



# Asa, Allyson, and Davies: Three Amazons of Tonal Integrity in Yoruba Vocal Music

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## Abstract

The existing body of literature has engaged the translation of English hymns to the Yorùbá language by European missionaries sung to European tunes, which constituted linguistic distortion of the Yorùbá language. Little or no attention has been given to this phenomenon in Yorùbá vocal music outside core liturgical settings. Despite the distorted singing of Yorùbá words in the church and its influence on Christian and popular Yorùbá singers, there remains a school of Yorùbá composers and singers, whose music has continued to align with Yorùbá speech tone pattern. Anchored on the theory of cultural representation, this study investigates three selected female icons of contemporary Yorùbá music – Bukola Elemide, Sola Allyson Obaniyi and Yinka Davies, who have demonstrated strong allegiance to Yorùbá tonal integrity in their musical vocalisations. Purposive sampling was employed in selecting two songs from each of the artists and subjected to content analysis. The music of the three selected singers conforms to Yorùbá tonal integrity, thereby promoting appropriateness in Yorùbá vocal music composition and performance. Their music has continued to create awareness, serving as an avenue for advocacy in the proper approach to composing and singing Yoruba music.

## Introduction

The issues surrounding the tonality of the Yorùbá language and its implication on Yorùbá music, otherwise referred to as “tonal integrity”, have continued to generate discussions among scholars. According to Whidden (2003) and Adedeji (2010), Yorùbá songs are logogenic (word-born) in nature, where the tone applied to each syllable of the words influences the melodic contour. The introduction of European music to the Yorùbá church in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially in the form of hymns, wherein English hymns were translated into Yorùbá language and sung to European tunes, has remained a significant historical event in Yorùbá music, which formed the basis for this discourse (Owoaje, 2020; Owoaje & Adegbola, 2022). Yorùbá music, especially those that took their roots from the Yorùbá church, has continued to demonstrate the influence of the tonality disruption caused by the age-long European-influenced Yorùbá church music tradition, wherein melodies were forced on song texts without conformity to the tonality of the Yorùbá language. Scholars such as Omojola (1998) and composers of art music have argued that composers can explore sounds to suit their creative imaginations and should not be restricted by indigenous musical elements such as language tonality. However, it is essential to note that conformity to the tonal inflexion of the Yorùbá language in the composition and performance of Yorùbá vocal art and popular music is a key element in meaningful communication and representation of Yorùbá musical identity.



For instance, Sowande's theory of 'Cultural reciprocity' and the principle of 'Cultural pluralism' subscribed to the intercultural exchange of musical elements in art music composition. According to Sowande, as cited in Omojola (1998):

We are not prepared to submit to the doctrine of apartheid in art by which a musician is expected to work only within the limits of his traditional forms of music, [and] uncontrolled nationalism in which case nationals of any one country may forget that they are all members of one human family (Omojola, 1998: 460).

Sowande's position is further demonstrated in his works, especially his symphonies and several organ pieces. His instrumental works, such as *Akinla*, *Folk Symphony*, *African Suite*, *Prayer*, and *Obangiji*, use Nigerian indigenous melodies and musical configurations. However, Sowande's position should not be misinterpreted. His idea of cultural reciprocity concentrates more on exchanging cultural elements such as melody and rhythmic configurations than linguistic interpretation and communication of meanings, which are essential components of Yorùbá vocal music. It is important to note also that Sowande's vocal compositions are essentially Negro spirituals and 'religious works, set to original music and conceived in an entirely European style' (Omojola, 1998: 460).

Furthermore, the contributions of Fela Sowande in fostering effective communication in Yorùbá art music, particularly *Yorùbá native airs* during the cultural nationalism movement of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, cannot be overlooked. As highlighted in Owoaje (2014), during his research on music, Fela Sowande encountered Rev. A. T. Olá Olúdé and emphasised to Rev. Olúdé the necessity of employing pentatonic scales to ensure that his compositions aligned with the tonal inflexions of the Yorùbá language, both in text and melody. This underscores Sowande's stance on Yorùbá vocal music regarding its tonality and the significance of communication.

Meanwhile, the introduction of European hymn tunes to translated Yorùbá hymn texts by early European missionaries resulted in ineffective verbal communication. The translated Yorùbá texts either completely lost their meaning or sounded nonsensical when sung to the European hymn tunes. To remedy the damage caused by this process and celebrate the Indigenous musical trilogy of singing, drumming, and dancing, Indigenous Yorùbá church music composers emerged in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. They aimed to create songs that genuinely represent Yorùbá musical culture, giving rise to the *Yorùbá native air* (YNA) tradition. The YNA movement was driven by singing, drumming, and dancing, along with adherence to the tonality of the Yorùbá language in their musical compositions (Vidal, 1986; Euba, 1992; Owoaje, 2014). Despite the YNA composers' efforts to address the language conflict caused by the introduction of European tunes to Yorùbá texts, issues concerning adherence to the 'tonal integrity' of the Yorùbá language have continued to persist in contemporary Yorùbá church and popular music. As noted by Euba,

...the efforts of these composers did not attract Yorùbá converts. For one thing, the church remained staid and genteel. Secondly, and ironically, the songs which today appeal most popular to the grassroots of the Christian community and indeed to non-Christian Yorùbá as well, are songs in which the intonation of the words is often distorted, as if they were European hymns translated into Yorùbá and sung to European tunes (Euba, 1992: 49).

This is evident in several Yorùbá contemporary gospel music, where it sometimes takes a long period to decipher the meanings of song texts because they have been composed without considering the logogenic nature of the Yorùbá language.



Demonstrated below is an example of Yorùbá popular songs that do not conform to the speech-tone pattern of the Yorùbá language. Also demonstrated is a translated Yorùbá hymn, which does not correctly communicate the intended meanings of the hymn texts when sung.

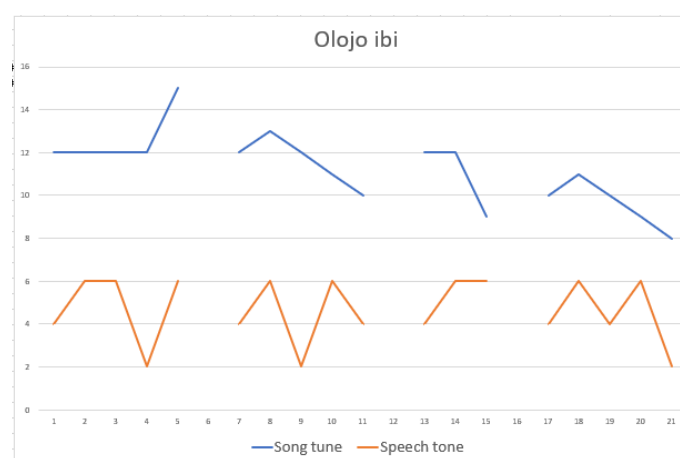


Olojo ibi, ijo kan e o

Birthday celebrant, it's your turn to dance

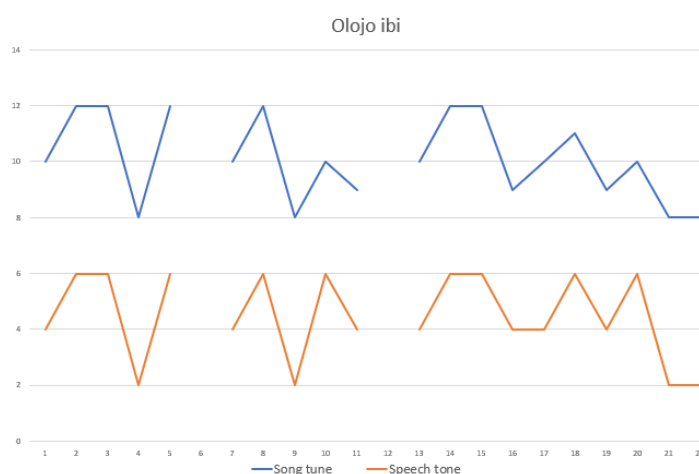
Se were k'o da wa l'ohun

Quickly Respond to us by getting on the dancing floor.



When sung to the tune above, the song texts in the first clause, “*Olojo ibi*”, communicate no meaning in Yorùbá language, while the third clause means “demonstrate madness”.

When sung to conform to Yorùbá tonal inflexion, the song is expected to sound as shown in the musical score and graphic illustration below:

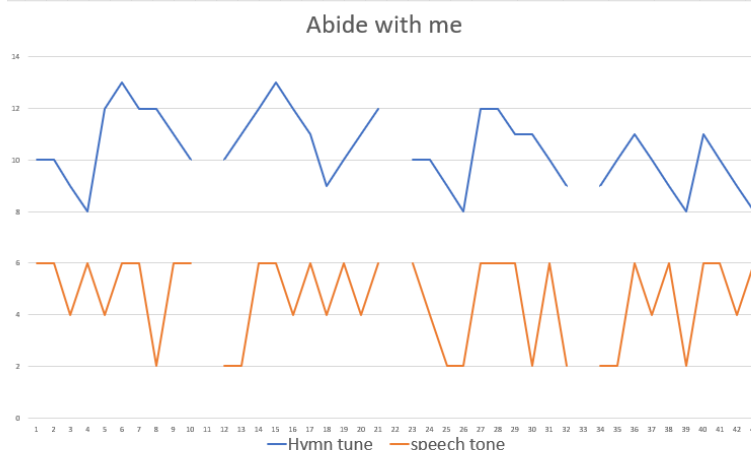


As shown in the graphical illustration above, the song tune and speech tone, when sung as recommended above, fit meaningfully in the Yorùbá language and communicate directly to



listeners without distortion or loss of meaning. Below is another example, taken from the Yorùbá hymnbook *Iwe orin mimo* (I.O.M), hymn 15. *Wa ba mi gbe* is a Yorùbá translation of “Abide with me”, sung to the tune “Eventide”. The non-correlation of the words and tune is further shown in a graphical illustration.

**Wa ba mi gbe, A - le fe-re le tan. O - kun-kun su, O -**  
 A - bide with me, Fast falls the e-ven- tide. The dark-ness dee - pens,  
**lu - wa ba mi gbe: Bi o - lu - ran - lo - wo mii-ran ba**  
 Lord, with me a - bide: When o - ther help - ers fail and com-forts  
**ye, I - ran-wo a - lai-ni wa ba mi gbe.**  
 flee, Help of the help-less, oh, a - bide with me.



To correct this error in some selected English hymns translated to Yorùbá and sung to European hymns, Gilbert Popoola Dopemu (1921-2021) composed an indigenous tune that thoroughly expresses the texts of the translated hymn. Below are the musical score and graphical representation of the correlation between the hymn tune and speech tone.

**Wa ba mi gbe a-le fe-re le tan; O - kun - kun su,**  
**O - lu - wa ba mi gbe. Bi o - lu - ran - lo - wo mi - ran ba ye,**  
**I - ran - wo a - la - i - ni wa ba mi gbe.**



It is important to note that the efforts of G. P. Dopemu and other Yorùbá native air composers have proven futile. Although their compositions are featured occasionally in the Yorùbá church, they are not widely accepted for use in church services in the Yorùbá church, in place of the translated English hymns that are sung to European tunes.

However, several frontline Yorùbá popular musicians have continued to uphold conformity to the tonal inflexion of the Yorùbá language in their song compositions, as well as performances. This is despite the lackadaisical attitude of a vast number of Yorùbá popular artists to Yorùbá song tune and speech tone correlation in their music. Although studies have engaged with various aspects of tonal inflexion in Yoruba music, little has been done on conformity to the tonal inflexion of Yoruba language in popular music. This study, therefore, contributes to filling that gap to advance knowledge of Yoruba music and speech tone patterns in African music.

Premised on Cultural Representation Theory, this paper engages the musical compositions and performances of three prominent female Yorùbá popular artistes who have emerged as amazons of Yorùbá music, namely Bukola Elemide (Asa), Sola Allyson Obaniyi and Yinka Davies. These artistes have continued to demonstrate conformity to Yorùbá tonal integrity in their music. They largely employ the Yorùbá language in their compositions and performances and have a considerable global audience. These artistes were purposively selected among several Yorùbá male and female musicians who endeavour to take the tonal inflexion of the Yorùbá language into consideration in their music. Purposive sampling was employed to select two songs from each artiste and subject them to content analysis. The correlation between the song tune and speech tone pattern is demonstrated using computer-generated graphic illustrations, which show the melodic contour at the top of the graph. In contrast, the speech tone is shown at the bottom of the same graph.

### Theorising cultural representation

The relationship between culture and language cannot be fragmented. They are two dependent components that function alongside each other. Language functions as the means through which culture is transmitted among members of society, while music communicates based on the language of its creators. Describing the relationship between culture and language, Hall (1997) employed the term 'representation' to describe how culture is regulated within a society through the medium of language. He argued that language functions through 'signs' and 'symbols', which stand for or represent intentions, feelings, thoughts and ideas. However, language is not limited to spoken or written words; it involves using other codes such as colour and body gestures. Meaning





is constructed in spoken language through sounds that users have understood and agreed upon within a cultural environment.

According to Hall, culture revolves around shared meaning, which involves attributing significance to people, events, phenomena, and objects. This meaning then forms the cultural identity of members from various groups within a society who exchange it through social interaction. Hutasuht (2009) observed that individuals utilise language as a means of generating and consuming meanings amongst one another. However, decoding a concept in another person's mind proves challenging unless one possesses the appropriate linguistic codes, which assist in translating the signs into familiar concepts. In the Yorùbá language, for example, intonation plays a crucial role in generating meaning, as several Yorùbá words with different meanings share the same spelling in writing. They are distinguished by the tone of speech attached to them, which shapes their cultural representation. For the Yorùbá language to serve as a medium for conveying Yorùbá culture, the words must be articulated correctly, in accordance with the rising and falling of the speech tone.

It is important to recall that the issues surrounding the singing of Yorùbá texts to European tunes in the early Yorùbá church, in which the meaning of Yorùbá words was distorted, was one of the factors that birthed the Yorùbá native air tradition in Christian liturgy (Owoaje, 2014). The European tonal orientation, which was introduced in the early Yorùbá church, has continued to influence Yorùbá music negatively in the area of linguistic communication. The improper singing of Yorùbá words has gone beyond the church and moved into Yorùbá popular music soundscape, whereby attention is first given to melodic composition, after which Yorùbá texts are added to the existing melody without considering the need to align the melody of the songs with the tonal inflexion of the Yorùbá language. As earlier demonstrated, many examples of this music-linguistic blunder abound in Yorùbá popular music soundscape. It is important to note that efforts are being made to correct this at institutional levels in the training of composers (Owoaje & Sofola, 2021). This current study is another step in addressing this issue on a broader scale.

The three selected artistes have continued to exemplify a strong understanding of the importance of meaning as encapsulated in their music to appropriately represent Yorùbá musical culture and communicate to their listeners with the most appropriate linguistic expressions. The following section presents a brief profile of these artistes, highlighting their musical backgrounds and activities.

#### **A profile of Bukola Elemide**

Born in Paris, France, on September 17th, 1982, as Olubukola Elemide, Asa is a Nigerian singer and songwriter. Her parents hail from Abeokuta, Ogun state, Nigeria. As a young girl, she was given the nickname 'Asa', which means 'hawk'. Asa attended Corona High School Lagos and Federal Government College, Jos. She also enrolled in a professional musical programme at Peter Kings School of Music, Badagry, majoring in Guitar studies for a year. Asa's love for music was motivated by her father's music collection, which included classics such as Bob Marley, Aretha Franklin, Sunny Ade, Marvin Gaye, Fela Kuti, Ebenezer Obey and Lagbaja.

Upon moving back to France, she was inspired by contemporary musicians such as D'Angelo, Lauryn Hill, Erika Badu, Angelique Kidjo, and Rafel Saadiq. She released her first single, "Eye Adaba," then "Jailer" while in Nigeria. She later produced her first album, titled 'Asa', in partnership with Cobhams Asuquo and the involvement of Christophe Dupouy. This album won her the prestigious French Constantin Award in 2008 after she was voted best fresh talent of 10 singers or groups by a jury of 19 music-industry specialists in Paris. She has performed on an extended tour of Europe, North America, Africa, and Japan. Asa's awards include French Music Awards Victoires de la Musique nomination for 'Female Artist of the Year 2011, Recording of the Year- Bibanke in Headies 2008, and Headies Awards Album of the Year 2008.



### **A profile of Sola Allyson Obaniyi**

Sola Allyson is a Nigerian singer, songwriter, and voice coach. She was born in the early 1970s. She attended Anglican Primary School, Ikorodu, and later enrolled at Shams-el-deen Grammar School, Ikorodu, for her secondary education. She studied Business Studies at Government Technical College, Agidingbi, Ikeja, obtaining an NBTE Certificate. She later gained admission into The Polytechnic, Ibadan, in 1997, where she studied Music Technology, majoring in voice. Sola started her music career as a backup singer at 13 and later developed into a professional backup singer.

Her first album, 'Eji owuro,' saw her rise to fame, coming as a response to the success of a sound track she had recorded for a movie. She is currently one of the most famous gospel artistes in Nigeria. She has collaborated with other popular Nigerian artistes such as Adekunle Gold, Tope Alabi and Cobhams Asuquo. Her musical albums include Eji Owuro (2003), Gbe je F'ori (2005), Ire (2007), Imoore (2009), Adun (2012), Ope (2015), Imuse (2018) and Iri (2019). Sola was nominated for Best Soft Rock/ Alternative Video in the 2013 Nigeria Music Video Awards (NMVA). She was nominated for Best Indigenous Concept in the 2013 Nigeria Music Video Awards (NMVA). She won the Special Recognition Award in the 2018 City People Music Awards.

### **A profile of Yinka Davies**

Yinka Davies was born on July 16, 1970. She is a singer, songwriter, reality television judge, actress, and dancer. She attended Reagan Memorial Baptist Primary School in Yaba, Lagos for her primary education. Her secondary education was at Our Lady of Apostle Secondary School, Lagos. Her love for music was built through various means. First, she was raised by her grandmother, who always listened to music on her radio set. This exposed her to the music of famous African musicians such as Manu Dibango, Dan Maria Jos, Orlando Julius, Victor Uwaifo and Fela Anikulapo. In addition, she was influenced by her father, a guitarist and a fan of Johnny Cash, Elvis Jimmy Dean, and Sam Cooke.

Yinka started her career with painting and sculpting. She grew interest in painting and sculpting when she visited the National Theatre, Lagos, on Easter Monday, 1987. There, she met Abiodun Olaku, a renowned Nigerian painter. Bassey Effiong, the National Theatre director, later mentored her. During this period, she helped to paint the stage for a production of Marriage of Anansewa by Efua Sutherland. She became a known artist through this production. She also encountered Elizabeth Hammond, a Ghanaian dancer who held dance classes at the National Theatre. Hammond's musical partnership with the late Christie Essien Igbokwe helped fashion Yinka's musical career. She has to her credit at least three music albums – Work (1998), Emi n lo (2002) and Black Chiffon (2010). She has had collaborations with popular Nigerian artistes such as Florocka (born Akinwunmi Nathan Oluniyi Akiremi), Bisade Ologunde (Lagbaja), Fatai Rolling Dollar, and Alhaji Sikiru Ayinde Barrister.

### **Tonal integrity in the music of Asa**

The music of Bukola Elemide has continued to project Yorùbá culture to the world, especially with the way she makes use of the Yorùbá language in her songs. In *Eye Adaba* (Dove), for instance, Asa employed the Yorùbá language as a communication medium. The song, performed by individuals and groups within and outside Nigeria, fully utilises the logogenic principle, which applies to Yorùbá language. Not only does the song follow the tonal contour of the Yorùbá language, but Asa employed the use of grace notes to realise a very deep tonal accent of the Yorùbá language in situations where a pitch could not fully express the speech tone of the Yorùbá language. This is despite the combination of elements of different musical cultures in the quest to make the song appeal to a global audience.

As demonstrated in the musical score below, Asa makes use of a crushing note in the form of an *acciaccatura* in the second bar to adequately stress the Yorùbá word “*ní'lẹ̀*” (in this land), which carries the “high-high-low” tone. In addition, she employed the Yorùbá idea of dawn and



calmness, which is demonstrated in the peaceful nature of the dove, with which she formed the theme and title of the song track “*Eye Adaba*”. In the popular Yorùbá worldview, the dove is alluded to calmness, as reflected in the following verbal expression – *O tutu bi adaba* (as calm as a dove). With this, Asa seeks to project the Yorùbá world view, in which the dove symbolises calmness, all with the appropriate intonation that allows for clear and meaningful communication. Thus, the focus of the song is a prayer for a peaceful day.



*Ojúmọ́ ti mọ́*

It's a new dawn

*Ojúmọ́ ti mọ́ mi ní' lẹ̀ yíí o*

It's a beautiful dawn in this land

*Ojúmọ́ ti mọ́*

It's a new dawn

*Mó rí' re o*

And I am favoured

*Ẹyẹ àdàbà, ẹyẹ àdàbà,*

Oh peaceful dove

*Ẹyẹ àdàbà tí n fò l'ókè l'ókè;*

Peaceful dove which soars high

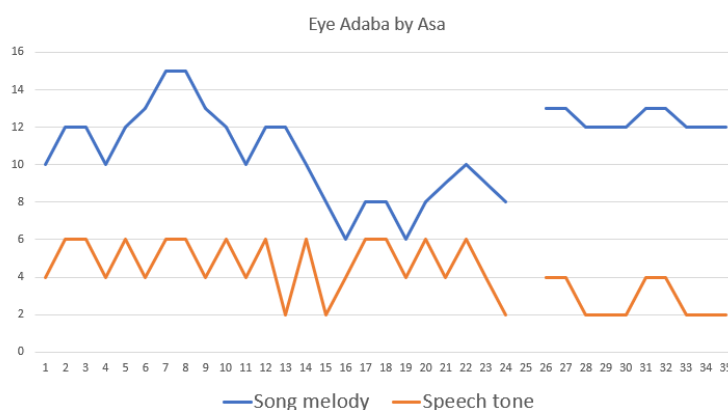
*Wá bà lé mi o,*

Come, rest upon me

*Ojúmọ́ ti mọ́, mó rí' re o*

It's a new dawn and I'm favoured

As shown in the graphical illustration below, the line at the top represents the melodic contour of the song, which is generated using the melody of the song as shown between bars one (1) and five (5) of the musical score above. The line at the bottom represents the speech tone of the phrases that make up the song melody. The two lines (song melody and speech tone) show a correlation between the melodic contour and the speech tone contour of the part of the song referred to in this discourse.



A graph illustrating the correlation between song melody and speech tone in Asa's *Eye Adaba*





Similarly, a close observation of the song track *Bimpe* in Asa's album titled *Beautiful imperfection*, reveals total conformity to the tonality of the Yorùbá language. The song employed the use of urban Yorùbá language, which involves the fusion of English words such as baby (pretty lady), sissy and business into Yorùbá language. Like in her other music tracks in which she employed the use of Yorùbá language for expression, Asa in *Bimpe*, exemplifies a good approach to the use of Yorùbá texts in popular Yorùbá vocal music. The musical score below shows the melodic pattern of the song and the texts in Yorùbá language translated to English.

Bi-m-pe'n ba mi wi,\_\_\_\_\_ O fo-wo si-'nu busi- ness\_ mi;\_\_\_\_\_ E -

mi i-re ko l'e- gbe,\_\_\_ O kan saa-ju mi bi-mo ni.\_\_\_\_ Mogbo p'on mo mi l'o- ju,\_\_\_ O la-'nu

gbo-a ni-pa busi- ness\_ mi;\_\_\_\_\_ O - ro e-mi i-re ko l'e- mi,\_\_\_ E gbon.re'n fe mi ni.\_

*Bímpé n bá mi wí*

Bimpe is reprimanding me

*Ó f'owó sínú business mi*

Poking her nose in my affairs

*Èmi ìrẹ kọ l'ẹgbẹ́*

I am not your peer

*O kàn sáájú mi bímọ ni*

You only happened to have become a parent ahead of me

*Mo gbọ́ p'ón mọ mi lójú*

She holds me in contempt and scorn

*Ó la'nu gbàà nipa business mi*

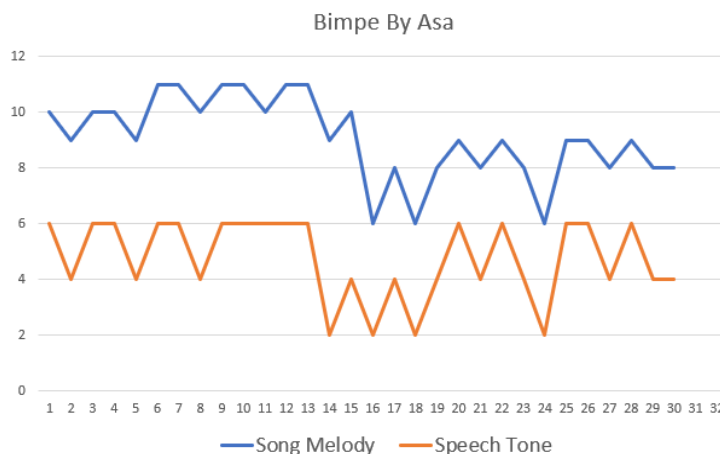
She intrudes into my affairs

*Ọrọ èmi ìrẹ kọ l'èmi*

I should not be the subject of your malice

*Ègbọn rẹ n fẹ mi ni*

This familiarity is only because I'm dating your brother



*A graph illustrating the correlation between song melody and speech tone in Asa's Bimpe*

To illustrate the correlation between the melody of the song and the tonal speech patterns of the Yorùbá texts featured in the song, the graphical representation provided above is used to depict the relationship between speech tone and song melody. While the song melody encompasses a broader intervallic range (two octaves) compared to the speech tone, which consists of just three variations (low, mid, high), both the song melody and speech tone maintain a similar contour. The two Asa songs discussed earlier have demonstrated adherence to Yorùbá tonal integrity in their melodic structure and thus do not distort the meanings of the Yorùbá texts incorporated into their lyrics. Consequently, these two songs exemplify standard practice in the application of Yorùbá texts in music.

### Tonal integrity in the music of Sola Allyson Obaniyi

Sola Allyson's *Alujonjonkijon* also employed the Yorùbá language to express her musical idea, which is based on a Yorùbá folktale song. Although the song is not presented in its original version, Allyson maintained the tonal inflexion of the Yorùbá language in her variation of the traditional melody, which forms the melodic idea of the song. In one of the solo sections, she employed a narrative vocal style with which she brought forth several Yorùbá proverbs and prayers to buttress her message on the importance of mothers in child nurturing and care. One of the solo parts taken by Adekunle Gold, an equally prominent Yorùbá popular musician, who is featured in the song, also follows in Allyson's established logogenic style that best expresses Yorùbá musical art, especially as it concerns vocal music. The refrain, which is chorused, is presented in call and response style.

I-ya, i - ya ta'-kun wa- 'le. A - lu - jan - jan - ki - jan. I - ya, i - ya ta'-kun wa-'le o. A - lu  
 jan - jan - ki - jan. E ma f'o - mo si - 'le fun 'ya je. A - lu  
 jan - jan - ki - jan. E - ni - t'o bi - 'mo l'o ye k'o w'o - mo A - lu - jan - jan - ki - jan.

*Ìyá ìyá ta'kùn wá'lẹ̀ o*

*Àlùjònjònkìjòn*

Dear mother, let down the cord

*Alujonjonkijon*



È má f'omọ sílẹ̀ fún 'yà jẹ

Don't leave your child to suffer

Àlùjònjònkíjòn

Alujonjonkijon

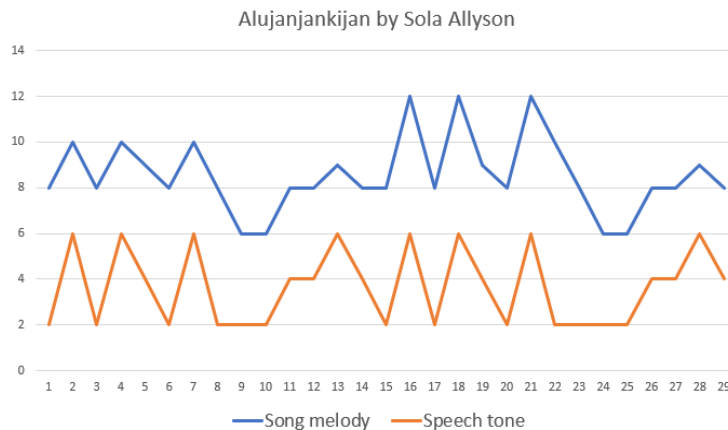
Èni tó bímọ ló yẹ k'ó w'omọ

A mother ought to care for her child

Àlùjònjònkíjòn

Alujonjonkijon

A graphical representation of the melody of the song vis-à-vis the speech tone is presented below, to show the correlation between the melodic contour and speech tone.



A graph illustrating the correlation between song melody and speech tone in Sola Allyson's *Alujanjankijan*

Sola Allyson has continued to demonstrate compliance to the tonal inflexion of the Yorùbá language in her singing, even in Westernised Yorùbá melodies. She does this through a deliberate attempt at correctly pronouncing Yorùbá words in such songs when taking them as solo, as well as in her *ad-libs*. For instance, in the popular Yorùbá chorus *Oniduro*, which was composed by Tolu Adelegan, Allyson made a deliberate attempt to correct the minor non-conformity to Yorùbá tonal integrity in the last phrase. Below is the song's original melody, composed by Tolu Adelegan, with the graphical representation of the song melody and the tone of Yorùbá's speech.



Bó bá s'eniyan lo duro ni a ti ma soro

A guarantor may grumble

Bó bá s'eniyan lo duro ni a ti sa lo

A guarantor may flee

Bó bá s'eniyan lo duro ni a ti a ti

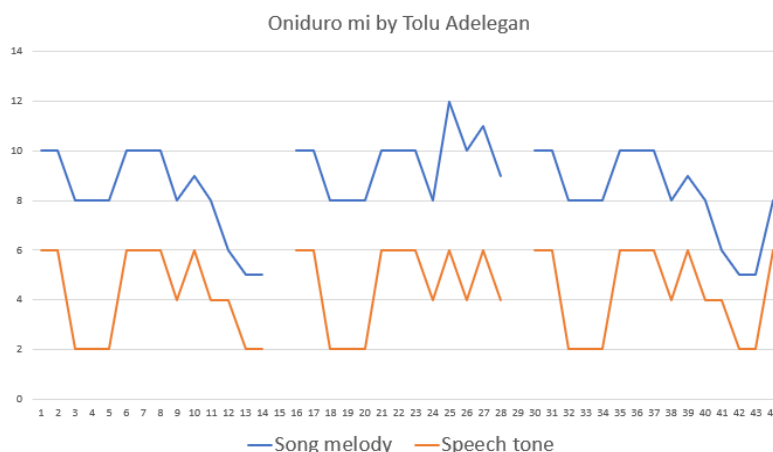
A guarantor may recount good deeds

ma siregun

and favours

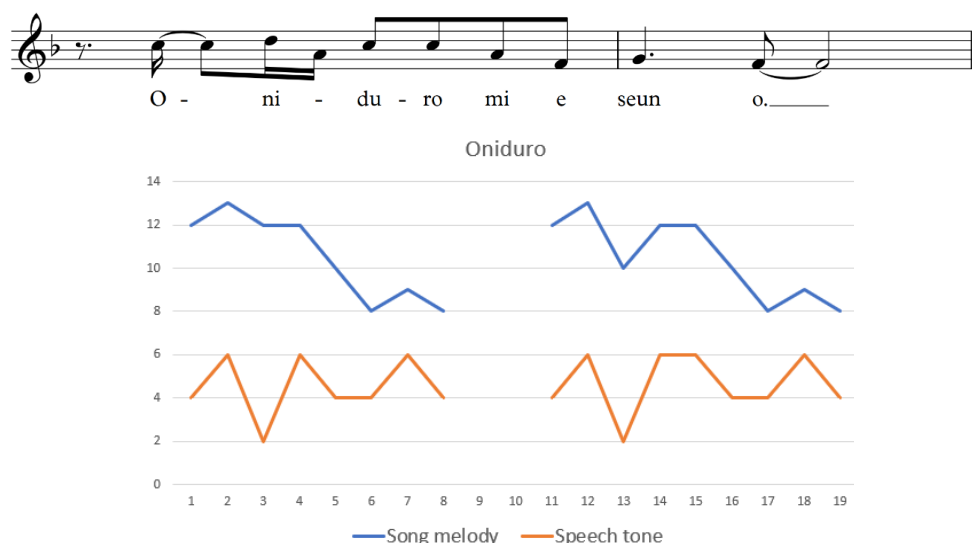
Oniduro mi e seun o

My guarantor (God), I thank you



*A graph illustrating the correlation between song melody and speech tone in the first three phrases of Tolu Adelegan's Oniduro*

Below is the musical notation of Sola Allyson's deliberate reworking of the last phrase during one of her live performances. Also presented is the graphical representation showing a correlation between the speech tone and the melody.

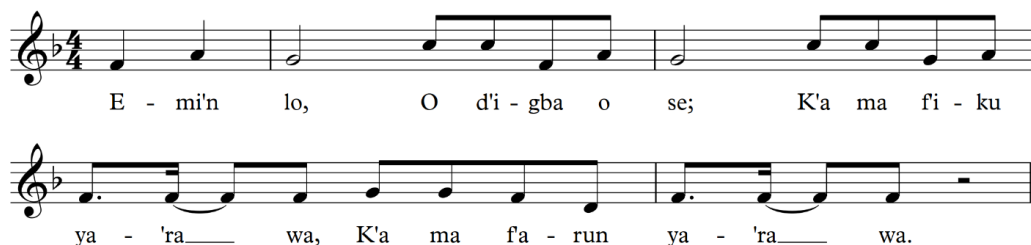


*A graph showing the original last phrase of Adelegan's Oniduro (left) and Sola Allyson's deliberate reconstruction of the same oniduro phrase on the right*

The ending phrase of the song, as illustrated above (left), does not properly conform to the speech tone of the Yorùbá language. Sola Allyson, therefore, deemed it necessary to sing it more appropriately in several of her appearances on stage. She has continued to demonstrate the proper singing of Yorùbá texts in several of her compositions, as well as when singing songs composed by other Yorùbá artistes.

### Tonal integrity in the music of Yinka Davies

An attentive listening to and observation of the use of the Yorùbá language in Yinka Davies' *Emi n lo* reveals that the song, in its wholeness, conforms to the tonal integrity of Yorùbá language in text and tune. The chorused refrain is a Yorùbá folksong, which is always used as a departure song among children after they have had enough fun, having played together all day. The musical score below shows the chorused refrain as sung by Yinka Davies.



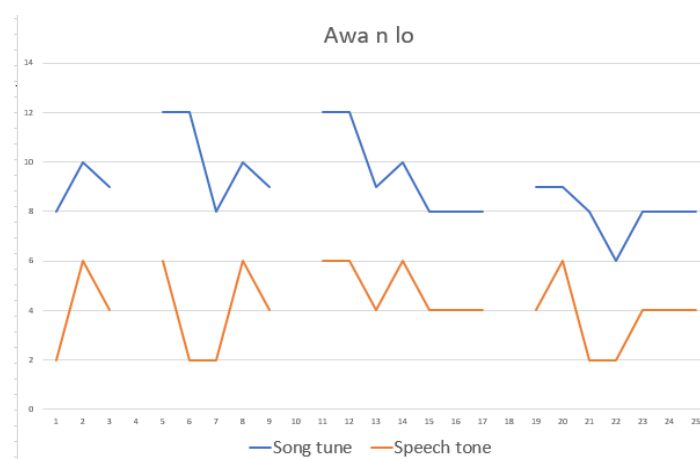
I go now

And I bid you farewell

May death not part us

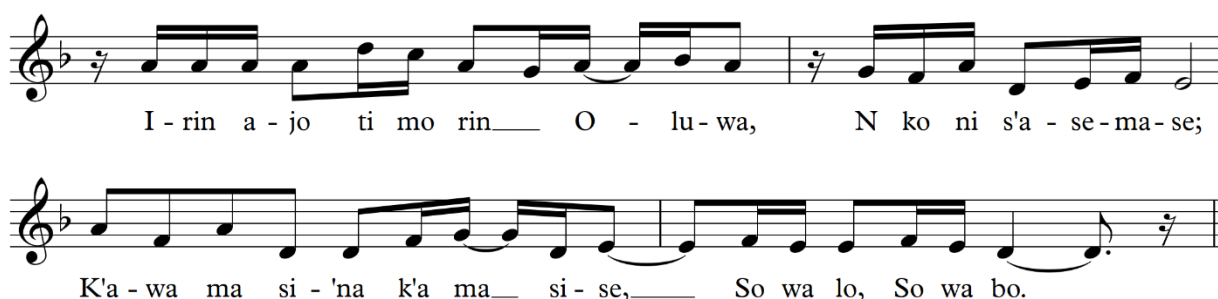
And may sickness not separate us

Shown below is a graphical representation of the speech-tone/ song melody correlation in the song as performed by Yinka Davies.



A graph illustrating the correlation between song melody and speech tone in Yinka Davies' *Awa n lo*

Apart from adopting the popular Yorùbá folksong as a chorused refrain, Yinka Davies sings her composed solos/verses through which she expresses her creative prowess in the song track. Shown below is her first solo in the song track.



In my journey, dear Lord

May I not misbehave

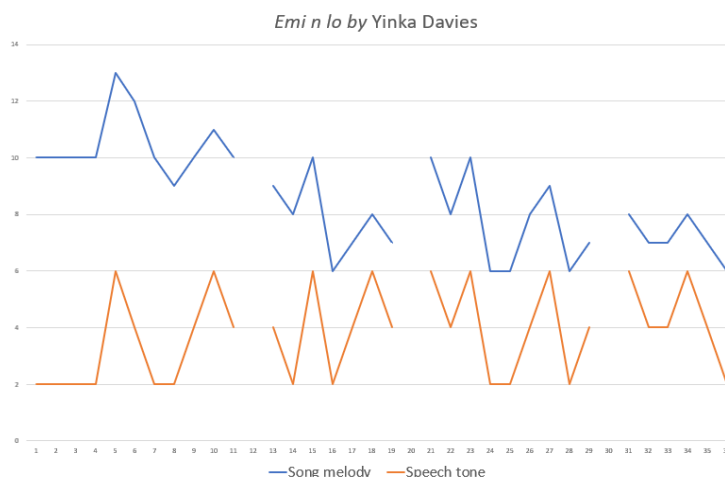
May we not be lost and enter into trouble

Guide us through, dear Lord.



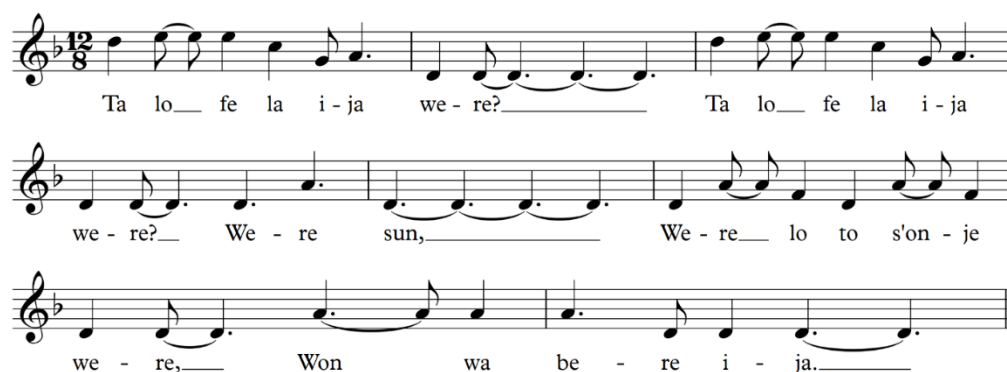


The graph below is used to illustrate the correlation between the song text and song tune, implying that Yinka Davies did not only adopt a Yorùbá folksong but rather created verses which all conform to the Yorùbá speech-tone pattern.



*A graph illustrating the correlation between song melody and speech tone in the first solo of Yinka Davies' Emi n lo*

In addition, Davies demonstrates the appropriate application of Yorùbá words to song melodies in her song track *Schizophrenia*. Although the song is presented in English, the theme song, which sustains the central idea of the song, is sung in Yorùbá language and surfaces prominently in the song track. The musical score of this melody is shown below, followed by the graphical representation of the correlation between speech-tone and song tune.

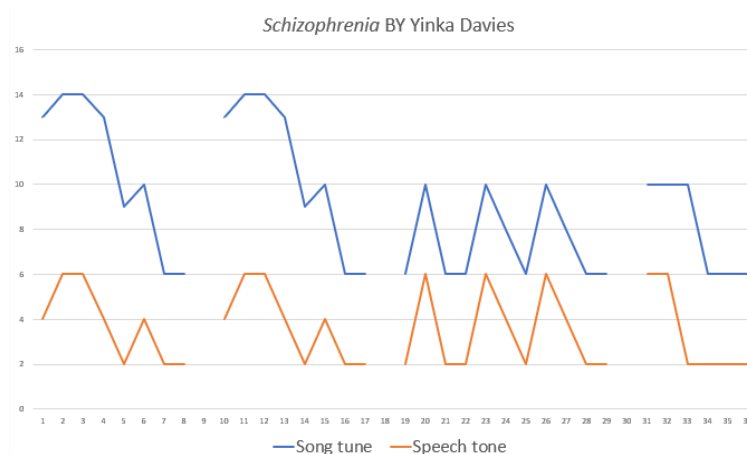


Who will separate the fight between two lunatics?

An insane person sleeps,

Another insane person urinates in the food of the sleeping lunatic

And they both start to fight



*A graph illustrating the correlation between song melody and speech tone in the first solo of Yinka Davies' Emi n lo*

Although other Yorùbá artistes have taken it upon themselves to sing correctly when using the Yorùbá language in their songs, the three artists selected for this study have continued to represent the correct singing of songs that make proper use of Yorùbá language in their lyrics. They have continued to champion the propagation of adequate representation of the Yorùbá musical culture through the appropriate use of Yorùbá language in their music, thereby standing out as amazons of Yorùbá vocal music. Identifying these three amazons as sticklers and total conformists to the proper use of Yorùbá tonal inflectional pattern is, therefore, aimed at raising awareness and paving the path for other music artistes to follow in composing the lyrics of their songs for easy and meaningful communication.

### Conclusion

The three amazons whose works have been engaged in this paper are outstanding in using Yorùbá language in their musical composition and performance. They deliberately conform to the logogenic principle of singing, which applies to the Yorùbá language, in their song composition and performance. Their musical activities have become significant in the face of improper use of Yorùbá language in both popular and art music. It is common to find song texts that have lost their meanings due to the lackadaisical attitude of artistes and composers to the tonal integrity of the Yorùbá language. Their popularity, both at home and abroad, has, therefore, helped promote and demonstrate the appropriate application of Yorùbá texts to composed and existing melodies. This is important, as it will encourage the use and musical application of the Yorùbá language by both local and international musicians of Yorùbá descent, as well as lovers of the Yorùbá culture who do not share kinship with the Yorùbá race. There is a need for music educators to pay attention to the proper usage of tonal languages, such as Yorùbá, in the gospel, folk and art music compositions of their students. This ensures that they do not distort or completely lose the intended meaning of texts used as lyrics in their musical compositions since music is supposed to be a communication tool. The identification of these three amazons as sticklers and total conformists to the proper use of Yorùbá tonal inflectional pattern is aimed at raising awareness and paving the path for other music artistes to follow in composing the lyrics of their songs for easy and meaningful communication.

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