

Freedom Suite

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Abstract

Freedom Suite is an intercultural orchestral composition that unites Western symphonic instruments with African indigenous idiophones and membranophones to create a dynamic, postcolonial sound world. Structured as a single-movement suite with clearly defined sectional contrasts, the work unfolds through additive layering, evolving textures, and rhythmic intensification. Its melodic language blends pentatonic and modal inflections with Western developmental phrasing, while motivic processes such as sequence, augmentation, and variation generate continuity and forward momentum. Harmony functions texturally rather than directionally, centring on modal sonorities and sustained pads that support a stable tonal anchor. African rhythmic logic forms the core of the suite's identity, with interlocking patterns, cross-rhythms, and asymmetric accents driving its kinetic energy. Through its integration of indigenous timbres, orchestral colour, and intercultural dialogue, *Freedom Suite* articulates themes of liberation, unity, and transcultural negotiation, offering a compelling contribution to contemporary African art-music discourse.

Keywords: Additive Layering, African Rhythmic Logic, Intercultural Orchestration; Modal–Pentatonic Language, Postcolonial Sound World

Introduction

Intercultural composition has become a defining feature of twenty-first-century African art music, reflecting the continent's ongoing negotiation of identity, modernity, and global artistic exchange. As African composers continue to assert creative agency within postcolonial musical spaces, new works increasingly foreground African rhythmic, modal, and textural logics while

engaging Western orchestral resources in innovative ways. *Freedom Suite* exemplifies this evolving aesthetic, presenting an orchestral sound world in which African indigenous idiophones and membranophones interact on equal terms with Western woodwinds, brass, and strings. This creative approach aligns with the broader African compositional movement that seeks to articulate cultural self-definition through intercultural synthesis rather than assimilation (Arom, 1991; Nzewi, 2013).

The suite's structural, melodic, and rhythmic design reflects African ensemble principles such as additive layering, cyclicity, and interlocking patterns, while simultaneously drawing on Western developmental techniques. Such hybridisation resonates with the work of African composers who advocate for the integration of indigenous musical thought within contemporary art-music practice (Omojola, 2009; Kofi, 2010). Through its fusion of timbres, textures, and symbolic gestures, *Freedom Suite* positions itself as both an artistic statement and a cultural discourse, contributing meaningfully to ongoing conversations on African musical modernity, postcolonial creativity, and transcultural expression.

Analysis of *Freedom Suite*

Freedom Suite is an intercultural orchestral composition that brings Western instruments, flute, clarinet, trumpet, trombone, and strings, into dialogue with African indigenous idiophones and membranophones such as maracas, wood blocks, and pot drum. This scoring immediately signals a deliberate intercultural aesthetic. The conceptual grounding of the work aligns with Akin Euba's theory of creative ethnomusicology, which advocates for the integration of African musical logic within contemporary composition (Euba, 2009), and with Kofi Agawu's critique of African musical representation, which calls for equitable musical dialogue rather than hierarchical borrowing (Agawu, 2003). The work also resonates with Nketia's (1974) postcolonial emphasis on asserting African rhythmic and textural identities within global art-music forms. Together, these frameworks illuminate the suite's intercultural ethos, where African and Western musical systems coexist without subordination.

Structural Design

The score (pp. 6–34) reveals a single-movement, sectional composition shaped by *additive layering*, a structural principle widely observed in African ensemble traditions (Nketia, 1974). The architecture unfolds as follows:

- **Opening Ostinato (mm. 1–12)** – strings establish a slow, chant-like pulse.
- **Instrumental Dialogue (mm. 13–32)** – woodwinds and brass enter contrapuntally.
- **Percussive Intensification (mm. 20–34)** – maracas, wood block, and pot drum drive polyrhythmic expansion.
- **Climactic Density (mm. 30–34)** – rhythmic saturation and polyphonic layering.
- **Concluding Cadential Section** – return to string-led sonority.

Although through-composed, the music’s cyclicity reflects African structural tendencies, particularly the use of recurring cells and evolving textures (Chernoff, 1979).

Melodic and Thematic Language

Melodic lines, especially in the flute and violins, exhibit three intercultural traits:

- **Pentatonic orientation**, characteristic of many West African melodic systems (Agawu, 2003).
- **Conjunct, chant-like movement**, reminiscent of Bini and Esan vocal traditions.
- **Western long-line phrasing**, shaped in 4–8 bar arcs rather than short responsorial cells.

Thus, the melodic voice mediates between African modal simplicity and Western developmental contour, creating a hybrid melodic identity.

Motivic Development

The opening violin ostinato (mm. 1–8) embodies both African and Western principles:

- **African groundedness** through cyclical repetition.
- **Western developmentalism** through sequence, augmentation, diminution, and transposition.

These processes echo the intercultural strategies used by composers such as Uzoigwe (1992) and Sadoh (2010), who similarly apply Western motivic techniques to African-derived materials.

Harmonic and Tonal Design

The work centres on a stable tonal anchor rather than functional harmonic progression, aligning with:

- African concepts of *tonal centring without functional direction* (Nketia, 1974).
- Western modal harmony, where chords support a drone-like centre.

Pitch collections suggest Aeolian and Dorian inflections, as well as pentatonic subsets, linking the work to Afro-diasporic hymnody and protest-song aesthetics (Floyd, 1995). Strings provide sustained harmonic pads, woodwinds add tertiary sonorities, and brass punctuate with quartal and quintal harmonies, devices associated with Euba (2009) and Uzoigwe (1992). Harmony functions texturally rather than directionally, reinforcing the non-hierarchical intercultural sound world.

Rhythmic and Metric Identity

African rhythmic logic forms the core of the suite's intercultural fabric. The maracas, wood block, and pot drum articulate:

- **3:2 cross-rhythms,**
- **asymmetric accents,**
- **additive rhythmic structures,** especially in mm. 20–34.

Although notated in regular metre, layered accents and syncopations create a sense of polymeter. Western strings provide metric grounding, while African idiophones destabilise it, producing a dynamic rhythmic negotiation. This multi-layered rhythmic ecology reflects African ensemble practice, where interlocking patterns generate collective propulsion (Locke, 2010).

Texture and Orchestration

The orchestration blends Western sustained sonorities with the dry, earthy timbres of African percussion, creating a poly-timbral space characteristic of postcolonial intercultural composition (Euba, 2009; Uzoigwe, 1992). Dialogic pairings, pot drum against cello bass lines, flute against wood block, brass against upper strings, symbolise intercultural negotiation rather than juxtaposition. Occasional heterophonic textures, where strings carry similar but varied lines, evoke African ensemble aesthetics realised through Western instruments.

Intercultural Interpretation

Viewed through intercultural theory, *Freedom Suite*:

- avoids superficial folklorisation,
- establishes equal participation of African and Western idioms,
- positions African rhythm as coequal with Western harmony,
- symbolises liberation, unity, and transcultural solidarity through its climactic intensification and final unison gestures.

Conclusion

Freedom Suite stands as a compelling example of 21st-century African intercultural composition. It synthesises African polyrhythmic practices with Western harmonic layering, producing a kinetic yet texturally rich sound world. Its melodic vocabulary draws from African modal and pentatonic inflections, while its structural unfolding employs Western developmental techniques such as variation, fragmentation, and sequencing. The integration of indigenous timbres with orchestral instruments reinforces its intercultural identity, situating the work within the lineage of Nigerian composers such as Akin Euba, Joshua Uzoigwe, and Godwin Sadoh. At the same time, its Edo-rooted sensibilities and thematic material assert a distinct creative voice. Through this synthesis, *Freedom Suite* contributes meaningfully to contemporary African art-music discourse, advancing conversations on musical modernity, postcolonial expression, and the evolving nature of intercultural composition.

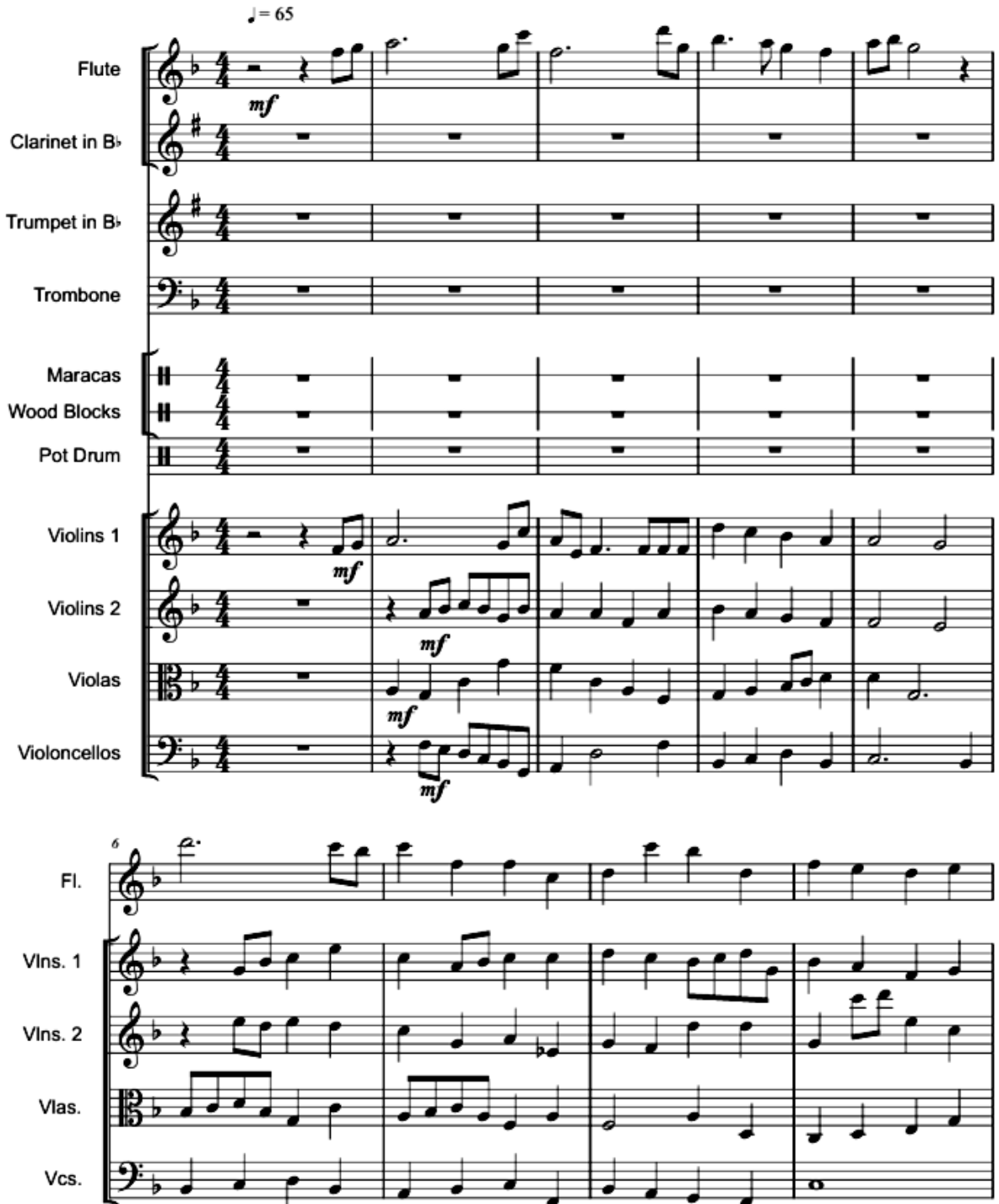
FREEDOM SUITE

(An Intercultural Work)

Instrumental parts are available for free download @
<https://osarodionotamere.com/#freedom-suite>

Otamere Osarodion
2025

♩ = 65



Flute
Clarinet in B \flat
Trumpet in B \flat
Trombone
Maracas
Wood Blocks
Pot Drum
Violins 1
Violins 2
Violas
Violoncellos

6
Fl.
Vlns. 1
Vlns. 2
Vlas.
Vcs.



10

Fl. *f*

Vlns. 1 *mf*

Vlns. 2 *mf*

Vlas. *mf*

Vcs. *mf*



Musical score for measures 10-14. The Flute part starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The Violins 1 and 2, Viola, and Violoncello parts are marked mezzo-forte (*mf*). The score is in a key signature of one flat and a 4/4 time signature.

15

Fl.

Vlns. 1

Vlns. 2

Vlas.

Vcs.



Musical score for measures 15-19. The Flute part continues with a melodic line. The Violins 1 and 2, Viola, and Violoncello parts continue with their respective parts. The score is in a key signature of one flat and a 4/4 time signature.

20



Fl. *mp*

Vlns. 1 *mp*

Vlns. 2 *mp*

Vlas. *mp*

Vcs. *mp*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 20 through 24. The Flute part begins with a melodic line in measure 20, marked *mp*. The Violins and Viola parts provide harmonic support with rhythmic patterns. The Violoncello part has a steady bass line. The key signature has one flat, and the time signature is 4/4.

25



Fl.

Vlns. 1

Vlns. 2

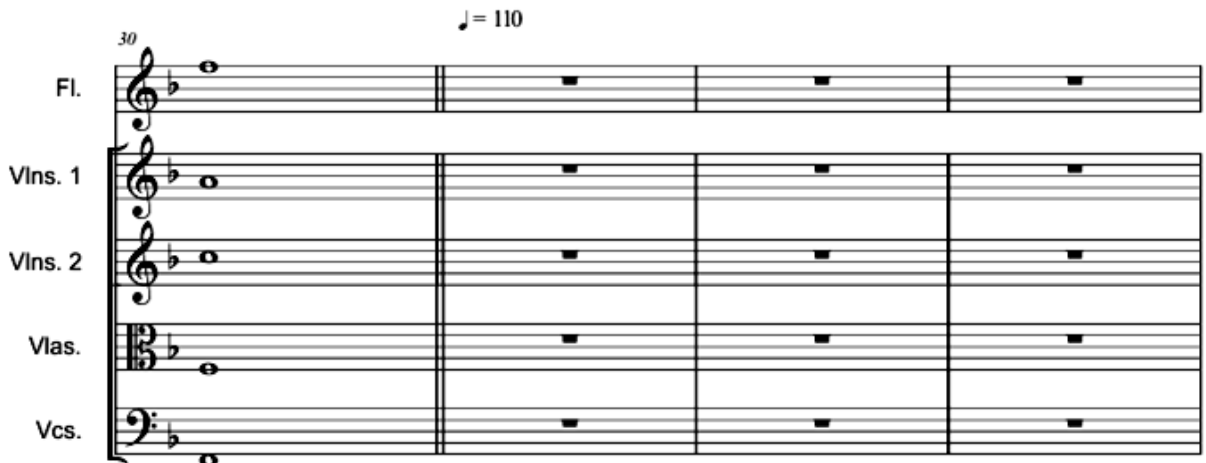
Vlas.

Vcs.

Detailed description: This system contains measures 25 through 29. The Flute part continues its melodic line. The Violins and Viola parts have more active rhythmic patterns. The Violoncello part maintains its bass line. The key signature and time signature remain the same.

$\text{♩} = 110$

30



Fl.

Vlns. 1

Vlns. 2

Vlas.

Vcs.

Detailed description: This system contains measures 30 through 33. The tempo is marked $\text{♩} = 110$. The Flute part has a sustained note in measure 30. The Violins and Viola parts have sustained notes. The Violoncello part has a sustained note. The key signature and time signature remain the same.

34



Fl.
Vlns. 1
Vlns. 2
Vlas.
Vcs.

f

Detailed description: This system of musical notation covers measures 34 to 37. The Flute (Fl.) part is mostly silent, with a few notes in measure 37. The Violins (Vlns. 1 and 2) and Violoncello (Vcs.) parts feature a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, with a forte (*f*) dynamic marking. The Viola (Vlas.) part has a similar rhythmic pattern. Trills are indicated in measures 35 and 37.

38



Fl.
Vlns. 1
Vlns. 2
Vlas.
Vcs.

Detailed description: This system covers measures 38 to 40. The Flute (Fl.) part has a melodic line with trills in measures 38 and 40. The Violins (Vlns. 1 and 2) and Violoncello (Vcs.) parts have a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with trills. The Viola (Vlas.) part has a similar rhythmic pattern. Trills are indicated in measures 38, 39, and 40.

41



Fl.
Vlns. 1
Vlns. 2
Vlas.
Vcs.

Detailed description: This system covers measures 41 to 44. The Flute (Fl.) part has a melodic line with trills in measures 41 and 43. The Violins (Vlns. 1 and 2) and Violoncello (Vcs.) parts have a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with trills. The Viola (Vlas.) part has a similar rhythmic pattern. Trills are indicated in measures 41, 42, 43, and 44.

45



Fl.
Vlns. 1
Vlns. 2
Vlas.
Vcs.

Detailed description: This system of musical notation covers measures 45, 46, and 47. It features five staves: Flute (Fl.), Violin 1 (Vlns. 1), Violin 2 (Vlns. 2), Viola (Vlas.), and Violoncello (Vcs.). The key signature is one flat (B-flat). Measure 45 begins with a dotted quarter note in the flute and violin parts. Measure 46 contains a triplet of eighth notes in the flute, violin 1, and cello parts. Measure 47 continues the melodic lines, with a sharp sign appearing in the flute part.

48



Fl.
Vlns. 1
Vlns. 2
Vlas.
Vcs.

Detailed description: This system of musical notation covers measures 48 through 53. It features five staves: Flute (Fl.), Violin 1 (Vlns. 1), Violin 2 (Vlns. 2), Viola (Vlas.), and Violoncello (Vcs.). The key signature is one flat. Measure 48 starts with a triplet of eighth notes in the flute. Measure 49 shows a melodic line in the flute and violin 1 parts. Measure 50 features a triplet of eighth notes in the violin 2 and cello parts. Measure 51 continues the melodic development. Measure 52 shows a melodic line in the flute and violin 1 parts. Measure 53 concludes the system with a melodic line in the flute and violin 1 parts.

54



Fl.
Vlns. 1
Vlns. 2

Detailed description: This system of musical notation covers measures 54 and 55. It features three staves: Flute (Fl.), Violin 1 (Vlns. 1), and Violin 2 (Vlns. 2). The key signature is one flat. Measure 54 begins with a melodic line in the flute and violin 1 parts. Measure 55 continues the melodic lines in the flute and violin 1 parts, with a sharp sign appearing in the flute part.

58

Fl.

Vlns. 1

Vlns. 2

61

Fl.

Vlns. 1

Vlns. 2

64

Fl.

Vlns. 1

67

Fl.

Vlns. 1

70

Fl.

Vlns. 1

73

Fl.

Vlns. 1

77

Fl.

Vlns. 1



80

Fl.

Vlns. 1



84

Fl.

Vlns. 1



87

Fl.

Vlns. 1



90

Fl.

Vlns. 1



93

Fl.

Vlns. 1



96

Fl.

Vlns. 1

99

Fl.

Vlns. 1

103

Fl.

Vlns. 1

Adagio

107

Fl.

Vlns. 1

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