refrain: The stars are down, etc...

Has brought his merchandise of pain

Refrain: The stars are down, etc...

Death of course is what he sells

Lamp, yield your oil to the oil seller

Refrain: The stars are down, etc.

Alagangan is another name for death. As a result of the great pain that the people experience, the mourning continues in "Who Heard the Frightening Sound on the Farm":

Lesi gbo gbigbi lereko o

gbigbi!

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Boo gbo gbigbi ko wa so o	gbigbi!
Won wipe igi nla wo	ehn!??
Won wipe eni nla subu	ehn!??
Won wipe eyin nla fo	ehn!??
Won wipe bale subu	ehn!??
Emi gbo gbigbi lojude o	gbigbi!
Translation: Who Heard the Frightening Sound on the Farm? –	gbigbi!
If you did, come and say o –	gbigbi!
They say a big tree's fallen -	gbigbi!??
I didn't hear the sound at all -	gbigbi!
I certainly did not hear the sound at all	gbigbi!
Who heard the scream in – the yard?	gbigbi!
If you did, come and say so -	gbigbi! (<i>Women of Owu</i> 70)

The “big tree”, “giant”, “big egg” and “family head” are different metaphors for the same deity that has passed on to the land of the great ancestors. The aesthetic of this dirge lies essentially in the onomatopoeic sound of the refrain, *gbigbi!* The sound is often accompanied by the mourners stamping their feet on the ground to its rhythm. As the departed is being laid to earth, further lamentation is raised to encapsulate the distress the people feel:

Buje-buje pa mi o:	Tere buje!
Oyin nla ta mi o:	Tere buje
Iku gbe mi lomo lo:	Tere buje!
Iku da mi loro:	Tere buje!
Translation: I've been stung death:	Tere buje!
Stung by a mighty bee:	Tere buje!
Death's stolen my child:	Tere buje!
Death's stung me badly:	Tere buje! (<i>Women of Owu</i> 70)

It is instructive to note that because of the atmosphere of sadness that permeates the rites of burial, The rhythms of the music are slower and the images drawn by the words complement the sombre of the occasion of burial rites. The culture is to bid farewell to

the departed in tearful and sorrowful music, the music is, thus, sober as opposed to the boisterous music that accompanies marriage rites. Again, the rhythms are slower and the images drawn by the words complement the sombre mood of the occasion of burial rituals.

4. Music and the Culture of Abuse

One aspect of culture in Yoruba land is the use of music as invectives (or abuse) by 'warring' factions. As explained by Nketia (1974:108), the negative use of music is common in all traditional societies. We have only used Yoruba land as an illustration of this assertion. We may say straightaway that Osofisan uses the music in these plays to comically criticise people who see every contest as a 'do-or-die' affair.

In *The Engagement* (1995:24), Elemude, the lead character has gone to ask for the hand of Ronke in marriage, but due to his bashfulness, he makes a mess of the proposal. Ronke, in anger, begins by insulting Elemude's family with:

A dele yin, a o b'enikan/ Ewure la ba
Adie saba: / Orisirisi agba'ya / Lo w anile yin.

Translation: We went to your house
And found nobody (i.e. that we could call a human being)
We found only goats / and plenty of fowls
It's all sorts of useless adults / Who people your house.

Even when Elemude collapses in pain and needs help, Ronke still *sings abusively over him*

Oku aja sehin wonrinwon
O ma le paniyan o!

Translation: Dead dog with teeth pointing out
The sight could kill a person! (38)

Yungbayungba and the Dance Contest (1993:76-77) is a dancing competition among three houses: The Mayesoges, the Jeosunwons and the Aroorotons. It is instructive that *Yungbayungba* is the only play of Osofisan that has an all-female cast. This, perhaps, is due to the fact that when it comes to waging war with songs or abuses, women seem to be better than men. One can then understand the 'war without end' songs that take place in the play because, apparently, nothing seems to bring out the "devil" in women better than competition. So, very early in the morning, the three houses go to 'war', pouring invectives on one another. The Mayesoges abuse the Jeosunwons thus:

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Arifin ni tabi edi ni?
Tegbe ni tabi egba ni?
Oke kan ga j'oke
Abeni ta nba wi di'ti ni?
Eyin Jeosunwon
Eyin ko la mba wi?
Eni ti o gba pe / a ju won lo
Ko lo ko si salanga!

Translation: Is it insult or stupidity?
Are you cursed or charmed?
Some hills tower above others
And surely, you can't be deaf?
You Jeosunwon
Are you listening or not?
Whoever will not admit / Our superiority
Should jump into the latrine!

In this abusive song, the Jeosunwons are mentioned by name so there is no ambiguity in the people being referred to. Similarly, the Aroorotons are thoroughly vilified by the Mayesoges in:

Bi a ba nwi / Won ni a tun de!
Bi a ba so / A da bi owe
Omo atiro to fe lo wo bata
Oro lo fe gbo
Sokundoru / Sokundoru
A b'enu teesin nyin si
To fe s'oro s'awa
Omo eleyin keke

Translation: When we talk / They say we've come again
When we speak / It sounds like proverbs
The cripple / Who is asking for shoes to wear
Is obviously asking for abuse
Sokundoru, Fool
In whose mouth flies lay eggs
dares to confront us
Whose teeth are finely set! (76-77)

The contest in *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen* (1992:79-80) is between the men and the women. Aringindin, the eponymous 'hero' of the play, has just been awarded one of the nation's highest honours, OFR, (Officer of the Federal Republic) and the celebration soon degenerates into a dance contest between the men and the women. It affords both

the opportunity to pour expletives on one another. The women start the battle of the sexes with the attack:

E-e-e-e

The rich do not dance like that /2ce

With such scattered antler's legs

Or like monkeys running after banana

Ah, how unbecoming, hopping about like toads!

The metaphors 'antler's legs' and 'monkeys running after bananas' refer to the men and their dancing style. The comparisons are meant to infuriate them. Infuriated and eager to "avenge" the insult, the men 'reply' the women in their 'reposte':

Lead and Men: Ja koko ji! Ja koko ji!

Lead: Move back before I begin to speak

Men: Move back before I begin to speak.

Lead: The person who only saw a snake is panting!

Men: The person who only saw a snake is panting!

Lead: But you see the king of the forest and stand!

Men: Do you see the lion and still wait? (*Aringindin*, 80)

Thus, through their attack and riposte, each group tries to assert its superiority and at the same time pour invectives on the other group.

5. Music and Ancestral Worship.

We also have the use of music to show the culture of ancestral worship among the Yoruba. Apart from various rituals associated with the worship of ancestors and countless deities, chants (patronyms) extolling the virtues of these ancestors, elders, and deities are rendered during the worship. In *Once Upon Four Robbers* (1991:31). *Ifa* is the deity the Aafa and the robbers chant their incantations to. As observed by Wande Abimbola (1980:65), the chant is not only to praise *Ifa* but to also ask for his blessing and success. Although modified by the playwright for the reasons of dramaturgy, one can still see that the purpose of worship, although the chant is, ironically, to ask *Ifa* to bless the nefarious activities of these robbers in **Son of Enire**:

Omo Enire / Omo Enire

Omo enikan saka bi agbon

Ifa ka r'ele o

Ewi nle Ado / Onsa n'Deta

Omo aseseyo ogomo

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Tii fun yinni yinni
Omo ejo meji
Tii sare ganranganran lori irawe
Omo ina joko mo jeeluju
Ifa ka rele o

Translation: The son of Enire, the Son of Enire
Of those who strike sudden and sharp
Ifa, we invite you home!
Ewi of Ado / Onsa of Delta
Source of graceful palm fronds
Which dance and hum by the river
Offspring of two snakes
Which glide so fast on trees
You offspring of bush fire
Ifa, hearken to our call!

The beauty of this chant lies essentially in the musicality brought about by the repetition of 'Ifa ka rele o' and the sombre tone that lends dignity to the rendition. Esu, another deity in Yoruba land, is eulogized in *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels* (1991:16)

Esu o, Esu o, Esu o, laaroye,
Se oun gbo'gbe, baba?
Araiye d'eri wa mo konga
Dede'eni kongun, baba o!
Gbawa o, we de sim'edo
K'o gbo t'eni o!

Translation: Esu o, Esu laaroye
Father, please hear our prayers
We've been pushed down the well of despair;
Completely lost and undone!
We call you, and crave your pity
Please do not shun our prayers (*Esu*, 16)

In *Morountodun* (1982:40-41), Moremi is the goddess who gave her life to ransom her people from the Igbó (bush people [as opposed to Igbò in Eastern Nigeria]). The self-sacrifice of Moremi is shown in her praise chant :

Hail Moremi
The huge sacrifice that wards off death
The big offering that prevents diseases
Like Ikoyi, you fearlessly faced battle
Moremi you dared death

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To bring peace to the world
 You braved war
 That Ile-Ife might be peaceful
 No kind deed is ever forgotten
 Moremi has become a deity (worshipped yearly)
 Moremi like the sun.
 You shine so brightly (*Moroutodun* 40 –41)

In Yoruba mythology, Osun is the goddess of fertility and it is to her that barren and expectant women turn to seek her blessing for the fruit of the womb. Yearly, supplicants gather at the shrine of Osun in Osogbo, the capital of Osun State, to beg for the good things of life, especially children. The importance of children in Yoruba land is underscored by the fact that even if a man is stupendously rich but is childless; such a man is regarded as having wasted his life on earth. This point is buttressed by the song "Let the Snake Rise":

Eni lowo / ti o bi'mo
 O ti gbe s'aiye
 Ka sise sise / Ka si f'omo logun
 B'ogede ba ku
 Soun f'omo ro po ni
 Ile o to / Aso o p'eniyan
 L'ojo ale
 Omo nikan lo le sinni

Translation: Any man of wealth / Who has no children
 Wastes his life on earth,
 May we have a son / To inherit everything,
 Like the banana /Whose tree dies to be reborn;
 When the clothing/And the money have gone
 With our dust, /Children will prolong our name! (*Esu* 25)

So, to further underscore the importance of children in Yoruba culture, the lead singer chants his prayer of fertility to Yeye Osun and others chorus amen to signify their agreement with the sentiments expressed in the chant:

E ma ape ko se —	Ase
Igi wa a ru'we—	Ase
Konga wa a pon'mi—	Ase
Ojola a dide —	Ase
A dide a s'ogbe —	Ase
Ekun iya aburo —	Ase

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	Ekun omo a so	—Ase	
	L'ayo ni gbehin orin---	Ase	
Translation:	Say after me: Amen!-		Amen!
	Our trees will be green		“
	Our wells fill to brim		“
	And the snake will rise		“
	Snake will rise and strike		“
	Then a mother's cries		“
	Welcome, new baby!		“
	May sweetness and our song (<i>Esu</i> , 25).		

It is important to note that “Our trees will be green”, and “Our wells fill to brim”, are metaphors for the abundance of children that the lead singer prays for while “the snake will rise and strike” is a euphemism for the man being able to “strike” (i.e. sleep with) the wife and make her pregnant. This will ultimately lead to the birth of a new baby. All of these, apart from the inherent beauty in the music, bespeak of the entrenched culture of the Yoruba as they grapple with the challenge of daily existence.

6. Conclusion

As we conclude this essay, it is pertinent to point out two important things concerning the translations of the various aspect of music used and our use of the word music instead of songs in our topic. The first is that all the songs, chants and dirges used in this work are as translated by the playwright, Femi Osofisan. The second is that the word “music” has been used instead of “song” because, strictly speaking, while dirges, chants and patronyms qualify as music, they do not qualify as song. To reiterate, the purpose of this paper is to show how the playwright has created beauty and projected the culture of the setting (Yoruba land) in the various aspects of music for dramatic and theatrical exploitation. We have shown that through music, the playwright has dramatized the culture of the Yoruba as shown in their rites of marriage, rites of burial, culture of abuse and ancestral worship. We have demonstrated that with metaphoric references, repetition, onomatopoeic sounds, rhythms of the songs, chants and dirges, the playwright has created appreciable beauty and captured the rich cultural heritage of the Yoruba of Southwest Nigeria.

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