

African Organized Dance

A case study of igba enyi-Nimo.



JOE ONYEKWELU



About the Author

Dr. Joe Onyekwelu was born on December 19, 1948 in Nimo, Njikoka Local Government Area of Anambra State, Nigeria. He had his primary school education at St. Bonaventure's School, Nimo and his post primary education at Holy Cross High School, Umuawulu-Mbankwu from 1962-1966.

In 1974, he gained admission to the University of Nigeria, Nsukka to study Music, graduated in 1978 and was posted to Kaduna for Youth Service where he led the Nigerian Airforce Band and also established music studies in the Air Force Primary School, Kaduna. His Sunday obligation as a strong Catholic took him to St. Joseph's Cathedral, Kaduna where he stood a formidable choir to the excitement of the Bishop who wanted Joe to stay back after youth service promising to use his position to secure a very good job for him, but Joe had decided to work in the East despite all attractions outside.

He returned to Enugu in September, 1979 and was immediately offered employment by N.T.A., Enugu as a music producer, a position he held until 1996 when he joined the University of Nigeria as a Senior Music Tutor. In his new academic environment, he decided to further his studies, got his masters degree in 2002 and PhD (ethnomusicology) in the year 2011.

When Joe returned to Enugu in 1979, he joined the Holy Ghost Cathedral Choir which he directed from 1980-1985. Later, he was employed as Music Director by Sacred Heart Parish, Uwani-Enugu where he directed the choir from 1985-95. Till date, Joe is the Music Director of St. Mary's Catholic Church, Uwani, Enugu.

His exposure and challenges in the profession gave him wide experience in the world of creative and performing arts. Joe has many liturgical compositions to his credit as well as musical productions. He is well known as composer, conductor, performer of many musical instruments and teacher. His television name "Bolaji" as an actor is a household name which tends to overshadow his real name. This publication is a product of long term experience in music research, composition and performance.



(A CASE STUDY OF IGBA-ENYI, NIMO)

AFRICAN ORGANIZED DANCE FORMATION

Dr. Joe Onyekwelu



Rex Charles & Patrick Publications

© Dr. Joe Onyekwelu, 2011.

E-mail bolajoe, onyekwelu@yahoo.com

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior written permission of the author.

ISBN: 978-978-50530-3-6

Printed and Published by
Rex Charles & Patrick Ltd, Nimo
Booksmith House, Harmony Place,
P.O. Box 575, Nimo,
Anambra State, Nigeria.
07086845197, 08080608127

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION

I dedicate this publication to **ALMIGHTY GOD**
from whom I draw my inspiration and power.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	v
Preface	vi
Acknowledgment	vii
CHAPTER ONE	1
Introduction	1
Structural Characteristics of African Dance	2
Organization	5
Dance Rehearsals	6
Outing	9
The Dance	10
Instruments of the Dance	10
Segments of Dance	11
Costumes	17
CHAPTER TWO	
Factors that Account for Observable Differences Between the Free Medley Dance and the Stylized Dance Types in Igbo Culture	20
Bibliography	24

FOREWORD

The most inadequately written of all Nigeria's cultural expressions is the Nigerian dance. And yet the life of every Nigerian is full of the sounds of music that swell around him/her from the cradle to the grave.

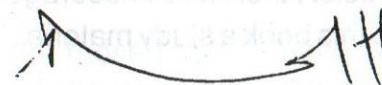
Dance is embedded in a complex web of cultural, religious, and political contexts that reflect the unique facets of the Nigerian society. Dance helps people tie music to celebrations like birth and death, initiations, festivals, commemoration, entertainment, other culturally important activities and for ceremonies of State.

Indeed, the Nigerian culture seems to make use of the dances almost more than any other art form. There are dances for children, adolescence and adults, for men and for women, and for spirit-manifests (*Mawu/mmanwu/mmonwu*).

Whichever is the case, dances are almost certainly among the highest forms of Nigerian traditional arts engaging, as they do, the senses of sound and sight, as well as the body, mind and soul.

In this book, African Organized Dance formation- A Case Study of Igba-Enyi Nimo, Joe Onyekwelu presents an ethnomusicological study of a popular dance of his Nimo community, in Anambra State.

The book is recommended to all students of African music as well as the general reader.



Prof Richard C. Okafor, PhD, MNAL
(Professor of Music Education & Ethnomusicology)

PREFACE

A practical approach to the understanding of organized ethnic dances in Africa is by active participation. Much has been discussed in books and other publications about music in community life, performing groups and their music, recruitment and training etc, but the step by step approach to the organization of a typical African ethnic organized dance is a task which a student of African music deserves to know before participating in a dance. This will serve as a prelude to the study.

Having participated in organized dances from the village level for many years, and taught African music also for many years in the university, I am well acquainted with the problems facing the organization, performance and prospects of African dances when organized in the proper sequence. It is this problem of the study that motivated me to put together the content of this book which I believe will be invaluable to all African Music Students.

It is my prayer and hope that the desire and interest of students may be aroused in their quest for an in-depth knowledge and understanding of African Organized dance formations through this book. The book is also purposely designed to equip students and prospective ethnomusicologists for tests in certain aspects of applied African music. I therefore encourage every African music student to make this book a study material.

Dr. Joe Onyekwelu
2011

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

It is my pleasure to thank the creator of mankind for giving me his special gift of the Holy Spirit that inspires me to put down in writing my life experience and research work that make up this publication. I give Him all honour, power and adoration which He deserves.

My special thanks go to Prof Richard Okafor, a renowned professor of ethnomusicology and music education who not only vetted this work before publication but undertook to write the forward. He has been my mentor and a source of inspiration to my academic life.

I thank Prof. Ola Olodi of the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, University of Nigeria, Nsukka for his immeasurable advice to me on research and how to assemble my works for publication. He is another big source of inspiration to me.

Prof. Dan Agu of the Department of Music and now Dean, Faculty of Art, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka was my supervisor in Masters Level and a personal friend, who also inspired and motivated me a lot.

I want to thank in a special way Sir P.C. Omabu of Rex Charles and Patrick Ltd, and Sir, J.C. Odiwe, both of Africana Publishers Limited, Onitsha, who made it possible for this book to be published in spite of my financial predicament. May God bless and reward them abundantly.

For those I seem to forget their contributions, may God in His infinite mercy bless them.

Dr. Joe Onyekwelu

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The English ballet master John Weaver, writing in 1721, argued that "Dance is an elegant and regular movement harmoniously composed of beautiful attitudes, and contributed graceful postures of the body, and parts thereof. The 19th century French dance historian Gaston Vniller also emphasized the qualities of grace, harmony and beauty distinguishing spontaneous movement of the early man.

My personal experience in the world of music-making has offered me some good ideas to share as part of the introduction of this work. Apart from other information and the research done to enhance this work, I am satisfied that by virtue of my birth, upbringing, environment, education and active participation in the cultural activities in the village for a major period of my life, I am in a position to share my views.

African dance has been described or defined in different ways depending on the school of thought. Some have fairly good conception of African culture while some have not. It is like the proverbial six blind men who described the elephant based on their individual conceptions. As an active participant in cultural music-making and dance, my definition of dance is "Dance is a response of the physical body to the stimulus of organized sound." In other words, dancing appears to be a reflex action in a sense. African music is very rhythmic in nature, and it is the rhythmic vibration through the tympanum (ear drum) of the ear that sensitizes the central nervous system setting the body vibrating in consonance with the rhythm. The rate of sound vibration varies inversely with the rate of body movement.

This has been my experience all these years of existence. My exchange of ideas with other dancers in culture reveal the same experience. One of them, Joe Ikiliogu Aniedobe of Nimo added to my observation when he said "My body reacts to musical sound just as it reacts when there is a sudden blast of the gun nearby or like my eyes blink when a fly bypasses." Other creative aspects of dance as externalized in variations of body movement are extensions of the basic sensitive reaction. According to Enekwe (1991),

Dance in Africa has remained a vital and dynamic art form which has suffered some remarkable little external interference in the rural areas and serve as a vehicle for solidarity and cultural continuity when people are displaced to urban centres. (P. 5).

STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF AFRICAN DANCE

In Africa, dance is an essentially social event which not only accommodates, but encourages and appreciates participation by spectators. The performance is elastic enough to expand or contract in time according to the quality of the performance. African dance exhibits a high degree of professionalism, born of long hours of patient rehearsals, despite the fact that performers are often amateurs. Moreover in a single dance, repetition of movements may be valued for the sake of communal recognition, at the same time that individual improvisation is eagerly awaited and applauded. African dance also participates in the world of religion, where its inclusion in festivals, ceremonies and masquerades heightens the religious experience for both the performer and audience. One of the most important aspects of African dance is that it is a form of communication between dancers and musicians, between

performers and audience, and ultimately between the community and the supernatural beings upon whom human welfare and indeed their very survival depends. African dances are full of rhythmic procedures and are the integral part of the African daily and of the most highly developed form of African arts. African dances are as numerous as the African communities. There are the Etilogwu dance of Ezeagu in Enugu State of Nigeria (Okafor, 1998), the Nkpokiti dance of Umuneze in Anambra State of Nigeria, the Striding dances of the Sotho, the get stuck dance of Northern Uganda, the Mpango dance of western Uganda, the acrobatic dance of the Hausa of Nigeria etc. All these are special stylized dances for different communities in Africa. The physical exercises as well as the acrobatic displays include the explosive bodily movement and the flinging of the limbs up and down, the centrifugal and kicking and large broad movements and often times the subtle gestures, looseness of joint, a few apparently relaxed articulation of limbs create an impression of naturalness and elasticity or flexibility in an expanded dance circle.

Not all African dances contain leaps and jumps. There is a fair mixture of curtailed movements often expressed as an almost stationery shuffle. Acrobatic techniques are common in certain areas and occasions. Somersaults, backward leap and turns, arching of the spine to form a bridge, dancing on stilts are some of the special acrobatic movements of west Africa. The bridge arch also appears in some communities. Nearly all important ceremonies contain some dancing-secret societies; initiation, puberty, circumcision, exorcism and healing, birth, marriage, death, planting, reaping and hunting.

The dance in Africa has remained a vital and dynamic art form, because it has been allowed to thrive in a predominantly rural environment. Fortunately the greater majority of Africans practice their dances with minimal interference or hindrance by western influence.

Even in the urban areas where traditional African cultures clash with those of Europe, interest in dancing remains high outside their traditional communities, people, especially women, form themselves into dancing group that keep their local traditions alive. Sometimes such groups are attached to unions from where they draw their support and encouragement. An example of such a group is the Nimo Brotherhood Society (N.B.S), Enugu branch, a town union of Nimo indigenes resident in Enugu the capital of former Eastern Nigeria. It is through the instrumentation and sponsorship of this town union that an outstanding dance group called *Okacha Igba Enyi* of Nimo came into existence in Enugu. *Okacha Igba Enyi* is a dignified dance music that is blessed with almost all the structural qualities of African dance formation. It is an embodiment of form, movement and variations creating room for free medly and stylized dances at different sections of the dance. Its popularity arises from the suitability of the music and its relevance to almost every occasion in Igbo culture. Although every dance has a special occasion and season for its performance, the *Igba Enyi* has this special character and significance that makes it unique as a suitable music for every occasion. Although different communities can add a special slogan to qualify their own *Igba Enyi* as being superior like the Nimo Town Union, yet the basic principle, concept, rhythm and movement remain the same.

Igba Enyi simply means, "the drum of the elephant." It means that the dance is as majestic and impressive as the elephant. The dance generally is dignified. The instrumental ensemble is heavy with very high density and the movement majestic. The song text is rich with a lot of philosophical expressions embodied in the call and refrain. The Igbo acknowledges the effect of *Igba Enyi* on the motor muscles by saying that either one springs up to dance or at least one nodes one's head, or that *Igba Enyi* is one of such dances that make a paralytic plead to be lifted up so that he would treed some measures.

The choice of *Okacha Igba Enyi* in this work is an attempt to kill two birds with one stone. This is a dance which, in structure and content, is full of the FREE MEDLY DANCE in one section and the STYLISED DANCE in another. It has four sections with their different titles which we shall discuss later.

ORGANIZATION

This organization of *Okacha Igba Enyi* dance is not different from the normal procedure of organization of dances in the African culture. A group of people or a community must come together and resolved to have a dance of their own, most often with the objective of having a special identity or, in addition, to add life and excitement to occasions that warrant some entertainment. In the same way, the Etiti Nimo Town Union resident in Enugu resolved at a general meeting to learn a dance having the following as their objectives:-

1. To raise fund for community development at home.
2. To present a new dance during their general return at home.
3. To entertain whenever they have any occasion that requires entertainment.

4. To perform at the wake and burial of a deceased member.
5. To entertain when they are invited by other people.

A committee was constituted and mandated to scout for a suitable dance. At the next general meeting of the union, three dances were presented to the general house. Eventually a fresh committee was constituted to go and watch the three dances and come up with the one they considered best. At the next general meeting, the committee presented to the house a good *Igba Enyi* from Nibo. The same committee was mandated to go to the people of Nibo and get a list of their demands to teach the dance. All this were done and at the next general meeting, the list was presented and approved.

This particular *Igba Enyi* was considered most suitable for Nimo Town Union because the dance embraces men, women and children participating in the actual performance. The men play the musical instruments, while the women and children do the dancing in groups. The alternation of the women group with the children not only creates a suspense but provides beautiful variations of movements and counter movements in succession. This is the observation of the committee that made the dance most suitable for Nimo Town Union in which the entire family set-up participates in a dance.

DANCE REHEARSALS

The venue for the dance rehearsals was carefully chosen putting many things into consideration:

1. The centrality of the venue for the convenience of members.

2. How spacious the venue was for accommodating everybody.
3. Shelter for the members in case of unexpected rain fall.

The teaching of the dance began after the necessary payments in cash and materials were made. The ritual then followed, beginning with the killing of a goat presented by the hosting community. They cooked, ate and drank together to signify the intimate relationship which must exist between the two groups before the teaching commenced. For seven days, the Nimo Town Union hosted the Nibo Town Union who taught them the dance.

At the rehearsal venue, the teaching was preceded by the enumeration of the bye-law guiding the dance rehearsals. This was done by the group leader. The bye-laws cover a range of dos and don'ts meant to guard against lateness, disobedience, quarreling and other offences that are considered unhealthy to the smooth learning of the dance.

The men, women and children who were selected to learn the dance were therefore assembled. For the musical instruments, two men were assigned to one instrument. The big drum, which is the principal instrument that dictates the tempo and movement, required a special talent or one who is naturally gifted in the technique of drum playing. Such talents are rare, but nature made it that in every African community, such talents are always available. The teachers began their teaching by demonstrating the basic rhythms while the learners watched and repeated after them. Gradually, they began to catch up with the music.

The women and the children, on the other hand, were lined up in their own groups. In each, the teacher would dance the steps and make the learners do the same. Gradually they began to catch up with the dance steps.

The trainee lead singer had to memorise the song's texts as directed by the teacher while the chorus men had to do the same.

The instrumentalists, singers and dancers all had leaders who were faster than others in their learning. Occasionally, the learning groups were made to play and dance on their own, while the teachers watched out for possible errors or mistakes.

The process of teaching and learning continued for seven days at the end of which a lot of progress had been made in fact, the learners were able to play although it still required a lot of practice to perfect.

The official teaching and learning of the dance ended on the seventh day. This was marked with another ritual of eating and drinking together. On that day, whatever was outstanding in the agreed payment was completed. Finally, another demonstration of the entire dance was made. A live-goat was presented to them as a farewell gift before the last movement of the dance. Taking the goat along, the group danced home without stopping till they left the venue.

They instructed that no one should say good-bye or wave farewell to them. This goes with the superstitious belief that if anyone says goodbye, the dance will go back with the

teachers. The result is that the learners would never master the dance.

Frequent rehearsals continued with the Nimo people. Although the teachers had gone officially, yet it was an obligation for them to visit occasionally to supervise the dance for possible errors and corrections. This continued until the official outing of the dance.

OUTING

The outing of a dance requires elaborate arrangements and organization. The venue for learning the dance should be different from the venue for the outing. This is because the venue, this time requires a place large enough for the invited guests and the general public to watch the show. In the rural areas, it is usually the village arena. In urban towns like Enugu, it is the Nnamdi Azikiwe Stadium or Okpara Square. The venue is booked in advance. Invitation cards are printed and circulated to friends and well-wishers. A wealthy couple is chosen to be the *Nna and Nne Egwu*-father and mother of the dance. This is an honorary recognition which the recipients must give their confirmation of acceptance before the outing is planned. The choice of *Nna Egwu and Nne Egwu* is carefully made since it requires a personality who is wealthy and influential enough to support the group financially and attract other personalities that would dish out money to the group on their outing day.

On the eve of the outing of *Okacha Igba Enyi* Etiti-Nimo, the *Nna egwu* and his wife *Nne Egwu* hosted the dance in their residence where they fed them lavishly and presented them

with a live goat. The group realized large sums of money which opened the way for a successful outing. Their *Nna and Nne Egwu* good friends and colleagues were invited to support them which made the event great.

On the official outing day, both the invited guests and the general public gathered at the Michael Okpara square waiting for the dance. It was a bright day with clement weather. The group was already worming up as the spectators arrived in groups. Many people trouped into the square anxious to watch another dance of the season. The occasion began with the official breaking of kolanut by the chairman. Then the dance was introduced for the group to perform.

THE DANCE

Okacha Igba Enyi is a dignified traditional dance that heightens the ego of an Igbo man making him to move majestically to the high density rhythm of the music. It is a dance which invites both the dancer and spectators to perform within and outside the performance arena. It is so because the music has the characteristics of both the stylized and the free medley dances. The music begins with free medley passages which enables performers to move freely and with no definite body movement over the performance arena. This is followed by stylized sequences that generate different body movements and variations.

INSTRUMENTS OF THE DANCE

The instrumental ensemble comprises three membrane drums, a slit drum, two bells, one rattle and one flute (*oja*). The big membrane *drum-nne igba* plays the role of the master. The

medium sized drum-*obe igba*-plays an assistant role to the master drum, playing a constantly repeated statement that adds to the density of percussion. Then, there is the single membrane long cylindrical drum *ogwe*, which plays the basic rhythm that maintains the time line of the music. The rattle-*oyo* plays a very short and tight rhythm that heightens the density of the music. The slit wooden drum *okpokoro*, the medium sized iron bell which plays in the lower register and the small sized bell, which supports it complete the percussion section. The only melodic instrument in the ensemble is the *oja* (flute) which dishes out melodic phrases intermittently in support of the singer.

SEGMENTS OF THE DANCE

Okacha Igba Enyi has four segments each of which enjoys some degree of autonomy from the others. The order is as follows:

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| 1. <i>Igba Dike</i> | Drum of the brave |
| 2. <i>Egwu Owuwa</i> | Movement dance |
| 3. <i>Eroloba</i> | Dance of honour (to the living and the deceased members) |
| 4. <i>Ezelagbo</i> | Dance of the beauties |

Igba Dike (drum of the brave) is the prologue of *Okacha Igba Enyi* performance. In an opening recitative, the lead singer salutes the honoured and the brave in the community, among them cherished patrons of the group. The flautist complements the lead singer by saluting the worthy and the patrons in melodic phrases. The recitative then leads to an introductory song inviting the audience and spectators to watch and participate in *Igba Enyi* dance. The chorus responds in salutation. Then enters *nne igba*, the master drum, followed by

the long drum (*ogwe*) that keeps the time line. The medium sized drum-*obe*le *igba* -comes in followed by others in succession at the appropriate entry points (instrumental sample Demonstration).



The movement begins at a walking pace which is free medly. The *Nna Egwu* (father of the dance) followed by *Nne egwu* (mother of the dance) lead the way, while the instrumentalist follow. The women and children groups follow one after the other. From the right flank, the groups move round the arena in an introductory free medley style until they get to the proper point of performance where they face the special guests. Suddenly the master drummer introduces a change of rhythm which leads to the first variation of the stylized dances. The women's group takes the first variation that moves them in a levitational progression after which they progress deeper in the performance circle towards the back of the instrumentalists. This creates more space in the performance circle into which the children's group dances in a surge from the left side of the instrumentalist.



Spectators are usually taken by surprise. After their own sequences, the children dance to join the women at the back-a type of suspense is created and holds till the master drummer stops abruptly and suddenly changes to a fast and exciting tempo. The women group in another line-up dances in leaps descending with their arms stretched to the audience and their eyes widely focused on an important person in the audience as an invitation to join in the dance. The master drummer punctuates the movement with a cadence giving the signal for the children's group to take over and bring *Igba dike* to a close. The next segment of *Igba Enyi* is *Egwu Owuwa* which begins with a "bridge passage" that immediately follows the preceding segment. Without wasting time, the flautist takes on the inspirational solo dancer (*onye mpete*) who moves to the flautist calls by her titled names as she demonstrates her qualities of beauty and agility.



She targets on one of the personalities, moves towards him, and then stops abruptly to bluff and do a little inspirational dance. She looks and falls on the laps of that personality of her choice. There is a loud ovation for her courage and boldness. She does so to some other personalities under the inspiration of the flautist. The thrilled personalities shower her with rains of money. The flautist then call her to retire for the next dance.

The soloist intones the next movement which begins in the reverse order with the children coming and performing before the women who clap their hands. This is to enable the women muster enough energy for the next sequence.



On special occasions or when the dance is performed on invitation, it is possible to create an intermission at the end of *Egwu owuwa* to raise fund, make special presentations or introduce the guest in whose honour the performance is being put on.

The next segment is *Eroloba* (dance of honour for the living and deceased members) with which the group remembers and honours their members alive or dead. Here, it is the song text that is central. The lead singer chants and the chorus response follows thus:

- | | | |
|----------|---|---|
| Soloist. | - | <i>Eroloba n'egbu ebuna-e</i>
Eroloba that kills the ram |
| Response | - | <i>Imago Eroloba-e</i>
Have you known Eroloba |
| Solo | - | <i>Nimo imago Eroloba</i>
Nimo have you known Eroloba |
| Response | - | <i>A-e Onwu Eroloba dike, Eroloba-e! owu elomae</i>
Eroloba the brave, death does not think-well of anyone |
| Soloist | - | <i>Ndi nwelu ego na ekwu-o</i>
Those who have money talk |
| Response | - | <i>Oso na ijehe</i>
He is a member |
| Soloist | - | <i>Okoye nwanne nke m-o (alive)</i>
Okoye my own brother |
| Response | - | <i>Oso na ijele</i>
He is a member |
| Soloist | - | <i>Ozodinobi nwanne nke m-o (dead)</i>
Ozodinobi my own brother |
| Response | - | <i>Oro onwu gbuluya, onwu elo mma-e</i>
Is it not death that killed him, death that does not think well. |

The rhythm instruments follow the vocal call and response in succession in a moderately slow tempo. The flute cries out a melody that indicates a sad memory as soon as the name of a deceased member is mentioned. After that brief moment, the drummer introduces a lively rhythm, then the lead singer salutes in song the members who have played significant roles in the life of the community. The chorus responds in reinforcement, but as soon as the singer calls again the name of a deceased member, the music suddenly drops to a slow tempo and the chorus gives a sad response showing that he is no more. At the end, the music comes up to a lively tempo-a return to the world of the living. This segment ends with a lively dance.

The last segment is a typical example of a *free medley* dance. (Agu 2001) in his lecture series intimates that:

The free medley dance is the type of dance that offers greater scope for individual freedom in composition and body movement. Each dancer creates his or her own movement in keeping with convenience. An observer can see that the steps and body configurations differ from each other, yet all are accommodated within the rhythm of the music.

This observation indicates therefore that the number of performers determines the structural density and content of the performance. Another very visible observation in a "free medley" dance is that the technique appears to be highly individualistic and incorporates movements that are divided among several seemingly independent body areas. This offers

the dancers more freedom to show off their different dance styles of their own creation. This freedom of individual aesthetic creation of body movement is among the most important factors that account for observable differences between the free medley and stylized dances. In *Igba Enyi* this "free medley" dance is called *Ezelagbo-dance* of the beauty. This is a special dance with which the dancers individually bluff, wink and jiggle to captivate the spectators. It is a free dance in which the master drummer improvises drum phrases while the women display romantic movements as they divert towards different directions to attract some targeted spectators. Here every dancer displays her individual talent, quality and skill unfettered by the demand for cohesion between movement and instruments.

The movement gets to a close and the master drummer calls their attention using the normal drum code to retire to their positions. As soon as they re-assembled, the music reverts to the normal dance rhythm of *Egwu Owuwa*. With this, they gracefully move out of the arena in an atmosphere of ovation.

COSTUMES

As a typical African dance, *Igba Enyi* has local attires and costumes that reflect the culture and gives special effects to movements. Nevertheless, it is not immune to the various acculturative agencies at work in the modern world. And so, the city has had its influence on the original costumes of *Igba Enyi*. This promotes easier acceptance and harmony with the environment when the performance is to be staged in the neo-traditional setting of the proscenium stage or the television

studios. Sometime, the choice of the city as the performance venue is economic as the audience of the city would include men and women from many cultural backgrounds and economic groupings, enabling the artistes to earn more money than would have been the case in the close low income audience of the country-side.

For a performance of the *Igba Enyi* Etiti Nimo staged in Enugu on their outing day, the colours of the Nigerian flag-green and white-were dominant. The men had as their costumes, white top with a green sack over green trousers. They also wore white caps with green designs. The women wore white blouses with green designs and yellow wrappers with green designs. The children on their own part, wore green skirts and white blouse with green combinations. The musical instruments were painted green and white to match. Looking at the group, generally, the entire atmosphere portrayed the Nigerian flag.

The decision to choose this colour and design was also economic. The group was offering itself to a possible invitation to a command performance or to any other events that the government may sponsor nationally or internationally like the world festival of arts and culture.



CHAPTER TWO

FACTORS THAT ACCOUNT FOR OBSERVABLE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE FREE MEDLEY DANCE AND THE STYLISED DANCE TYPES IN IGBO CULTURE

Before justice is done to this discussion, it is important to first of all clarify the difference between the two. Both of them are dances very common in Igbo culture, but one is more complex than the other in terms of preparation, skill and use of energy. Agu (2001) further observes that:

The free medley dance is the type of dance that offers greater scope for individual freedom in composition and body movement. Each dancer creates his or her own movement in keeping with convenience. An observer can see that the steps and body configuration of the dancers differ from each other, yet all are accommodated within the rhythm of the music.

This observation indicates therefore that the number of performers determines the structural density and content of the performance.

Another very visible observation in a free medley dance is that the technique appears to be highly individualistic and incorporates movements that are divided among several seemingly independent body areas. This offers the dancers more freedom to show off their different dance styles of their own creation. This freedom of individual aesthetic creation of body movement is among the most important factors that account for observable differences between the free medley and the stylized dances.

The stylized dance requires uniform or fixed choreographic patterns or sequences but with varying signs of aesthetic communication. In this dance the fundamental artistic dance theme already created, the choreographic development of the dance theme, the structural variations and the compositional development derived from the dance theme, are all performed in fixed choreographic patterns and sequences, that is, in uniform style (Agu, 2001).

An observer can see during performance that all the dancers execute the same sequenced structured and timed movements as well as the ability to embellish them with aesthetic effects.

These minor observations are very important in the aesthetics of African dance generally and Igbo race in particular, and constitute the factors that account for observable differences between the free medley and stylized dance types.

A popular Igbo dance, *Igba Enyi* has four autonomous segments:

1. *Igba lke* - a free medley dance progression
2. *Egwu Owuwa* - a stage dance which is stylized with uniform variations and changes of rhythm.
3. *Eroloba* - a dance of honour for the living and dead members
4. *Ezelagbor* - a dance of the beauties, a combination of stylized and free medley movements.

The changes from a free medley to a stylized dance, the factors that are responsible for the observable differences, special

patterns of choreography, are the hallmark of the African dance. Some of the striking features of this genre include a blend between uniformity and freedom for personal interpretative flair to standard patterns of movement. This is the heart of the dance genre as art in its own right accounts for aesthetics and creativity among dancers.

In stylized dance, the rate and sequence of change of choreographic variations are programmed, well rehearsed and uniform for all dances. Some creative dancers can be individualistic even within a stylized dance situation with regards to the individualistic aesthetic creation. This individualistic expressions of such dancers help to classify performers into those with expressive body, referred in Igbo as, (*ndi nwelu aru egwu*) and those with limpid turgid torso, referred to as (*ndi do kJiyi*). A dance is not merely a sequence of mechanical body movement but an eloquent oration delivered by the patterning of the human body in time and space. A few other factors are of important interest.

The general organization of a stylized dance is more elaborate and serious demanding the cohesion and co-ordination of different talents and skills. A free medley dance does not require such elaborate and solid planning. The lead dancer is generally chosen on grounds of dancing skill, good looks, good character and the ability to co-ordinate and interpret the dance steps. The coordinators or leaders of various sections such as the lead singer, master instrumentalists or lead soloist are rare and not very necessary in free medley dance. The vigorous training involved in a dance is only possible with stylized dances.

So far, all the above factors as well as others yet to be observed account for the observable differences between the free medley and the stylized dances among the Igbo.



CONCLUSION

In many cultures of the world but in Africa and Igbo cultures especially, the dance is regarded as one of the greatest of the arts, combining, as it does, skills in manipulation of instruments and of the human body, extensive use of the decorative arts as well as the mental or phonic arts, gestures and progressions, surprise and familiarity and the manipulation of the environment to desired effect. *Igba Enyi* fits into this pattern and though the four segments are well known, each performance is new as the dancers improvise, extemporize and create at the same time.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Agu, D.C.C. (2001). Factors that Account for Observable Differences Between the Free Medley Dance and the stylized Dance Types in Igbo Culture" Unpublished Lecture series. University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
- Breandan, B. (1977). *Folk Music and Dance of Ireland*. Dublin and Ireland: The Mercier Press.
- Enekwe, O.O. (1991). *Theories of Dance in Nigeria*. Nsukka: Afa Press.
- Hanna, J.1. (1973). African Dance: the Continuity of Change. *Year Book of the International Folk Council*. pp 66-75
- Harper, P. (1969). Dance in Nigeria. *Ethnomusicology*, Vol. xiii, pp.280-295. Paper Presented at the 2nd Congress of Africanists in Dakar, December, 1967.
- Hinde, R.A. (1975). *The Comparative Study on Non-verbal Communication*. London: Penguin Books Ltd.
- Lo-Bamijioko (1994). Music and Dance in Igbo Culture. A Marriage of Convenience. Paper Presented at the 2nd Annual National Conference of the Musicological Society of Nigeria 1994.
- Nketia., J.H.K. (1974). *The Music of Africa*. New York: w.w Norton Company.
- Okafor, R.C. (1998). *Ezeagu Atilogwu: The Legendary Igbo Troupe*. Enugu: New Generation Books.
- Scholes, Percy. A (1975 a-c). *Oxford Companion to Music*. London: Oxford University Press.
- S. Arom (1721): *African Polyphony and Polyrhythm: Musical Structures and Methodology*. New York: Cambridge University Press.