

Aye Baje

(The World Decays)

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Abstract

Aye Bajẹ Tan (“The World Decays”) is a Yoruba art-music composition for solo soprano and piano that reflects on contemporary moral decline and social disintegration. Set in B-flat major and cast in a 6/8 compound metre, the work employs a Moderato tempo and monophonic vocal texture to evoke a chant-like introspection. Its through-composed structure enables a continuous unfolding of musical ideas, mirroring the progressive deterioration described in the text. The piano’s interludes articulate emotional pacing and structural transitions, while the vocal line deepens the narrative through expressive declamation and rhythmic fluidity. The composition draws inspiration from everyday experiences within the community, transforming observations of societal change into a reflective musical statement. Through its interplay of melody, metre, and narrative, *Aye Bajẹ Tan* functions as both lament and commentary, offering a poignant artistic meditation on the complexities of modern life and affirming the role of contemporary African art music as a medium for cultural reflection and ethical discourse.

Keywords: African Art Music, Ethical Discourse, Musical Narrativity, Socio-Cultural Reflection, Yoruba Vocal Composition

Introduction

Art music in contemporary Africa continues to evolve as a dynamic medium through which composers interrogate social realities, articulate communal anxieties, and preserve cultural memory. Within this creative landscape, *Aye Bajẹ Tan* (“The World Decays”) stands as a poignant example of how modern African composition engages moral, social, and philosophical concerns through refined musical language. The work reflects a long-established African aesthetic in which music functions not merely as entertainment but as a vehicle for ethical reflection, social critique, and communal consciousness (Agawu, 2003; Nketia, 1974). As societies confront rapid modernisation, shifting value systems, and increasing socio-economic pressures, composers have turned to musical expression as a means of documenting lived experience and articulating collective unease (Barber, 1999).

Composed for solo soprano and piano, *Aye Bajẹ Tan* draws on Yoruba expressive culture, where vocal declamation, metaphor, and rhythmic nuance are central to meaning-making. Its 6/8 compound metre, Moderato pacing, and monophonic vocal texture evoke a chant-like introspection that mirrors the gravity of its thematic concerns. The through-composed structure allows the narrative to unfold organically, reflecting the progressive moral deterioration described in the text. This structural fluidity aligns with Euba’s (1990) concept of “variation within

continuity,” a hallmark of African compositional thought in which musical ideas evolve through subtle transformation rather than strict formal symmetry.

The work is grounded in the composer’s observations of everyday life, capturing the moral decline, indifference, and behavioural disintegration perceived within contemporary Nigerian society. By transforming these observations into a reflective musical statement, *Aye Bajẹ Tan* situates itself within a broader discourse on the role of African art music as a medium for cultural introspection, ethical commentary, and socio-aesthetic engagement. In doing so, it contributes meaningfully to ongoing scholarly conversations about the intersections of music, modernity, and moral consciousness in twenty-first-century Africa.

Compositional Procedures and Analysis of *Aye Bajẹ Tan*

Aye Bajẹ Tan (“The Unravelling World”) is a Yoruba long-form vocal composition for solo soprano and piano, set in B-flat major and cast in a 6/8 compound metre. The Moderato tempo and monophonic vocal texture create a reflective, chant-like quality, while the through-composed form allows the narrative to unfold continuously without structural repetition. The natural grouping of the six quavers into two sets of three produces a lilting, rolling motion that contrasts poignantly with the gravity of the text. This rhythmic fluidity aligns with the expressive tendencies of Yoruba vocal declamation, where metre often supports the semantic weight of the text (Omojola, 2012).

The work is inspired by the composer’s observations of daily life within the community and the wider nation. It reflects on the growing moral decline, indifference, and behavioural disintegration perceived in contemporary society. Although modernisation promises progress, the piece meditates on the unsettling reality that unprecedented social and ethical disruptions increasingly overshadow any sense of improvement. This thematic orientation resonates with the long-standing African artistic principle that music functions as a medium for social critique and communal reflection (Nketia, 1974). In this sense, *Aye Bajẹ Tan* becomes both a lament and a commentary on the erosion of communal values in a rapidly changing world.

The piano introduces the work with a two-bar prelude that sets the tonal and emotional atmosphere before the soprano enters in bar 3 with the principal theme. This opening section, extending to bar 10, establishes the central melodic idea. A brief two-bar piano interlude (bars 11–12) provides a moment of repose before the second segment begins. In bars 13–20, the text deepens

the thematic exploration, articulating the consequences of societal decay and the emotional weight carried by the persona. The short piano interlude in bars 21–22 functions as a structural hinge, guiding the listener into the third segment.

The third section (bars 23–37) expands the narrative and intensifies the reflective tone. The piano offers a single-bar interlude at bar 38, after which bars 39–42 introduce a short repetition that prepares the listener for the final segment. The concluding passage, comprising bars 43–46 and repeated twice, brings the piece to a contemplative close. Repetition reinforces the message of the text, allowing the emotional resonance of the lament to settle fully. This structural approach reflects what Euba (1990) identifies as the African compositional tendency toward variation-within-continuity, where musical ideas evolve organically rather than through strict formal symmetry.

Overall, *Aye Baję Tan* is a thoughtfully crafted work that merges expressive melodic writing with a structurally fluid form. Its through-composed design mirrors the unfolding nature of its social commentary, while the interplay between voice and piano provides both narrative continuity and expressive contrast. The piece stands as a poignant artistic reflection on the complexities of modern life and the moral tensions that accompany societal change, affirming the role of contemporary African art music as a vehicle for cultural introspection and ethical discourse (Akuno, 2010).

AYE BAJE

Olawole Fadipe
Adeleke Ramon

Doh is Bb

Soprano



A - ye ba - je tan o do - ri - ko - do

Piano

5

S



o - ge - de n ba - je a lo n pon i - le a - ye wan po - luu lo

Pno.

9

S



a n p'o - la - ju lo de - le a - ye

Pno.

13

S

e - ku ko e - ku o ke bi e - ku e - ye ko e - ye ko ke bi e - ye

Pno.

17

S

a wan ba hi - la - hi - lo ki - ri si - be a - da - ri hu - run ko fun - ra

Pno.

21

S

Pan - sa o fun - ra o ja si - na

Pno.

25

S

a ja o - fun ra a - ja jin o o se - bi e - re o se bi e -

Pno.

29

S

re a - la - bo - run n d'e - wu a o fun ra a o fun - ra

Pno.

sfz

sfz

33

S

i - fu - ra l'o - o - gun a - gba e - je ka fu ra

Pno.

37

S



e - je ka sa ye - e re

Pno.

41

S

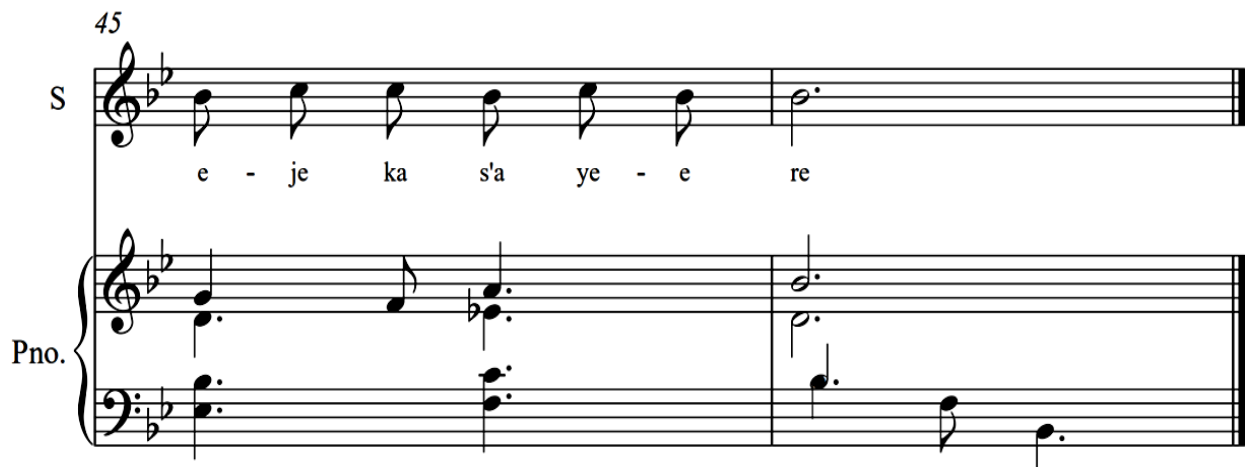


e - je - ka sa ye - e re e - ni a - ye kan e sa ye - e - re

Pno.

45

S



e - je ka s'a ye - e re

Pno.

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