

MUSIC IN THE CATHOLIC LITURGY:

THE CHOIR AND EUCHARISTIC CELEBRATION

FUNDAMENTALS OF MUSIC AND POSITION

1. Do you have the gift of Musical Talent?
2. Can you read the Staff Notation and Tonic Solfa?
3. Do you have the ability to play an instrument?
4. Do you have the ability to sing different parts of choir? This helps in writing the harmony.
5. Do you know the range of voices? This also is important.

ORIGIN OF A MUSICAL COMPOSITION

The different approaches to musical compositions are:

1. **individual Composition:**

Composition by an individual following rules of techniques or imitating types of music he admires.

2. **Spirit Songs:**

Some songs, particularly choruses that are used in churches, are composed on the spur of the moment. In traditional religion, many believe that musicians must be possessed of a spirit in order to have the gift of music. These spirit songs are free in design and usually follow the pattern of music developed within the cultural context over a long period of time.

- a. Traditional
- b. Choruses
- c. Inspirational songs

3. **Dream Song:**

A person may write down a composition, which he dreamt.

4. **Group songs:**

These are songs composed by a group person.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD MUSIC COMPOSITION?

1. A meaningful text
2. Singable melody
3. A danceable rhythm

ELEMENTS OF A MUSIC COMPOSITION

As you compose your music, you will want to think of these elements of music.

Think of them as the building bricks to your piece of music.

Melody: Tune of the music.

Text: Words of the song.

Rhythm: Movement of the notes: Combination and arrangement of pulse within a time-frame of regular beats.

Harmony: Pleasing combination of notes/voices sounded together to make chords.

Time Signature or beat pattern: Rhythm of a song is determined by the arrangement and number of beats in a bar.

Common beat patterns: 2 4 2 3 4 6 6 9 12
2 2 4 4 4 4 8 8 8

FORM: (Over-all shape of the composition)

1. **Call and response form:** Animal Card

This is the commonest form in African traditional music whereby a leader sings a line to be completed by the group.

2. **Thorough-composed form:** Chineke Adogwu

This is a lengthy composition with varying verses.

3. **Strophic/verse/Hymn form:** e.g Rock of Ages

Text of the music is written in verse. Common forms for hymns are Binary Form and Ternary Form.

Phrase:

The basic organization in music is the phrase. Most phrases in traditional music are 4 bars long. Phrases both longer and shorter occur when there is need for another phrase to balance the composition. There may be an Opening Phrase and Closing Phrase OR Leading Phrase and Ending Phrase. (Phrase in music refers to the composition, not to the words of the song).

Sentence:

Opening Phrase and Closing Phrase make a musical sentence. (Sentence refers to the music, not-to the words) e.g. The first Line of the National Anthem.

Cadence:

Cadence is a melodic formula which brings a musical phrase or sentence to a more or less definite close.

**NECESSARY/USEFUL INFORMATION ON
INDIGENOUS COMPOSITION**

Composing a song to be sung in Hausa or other tonal languages has requirements restricting the composition of the melody. These restrictions are not needed when composing a song to be sung in English.

Composing a song in English places restrictions because the words must be arranged to fit the rhythm of the song or the rhythm must be written so that it will fit the words. The English language is a time-stressed language. The rhythm of the melody must stress the same syllables stressed in spoken English for the words to be meaningful, e.g. this chorus has no meaning to a person whose native language is English.

CHORUS: "I will go with my own sir-tea-fee- kate".

CORRECT: "I will go with my own sir-TIFY-kate. (Certificate)".

Most Nigerian languages are tonal languages. If the wrong tone is used in singing a word, the word has a different meaning or the word has no meaning at all. Early missionaries, using their familiar Western hymn tunes, translated hymns so that the numbers of syllables in each line were correct, but since the tones of the words were wrong, the words had no meaning. To be understood, the hymns had to be read before they were sung.

TECHNICAL COMPOSITION

Follow these steps:

1. Imagine and determine why and for whom you are writing the composition.
2. Write a meaningful text and add a suitable melody.

OR

Write the melody first and then write a text to fit it.

3. Go over your melody and the text to see if changes are needed.
4. Think of the form you want for the composition.
5. Expand the composition. You may write more stanzas/verses. This is called **Thematic Development**.
6. Add harmony where possible.
7. Add instrumental arrangement where applicable.
8. Listen to your composition over and over and think of a style of rendition.
9. Add **Expression terms** or **marks** to your composition.

DEVELOPMENT OF A THEME

A composition is satisfactory in its form if it has a satisfying balance between unit and contrast. Unity is created by various forms of repetition.

Repetition:

Music is a language, but it lacks the exact meaning, clarity and logic of words and, therefore, it requires more repetition than verbal language does, in order to produce a recognizable shape. In listening to music, try to cultivate a good memory so that you will recognize the composer's repetitions.

Sequence:

Repetition of a phrase at a higher or lower level is called a sequence. A sequence may be melodic or harmonic. Repetition is not bound to be exact, and, in fact, it is rarely exact in more highly evolved music.

Variation:

Variation is necessary in order to prevent monotony. There are many ways of varying the repetition of a phrase to make it more interesting.

1. Some or all of the notes of a phrase may be repeated in longer notes. This is called augmentation.
2. Some of all of the notes of a phrase may be repeated in shorter notes. This is called diminution.
3. Slight differences in a phrase produce a varied repetition.
4. Additional ornamentation may be added to the melody or accompaniment. -

5. The intervals in a melody may be changed while the rhythm remains the same.
6. The harmony of a repeated phrase may be varied.

Inversion:

Inversion is variation in which every interval of a melody goes in the opposite direction.

Contrast:

A composition must have a satisfying balance between unity and contrast. Contrast of melody may be produced by using a different melodic shape or style by the use of a contrasting rhythm. A contrasted style of accompaniment is another possibility. There may be contrast of key, dynamics, speed, orchestration, and so on. Extension and contraction of phrase:

Phrases are quite frequently extended or shortened. This often happens after a regular four-bar phrase has been established, thus providing a delightful variation of the prevailing pattern. It may be repetition, sequence, augmentation, or diminution of a bar or two. Sometimes, no reason can be given for the contraction and the extension. The listener expects to hear the usual four bars and is often conscious of the irregularity.

Limitation:

This consists of a musical phrase sung by one voice and repeated immediately by another voice. The imitation maybe exact in every detail, or it may be at a higher or lower pitch, or the intervals may be modified. Anything is possible as long as it is recognizable as an imitation of the original.

Dynamics and Instrumentation:

Good and effective application of expression marks and proper use of instruments can provide enrichment and further development of a theme.

Style:

Musical style is developed by the way in which all the musical elements are used, e.g.

African Folk Songs have solo and response form.

'Reggae' Style has recognizable bass and rhythm.

Western Hymn Style has 4-part harmony and several stanzas.

Styles are developed over a period of time through culture and by the repeated use of a certain style by a composer. As you write your composition, you will write in a particular style determined by your ability and influenced by your understanding of how all elements of music can be used to make your composition more effective and distinctive.

Length:

In writing composition to be sung as an anthem or as special Music for a regular Sunday Church service, remember that five minutes is an adequate length. If your composition is longer than that, people will stop listening to your song, and will begin to look at their watches and pray that the music will soon end. An effective composition leaves the listener eager to hear more. Do not try to preach a sermon in song. God has called the priest to preach. Your music prepares hearts to receive Gods message.

Text:

A composition is not good just because the music is beautiful, pleasing or danceable. The text of your song must be worshipful, leading people to praise God, to feel His presence in their midst and His concern for the welfare of their souls. Music for the church must be true to the message and teachings of the Bible and must draw people to God.

I believe that God Almighty who is the greatest musician of all time, bless your humble efforts and attempts in writing songs for Him and may He strengthen your endeavours and enrich your knowledge through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Yours ancestrally,

Jude Nnam (KSM)

MUSIC IN THE CATHOLIC LITURGY:

THE CHOIR AND EUCHARISTIC CELEBRATION

I am particularly happy to be associated with the above well-chosen topic especially at this time that we are undergoing a development in the Music World. The entire Music World in Nigeria is gradually drifting into meaningless unorganized and uncensored shouts all in the name of music. Unfortunately this, like every other trend in the circular world is influencing and affecting the church and her liturgical music that are part and parcel of the entire world. Here one cannot escape the Socratic saying: *that man does wrong because he lacks knowledge*. It is clear that we lack knowledge of the basic thing we need as human beings to make our world a better place, consequently we end up crying, shouting and singing about our wants.

The point of this paper is not just to get better music in the church; it is by far more complex than that. The fact is that we want to put better music in the context of better prayer. Here one must be very careful not to compare or reconcile music with liturgy per se.

Music as we know is an autonomous science governed by laws that lie beyond the scope of liturgical discipline; whereas, liturgy restricts and narrows the freedom of any science employed in her service. Liturgy goes beyond the personal of which Music is fend, thus giving expression to communal and also *Godward* in its direction of giving delight and not *manward*.

The Music in question is the music of the liturgy or music in liturgical celebrations. The point is that we are called to have some basic knowledge of the Liturgy so that we can select hymns that will suite a particularly liturgy.

One may then ask. What is the liturgical year or the liturgical cycles and seasons? Going therefore from the known to the unknown, we all know what the calendar year is, the lunar cycle and the Geographical seasons of the calendar year. The big difference is in the content. In the Geographical and calendar year or seasons, we think of rains, the

sun, dry harmattan periods and the things that go with these and also the mood they impose on men. In these we also think of times for burning the bush, clearing the land, cultivating, pruning, harvesting, storing, feasting.

In the same way the liturgical year or cycle we may have variations in the number of days, in the things that men do and how they do them in the calendar cycles. The main content of the liturgical year is the church's celebration of the saving work of her divine spouse. In the words of the Vat. II. Fathers:

“Holy Mother Church believes that it is for her to celebrate the saving work of her divine spouse in a sacred commemoration on certain days throughout the course of the year” — (Constitutions on the sacred Liturgy No. 102).

I will just enumerate them and then say briefly what the Church wants to teach in each or what she is celebrating so that we will be able to select hymns appropriately during any celebration.

SUNDAYS:-

The Lord's day. The church celebrates the memory of the Lord's resurrection. She also celebrates it once every year together with the blessed passion, at Easter.

In the course of the year the church lays bare the whole mystery of Christ — from the incarnation and nativity to the ascension to Pentecost and the expectation of Christ's second coming. In celebrating this annual cycle of the Mystery of Christ, the church honours the Blessed Virgin Mary Mother of God with a special love because she is in a serious way linked with her Son's salvific work.

There are also Memorial days of the Martyrs and other Saints who sing God's perfect praise in heaven and also pray for us.

The Seasons are broken down into the following:

ADVENT:-

The Church celebrates with joy the News of a Saviour who is to come. It will be good also to go through the Old Testament to see what the Israelites went through, that will tell one how they felt at the news that a Messiah will come. In the same way mankind had undergone series of rise and falls and now God is to come among us for our sake. What a show of humility. It is time of joyful expectation.

CHRISTMAS: -

The hope and expectation of both the old and new people of God was not an empty one. The baby king is born. A thing of joy, a king is born, a Godman among men.

LENT: -

The Godman fasts and prepares for an ordeal, He is challenged, misunderstood, accused, tried, condemned and killed. Here the church points out or emphasizes the human dimension of the Lord of Lords. The King of Kings suffers a shameful death. Ps. 8 asks: *“What is man that God is so mindful of him”*.

EASTER: -

The Lord rose from the dead. At the death of Christ, it seemed that men won but it is not true. God tells man that he merely allowed things to happen according to His plan. Those who did not believe laughed at the Christmas and lent and their fate.

Here is another cause for joy for man. There is victory, there is hope for man because Christ has destroyed death. Man's salvation is assured.

PENTECOST: -

Even though Christ rose from the dead, man is to lose Him again but physically. He went back to the Father. He however, promised to send us the Holy Spirit, the advocate who will teach us, remind us of the things Christ Himself taught, guide us and give us the power to persevere and endow us with a number of gifts. Pentecost is the time when we celebrate the fulfillment of this promise.

TRINITY: -

Here the Church celebrates the mystery of the triune God — Father, Son, Holy Spirit. This is one of the Cardinal Mysteries that hold all Christians together, the belief in the three persons in one God. The three Persons are not three Gods but one and the same God who appears in the three persons named causative of the three principal interventions of God in His salvific plan for man or better still in virtue of the “Principle of appropriation”.

FEASTS OF THE LORD: These include: Corpus Christi, Christ the King, Sacred Heart. In these we emphasized one or two aspects of what happened during the Passion or the Easter. In Corpus Christi we acknowledge Christ; the food of life. He gives us food that will quench all hunger. In Christ the King we celebrate his triumphant entry into Jerusalem; this is also seen in Palm Sunday celebrations. Sacred Heart reminds us of His special love for us via His precious wound.

FEASTS OF THE B.V.M: In this feasts, we celebrate Mary and her role in the history of salvation - she is the Model of Mothers; pure in body and soul.

This paper presumes that the composers, directors and choir masters are already at home with the different parts of the Mass in which all of the above mentioned mysteries, feasts are re-enacted or celebrated. That is the introit, kyrie, Gloria to the Dismissal. And so we will not go into them here.

The last is **THE ORDINARY TIME OF THE YEAR.**

Now the Question: What are the liturgical hymns which must fit in appropriately to all the above mentioned? One cannot overlook what St. Augustine said about singing. He insists that *“He who sings well prays twice”*. From this alone it is clear that liturgical hymns are prayers and since prayer is the raising up of our minds and hearts to God, or again, all forms of behaviour, compositions either sung or recited, (that raise us to God) liturgical hymns are prayers. Liturgical Hymn should be able to raise us to God in a lighter mood and this we can achieve if they are properly selected. In the words of the Vat. II fathers:

No kind of Sacred Music is prohibited from liturgical sections by the church as long as it corresponds to the spirit of the liturgical celebration itself and does not hinder the active participation of the people.

From what we see today in our churches it is clear that either that the selectors and directors of liturgical hymns have not cared to look up some of those directives in the documents that contain them or that they feel that with the advent of the so called “light of the spirit” that they are at liberty to tell the spirit how he shall influence them to say **“Abba — Father”**. The Spirit blows where and how it wills but it is never an agent of confusion or disorder, promoting ephemeral spirituality. Let us bear in mind as Paul J. Hallinan tells us that in composing, selecting, directing and singing the praise of God, there can be no excuse for mediocrity. We certainly cannot afford to have just anything. The church in this part of the world is still growing and should as a matter of fact lay good and healthy foundations.

I hope that you will not be scandalized to hear that in some parishes one hears a particular chain of compositions some of which are hardly

liturgical simply because they are the brain child of the choirmaster or his friend. In these places, no attempt is made to select the hymns with an eye on what the church is doing at the times in question. Sometimes it is due to gross culpable ignorance, at other times it is due to callousness, laziness and indiscipline.

Furthermore, I must say that it is not just enough to merely know that these seasons exist. The ideal thing is that every choirmaster, director or selector should have a liturgical calendar, a Missal or the weekly bulletin and consult these before one can select liturgical hymns appropriately. They should also see the Priest ahead of time.

According to Vacation II.

Liturgical worship is given a noble form when it is celebrated in song, with the Ministers of each degree fulfilling their ministry and the people participating in it (SL No. 113)

May I draw it into every ear that Music meant only to be heard and admired or hymns with cheap tunes and feeble Theology or even Philosophy of life, are clear signs that we have lost the truly Catholic experience of songful prayer. That is the truth as it stands but all hope is not lost. Paul Hallinan tells us that “Renovation of the ways of Christian worship is possible but only demands music worthy of praying; participating people of God”.

In any event, whether the Mass is one in honour of a Saint, or the celebration of any of the Mysteries of our redemption or special to any occasion, the hymns must as a matter of fact be chosen for their ability to fit into the frame work of the Mass. The selection of hymns must never be left to mere arbitrating choice without consideration for the nature of the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

Thank you for your patience and may God bless.

Best of the seasons.

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Jude Nnam (KSM) Ancestor