

Historical Background on *Adawura bɔ me*

This song was composed in July of 1943, and was first performed during the visit of the late Sir Oliver Stanley (the then secretary of State for the Colonies) to the Achimota School where Dr. Amu was the director of music education.

In 1969, the University of Ghana Men's chorus sang the TTBB version of *Adawura bɔ me* as part of their program at the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York City. The ensemble was participating in the Second International University Choral Festival there, and they performed a number of choral and instrumental works, of which *Adawura bɔ me* was a part. In his introductory address to this song, Amu demonstrated a two-against-three cross-rhythm, and explained: "*Adawura bɔ me* is a study in balancing triple effect against duple effect. We have one-two-three against one-two [within the same time span], so that in this song, some of the parts will be doing duple effect, others will be doing triple effect, balancing one against the other." The text is playful, the translation for which is found below. Most of the words are examples of onomatopoeia: not actual words, but text representing the sounds of the bell and various drums in an ensemble. *Adawura bɔ me* is one of Dr. Amu's nearly 200 works composed for schools, churches, and community groups. It will be included in a forthcoming critical edition of his complete works, edited by Dr. Felicia Sandler and proofread by Dr. Misonu Amu. All inquiries regarding the present edition can be directed to Felicia.Sandler@neemusic.edu.

A Note on Notation, Text, and Practice

The dialogue regarding notation of African repertoires has been a lively one in Ghana. Should the two-against-three rhythmic interplay so pervasive in African repertoires be notated in shifting meters, in 6/8, in 3/4, or in 2/4 with special beaming or accents? Before 1930, one will find scores of Dr. Amu notated in a variety of meters: 4/4, 6/8, 3/4, and 2/4, and even shifting meters. After 1930, when Amu began composing his African songs exclusively, he notated all his scores in 2/4 with triplet signs, unwaveringly. Though some of his students and colleagues made other choices, Amu was consistent. It is not only out of respect for his choices that his score is notated here in 2/4. Through experience singing from a score that, though a bit busy to view, forces one to engage triplets in a duple meter consistently, we realize that the two-against-three is *felt* in a pronounced way, which affects how it sounds and is heard. It can be helpful in rehearsal to tap 2:3 in a composite rhythm (one, two and, three) while singing/speaking the text, until one can hear two when singing three and three when singing two. Regarding text, whenever two vowels are slurred, move quickly through the first, allowing the second to carry the bulk of the sound.

YouTube Videos

To assist performers in acquiring proper pronunciation and style, search for performances of this work by The Dwenesie Singers on YouTube.

IPA guide by Dr. Felicia Sandler – English Translation by Dr. Misonu Amu

Lyrics

Adawura bɔ me o,
Kon kon kon
ɔyanfo e yan me o.
Pete pete pete
Pren pren

IPA Guide

[ɑdaura bɔ mio,
kɔŋ, kɔŋ, kɔŋ
ɔyanfoe yan mio.
pete, pete, pete
preŋ, preŋ]

English Translation

I am the bell, play me.
"gong" (bell sound)
Drummer, play me.
"pete" (drum sound)
"preng" (drum sound)

I Am the Bell

(*Adawura bɔ me*)

for SATB Chorus unaccompanied

Ephraim Amu (1899–1995)

Playfully (♩ = c. 100)

mf

Soprano
A - da - wu - ra bɔ me ɔ, kon kon kon,

Alto
A - da - wu - ra bɔ me ɔ, kon kon, kon kon,

Tenor
A - da - wu - ra bɔ me ɔ, ɔ -

Bass
A - da - wu - ra

Keyboard
(for rehearsal only) *mf*

(* All slurs between note-heads imply a slight *glissando*.)

kon kon kon, kon kon kon,

kon kon, kon kon, kon kon, kon kon, kon kon, kon kon, kon kon.

yan - fō ē yan mē o, pe - te pe - te pe - te, pe - te pe - te pe - te.

bō mē o, kon kon kon, kon kon kon, kon kon kon,

kon kon kon, kon kon, kon kon, kon kon,

kon kon, kon kon, kon kon, kon kon, kon kon, kon kon,

pe - te pe - te pe - te, pe - te pren pren. A - da - wu - ra bō mē o, bō mē o,

kon kon kon. ○ - yan - fō ē yan mē o, pe - te pe - te pe - te,

13

kon kon, kon kon, kon kon, kon kon, kon kon, kon kon, kon kon.

kon kon, kon kon, kon kon, kon.

kon kon kon, kon kon kon, kon kon kon, kon.

pe - te pe - te pe - te, pe - te pe - te pe - te, pe - te pe - te pe - te, pe - te pren pren.

17

A - da - wu - ra bo me o,

o - yan - fo e yan me o, pe - te pe - te pe - te,

Kon kon, kon. A - da - wu - ra bo me o, A - da - wu - ra

A - da - wu - ra bo me o, kon kon kon,

