

WORKS OF INNOCENT OKECHUKWU & DATES



Artist Statement

INNOCENT OKECHUKWU *Composer*

I represent a revolutionary new pathway in music that stands at the intersection between tradition and modernity.

People tell me that I look tough, but my music is softer than one can imagine.

Yes! Often, I lack words to express myself, so I cry, worry, laugh, get angry, jealous, mad, and happy; all in my music.

I am human.

✓ ***Oku Nchehari*** (Easter Igbo Cantata SATB & Piano, percussion) 2017, Nigeria

✓ ***Ome n'ala*** (Countertenor & Piano) Feb. 2020 - New York (USA)

"Ome n'ala " is borne out of a closer look at the Igbo cosmological festivities like the (Ofala, masquerade, child dedication, coronation) festivals. This is premiered by one of the world's best countertenor singer - Andrew Egbuchiem. Accompanied by a profound pianist- Echezonachukwu Nduka

✓ ***Ije Uwa*** (Countertenor, Soprano & Piano) Feb. 2020 - New York (USA)

For two voices Soprano and counter tenor. The strives of this world. - In honour of the Black History 7th February.

- ✓ ***Soro M tobe Chukwu*** (SATB) May 2020 Abuja, Nigeria

This is a hymn of praise and thanksgiving. Written in Igbo language for SATB.

- ✓ ***Nwa-Nwa Ndo*** (Soprano & piano) June 2020 - West Virginia (USA)

Nwa Nwa Ndo is an Igbo Traditional Folk song. It is a lullaby and therefore serves such a purpose. This work of art was premiered live on Instagram on the 27th of June 2020 in the United States of America, by a Coloraturas soprano singer who happens to be a Doctoral student in voice performance - Miss Agatha Ibeazor Holland (Primadonna), and was accompanied by a virtuoso concert pianist - Akina Kondoh.

- ✓ ***Survivors*** (Soprano & Piano) June 2020 - Lagos, Nigeria

"Survivors" was borne out of meditative thinking and how best to heal the world from pain and anxiety she faced at the surge of the pandemic COVID 19. I thought of a way to encourage us who are still alive even though many were lost in this crisis and some, still on the way to recovery, this should make us grateful that we made it at least.

- ✓ ***Mmiri Mara M*** (SATB & Piano) July 2020 - Enugu, Nigeria

Mmiri Mara m* is an Igbo folk which poignantly depicts Resilience. A story of two lover birds (Man and Woman) who by all odds, must protect their territory of love from intruders and nay-sayers alike. This story was first captured in a Nollywood movie in the early 90's. In a quest for taste of nostalgia, Innocent Okechukwu, sought to arrange it for (SATB) choral form. He achieved this by employing African melodic and rhythmic pattern, gracefully fused into contrapuntal shape, also employing some Igbo generic idioms, and capping it up with a nuance of ostinato- a technique which is evidently visible in African music. Call and response were also well expressed to show agreement of the subject/chorus.

- ✓ ***Sinking Sand*** (Violin Sonata & Piano) - Nov. 2021 - Longy School of Music (USA)

Sinking sand got its title from the melancholic nature and feeling derived from this piece. Sinking sand is a violin sonata with piano accompaniment. It expresses various emotions, hopelessness, depression, and then courage and perseverance.

- ✓ ***Hello God*** (Male voice + Piano) - Feb. 2021 - Abuja, Nigeria.

Hello God, is anthropological. It addresses God like he was human. Dialing his number and expressing your intent and wants as though you were speaking to a friend somewhere on phone.

- ✓ ***Behold the Star*** (SATB + Piano) - Nov. 2020 - Dubai, UAE

Behold The Star is one of my latest Christmas compositions. It expresses the untold joy of the Angels as they worshipped the Newborn Prince of peace.

- ✓ ***Snow-Snow*** (High Voice & Piano) - Dec. 2021 - Longy School of Music (USA)

My first experience of snow in the USA, spur me to write this season song. It carries the message of yuletide.

- ✓ ***The River Within*** (String Quartet) - Feb. 2022 - Boston Center for the Arts

The River Within is my first-String quartet. Premiered by Castle of our Skin, at the Boston Center for the Arts on the 12th of February 2022. Boston, MA, USA.

- ✓ **hang-out** (Bb trumpet & Piano) - Dec. 2021 - longy School of Music (USA)

Hang-out is a trumpet piece composed in a typical Highlife style. It places emphasis on the 7th degree which makes for a restive feeling, and in turn, drives an ostinato.

- ✓ **Ave Verum Corpus** (SATB) - Dec. 2021 - longy School of Music (USA)

Ave Verum Corpus is lifted from the Catholic Prayer in reverence for the Eucharistic Jesus. I tried to explore some Renaissance touch of strict counterpoint; a style of writing well utilized by Palestrina. There is also some evidence of tonal counterpoint.

- ✓ **The Beaming Light** (Flute & Piano) - Feb. 2022 - longy School of Music (USA)

A calm and gently flowy flute composition. Picture the flute as flying birds making their way to the horizon of the sea. The accompaniment depicts the flowing sea while the flute depicts the singing birds, all turning into a beaming light. Imagination is what I do for a living. I imagine.

- ✓ **The Lamb** (SATB & Organ) - May 2022 - longy School of Music (USA)

The Lamb is an original poem of William Blake, titled "The Lamb". I decided to put this into music. And the performance was done by my colleagues, Conducted by my humble self. Little Lamb personifies "Lord Jesus Christ" The Lamb of God.

- ✓ ***Sneaky one*** (Brass Quartet) - May 2022 - Longy School of Music (USA)

Many have argued that the saxophone does not belong to the brass family, but I said to myself..... "Can we sneak it in?", at least without making it too obvious. This earned it the title "Sneaky One"

- ✓ ***David's pencil*** (Violin Sonata) - May 2022 - Longy School of Music (USA)

David's Pencil is a violin composition of mine, dedicated to my friend, and an Artist, David Mynott II. Watching David do his paintings and drawings, I was inspired to write this.

- ✓ ***The Lord's My Shepherd*** (SATB & Piano) June 2022- Abeokuta, Nigeria

This is psalm 23 put into music by me. The tune is uplifting and reassuring.

- ✓ ***Heavy Sigh*** (Cello & Piano) - June 2022 - Longy School of Music (USA)

Heavy Sigh is my latest Cello composition. The title, "Heavy sigh" is likened to my way of handling uncomfortable situations. I let out a heavy sigh. Friends who are close to me already know this truth about me. My music is always about what goes in and out of me.

- ✓ ***Dance 1*** (Piano Trio) - June 2022 - Longy School of Music (USA)

This is my first ever piano trio. Written with African idioms. The cello, violin and piano had a good talk with each other.

- ✓ **Ndidi** (Piano solo) - June 2022 - longy School of Music (USA)

This is a piano solo piece that I just composed. Its persistent melodic material relates to how I envisioned one who is patiently waiting on someone or something. I employed some African idioms to relate to the people closest to me, whom I have watched waiting on God for so many things. Patience is a virtue. We all should strive for it. It is difficult to practice, but if we keep reminding ourselves of the need to practice it, we will be more conscious and zealous to achieve some bit of it.

- ✓ **The Blue Bird** (Oboe & Piano) - June 2022 - longy School of Music (USA)

Blue bird is the title I gave to this lovely oboe piece. Blue bird signifies joy, a trusting situation where you need not worry about anything - just like a child.

- ✓ **When the World is Sick** (Soprano +Piano, SATB +Piano) June 2022 - longy School of Music (USA)

This is a Broadway composition about our sick world and what we all can do to salvage the situation. Composer || Innocent Okechukwu Lyricists || David Mynott & Innocent Okechukwu

- ✓ **Fear** (Soprano & Piano) - June 2022 - longy School of Music (USA)

Fear is an emotion we all experience at some point in our lives. our fears vary from individual to individual. But should we allow fear to keep us in perpetual bondage? No. We need courage! courage to overcome, no matter what degree.

- ✓ ***The Wanderer*** (Violin & Piano) - June 2022 - Longy School of Music (USA)

My latest composition for the violin is titled "The Wanderer". Picture how one wanders in a state of oblivion. This depicts an endless journey, a journey with no end, hence the wanderer. The melody attests to this.

- ✓ ***Winter Coffee*** (Bb Trumpet & Piano) June 2022 - Longy School of Music (USA)

Winter coffee is the title I gave to this rag piece. I imagine where everyone is rushing to grab a cup of hot coffee especially when it snows.

- ✓ ***I can Do All Things*** (Tenor, Harpsichord & Cello) June 2022 Longy School of Music (USA)

This piece is composed for Voice, harpsichord, and Cello. Written in the style of early Baroque music. Having performed a lot of early music as a young choir boy, I have grown to love and cherish some Baroque musical exponents; the likes of G.F Handel, Antonio Vivaldi, Henry Purcell, and J.S Bach. I took lessons on figured bass, basso continuo, and analysis of baroque pieces. This opened more horizon for my baroque music appreciation. So, when contacted by Yihan to write a piece in the style of early music, which also happened to be the period I was taking a class called 'In the Manner Of', taught by John Howell Morrison - the class was about studying different composers and attempt to compose in the manner which they would have composed; this was an opportunity for me to express my long study of the baroque style. 'I can do all things' is gotten from the Bible in the book of Ephesians 13. It started with a recitative and then comes the aria. It employed the use of major-minor borrowing. There was also a change in time signature; this was purposefully done to incorporate "The Doctrine of Affection", - the opium of baroque music.

✓ **Ariri** (SATB & Piano)

July 2022 - Lagos,

Nigeria

Ariri is an Igbo generic term for "Sorrow" Sorrow is an emotion perceived or expressed by humans. The inner soul sometimes gets quite overwhelmed that it cannot but, through its vehicle - the body, express the emotion. ARIRI was composed in September 2021 here in Massachusetts, USA. The inspiration was borne out of my personal life battles. Coming down with anxiety/depression in Dubai, I had to return to Nigeria where I had my mom looking after me like a child. During these trying times, I imagined what it would have been like if my dad was still alive. He passed away in 2011 when I was about to get into university. Ever since then, things have never been the same. These feelings were bottled up in my heart, thereby making me unable to heal properly. There was only one way to begin the healing process - to grief. Coincidentally, I was coming to the USA to further my education in music composition with a full tuition scholarship; this became an avenue for me to grief through my music. ARIRI is written SATB and piano, with some divisions on various parts. It starts off in a common time signature, and then explodes to 12/8, a compound time signature. Ariri sits on F major tonality.

✓ Bitter-Sweet (Soprano + Piano)

Feb. 2022 - Longy school of

music USA.

Bitter-sweet is a love song. It is paradoxical. Love has been known to be paradoxical.

✓ **Trust in The Lord** (SATB & Piano)

Aug. 2022 - Lagos, Nigeria

"Trust in the Lord," is contained in my recent book publication || Musical Echoes. Yunona Tabala, the first to premier this piece, reached out to me to write this lovely and soulful song. I am happy I did. I went ahead to arrange the same piece for SATB & Piano, which you will find in my book, Musical Echoes.

- ✓ **God of Hope** (SATB & Piano) Aug. 2022 - Lagos, Nigeria

God of hope is a song of dependence. Total trust on God. This is a sacred music.

- ✓ **Streams of light** (String Orchestra) June 2022 - Boston, USA

This is a string orchestra composition which carries the energy of light.

- ✓ **Cantate Domino** (SATB & Piano) Aug. 2022 - Lagos, Nigeria

This translates to "Sing to the Lord" An inspired song, from one of my dreams around 2016.

- ✓ **Egwu Onwa** (SATB, Tenor & Piano) Sept. 2022 - University of Oklahoma, music Dept.

Egwu Onwa was originally written as a solo work for a countertenor and piano. this arrangement captures African pianistic, rhythmic, and interactive nuances, and equally explores this musical interaction between the solo/Choral ensemble, and the piano. Egwu onwa is a piece that represents the reflective expression of traditional tale-telling, folksong, and moonlight dance practices of the Igbo culture. The moonlight play serves as a bringer of joy to the adults, and also an opportunity for the children to play with their peers and learn from the stories told by the elderly. The tenor soloist plays the role of the elderly storyteller, who regales the community. with folktales, while reminiscing about the events of the past. themed in Igbo Culture, customs, and tradition, this piece explores the idiomatic and folkloric richness of the Igbo people through textual structures. The Composer has written this work as a response to the nostalgic need to retain, preserve, and sustain intrinsic parts of the Igbo culture which are fast eroding in contemporary modernism, and globalization.

- ✓ **Mother** (Male and Female voices +Piano & Cello) June 2022, Boston
USA

Mother is the title of my recent piece. Inspired by the love I ever received from my mom. She risks everything just for her children. She hides her own pains just to be strong for us. I love you Mother.

- ✓ **Libation** (String quartet +Piano) Sept. 2022, Boston, USA

Libation is a reverential prayer of the Igbo man to his "Chi". He offers prayers and gifts and prays for protection and success in his work/businesses.

- ✓ Ekpere || Prayer (Countertenor + Piano) October 2021 Boston,
USA

Ekpere is an Igbo Cantata for the Countertenor from the Biblical text of Ephesians 6:10-20. I was commissioned by Andrew Egbuchiem, one of the Nigerian-New York-based finest countertenors, to compose this. I wrote this on October 2021.

- ✓ **Udara M too** (SATB + Piano) July 2022 Boston, USA

Udara m too, is an Igbo folklore from our numerous moonlight play songs.

- ✓ **Ndubuisi** (Marimba Concerto) Aug. 2022 Boston, USA

This is a marimba concerto that displays a greater influence of the subsaharan demography. It focuses in bringing the African idioms to light, as against the usual western concerto.

- ✓ **Kpo ya Chukwu** (SATB + Piano) Oct. 2022 Boston, USA

This is an Igbo song of praise, a song which buttresses various ways people call on God and he answers to their prayers. I was commissioned to write this by Ike Eseka, Esq.

✓ ***Ageless Sea*** (Pipe Organ) Aug. 2022 Boston, USA

This is my very first organ work. It serves for opening voluntary, commencement etc.

✓ ***Be kind*** (SATB + Piano) Aug. 2022, Boston USA

This is a call on humanity to show kindness to one another.

✓ ***Sad Puppy*** (piano solo) June 2022, Boston, USA

An expressive, yet melancholic piece for my little poor puppy I left behind in Nigeria while i came to study in the USA.

✓ ***Oji || Kola nut*** (Piano solo) Oct. 2022, Boston, USA

I decided to come back home. oji is an important commodity in the Igbo culture. Elders pray over a kola nut (oji) before it is shared and eaten. It is eaten with respect and reverence as it is believed to be very efficacious.