



# Ghanaian Choral Music Compositional Styles: An Appraisal of The Approach of Jacob Paulinus Johnson

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## ABSTRACT

The paper sought to present a compositional style of J. P. Johnson emanating from a consensus of three of his choral art compositions. The paper also presented a background of J.P. Johnson tracing his musical background, influences and development as an astute Ghanaian art music composer. Data was collected through interviews and music score analysis. The selected songs were analysed to bring to the fore techniques of traditional indigenous Ghanaian music idioms employed in J. P. Johnson's *Wɔnhye Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory), *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God) and *Da Yi Na Ewuradze Ahyehye* (this is the Day the Lord has made). The analytical parameters adopted for the study included melody, harmony, rhythm, and form. The paper examined J. P. Johnson's exploration of traditional idioms such as call-and-response phrasings, repetition, text-tune relationships, and parallel thirds in his creativity. These compositional techniques depict his cultural belief as an African composer with knowledge of Western music tradition.

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## INTRODUCTION

Ghanaian choral music is embodied with rich idioms that are of the essence in the context of African music which forms part of the African culture. The African culture exhibits both choral and instrumental forms of music which have a strong hold on the people that practice it. The music of a people also showcases their identity and serves as a reflection of their practices and norms within the African context. Therefore, Ghanaian choral music is an institutionalised and long-standing practice that serves as a reflection of the Ghanaian culture based on the diverse ethnic societies that cut across the nation. Ideally, it was an accepted musical form before the introduction of art music in Ghana, which is very valuable, loved, appreciated, and recognised.

The fusion of Ghanaian indigenous music and art music form Ghanaian art music. It is important to note that Ghanaian art music has developed into a household-rooted construct that has become part of the cultural activities and has survived until the present day. This art form is competing with the traditional, and popular music that have also gained firm ground in the Ghanaian musical space. Ghanaian art music is practised predominantly in institutions such as churches, schools, concert halls, tertiary institutions and security services among others and is gaining sponsorship and audience support and involvement. Under this art form, it is fashioned in two streams i.e., Ghanaian choral art

and Ghanaian instrumental art by Amuah.<sup>1</sup> This paper is geared toward Ghanaian choral art composers with an emphasis on Jacob Paulinus Johnson.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Many scholars have conducted similar studies.<sup>2</sup> Acheampong fixated on the intercultural bi-musical nature of Mensah Esilfie, taking into consideration both Western and Traditional influences that shape his creativity.<sup>3</sup> Amuah focused on the third and fourth generations of selected composers in his delineation of Ghanaian choral art composers.<sup>4</sup> His focus was not on the common styles of each of these two generations nor a comparative foundation of both. Agbevohia sought to subject selected works of Nketia and Kafui to Anku's Set Theory concept of analysing African art compositions to test its efficacy.<sup>5</sup> Amuah and Arthur focused on one of the pieces by George Mensah Esilfie to establish his compositional techniques.<sup>6</sup> Annan traces the roots and analysed nine selected art songs of Nketia with a focus on each song bearing the linguistic structure of the text in relation to the music without a comparative touch.<sup>7</sup> Dzisah enumerated the contributions and influences of George Worlasi Dor to the musical traditions of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church Ghana in the style of Ephraim Amu and his contemporaries.<sup>8</sup> Gyimah-Aboagye focused on James Tsemafo-Arthur's styles and techniques of composition and song texts.<sup>9</sup> The attention and focus of these scholars were mainly on Ghanaian choral art composers with interests in some significant aspects of the selected composers like the song texts and the subjection of the works within theoretical paradigms.

The work of these researchers mostly touched on the second, third and fourth generations of Amuah's delineation of Ghanaian choral art composers.<sup>10</sup> These scholars have not dwelt on a comparative study to establish a complete style of the composers they studied in exposing to the fore their full musical identity to enrich the literature on Ghanaian choral art compositions. This paper is focused on the compositional style of Jacob Paulinus Johnson and accordingly showcases his signature with reference to his songs titled *Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory), *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God), and *Da Yi Na Ewuradze Ahyehɛ* (this is the Day the Lord has made). The selection of these choral artworks is purposeful due to their 'popular' nature among

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<sup>1</sup> Joshua A. Amuah, "Typology of Choral Music in Ghana: Current Perspectives," *International Journal of Humanities & Social Studies* 2, no. 2 (2014): 85–99.

<sup>2</sup> K. Acheampong, *A Study of the Intercultural Creativity of George Mensah Essilfie* (Unpublished Mphil Thesis, University of Ghana, Legon, 2020); Joshua A. Amuah, *The Use of Traditional Music Elements In Contemporary Ghanaian Choral Music: Perspectives From Selected Works of G.W.K. Dor, Nicodemus Kofi Badu, And Newlove Annan* (Published PHD Thesis, University of Ghana, Legon., 2012); S. H. Agbevohia, *Application of Structural Set Theory to African Art Music Compositions, A Case Study of Selected Works of J.H.K. Nketia and Kenn Kafui*. (Unpublished Mphil Thesis, University of Ghana, Legon., 2011); Joshua A. Amuah and Kras K. Arthur, "Appreciating Ghanaian Choral Music: George Mensah Esilfie's *Yɛdze Wo Kɛseyɛ Maw*' (We Ascribe To Your Greatness) In Perspective," *Global Journal of Human Social Science* 14, no. 3 (2014); J. F. Annan, *Structural Analyses of Nine Contemporary African Art Songs of J.H.K. Nketia* (Unpublished Mphil Thesis, University of Ghana, 2008); E. Gyima-Aboagye, *An Analytical Study of the Choral Compositions of James Tsemafo-Arthur* (Unpublished Mphil Thesis, University of Ghana, Legon, 2014); A. Dzisah, *The Contributions of George Worlasi Kwasi Dor to the Musical Tradition of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana* (Unpublished Mphil Thesis, University of Ghana, Legon, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> Acheampong, *A Study of the Intercultural Creativity of George Mensah Essilfie*.

<sup>4</sup> Amuah, *The Use of Traditional Music Elements In Contemporary Ghanaian Choral Music: Perspectives From Selected Works of G.W.K. Dor, Nicodemus Kofi Badu, And Newlove Annan*.

<sup>5</sup> Agbevohia, *Application of Structural Set Theory to African Art Music Compositions, A Case Study of Selected Works of J.H.K. Nketia and Kenn Kafui*.

<sup>6</sup> Amuah and Arthur, "Appreciating Ghanaian Choral Music: George Mensah Esilfie's *Yɛdze Wo Kɛseyɛ Maw*' (We Ascribe To Your Greatness) In Perspective."

<sup>7</sup> Annan, *Structural Analyses of Nine Contemporary African Art Songs of J.H.K. Nketia*.

<sup>8</sup> Dzisah, *The Contributions of George Worlasi Kwasi Dor to the Musical Tradition of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana*.

<sup>9</sup> Gyima-Aboagye, *An Analytical Study of the Choral Compositions of James Tsemafo-Arthur*.

<sup>10</sup> Amuah, *The Use of Traditional Music Elements In Contemporary Ghanaian Choral Music: Perspectives From Selected Works of G.W.K. Dor, Nicodemus Kofi Badu, And Newlove Annan*.

Catholic choirs within the *Fante* areas of Ghana such as Cape Coast and Takoradi. The selected songs have a strong sense of Jacob Paulinus Johnson's styles, and its examination will bring to the fore the styles that are peculiar to him that form his identity as a composer. Invariably, *Wɔnhye Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory) has the touch of a large work that comprises Soprano, Alto, Tenor & Bass (SATB) and piano accompaniment compared to other works by J.P. Johnson whiles *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God), and *Da Yi Na Ewuradze Ahyehye* (this is the Day the Lord has made) do not have a separate piano accompaniment.

## METHODOLOGY

The selected songs which were a hard copy retrieved from a compiled book titled *Ndamirifa due* (a compilation of songs by J. P. Johnson), were scored on a computer with Finale 2014 Music Software to enhance portions of the score to buttress the researcher's arguments. Analytical parameters for this paper include melody, harmony, rhythm, and form in the examination of *Wɔnhye Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory), *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God), and *Da Yi Na Ewuradze Ahyehye* (this is the Day the Lord has made). Amuah's delineation of Ghanaian choral art music composers into four generations is based on factors such as the teacher-student relationship, age-wise of composers, and the period of compositions.<sup>11</sup> According to Emielu "The concept of generation is visible in the areas of musical creativity and performance."<sup>12</sup> Each generation is defined and constrained by available opportunities such as the level of technological development, which determines what musical instruments are available, as well as the creative and performance possibilities for musicians".

It is very intriguing to see the performances of Ghanaian choral art music of the pilot period at competitions, state functions and other events that are an embodiment of the Ghanaian musical space due to the prevalent scores of modern choral art compositions. This is not to degrade nor lower the work of older Ghanaian choral artworks to contemporary ones but to showcase styles that are unique to this era. Moreover, it is important to study the 'old' and apply the findings in the creation of the 'new' for the sustainability of this art form.

'Generation' is used to determine that each of these categories belongs to a period that had something peculiar to the development of Ghanaian art music. For this paper, the author's focus is on the first generation of Ghanaian choral art music composers which Twum-Barimah has relabeled as the Pilot period (1850 – 1940) per the map created for Ghanaian choral art composers by Amuah.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, Jacob Paulinus Johnson is captured among the pilot period composers. However, Twum-Barimah has also relabeled the second generation as the Development period (1940 – 1970), the third generation as the period of Institutionalisation (1970 – 2000) and the fourth generation as the Adventure period (2000 – till date).<sup>14</sup>

Dwelling on the theoretical principles of LaRue (1981), that is the Stylistic Analytical Approach which advocates a sectional analysis of art music with musical elements (such as melody, harmony, rhythm, and form) to bring out the true meaning, style and techniques employed by a composer. These characteristics define a composer after a careful examination of his or her composition(s). To place this analytical discussion within the context of Ghanaian choral art music, a background has been provided about the composer, to have an overview of who he is, his musical development, advancement, growth and what has inspired him to produce works such as *Wɔnhye Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory). Hereafter, more importantly, the paper presents the *Fante*

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<sup>11</sup> Amuah, *The Use of Traditional Music Elements In Contemporary Ghanaian Choral Music: Perspectives From Selected Works of G.W.K. Dor, Nicodemus Kofi Badu, And Newlove Annan*.

<sup>12</sup> A. Emielu, *Generations* (The SAGE International Encyclopedia of Music and Culture, 2019), 3.

<sup>13</sup> Peter Twum-Barimah, *An Exploration of Compositional Techniques Among the First Two Generations of Ghanaian Choral Art Music Composers* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Ghana, Legon, 2021); Amuah, *The Use of Traditional Music Elements In Contemporary Ghanaian Choral Music: Perspectives From Selected Works of G.W.K. Dor, Nicodemus Kofi Badu, And Newlove Annan*.

<sup>14</sup> Twum-Barimah, *An Exploration of Compositional Techniques Among the First Two Generations of Ghanaian Choral Art Music Composers*.

translation of the song text to English for readers to appreciate and understand with the help of a linguistic expert who understands the *Fante* language. Since the composer in question is deceased, personal communication with his son (James Paulinus Johnson) enabled the researcher to get his profile and to trace his musical development into becoming a composer.

### **Profile of J.P. Johnson**

Born on the 26<sup>th</sup> day of July 1897 to Joseph Kwame Gyaakwa and Araba Kokuena at Anomabo (a town in the Cape Coast municipality – in the Central Region of Ghana), Jacob Paulinus Johnson enrolled at the Anomabo Catholic Primary and Middle School passed all required examinations with distinction and completed on the 12<sup>th</sup> day of December 1912. Nevertheless, he did not attend Secondary School or what is referred to currently as High School nor attended any tertiary institution after completing Middle School.

Johnson is described as a “self-taught musician” by his family due to his constant practice on the keyboard and his creative works (compositions) coupled with lots of observation from other experienced musicians. His son, James Paulinus Johnson (JPJ), opines that “most of his father’s skills were developed due to his fast way of learning. Also, the constant playing of the harmonium together with his command over the *Fante* language were key factors that made him successful in his career as a musician and composer. Johnson composed songs for mixed choruses Soprano, Alto, Tenor and Bass (SATB) with his native *Fante* language which is a clear indication of his pride in his culture and serves as a preservation of his ethos and an important indicator that describes his identity as a Ghanaian choral art composer, except for about two of them which he translated to the English language.

As a staunch Catholic, Johnson exhibited his musical skills in promoting church music during his time. Thus, he composed liturgical songs to promote Catholic worship which was eminent at the time due to the dominant Latin setting which deprived the natives from participating actively and consciously. Therefore, his compositions promoted congregational participation at Holy Masses and other liturgical celebrations. Additionally, Johnson took a bold initiative by being selfless in promoting church growth and not being self-centred by translating existing songs in Latin to *Fante* which made the services organised by the clergy have a grounding with the indigenes. All choral compositional works of Johnson are set for sacred and liturgical celebrations. Some of his notable choral works are *Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory), *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God) and *Da Yi Na Ewuradze Ahyehye* (This is the Day the Lord has made).

### ***Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory)**

*Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory) is one of Johnson’s compositions that bore his dexterity, features and signature as a composer. This song is captured in both English and *Fante* as song text by the composer. The Soprano, Alto, Tenor and Bass (SATB) and piano accompaniment score are evident due to the composer’s association with choirs that have SATB as their setup which are mostly mixed voices. The piano also signifies the presence of Europeans, art music and the use of piano within the Christian Religious milieu of the Gold Coast and the early post-colonial period of Ghana. In the author’s encounter with JPJ, he stated that his father sought to bring the indigenes closer to God with his music by breaking the monotonic nature of Catholic worship that was introduced by the early missionaries with songs such as *Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory), which was predominantly said and sung in Latin. This development brought a sense of belonging, appreciation, true worship, and a binding spirit among congregants who identified closeness via music in a local dialect. *Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory) reflects how glorious, majestic, and powerful God almighty is.

**Table 1 Song Text of *Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Nyankopɔn Enyimnyam***

ORIGINAL FANTE TEXT	ENGLISH TRANSLATION
Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Nyankopɔn Enyimnyam Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Nyankopɔn Enyimnyam Sor Abɔfo hu-gyan' da Wim kasa ma N'e-dwinsa E-po ɔ-taa ne nsa yam' Na nko-kwaa gyi-na N'a-baam' E-po ɔ-taa ne nsa yam' Wim nno-ma mpo y'akyia me, Ma Twerampɔn N'a-ye- yio-bɛ-yɛ dɛn nna hɛn mbom A-da-sa yɛ-bɛ komm? Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Nyankopɔn Enyimnyam	Tell ye the glory of ever Potent God Tell ye the glory of ever Potent mains Angels ever Him acclaim Of His work, Heav'ns tell the fame In His palm stay the deep mains In his arms rest the mountains Even birds are eloquent In praise of the Omnipotent How can we still of mankind Keep silent without a mind Tell ye the glory of ever-potent God

***Wonyi Ewuradze Aye (Let us Praise God)***

The second selected choral artwork of Johnson for this paper is *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye (Let us Praise God)*. This song employs only the *Fante* language as text and promotes collectivity just like the above. Thus, the composer calls on all Christians to praise God. This plural call of the composer makes him preach by saying the praise of God is a collective nature and not to be left to a few but rather take on the duty of praising God in His holiness with musical instruments.

**Table 2 Song text of *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye***

ORIGINAL FANTE TEXT	ENGLISH TRANSLATION
Wonyi Ewuradze Aye Wɔ ne mbea krɔnkrɔn do 'Wɔ mfa aka saa na adwontofɔ nyi n'aye' 'Wɔ mfa nsa prawa ne nsanku nyi Ewuradze aye'	Praise God In His sanctuary Praise Him with harp and Psaltery. Praise Him with stringed instruments and organs

***Da Yi Na Ewuradze Ahyehye (This is the Day the Lord has made)***

The third selected song composed by Johnson for this paper is *Da Yi Na Ewuradze Ahyehye (This is the Day the Lord has made)*. Indeed, as the composer postulates, the favour and mercy of God almighty are always available. This song is based on the theme of the resurrection of Jesus Christ after being condemned and crucified. The composer portrays God as a dependable Supreme Being and that he is capable of everything and anything. That His grace and mercy resuscitated Jesus Christ on the resurrection day and that it was a day that the lord God made. This is to call on worshippers to have a strong hold on God and not to give up in their various struggles in this life for there comes a day that God will vindicate, release, heal and provide all the needs of those that diligently serve Him.

**Table 3: Song Text of *Da Yi Na Ewuradze Ahyehye***

ORIGINAL FANTE TEXT	ENGLISH TRANSLATION
Da Yi Na E-w'radze ahyehye Hom mma yen-nya e-nigye na ye ndzi dɛw wɔm' Hom mfa a-ye-yi mma E-wuradze O-sian-dɛ ne yam' yie ɔnam dɛ n'ehu-mbɔ-bɔr wɔ hɔ da Alleluia	This is the Day the Lord has made Let us rejoice and be glad in it Let us praise the Lord for he is good Because his tender mercies endure forever Alleluia

The three selected choral art songs of Johnson do not exhibit the year or place of composition and have been analysed with parameters such as melody organisation, harmony, rhythm, form and texture. The three selected works bear the *Fante* language as text except for *Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* which exhibits both *Fante* and English texts. Twum-Barimah (2021, p.37), postulates that “Johnson’s category of songs found in his hymn book “Ahemfo-Hen Ndamirifa”, two out of the three songs fall under ‘*Ayeyi na Ndaase*’ (Praise and Thanksgiving).<sup>15</sup> These two songs are *Wonyi Ewuradze Ayɛ* (Let us praise God) and *Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory). These two songs are centred on gratitude to God Almighty and hence express joy and a majestic mood. However, *Da Yi Na Ewuradze Ahyehyɛ* (this is the Day the Lord has made) falls under the category of *Wusoɛr* (Resurrection).” Having given a simple overview of what the three selected songs mean in English language, the paper now delves into the analysis of the paper to execute the objective set out in revealing the compositional style of Johnson.

J.P. Johnson’s *Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory), *Wonyi Ewuradze Ayɛ* (Let us Praise God) and *Da Yi Na Ewuradze Ahyehyɛ* (this is the Day the Lord has made) have been subjected to analysis with the following parameters - Melody, Harmony, Rhythm and Form to establish his compositional style.

### Analysis of *Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory)

#### Melody Organisation

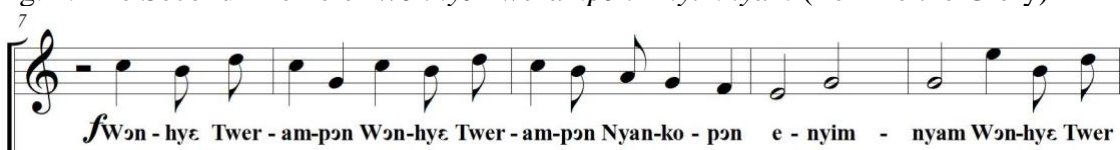
The first theme of *Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory) is established in the Bass after a four (4) bar piano introduction, the first theme starts with the tonic (C). The first note of the first theme starts on C1 evident in bar 1, which doubles as the climax of the piece due to its nature as the highest note and with E1 as the lowest note of the first theme in bar 6, ending with G1 in bar 7 of the Bass.

Fig. 1 The First Theme of *Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory)



The melody travels to the Soprano from the third beat of bar 7 on C2 to the second beat of bar 11 at G2. This then becomes the second theme of *Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory).

Fig. 2. The Second Theme of *Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory)



Carefully examining the intervals of the second theme, showcases major 2nds and 3rds, and perfect 4ths with D2 as the highest note and E1 as the lowest note. Johnson does a varied repetition, thus the third beat of bar 11 to the second beat of bar 14 is a varied repetition of the third beat of bar 7 to the second beat of bar 11. The movements of both melodies are simple and not difficult to sing and are smooth in their conjunct setup employing a text-tune structure that vividly indicates or strongly suggests that Johnson had the song text before setting it to music. This merger of a traditional Ghanaian tonal language is bare in the sense that the composer employs high pitches to high notes and vice-versa on the low notes. For instance, in the second theme, the composer assigns ‘*Twer*’ to a high note and ‘*ampɔn*’ to a low note.

<sup>15</sup> Twum-Barimah, *An Exploration of Compositional Techniques Among the First Two Generations of Ghanaian Choral Art Music Composers*, 37.

### Harmonic Organisation

Harmony is a key component of music and is a binding force of a musical work that serves as a cemented force of individual lines and voices. Very significant to the harmony employed by Johnson is the merging of traditional Ghanaian and Western art music harmonic resources to create an identity. Amuah opines that “Harmonic vocabulary constitutes a determining factor in a composer’s work.”<sup>16</sup> The harmonic densities of Johnson’s work are based on his melodies; thus, the harmony is composed not in a vacuum but grounded and constructed on the melodic structures created by the composer. First, chromatics is a compositional device employed by Johnson in *Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory).

According to Apel, chromatics is the “use of at least some pitches of the chromatic scale in addition to or instead of those of the diatonic scale of some particular key.”<sup>17</sup> In other words, the chromatics notes are altered notes of the diatonic scale. The craft of Johnson, in combination with his knowledge of Western and traditional Ghanaian musical idioms, employs chromatic notes for decorative reasons which neither portray a sense of modulation nor transposition to related keys. This art of employing chromatic notes is a bold step that showcases his creative nature despite the challenge of its application using the *Fante* text in his song despite the tonal nature of the language of the song text. The chromatic notes showcased in *Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory) are F sharp, B flat, and G sharp. The B flat which also doubles as the lowered 7<sup>th</sup> of the Akan of Ghana is evident in bars 3, 18, 26, 27, 32, 50, 58, 59, 109, 117, 118, 121, and 124 of the piano accompaniment. The F sharp is also evident in bars 19, 28, 51, 60 and 110 in the Bass and in bars 19, 22, 34, 40, 41, 51, 53, 110 and 112 of the Alto. The G sharp is evident in bars 30, 64, 66, 74, 76, 78, 80, 82, and 112 of the piano accompaniment and in bars 39, 44, and 78 of the Bass. D sharp is also found in bars 34 of the piano accompaniment and bar 35 of the Alto.

Fig. 3 Chromatic notes in *Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory)

The image shows a musical score for the song 'Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam'. It features four vocal staves (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are written in Fante: 'Wɔn hyɛ Twer am pɔn Nyan - ko - pɔn e - nyim - nyam Wɔn hyɛ - Twer - am - pɔn Nyan-'. Chromatic notes are indicated by dashed boxes and arrows pointing to specific notes in the vocal and piano parts. The piano part includes markings for 8va and 8va2.

The art of unison is evident in *Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory) and his approach to the use of this idiom which is found in both traditional Ghanaian and Western musical

<sup>16</sup> Joshua A. Amuah, “The Use of Traditional Music Genre as a Pre-Compositional Resource in Ghanaian Contemporary Choral Art Music: Perspectives from Newlove Annan’s ‘Ewuradze,’” *Journal of Performing Arts* 4, no. 1 (2009): 42–62,48.

<sup>17</sup> Willi Apel, “The Harvard Dictionary of Music. Vol. 16” (Harvard University Press, Harvard University, 2003), 175.

practices is unique in the sense that both piano and voices are found displaying this idiom at the same time. Twum-Barimah writes that “unison encompasses the song leader and the chorus of a traditional music vocal setting, usually with the exact song text.”<sup>18</sup> In support of the argument made by Twum-Barimah with regards to unison in the traditional choral music which also extends to the audience participating in the performance contributes immensely to the success of the act. Nonetheless, Johnson employs this device by assigning the same notes to both the voice and the piano accompaniment that suggest a heavy, altogether, unified, and plural nature to glorify God. This is evident in bars 5-7, 96-98 of both Bass and the piano accompaniment. It is important to note that the Bass is positioned in key with a prior piano introduction before the unison.

Fig 4. Unison in *Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory)

Parallel thirds, a key component in the vocal music of some Ghanaian indigenous Ethnic groups notable among them is the Akan of Ghana and by extension a musical idiom in African choral indigenous music. Johnson’s introduction of this idiom defines his knowledge of choral music in his locality and has adapted parallel thirds in his composition. These thirds bear major and minor qualities. It is evident in bars 71-78 among the Tenor and Bass, with descending sequence located at bars 71-74 and likewise in bars 75-78.

Fig. 5 Parallel Thirds in *Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory)

Johnson has in mind the range of the various vocal parts and has stretched each part to suit his idea of this choral artwork.

Fig. 6 Vocal Ranges in *Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory)

<sup>18</sup> Twum-Barimah, *An Exploration of Compositional Techniques Among the First Two Generations of Ghanaian Choral Art Music Composers*, 40.

### Rhythmic Organisation

*Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory) is assigned to two-time signatures in both  $4_4$  quadruple time and  $2_4$  simple time. The quadruple time is evident from bars 1-62, and from bars 63-95, the time signature changes to  $2_4$  and resumes to  $4_4$  at bar 96 to the very end of the entire choral work. The general rhythmic nature of this choral work is parallel in all four parts in relation to the syllable of the song text. This suggests a sense of plural performance in a traditional context where both cantor and chorus sing the same text at the same time producing a sense of togetherness and full participation. Portions of this style are evident in bars 19-21 and bars 87-95. The creation of parallel rhythmic structures is also evident in the two-part harmonic occurrence in the songs evident in bars 79-84.

Fig. 7 Parallel Rhythms in *Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory)

The figure displays a musical score for four voices: Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). The score is for bars 19-21. The lyrics are: Wɔn - hɛ Twer - am - pɔn Nyan - ko - pɔn e nyim. The Soprano part starts with a fermata over the first two notes. The Alto part has a sharp sign on the second note of the second phrase. The Tenor part has a sharp sign on the second note of the second phrase. The Bass part has a sharp sign on the second note of the second phrase. The lyrics are written below the notes, with hyphens indicating syllable placement. The final syllable 'nyim' is written on a separate line for each voice part.

Interestingly, Johnson's craft in the composition of Western music is exhibited per his mastery and appreciation of this style. He employs four (4) tempos in *Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory) namely, *allegro maestoso* (fast and majestic) evident at the beginning of the choral work affecting bars 1- 63 and bars 96-127. *Menno mosso* (less motion) is utilised at bar 30, and *andante* (slow, at a walking pace) is found at bar 64 affecting bars 64-95. The presence of the fermata forms part of the aesthetics of the choral work and signifies the end of the third section as evident in bar 95 and the ending of the piano accompaniment in bar 126. Nonetheless, the tempo *ritardando* (rit.), prior to the fermata in bar 93 ushers the voices to move at a slow pace before the fermata creating some tension and attention to what is to happen. Johnson employs a bi-rhythmic structure in *Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory) as part of his rhythmic signature and identity. This is executed by the composer among the parts suggesting a *divisi* which suggests an eight-part due to the *divisi* in SATB. This development suggests an influence from a traditional African drum ensemble having an *ostinato* (timeline) with different rhythmic patterns. This is evident in *Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory) in bars 61-62.

Additionally, simple polyrhythmic structures are inherent in *Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory). This feature is characterised in such a way that Johnson gives a different rhythmic pattern to the Bass as against a varied rhythm evident in the Soprano, Alto and Tenor portraying the assertion of cross-rhythmic notion displayed in this choral work. This is evident in bars 58-59 and 105-109.

Fig. 8 Division in *Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory)

59

S  
Wɔn - hyɛ Twer - am pɔn Nyan - ko - pɔn - e - nyim - nyam.

A  
Wɔn - hyɛ Twer - am pɔn Nyan - ko - pɔn - e - nyim - nyam.

T  
8 Wɔn - hyɛ Twer - am pɔn Nyan - ko - pɔn - e - nyim - nyam.

B  
Wɔn - hyɛ Twer - am pɔn Nyan - ko - pɔn - e - nyim - nyam.

### Form

The structure of *Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory) is designed with the piano accompaniment serving a pivotal role in its pattern. The presence of the piano accompaniment on the musical score serves three main functions in the entire piece as an introduction, interlude, and postlude. Each of the three functions of the piano accompaniment outlined above serves not only as the composer's choice but also importantly bores an African twist and significance that portrays the dual musical sensibility of the composer. The piano accompaniment can be linked to a traditional African vocal ensemble where traditional musical instruments are played before the start of the performance, within the performance and at the end of the performance such as the *Apatampa* and *Nnwonkorɔ* of the Akans of Ghana. Additionally, the piano introductory section serves as a preparatory session of the performers within a traditional African vocal context which also aids as a cue to singers and choristers under the direction of a conductor. This further implies that the singers might have mastered the introduction of the piano to be acquainted with it at their rehearsal sessions to be able to sing on time per the score. The piano introduction in *Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory) affirms two important things musically. The first has to do with the establishment of the key of *Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory) which is a guide to singers to pitch their voices to the established concert key to produce a harmonious sound. Secondly, the piano introduction gives a gist of the second melody sung by the soprano evident in bars 7-11.

Fig. 9 Piano Introduction of *Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory)

Piano

*mf*

The piano interludes in Johnson's *Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory) have their own role. The piano interludes are evident in the fourth beat of bar 30 to the third beat of bar 33. Johnson also creates another piano interlude at bars 63 to 70. Although piano interludes are used by many composers either in art or popular music, they serve an important significance in Johnson's *Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory). Johnson's creativity embraces the device of interlude in music composition with significance that is worth noting. Johnson employs the piano interlude to create first and foremost a switch from one mood to the other, thus a preparatory ground to switch the mood based on the tempo mark assigned to the interlude which suggests something new

in subsequent bars. On the other hand, the piano interlude(s) also gives a foreshadowing of the Soprano evident in bars 79 to 86, and a varied foreshadowing of the Alto in the same bars.

Fig. 10 Piano Interlude of *Wɔnhye Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory)



The closing section of the piano accompaniment is an extension of the entire choral artwork. This derives inspiration and influence from Ghanaian traditional choral settings where the voices or performers cease as the musical instruments are played and based on the communication among the musicians end the performance in a grand style. Note that this type of style is not exhibited in all indigenous choral performances but forms part of the aesthetic appreciation of Ghanaian traditional musical practices. Johnson creates this style of extension with the presence of some crushing notes and resolves to chord I in the root position at bar 142. In sum, the piano accompaniment is transmitted in three main sections that form the backbone of *Wɔnhye Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory) creating mood swings, tension, climax, and resolution. The presence of the piano accompaniment, though known as a Western musical instrument, fused with Traditional *Fante* text, signifies the choral art nature of the piece. This acts as an example of Akin Euba's propounded theory of Interculturalism, with a focus on Western and Ghanaian musical idioms at play.

Fig. 11 Piano Postlude of *Wɔnhye Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory)



Johnson utilises the call-and-response phrasing, which is prominent in traditional African vocal music, that promotes integral collectivity of both performers and audience participation. Twum-Barimah opines that “the call and the response are of great importance within the traditional vocal performance arena.”<sup>19</sup> These two characters are key in the performance showcasing a blend of roles in creating a sensibility that adds to the aesthetics of the presentation”. For clarity's sake, call and response is also used in Western art music, for the purposes of this paper, it dwells on the imitation of the traditional African vocal ensemble that has a lead singer and a chorus. Agawu asserts that “both Call and Response are vitally involved with harmony, the one implicitly, the other explicitly. Every Call has several obligations, including a voice-leading one that ensures continuity between it and the Response.”<sup>20</sup> The African perspective of this compositional device has a deep sentiment that falls within the African paradigm in function and aesthetics. The role of the cantor or song leader can be compared to the role and function of a conductor in Western art music performance. Thus, much is expected from the cantor in terms of continuity, smooth performance, knowledge of the culture, being well-versed with the repertoire for the performance for smooth transitions from one song to the other, and his or her ability to attract audience participation. The call made by the cantor is answered by the chorus or together with the cantor. Johnson cites this African perspective of call-and-response phrasing

<sup>19</sup> Twum-Barimah, *An Exploration of Compositional Techniques Among the First Two Generations of Ghanaian Choral Art Music Composers*, . 46-47.

<sup>20</sup> V Kofi Agawu, “Variation Procedures in Northern Ewe Music,” *Ethnomusicology* 34, no. 2 (1990): 221–44, 232.

in *Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory). Johnson represents the call with the Tenor and Bass parts and the response with the Soprano and Alto. The Tenor and the Bass later connect in the response as evidenced in bars 71-95. Likewise, *Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory), exhibits call-and-response-phrasings with the Bass doing the call which is tailed by the response by the Soprano and Alto which is later fused with the Tenor and Bass in the response evident in bars 5-8, and 96-99.

Fig. 12 Call-and-Response-Phrasing in *Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory)

The musical score for Figure 12 is arranged in five staves. The top four staves are for vocal parts: Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). The bottom staff is for Piano (Pno.). The Soprano and Alto parts begin with a rest in the first two bars, then enter in bar 3 with a melodic line. The Tenor and Bass parts begin with a rest in the first two bars, then enter in bar 3 with a lower melodic line. The lyrics are: *f* Wɔn - hɛ Twer - am - pɔn Wɔn - hɛ Twer - am - pɔn Nyan - ko - pɔn. The piano accompaniment provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines in both hands.

It is worth noting that *Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory) is in a through-composed form with four discrete parts. These four distinct parts ‘A’ spans bars 1-32, ‘B’ bars 33-62, ‘C’ bars 63-95 and section ‘A1’ spans bars 96-127. The fourth or last section ‘A1’ is a varied repetition of the first section. This last section ‘A1’ is devoid of any piano introduction and features different rhythmic patterns at the phrasal endings compared to section ‘A’ but is evidenced by a piano postlude which serves as the coda of *Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory).

### Analysis of *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God)

#### Melody Organisation

Johnson’s melody of *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God) begins on the dominant of the home key (E flat major). The first melodic note on the dominant (B flat) is set on an anacrusis and is evident in the Soprano in the first eight (8) bars. The melodic range stretches within an octave, this octave is set from E flat 1 – E flat 2 (which is also the climax). Thus, E flat 1 is the lowest note evident in bars 2, 7, and 8, while E flat 2 is the highest note found in bars 1, 3, and 5, of *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God).

Fig. 13 First Melody of *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God)

Inadvertently, Johnson creates a second melody in the dominant of the home key. Johnson shifts from the original home key to that of B flat major (relative major) which also begins with an anacrusis. This second melody is evident in bars 9-16, with its starting point as the sub-mediante (6<sup>th</sup>) in the key of B flat major with its ending note on the tonic of the B flat major. The second melody owns f1 as its lowest note while f2 serves as the highest and climax. The second melody depicts conjunct motions in a stepwise manner within the scope of an octave just like the first melody. A clear observation of the second melody shows a direct repetition of bars 10-11 found in bars 15-16. Both first and second melodies exhibit conjunct movements with intervals of major 3<sup>rd</sup>, major 2<sup>nd</sup>, and perfect 4<sup>th</sup>.

Fig. 14 Second Melody of *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God)

### Harmonic Organisation

Johnson understands Western harmonic ties and practices and has a clear understanding of his use of these practices in his compositions. Johnson's Western harmonic practices especially his usage of primary chords such as chords I, IV, and V and their inversions are evident in *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God). The presence of secondary chords is found in *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God) such as the first inversion of chord ii in bar 60, and the second inversion of chord vii at bar 66. Nonetheless, the admittance of dominant 7<sup>th</sup> chords is evident in bar 94 and its second inversion at bar 24. Johnson produces a diminished chord which resolves to chord I at bar 93. Johnson's pragmatic use of primary and secondary and diminished chords suggests a strong sense of union or globality that portrays Euba's interculturalism. This is a strong philosophical phenomenon of creativity and leads to a much wider audience in both cultures portraying our reliance on each other and that none is greater than the other.

Dor postulates that "The intervals of thirds and sixth are best harmonic consonances associated with Akans and Northern Eves."<sup>21</sup> It is with this notion and sentiment that Johnson introduces the idiom of parallel thirds in *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God). Parallel thirds employed by Johnson are an influence from his Akan ancestry and he used them as major and minor thirds. These parallel thirds are present in the female voice (Soprano & Alto) and in the male voice (Tenor & Bass). Surprisingly these thirds are not seen functioning in both male and female voices at the same time. The

<sup>21</sup> G. Dor, *Trends And Stylistic Trait In The Art Composition Of Ephraim Amu, N.Z. Nayo And J.H.K. Nketia: A Theoretical Perspective*. (Unpublished Mphil Thesis, University of Ghana, Legon, 1992), 282.

parallel thirds present in the female voice signify its use in an all-female ensemble or two-part singing of females usually women. That of the male voice is a representation of an all-male ensemble such as the Asafo company of the Akan of Ghana. Parallel thirds in *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God) are found in bars 2-3, 5-7, 9-10, 12-13, 15, 17-18, 25, 31, 32, 36, 39-40, 43-52, 66-68, 82-84, 90-91, 94. Augmented thirds are also present in bars 65, 77, 81, 89, 93 of the female voice (Soprano & Alto), while they also appear in the male voice (Tenor & Bass) in bars 1, 3, 5, 8, 11-12, 14, 16-17, 20-21, 23, 25-27, 29, 31 33, 35, 37, 39, 42, 47, 69-70, 82, 85, and 88.

Fig. 15 Parallel Thirds in *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God)

The image shows a musical score for the piece 'Wonyi Ewuradze Aye'. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are written below the notes: 'Wo - mfa a - ka - saa na a - dwom - to fo nyi'. The bass line is characterized by parallel thirds, with notes often beamed together. A specific augmented third is highlighted in bar 24. The score is numbered 43 at the beginning.

The presence of non-chord tones such as passing notes adds some spice especially when it is placed in an active sequential manner within the full beat of a bar in Johnson's *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God). The use of passing notes in the colouring suggests a fill-in within block chords bearing the same time frame, displaying short durations either twice or four times the note value of the basic beat specified by the time signature of the bar. The presence of passing notes is evident among the Bass and are presented a second or a third from each other. The composer's use of this device at the Bass makes it easier for this part and its strong semblance portrays a heavy feel of the passing notes in its aesthetic sound production and excitement during a performance. It further becomes simple for this part to learn faster because a chord or chords are established before the movement of the passing notes either ascending or descending showcasing in most instances an interval of a second with a displayed occasional leap evident in bar 24 of the Bass. These passing notes are also apparent vividly in bars 21, 23-27 and 29.

Johnson introduces a (modulation) shift in tonality in the *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God) as part of his harmonic identity. This device of composition dwells in both the African and Western vocal music. Vehemently, Western music per its systems and structure encompasses this device cautiously in both choral and instrumental music with a calculated procedure of lowering or raising notes or its restoration to achieve their sense of craftsmanship. In the traditional African vocal setting, modulation, which the researcher prefers to describe as a shift in tonality is an integral part of the performance. There is no clear distinction between the song being performed in key and its sudden change in tonality because the performance is one important unbreakable facet appreciated within the traditional African space. Hence, the shift in tonality is not a planned ordeal, it is from within the performers mostly by the song leader which connotes his or her mood swing. It is in this perspective that Johnson utilises this device in *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God). Johnson's approach in the use of this device is orchestrated suddenly from one key to the other, making a swift movement suggesting that performers (choristers) should be attentive and in tune to remain in the right pitch when the shift in tonality occurs and not be in out of key. Interestingly, Johnson captures these shifts in tonalities in a manner that musicians can conform and identify these developments by placing the key signatures of the new keys at the very bars where the shift occurs.

*Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God) begins with the home key of E flat major and shifts to the dominant (B flat major) at bar 9, then shifts the tonality back to the original key (E flat major) at bar 35. Furthermore, there is a shift in tonality to (sub-dominant key) A flat major present at the last beat of bar 75 to the first beat of bar 77, tailed by another short shift in tonality to B flat major evident in the last beat of bar 77-78 transcending to E flat major. Another shift also occurs from the home key

to the sub-dominant (A flat major) from the last beat of bar 93 and then returns to the home key (E flat major).

Fig. 16 Shift in Tonality in *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God)



The role of unisons at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of a musical work suggests an identity of purpose or representation or a collective idea in the central message of the musical work. Nketia asserts that unison is an important musical form and idiom is appreciated in African societies and it forms part of an integral traditional vocal ideological setting and is accepted and valued within a performance.<sup>22</sup> Johnson's *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God) exhibits this device of unison in three distinct ways. First, Johnson showcases unison among all four parts (SATB) an octave apart in the pickup beat of bars 1 and 34. This suggests a chorus within the traditional indigenous vocal setting singing the same note together with the song leader. Secondly, the composer exhibits this device in the female voice (Soprano and Alto) at bars 8, 14, 33, 42, 64, 69-70. Johnson's third approach to the use of unison in *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God) is found in the male voice (Tenor and Bass) present in bars 2, 4, 36, 38, 49-51, 73, 85. The second approach suggests unison among a female ensemble and the third approach also suggests an all-male ensemble which falls within the traditional African vocal setting. The composer's approach to unison in *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God) confirms and upholds the participatory structure of African traditional music in connection with the *Fante* text 'Won' (let us), suggesting togetherness and a collective decision by the composer to glorify God.

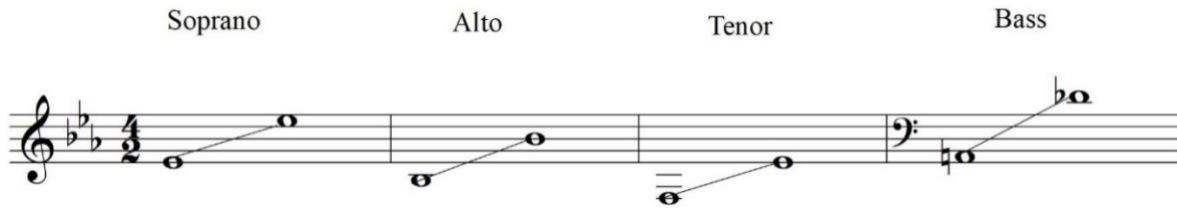
Fig. 17 Unison in *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God)



*Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God) ends with a perfect cadence (chord V-I) evident in bars 94-95. Similarly, it is also evident at the last beat of bar 68 to bar 70. A careful study also exhibits another perfect cadence at the last beat of bar 41 to bar 42 and at the beat of bar 7 to bar 8. The signature of perfect cadence is an identifiable way of ending phrasal sections and the entire choral artwork as well in *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God). Johnson has in mind the range of the various vocal parts and has stretched each part to suit his idea of this choral artwork. Thus, all four parts (SATB) have a length that has pitches per the prerogative of the composer in his creation of this choral artwork, bearing in mind the maximum and minimum range that suit each part to create a much more harmonious sound that can be performed effectively by singers.

<sup>22</sup> Joseph Nketia, *The Music of Africa* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co. Inc., 1974), 140.

Fig. 18 Vocal Ranges in *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God)



**Rhythmic Organisation**

*Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God) is designed with two-time signatures that are connected without a break to indicate a change in time. This continuous flow of rhythmic passages by Johnson, despite the presence of two-time signatures, is identified by the number of notes within the bars, even though the composer does not directly indicate the time signatures on the score. The first-time signature is the compound time of  $4_4$  (four crotchet beats in a bar) in *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God), evident in bars 1-42. The second time signature employed in this choral artwork is  $3_4$  (three crotchet beats in a bar) spanning bars 43-95. It is important to note that despite the continuous flow of this choral artwork, the time signatures affect and alter the rhythmic pattern and sensibilities since it is shaped in an orderly and organised manner. The rhythmic patterns constructed by the composer are straightforward suggesting an easy interpretation and appreciation that aids learning by singers. Additionally, the rhythms created by the composer are in direct contact hence fused with the syllables of the song text and these run through the four parts at the same time evident in bars 3,5,6-8,45-49. Inadvertently, the rhythmic sensibilities endowed in *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God) are mostly parallel and move in the same direction with the same note values assigned to the parts. These parallel rhythmic sensibilities signify the plural nature and collectivity of Johnson leading the people ‘Christians’ to praise God devoid of excuses, shortcomings and interpersonal differences, race, and tribe. The rhythms imbibed in *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God) will occasionally showcase long notes present at bars 13, 21, 23, and 25 even though they are short-notes dominated. The presence of long notes is not just meant to be decorative but of significance in relation to the song text attached to it. For instance, the long notes are assigned to the text ‘*krənkrən do*’ (The lord’s Holiness) which suggests a deep veneration of God. There are some repeated rhythmic passages evident in this choral artwork. Thus, there is a varied repetition of rhythmic structures of bars 12-13 evident in bars 17-18.

Fig. 19 Varied Rhythm in *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God)

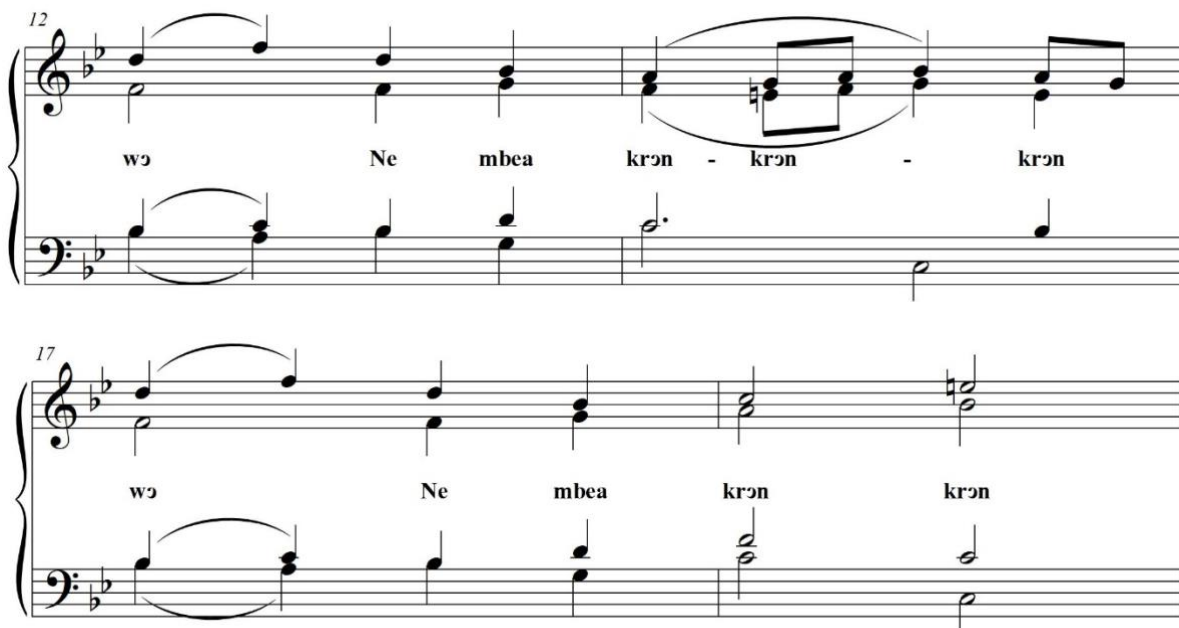
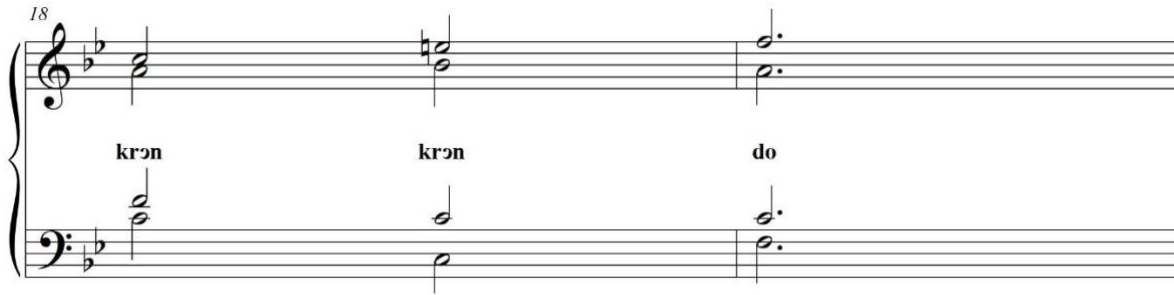


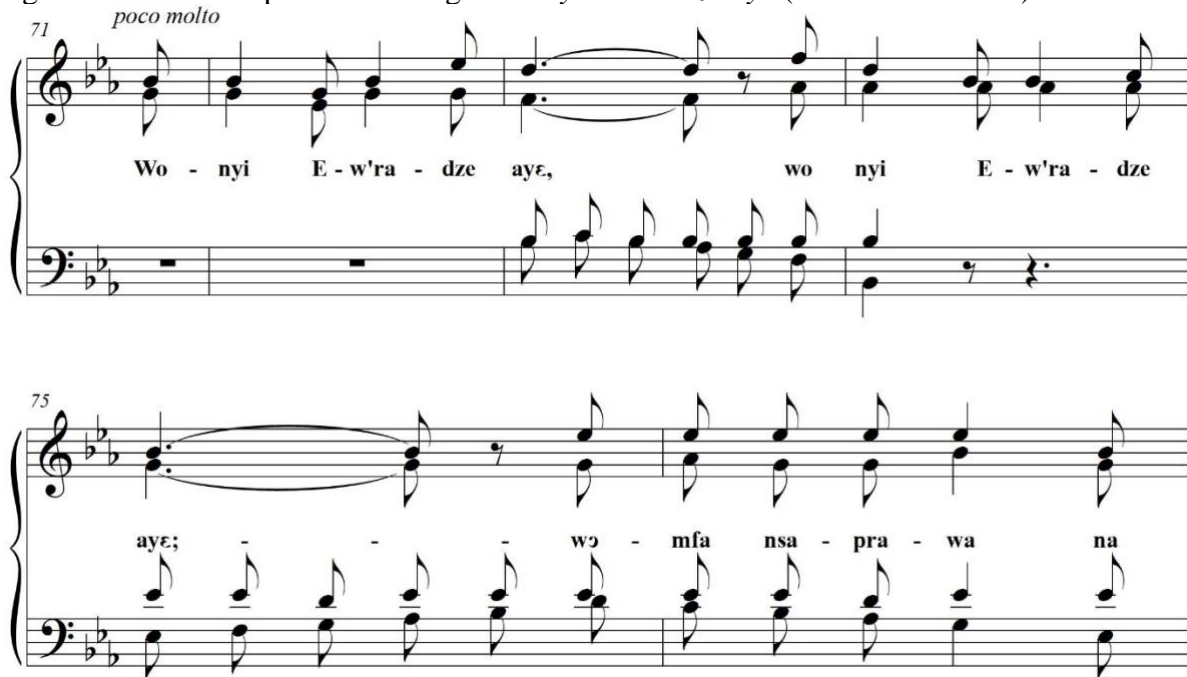
Fig. 20 Long Duration of Rhythms in *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God)



**Form**

Johnson established himself as an African composer by recuperating traditional African vocal idioms. He introduced the traditional vocal idiom of call-and-response phrasing which is a recognisable and accepted practice in vocal music. Johnson introduced this important idiom in *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God). This type of call-and-response phrasing captured in *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God) mirrors traditional ensembles such as the *Nnwonkorɔ* of the Akan in Ghana. This call-and-response phrasing is designed as a representation of the traditional vocal setup where the chorus responds abruptly when the cantor is still rendering his or her lines within a performance. In such cases, the chorus may respond to a varied or exact text sung by the song leader (cantor) or a different text altogether. Johnson decided to assign the call to the female voice (Soprano and Alto) and the responses to the male voice (Tenor and Bass). The male voice responds by imitating the call by the female voice and this is evident in bar 71 to the first beat of bar 76, the last beat of bar 83 to the first beat of bar 86 in *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God).

Fig. 21 Call-and-Response-Phrasing in *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God)



In a close examination of Johnson’s *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God), repetitions are showcased. Once again, its traditional perspective deals with it as being part of the performance and not carefully drafted to fit the composition. According to Twum-Barimah, “Repetition re-echoes the message of the songs, and it also allows one to imbibe what has been sung already, especially when

learning the song.”<sup>23</sup> The African traditional perspective of repetition in music is not only for its beautification and the prolonging of the piece, but the emphasis placed on the message, the ability for participants to learn and join in the performance and in some cases allow for extemporization and improvisation by the cantor (song leader). Johnson applies this traditional idiom in two ways. First as a varied repetition and second as a direct repetition. The presence of a direct repetition of both notes and text of bars 1-8 is evident in bars 35-42. Varied repetitions of bars 71 to the first beat of bar 83 are evident in the last beat of bar 83 to bar 95 with the difference situated at the last two bars of varied repetition though both bear the same text.

Fig. 22 Repetition in *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God)

The figure displays a musical score for the song "Wonyi Ewuradze Aye" in 4/4 time, B-flat major. It consists of four systems of music, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "Won - yi E - w'ra-dze a - ye wɔ Ne mbea krɔn - krɔn do Won - yi E-w'ra - dze a ye wɔ Ne mbea krɔn krɔn do. Won - yi E-w'ra-dze a - ye wɔ Ne mbea krɔn - krɔn do". The score illustrates direct repetition of musical phrases and lyrics across different systems.

<sup>23</sup> Twum-Barimah, *An Exploration of Compositional Techniques Among the First Two Generations of Ghanaian Choral Art Music Composers II*, 61.

*Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God) is divided into five distinct segments. The first ‘A’ is from bar 1 to bar 8, and the second section ‘B’ is from bars 9-34, tailed by a repeat of the first section ‘A’ (bars 35-42). The next is the fourth section ‘C’ spans bars 43-70 and the final section ‘D’ spans bars 71-95. This gives *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God) the form A, B, A, C, and D. Just as has been enumerated above the repetition of section ‘A’ after the second section ‘B’ is a representation of the emphasis placed on the message, the re-echo of the message and its invitation for the participant to join the performance. It is also notable of Johnson in *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God) that sections A, B, and C are performed in a parallel manner collectively in their respective parts or domains whilst section D starts with two-part singing among the female voice (Soprano and Alto).

### Analysis of *Da Yi Na Ewuradze Ahyehye* (this is the Day the Lord has made)

#### Melodic Organisation

The melodic language of the third selected choral artwork of J. P. Johnson for this paper has its outlined features that form the backbone of *Da Yi Na Ewuradze Ahyehye* (This is the Day the Lord has made). The melody of this choral work begins on the tonic of C major evident in bar 1 and comes to an end in bar 8 with the leading note (B). Johnson employs a direct repetition of the melody from bar 2 up to the third beat of bar 10. Additionally, the entire melody from bars 1-8 is also directly repeated in bars 35-47. The melodic intervallic sensibilities have to do mostly with major seconds and a major 6<sup>th</sup> evident in bar 3. The repeated melodic phrases which are mostly direct connote the traditional African perspective of being part by being able to learn both tune and text and join in the performance. Furthermore, Sopranos would be able to recognise that passage and easily retain it in their memories at their rehearsal and flow easily in the performance since they can identify that it has been sung already and they may have committed these passages to memory unknowingly. The climax which also doubles as the highest note of *Da Yi Na Ewuradze Ahyehye* (this is the Day the Lord has made) is F2 located at the 5<sup>th</sup> bar while the lowest note (G1) is evident in bar 3. Johnson incorporates and accommodates all seven (7) notes of the scale of C major in this choral artwork without any alteration. A careful examination of *Da Yi Na Ewuradze Ahyehye* (This is the Day the Lord has made) showcases that Johnson composed the melody of this choral artwork the text to the melody. Consequently, the melody does not have any relation to the song text, which therefore shows a clear distinction between the pitch level of the *Fante* song text and the constructed notes of the melody. Invariably, the text-tune relationship is absent in the melody and the melodic notes are likely to change the meaning of the text with the traditional Akan setting of Ghana. Johnson knowing the clash of Western style of composition against the traditional African tonal languages such as the *Fante*, does this merger carefully based on his knowledge of both cultures and may have had a forecast on how his audience would accept it and may test the adds to see the outcome of events. Evidence of this shift which Johnson has established is a signature and is located at the last beat of bar 3 to bar 4, Johnson employs the same note for the text ‘*da yi na*’ despite the text ‘*yi*’ that has a high pitch level.

Fig. 23 The Melody of *Da Yi Na Ewuradze Ahyehye* (this is the Day the Lord has made)



#### Harmonic Organisation

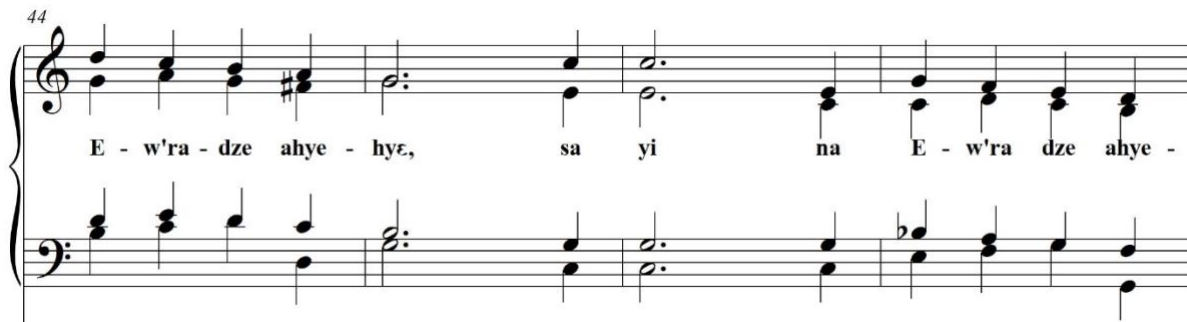
Johnson's choice of chords which predominantly are primary in nature is of the essence in this choral work. The existence of primary chords I, IV, and V together with their inversions have a significant

touch in this choral artwork. In addition to the use of primary chords, secondary chords such as chord ii in root position are evident in the last beat of 9. Likewise in bars 7 and 41, its second inversion is showcased as a way of demonstrating the composer's touch and affiliation and understanding of Western music ideologies. However, Johnson uses the elements of the rests in three main ways different from one another that are captivating. In the first way, the provision of rests in *Da Yi Na Ewuradze Ahyehye* (this is the Day the Lord has made) allows the female voice (Soprano and Alto) to perform alone. This type is evident in bars 14-19, 30-34 and 48-50. In the second, the rests are employed to accommodate the male voice only evident at the fourth beat of bar 19 to the third beat of bar 23. Similarly, another of this kind is also showcased at bars 26-29 and from the fourth beat of bar 50 to the second beat of bar 53. In the third segment, rests allow only the performers (Soprano, Alto, Tenor and Bass) to perform without the piano accompaniment. This Capella is found at bars 44-47 and 57-59. The composer's use of rests by allowing some voices to sing whilst others go on break is a mirroring of the traditional African vocal setting where at a point in time the cantor and the chorus move in turns within the cultural milieu.

The presence of chromatic notes in *Da Yi Na Ewuradze Ahyehye* (This is the Day the Lord has made) still advocates a sense of Johnson's Western music principles in his choral artworks. It is important to note that most of the chromatic notes in *Da Yi Na Ewuradze Ahyehye* (this is the Day the Lord has made) are mainly for embellishments and decoration apart from one chromatic note that suggests a shift) modulation and transposition to the sub-dominant key. This chromatic note is the lowered 7<sup>th</sup> (B flat) which is a prominent feature of the vocal musical sensibilities of the Akan of Ghana. This chromatic note (lowered 7<sup>th</sup>) is evident in bars 12, 24, 46, 61, 64 of the Tenor and bars 59, 61,62 of the Bass. The Soprano also performs this note in bars 59 and 62 and in bar 57 of the Alto. F sharp (the raised fourth note) in bars 61 of the Soprano and bars 7,41 and 60 in the Bass. G sharp is also treated in bar 15 of the Soprano and featured in bars 21 and 28 of the Bass and Tenor. This G sharp once again is expressed in the piano accompaniment section at bar 52. The lowered 3<sup>rd</sup> (E flat) is also showcased in bars 58 and 60 of the Alto. Finally, the presence of D sharp is also visible in the piano accompaniment section at bar 51.

Johnson shifts tonality in two instances in *Da Yi Na Ewuradze Ahyehye* (This is the Day the Lord has made) to the subdominant key of F major and transposes to F major itself before the end of this choral artwork. These shifts in tonality both in the form of modulation and transposition are executed with the placement of pivot chords that serve a common purpose in both the old and new keys. Johnson modulates to the subdominant of C major evident at bars 12,24,46, with the presence of the lowered 7<sup>th</sup> at the Tenor thereby becoming a pivot chord leading to the key of F major. This pivot chord is captured in its first inversion of chord V<sup>7</sup>. Also, the transposition effected getting to the end of the piece to F major with the continuous presence of B flat is evident at bars 57-65.

Fig. 24 Modulation in *Da Yi Na Ewuradze Ahyehye* (this is the Day the Lord has made)



Moreover, Johnson employs repetition as a compositional device based on the traditional African perspective mainly from his culture. Aside from its use in extending the length of this choral artwork, it is meant to emphasise the theme. In Johnson's harmonic nuances, there is a direct repetition of bars 1-13 found at bars 35-47. This repeated sentence structure not only makes it easy for singers to

learn but also for audience participation mirroring a traditional dance form where the audience participates by clapping, singing, and other body gestures.

Within Johnson's *Da Yi Na Ewuradze Ahyehye* (This is the Day the Lord has made), the traditional African vocal music idiom (call-and-response phrasing) is well featured and conceptualised by the composer. Its inclusion in this choral artwork is appealing thus making a twist from the parallel harmonic principle where all singers perform at the same time for variety that brings a change in performance. Johnson's approach to the use of call-and-response phrasing can be described as an orderly and consequential system that is easily identifiable and performed. Thus, the call finishes before the response follows suit, showcasing a clear-cut division and the passing of a button in a marathon. This is one of the types of call and response in the traditional setting opined by Nketia, hence, it is a type which the cantor or song leader in a vocal ensemble renders his or her lines before the chorus comes in with the response.<sup>24</sup> This scenario of call-and-response-phrasing in the traditional African context also advocates and suggests a two-part singing which often operates in thirds in the Akan culture; thus one party may sing a line before the other responds. The African music idiom of call-and-response phrasing is uniquely identified in *Da Yi Na Ewuradze Ahyehye* (this is the Day the Lord has made) with the call at bar 14 to the third beat of bar 19 by the female voice thence followed by a response by the male voice at the last beat of bar 19 to the third beat of bar 23. In another instance, Johnson places the call at bar 26 to the third beat of bar 29 followed by a response to the female voice from bars 30-34. Similarly, bar 48 to the third beat of bar 50 in the female voice acts as a call followed by a response from the fourth beat of bar 50 to the second beat of bar 53 in the male voice.

Johnson's captivating skills are displayed in *Da Yi Na Ewuradze Ahyehye* (This is the Day the Lord has made) hence, a twist within the idiom of call-and-response phrasing in bars 14-23. These bars showcase a difference in the response compared to the above examples mentioned i.e., an exact repetition of the call by the Soprano is captured in the response by the Bass showcasing the dexterity of skills displayed by the composer in weaving his ideas. In addition to the call-and-response phrasing, Johnson employs unison. Though unisons are not only situated in Western musical paradigms, it does certainly take a strong acceptance and recognition in traditional African vocal music suggesting a total involvement and strong collectiveness within the African musical cultural milieu. The presence of unison in Johnson's *Da Yi Na Ewuradze Ahyehye* (This is the Day the Lord has made) is a plural sensibility that makes singers perform this piece easily and makes it easy to remember portions of this choral artwork within the performance. The device of unison is employed in two ways. First, it is constructed for the female voice (Soprano and Alto) and secondly, for the male voice (Tenor and Bass). Nonetheless, some portions of the unison in Johnson's *Da Yi Na Ewuradze Ahyehye* (This is the Day the Lord has made) emulate a call-and-response character bearing the same note values but with a variation in the song text and the notes. Unisons evident in *Da Yi Na Ewuradze Ahyehye* (this is the Day the Lord has made) are found in bar 26 to the third beat of bar 29 and that of bars 30-34. Unisons are evident in bar 26 starting on the tonic at the male and female voices in bar 30. Subsequently, it appears again at the commencement of bar 48 at the female voice through to the third beat of bar 50 starting on the dominant of the home key (G major). That of the unison exhibited in the male voice at the last beat of bar 50 starting on the mediant of C major (E).

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<sup>24</sup> Nketia, *The Music of Africa*, 142..

Fig. 25 Call-and-Response-Phrasing

Johnson's *Da Yi Na Ewuradze Ahyehye* (This is the Day the Lord has made) has a span of notes and intervals for each of the four parts. This suggests careful thought of the composer in the placement of notes to achieve the purpose of transcending his messages via the mixed voices available to him at the time of composition and their strength and weaknesses may also inform his choice of notes that fit into the vocal ranges devoid of screaming and discomfort in the production of sounds within a performance.

Fig. 26 Vocal Ranges in *Da Yi Na Ewuradze Ahyehye* (this is the Day the Lord has made)

### Rhythmic Organisation

Johnson does not include or construct a complex rhythmic structure in *Da Yi Na Ewuradze Ahyehye* (This is the Day the Lord has made). Rather, he employs simple rhythmic passages within the common time frame of  $4_4$  times. Misonu Amu asserts that "The rhythm of African songs depends very much on speech."<sup>25</sup> Johnson employs rhythmic sensibilities in this choral artwork based on the influence of the syllable of the song text. This approach by Johnson further aids in strengthening and projecting the meaning of the text and its appreciation among native speakers and people who understand the culture. These rhythmic patterns are parallel to each other thus all SATB turn to be on the same rhythmic formula except for the presence of some passing notes toward the end of *Da Yi Na Ewuradze Ahyehye* (this is the Day the Lord has made). Consequently, the text correlates with the rhythmic significantly in promoting the meaning of the text, but a text-tune relationship would have promoted the true meaning of the words based on pitches matched with notes. Even though there are no clear set tempo markings to aid in interpretation, leaving it to the interpretation of choir directors in a performance

<sup>25</sup> M Amu, *Stylistic And Textual Sources of A Contemporary Ghanaian Art Music Composer: A Case Study of E. Amu* (Unpublished Mphil Thesis, University of Ghana, Legon, 1988), 40.

juxtaposing a traditional African vocal ensemble performance that is devoid of tempo markings but works within the spur of the moment. It is also important to note that some of these rhythmic nuances in *Da Yi Na Ewuradze Ahyehye* (this is the Day the Lord has made) bear a traditional African music idiom of anacrusis aside from the use of dotted minims, crotchets, quavers among others.

Fig. 27 Parallel Rhythms in *Da Yi Na Ewuradze Ahyehye* (this is the Day the Lord has made)

The musical score is written in 4/4 time and features parallel rhythms between the vocal line and the piano accompaniment. The vocal line consists of a series of notes with lyrics underneath. The piano accompaniment provides harmonic support with chords and single notes. The dynamic marking is *f* (forte). The lyrics are: "Da yi na E - w'ra - dze ahye - hye. da yi na".

### Form

Johnson affirms his creativity in weaving out his ideas in the construction of *Da Yi Na Ewuradze Ahyehye* (this is the Day the Lord has made). His ability to move or to break away from an existing phenomenon is derived from achieving his objective. A careful examination of *Da Yi Na Ewuradze Ahyehye* (This is the Day the Lord has made) shows that Johnson commences the piece in a close score and later in the development section introduces a piano accompaniment to complement the voices. This creative style of Johnson is quite different from other composers who ideally may have an accompaniment section probably with rest signs until the set time for the notes for the piano accompaniment. The piano accompaniment displayed in the development section makes the choral artwork not to be dry but rather enhances a sense of teamwork without it being dry suggesting an appreciation for the use of musical instruments during vocal performances to become richer. Within the constructed piano accompaniment, some notes vary from the SATB except bar 56 which houses the same chord structure for both voices and the piano accompaniment. Johnson has carefully as part of his design divided the entire choral artwork into five (5) distinct parts. Each of these five distinct parts is of equal rank and is associated with each other to make the piece a complete artwork. The first section 'A' spans bars 1-13 followed by section 'B' which also spans bars 14-34. Thence to a repetition of section 'A' from bars 35-47, the next is the fourth section 'C' which spans bars 48-56, after which the final section 'D' follows suit at bars 57-65. This clearly shows that the second section 'B' obviously has the highest number of bars attached to it. Therefore, the entire form of *Da Yi Na Ewuradze Ahyehye* (this is the Day the Lord has made) spells as A, B, A, C, D suggesting a through-composed structure. As part of Johnson's identity and creative nature, he constructs a misplaced beat at the beginning of all five sections in *Da Yi Na Ewuradze Ahyehye* (This is the Day the Lord has made). This suggests a reflection of off beats within the traditional African musical aesthetics either consciously or unconsciously when it comes to African rhythmic nuances. Furthermore, Johnson also showcases each division with a double line after each section.

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The paper has highlighted the relabeling of the Ghanaian choral art composers' delineation opined by Amuah.<sup>26</sup> Johnson creates simple melodic lines that usually conform with the text with conjunct movements that are straightforward. The melodies of the selected works are also centered on the heptatonic scale with the addition of the flattened 7<sup>th</sup> which Johnson has introduced based on the influence of his culture. Furthermore, his harmonic sensibilities that showcase traditional African idioms are very important features in his works that stand out and speak volumes about his musical identity and style. With regard to rhythmic patterns and form, Johnson's simple rhythmic sensibilities

<sup>26</sup> Amuah, *The Use of Traditional Music Elements In Contemporary Ghanaian Choral Music: Perspectives From Selected Works of G.W.K. Dor, Nicodemus Kofi Badu, And Newlove Annan.*

and the general nature of his compositions are chiefly friendly. It can be interpreted by singers and more importantly by the target singers (indigenes of the Gold Coast during the pre-independence of Ghana) for whom he composed to participate actively in church activities using the local dialect (*Fante*). The paper also revealed that Johnson's choral works were composed to encourage congregational participation. Johnson did not compose his songs only in his language but also translated other songs into *Fante*. After a vigilant examination of the three selected choral artworks by Johnson, the paper has been able to identify the compositional styles of Johnson such as repetitions, call-and-response phrasings, unison, parallel rhythmic passages, syllabic rhythmic relationships, text-tune relationships, and parallel thirds.

## RECOMMENDATION

The researcher recommends Johnson's style to upcoming composers in music schools, colleges and tertiary institutions to emulate and preserve. 'Preservation' in the context of this paper refers to the addition of Johnson's style of composition to that of modern creative styles for the purposes of posterity. All these may add up to the creative nature of this art form that has existed till now and is still exerting changes incorporating, and merging new ideals and sensibilities as part of the aesthetic contemporary musical taste.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has drawn from the arguments made above by delving into the style of Johnson, an astute composer of the Pilot period of Ghanaian choral art composers. The paper has touched on his personality, education, musical education, and his work as a composer. More importantly, the researcher has made a firm argument of the styles implored by Johnson during a thorough examination of three selected choral artworks by him namely, *Wɔnhɛ Twerampɔn Enyimnyam* (Tell Ye the Glory), *Wonyi Ewuradze Aye* (Let us Praise God), and *Da Yi Na Ewuradze Ahyehye* (This is the day the Lord has made). Additionally, each of the selected choral artworks has been translated into English for the appreciation and understanding of readers and researchers who might be illiterates of the Ghanaian indigenous *Fante* language. Johnson has indeed contributed to the development and sustenance of Ghanaian choral art music through the composition of his works when this art form was still finding its feet due to the heavy influences of Western nuances in the Gold Coast before Ghana's independence. His efforts need to be commended.

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