Background to Orthodox Church Music in Nigeria

By

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Abstract

The need for the composition of orthodox church music in Nigeria in recent times cannot be overemphasized, for musical composition in this context refers to a unique musical event, that involves conceiving a piece of music which is an act of combining various musical elements such as sounds, rhythm, melody and harmony to produce a logical form of piece as well as an assemblage of musical notes in succession to form a finished musical work which serves as one of the important aspects of musical arts.

Introduction

ever-growing number of persons from various backgrounds are roming interested in the Orthodox Church music in Nigeria. These iividuals are discovering the ancient faith and rich traditions of the dodox singing style. They have been attracted by her mystical vision of d and His kingdom, by the beauty of her worship in anthems, chants and am singing, by the purity of her Christian faith, and by her continuity th the past. These are only some of the treasures of the church, which has eng history reaching back to the time of the Apostles. There is no art ch has not been used in worship. Art as the name implies comes from: - cooperation in varying proportions of the sense of beauty. The need for self expression in religion provides its devotees with some opportunity of self expression and, of course, it is a human instinct.

Orthodox Church music is edifying songs that lift up the soul of the people to their creator. In analysis, we also find that these ancient songs are carefully crafted to

edify both God and humanity. The language is biblical and poetic and sometimes repetitive and often fellows certain rhymes which helps singers to memorize.

Period of Church Music Composition

The arrival of Europeans missionaries to Nigeria in the middle of the nineteenth century brought changes both in the scope and content of Nigerian Church music. Written music was introduced into Africa by the Christian missionaries in the form of hymns. They provided models for early Nigerian composers. Most of those composers were mere choristers who began to adapt new European church music tunes to native airs. Composition became a process of translating church anthems, chants and hymns into mother-tongues. The composer therefore, was a "translator" or a "modifier" of Western Church music tunes. It was necessary for composers (translators) in the various Orthodox Church and other Christian denominations to follow the European missionary models to avoid any intrusion of African musical idioms which were considered by the missionaries as carrying pagan connotations.

Church Music

Church music in Nigeria is founded around 1906 by the British. Its objectives are the encouragement of high standards in the choice and performance of choral music in worship. Predominantly the Anglican Church is one fellowship that marries music with its principal mode of worship. Music creates different atmosphere in worship, which include solemnity, joy and thanksgiving. It breaks down the wall between the rich and the poor in sad and joyous moods which creates into worship to elicit dancing or weeping. King David in the Old Testament reading danced so freely to music in worship that his wives could not dissuade him from the euphoric expression. Psalms of David refers severally to music and dance to the Lord in praise and worship. David goes on to say in psalm 149, "Sing a new song to the Lord, praise Him in the assembly of His faithful people". This goes to show the Christian ethos that communication with God requires music as a path that leads to God.

Historical Background of Church Music In Nigeria

The history of the establishment of Christianity in Nigeria by the missionaries side

by side with education has been severally discussed in Omibiyi-Obidike (1987), Olaniyan (2001). The churches that first settled in Nigeria were the Christian missibn society (CMS) - an Anglican sprang and the Methodist church, which established the first school, while the CMS contributed most to education, through which the advancement in Christian music was made. In the early stage of Christian establishment, the teaching of the Christian doctrine was directed to the ideals of the Christian faith and music that was considered not in accordance with the doctrine was discouraged as heathenish. By implication, folk music was banned. Even the new coverts were taught only Western hymns, while the few catechists and school teachers that were trained had the opportunity to learn the harmonium to accompany church worship.

Hymn Tunes and Metres

Songs of praise to the deity or a saint particularly associated with Anglican Church where words and melodies of hymns are especially popular for congregational singing. Books of hymns and hymn-tunes of special significance are: hymns ancient and modern and other hymnal books. In many hymn books, figures are attached to hymns and tunes either in the body of the book or in the index, to show the number of syllables in the lines and so to facilitate the fitting of tunes to the hymns. E.g. the metre known as 'six-eight' or 'six-lines-eight', appears as 8 8. 8 8. 8 8. Accordingly, as the poet has arranged his lines (as to rhymes) in one way or the other.

The following metres have distinct names:

8 6 . 8 6 . Common Metre (also called ballad metre from being that of the old English ballads);

6 6.8 6. short metre, 8 8. 8 8. long metre.

The variety of metres is now astonishing, as many as 100 to 120 being found in some hymn-books.

Returning to the subject of the two 'six-eights', which are metres much found in the hymns of the brothers Wesley, it may be remarked that organists have been known who could ally a hymn in one of these metres to a tune in the other without apparently being troubled by the strange effect.

Metre

This is the rhythmic element in poetry. The term covers:

(a) The number of lines in a stanza.

(b) The number of syllables in a line.

(c) The arrangement of the syllables as to accentuation (or in the ancient languages, their arrangement as to 'quantity', i.e. relative amount of time involved in the enunciation of the various syllables; the nature of these languages being different from that of the modern languages).

Anapaest

A foot consisting of two unaccented syllables plus an accented (or in ancient poetry two shorts and a long) is an Anapaest, and a metre so made up is. All of these connote the metre, accent, anacrusis and the syllabus which are strophic in hymn tunes.

Chants, Hymns and Anthems

Chants
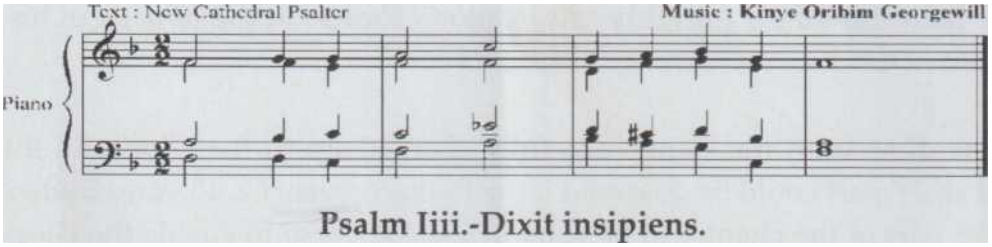
A chant implies vocal music. The text, the phrases, words and eventually the syllables, can be sung in various ways. The most straightforward is recitation on the same tone; melodies are sung on long sustained vowels ranging from five to six notes per syllable which is called "syllabic" as each syllable is sung varying the tone. The main principle is that of the traditional Gregorian tones, i.e. A short melody repeated to each verses, the varying number of syllables in different lines of the words being accommodated by the flexible device of a reciting note at the opening of each line. This being treated as timeless and capable of serving as the vehicle for many or few syllables. Compositions here are usually written for four voices: soprano, alto, tenor and bass generally known as S.A.T.B by the acronym. According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of current English, a chant is often repeated tune to which psalms and canticles are fitted to several syllables or lyrics to one note.

Single chant

Single chant in this context is a tune written for ten musical notes and harmonized accordingly. E.g. Georgewill's single chant No. 10 which words is fixed to the New

Cathedral Psalter (NCP) Psalm 53 Dexit insipiens.

GEORGEWILL'S SINGLE CHANT NO 10
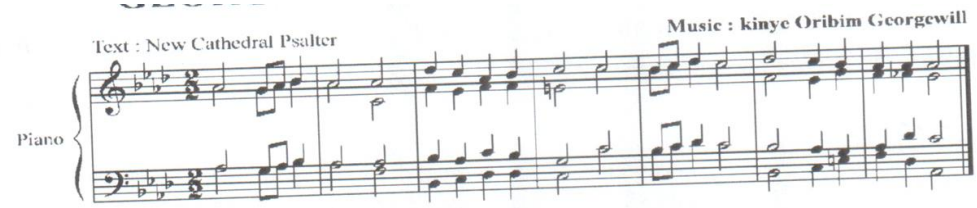


d-: r:r m - : s - : r :m f: r d -
THE foolish body hath said / in his / heart: **There** / is / no / God.
Corrupt are they* and became **abominable** / in their / **wickedness:** there is / none that / doeth / good.

Single chants takes just the verses one after the other until the chant is fully sung to the Gloria and no 2nd part is observed, even when the verses are nine. Just for the fact that it is a simple chant.

Double chant

Double chants are tunes written for twenty musical notes and harmonized accordingly. E.g. Georgewill's Double chant No. 2 which word is fixed for the Benedictus St. Luke 1:68 from the *New Cathedral Psalter* (NCP) which notes go thus:

GEORGEWILL'S DOUBLE CHANT NO 2



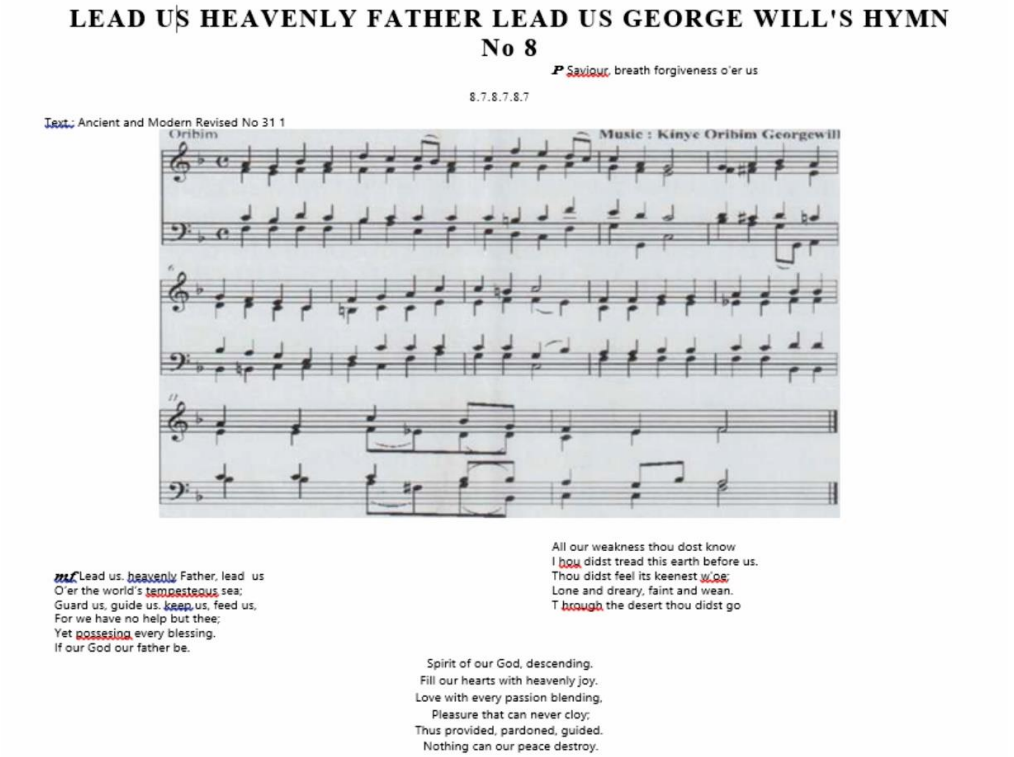
BENEDICTUS St. LUKE 1.68
d:- t.d: r d: - d:- f: m d: r m : -
BLESS-ED be the **Lord** / God of / Israel : for he hath **visited** / and re- / deem-ed . his / people;

m:- r:m f:m f:- m:r d: d : d : -
And hath rais-ed up a **mighty** sal- / vation / for us : in the **house** / of his / servant / David;
This is done until the Canticle is fully chanted up to the Gloria. In this context, 2nd part could be observed if the Psalm is even: i.e. 13 verses: where the 2nd part of the chant will be sung at the 13th verse to enable the Gloria start from the beginning.

Hymns

Hymn is a lyric poem, reverently and devotionally conceived, which is designed to be sung and which expresses the worshipper's attitude toward God or God's purposes in human life. It should be simple and metrical in form, genuinely emotional, poetic and literary in style, spiritual in quality, and in its ideas so direct and so immediately apparent as to unify a congregation while singing it.

A hymn, according to the Twentieth century current Dictionary is a song of praise for praise worship and adoration. Also, Oxford Advance Learners Dictionary of current English had described hymn as a song of praise to God Almighty usually the religious song of the Christian church, which every one sing during divine service. Hachette Dictionary, Edition 2000 also define hymn as a poetry song, sung in honor of God or a hero.



Marseilles is the hymn of France. Oxford Christian Dictionary also states it to be a sacred poetry set to music and sung in the course of divine service

Verse Form of Hymns

These verse forms are specifically for hymn tunes.

Verse Forms: By virtue of compositional styles in terms of meter and rhyme schemes, all poems could belong to any of the three broad categories: rhymed verse, blank verse or free verse. But first, we shall take a close look of the meaning of verse.

The word verse is used to describe all composition in lines. In other words, all compositions arranged in lines rather than in paragraphs are verses. More appropriately, verse is used to refer to those poems composed in lines, with a definite meter.

Free Verse: This is a composition poem that lacks a definite meter, nor a definite rhyme scheme.

Blank verse: This refers to a poem or composition that has a meter, but lacks only a rhyme scheme; e.g. a poem constructed within the deliberate constraints of 'measurable' lines, but without their final sounds showing a pattern of similarities. (Trinya and Shirley p.101)

Stanza And Couplet Of Hymns

Stanza: A stanza is a group of lines constituting a visible unit, usually set apart from other unit by space. It is like the paragraph in the novel or short story. **A** familiar example may be the stanza of the hymns we sing in church (and hymns are poems themselves some of them with very deep meanings). Stanzas are differently designated, depending on the number of lines that are in them.

Couplet: A couplet is a stanza of two lines. See, for example, the following one-stanza poem.

Happy Thought

The world is so full of a number of things I'm sure we should all be as happy as things

The same word, "things", (and the same rhyme) ends the two lines. In the following poem, however, there are three couplets (or couplet stanza's) but there is no rhyme (or similarity in the final sound of the words that end the lines), as in the example above. Yet they are also couplets, because they are stanzas of two lines.

This is neither rune nor riddle;
it is happening everywhere;
What I mean is -it is so simple
yet no trick of the pen or brush.
Could capture that impression;
Music could do nothing when it.

Anthems

According to Oxford concise dictionary of music Oxford University press; explained that an Anglican created, with a place in the liturgy. It constitutes in ordinary churches the one great occasion when the choir alone undertakes the duty of song, when an elaborate vocal setting impossible and unsuitable in other parts of the service becomes proper and effective. It is usually, but not necessarily accompanied by organ. John Owen ward (20th Edition pg 41) described anthem as

a consideration of the English speaking protestant churches' equivalent of the Latin motet from which it has sprung. It is an Anglican creation. For instance in the Liturgy of the Church of England there is a place provided for it (see: *book of common prayer*) and churches other than that have given it an equivalent place, somewhere after the middle, or towards the end of the service. It constitute in ordinary churches one of the occasion of the service when the choir alone undertakes the duty of song. It is usually accompanied by the organ so differing from the motet (in the strict application of the later term). It has frequent passages for solo voices, individual or in combination. The Anthem of the English Tudor composer often differed from motets but the use of the English language and the development of solo passages, recitatives, arias, duets, quartets and e.t.c largely took place after the restoration and in the chapel royal, where Charles II demanded a brighter music such as he has had when in exile at the court of Louis XIV, including accompaniment for strings. The Anthem of Purcell is some of the old serious motet style and others in this new style, when a little later, G.F. Handel came to England and wrote large scales and beautiful works of his class such as the Chandos Anthems and others. Such composition tends towards the type of the church cantatas of Bach and other German composers of the period.

From the definition above, musical identity is said to be what people are known for, their musical characteristics, feelings, thoughts, their creative ingenuity and their music to be recognized easily by others.

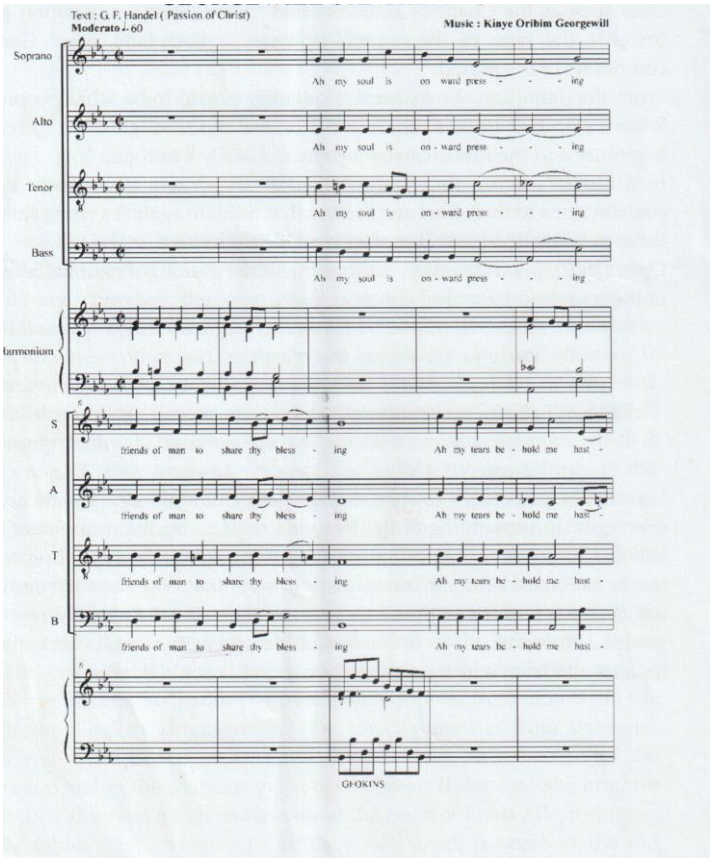
In a bid to achieve this, some Nigerian art writers have made useful contributions to this effect and factors that militate against getting through these possible dreams and proffer possible solutions.
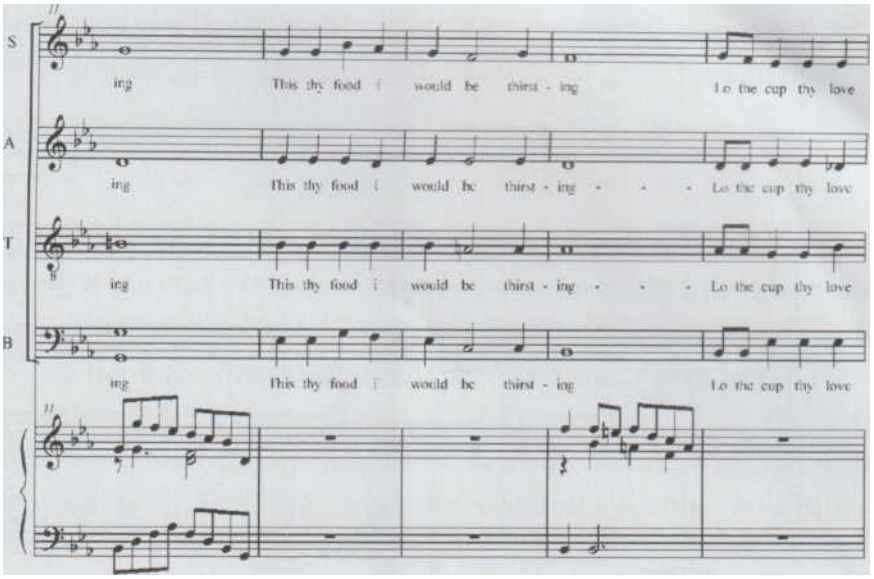
Ogisi (2007), in his Nigerian composer and the search for national identity: of the sonic and structural observes that:
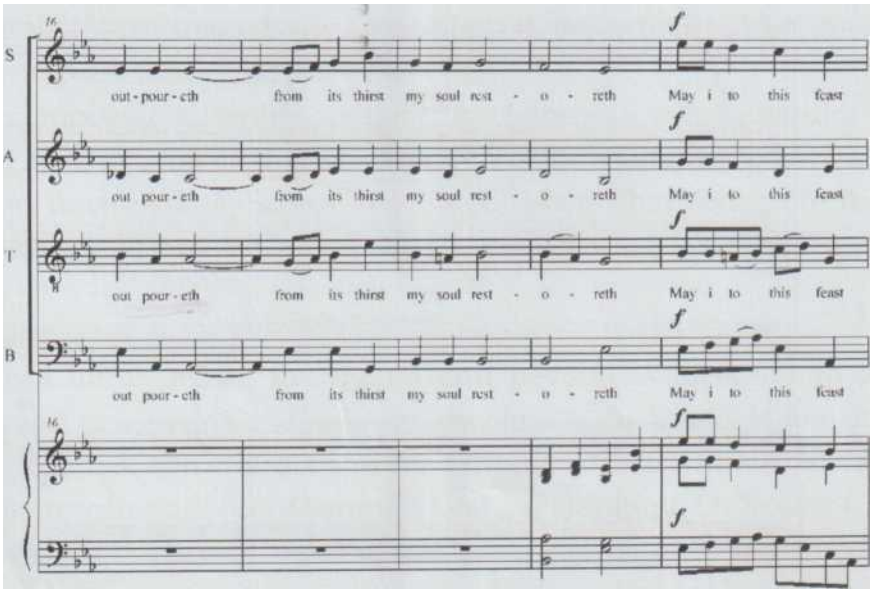
> *The recognition of languages comes from the type of sound that it contains. The same is true of music.*
>
> *The vocal derives from the language while the instrumental is chiefly environmental. That is why musical instrument are not arbitrarily employed in traditional music as a part of musical essence. (P. 137).*
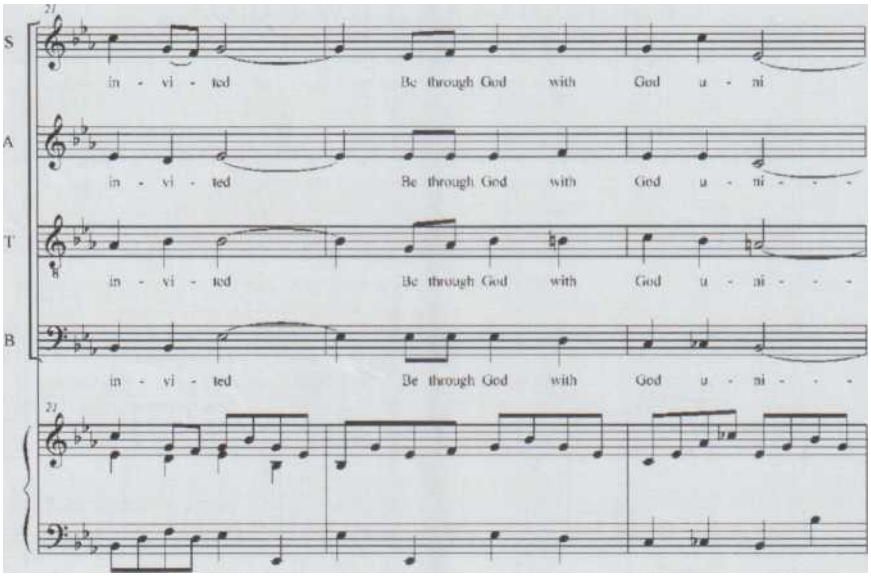
He went in furtherance to state that the "use of antiphony ostinato and the composer understanding of the Nigerian musical traditions are necessary in a bid to create words of national significance an identity". In a bid to create national identity it is necessary to state that Nigerians have several sonic matrixes derived from the national music of the various ethnic groups. However there are common features that composers should harness and from which a national sonic matrix could evolve.

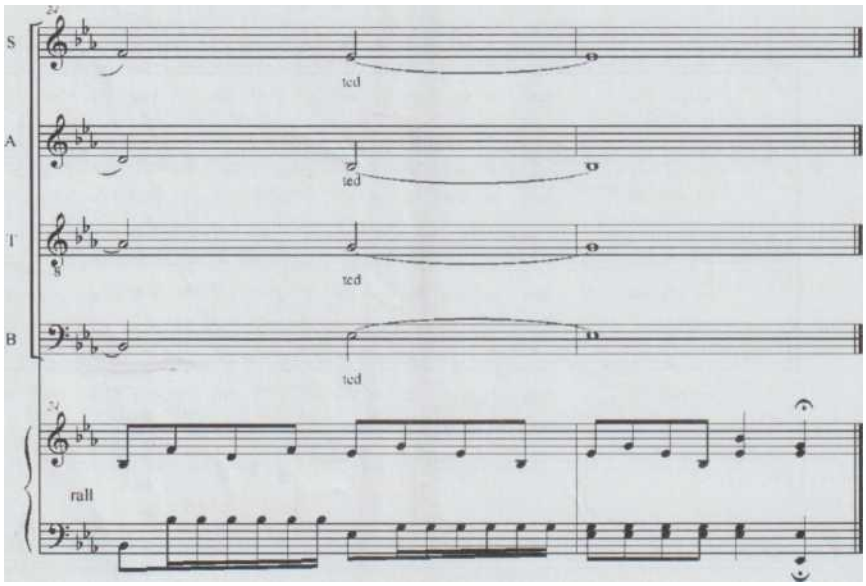
AH MY SOUL IS ONWARD PRESSING
GEORGEWILL'S ANTHEM No 4




S
A
T
B
ing This thy food I would be thirst - ing Lo the cup thy love
ing This thy food I would be thirst - ing - - - Lo the cup thy love
ing This thy food I would be thirst - ing - - - Lo the cup thy love
ing This thy food I would be thirst - ing Lo the cup thy love


S
A
T
B
out - pour - eth from its thirst my soul rest - o - reth May i to this feast
out pour - eth from its thirst my soul rest - o - reth May i to this feast
out pour - eth from its thirst my soul rest - o - reth May i to this feast
out pour - eth from its thirst my soul rest - o - reth May i to this feast


21
S
A
T
B
in - vi - ted
Be through God with God u - ni
21


24
S
A
T
B
ted
ted
ted
ted
rall

RHYTHM AND SYLLABLE

Rhythm

Rhythm refers to the 'flow' of the sounds of the words of a poem. It refers to the beat, comparable stressed and unstressed syllables (meter) in the poem.

Syllable

This is a pronounceable unit of a word or a unit of pronunciation in a word. For example, the word "syllable" can be broken down into three units or segments of pronunciation, as follows: sy-lla-ble. The word "dic-tio-na-ry" has four syllables: dic-tio-na-ry. The words "provide" has two pronounceable segments: pro-vide.

Every word has its natural stress pattern. The word "provide", for example, is pronounced with the stress on the second syllable, and the word "broken" with the stress on the first syllable. A short upward stroke called an accented or stress syllable, whereas the brave (u) placed over a syllable indicates that it unstressed or (unaccented) the word "provide", therefore would be represented thus: pro-vide

In some compositions, words are deliberately chosen with particular stress patterns, so as to achieve definite effects. It is the relationship between the stress and unstressed syllables in a line of poem that constitute the feet which amounts to a meter.

Conclusion

Orthodox Church music in Nigeria and beyond is basically meant to worship and give praises to God Almighty just as the preacher ministers to the congregation, same applies to the Orthodox Church music composer who write or compose tunes through God's inspiration. Orthodox Church music is sacred not secular by all standards which could also be meditated upon, which is sung for reflection and meditation, also for evangelism and exultation of the name of our God. It attributes solemnity and builds one moral standards.

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