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The Compositional Thought in Godfred Sackey's *Ebiawonkasama*: An Analytical Presentation

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Abstract

Over the last six decades or so, art music compositions in Africa have been described as a symbiosis of Western and African musical elements by music scholars such as Euba, Agawu and Dor. The description was based on the fact that African composers such as Amu, Nketia, Bankole, Mereku, and others have focused on the usage of indigenous African musical elements in Art music compositions to either identify themselves with their compositions or to situate the compositions in the framework of interculturalism. Ebiawonkasama, an art composition based on Ebibindwom of selected syncretic churches in Winneba was composed by Godfred Sackey, a Ghanaian creative ethnomusicologist. In Ebiawonkasama, Sackey exploited both the indigenous Ghanaian (African) and Western musical elements. This article aims at exposing the reader to the compositional thought and analytical narrative of Ebiawonkasama using Donald F. Tovey's descriptive communicative type of formal analysis to unravel the several compositional styles that were used by the composer. The writers utilized purposive sampling technique and document analysis for data collection. The consequence of this paper is to provide a clear compositional and analytical presentation of a research-based composition (creative ethnomusicology) that utilizes diverse compositional scopes to add to the literature on intercultural music compositions.

Keywords: Ebiawonkasama, ebibindwom, syncretism, interculturalism, African art composition

1. Introduction

The contact with the Europeans at a time, aided the creation of new social and musical values. In effect, these new values were representations of both the Ghanaian and the European socio-

cultural values. One of these Ghanaian values is Ebibindwom. "The *Ebibindwom* as a musical genre is, therefore, one of the products of the Ghanaian European socio-cultural interaction" (Mensah (1966, cited in Sackey, 2017, p. 9). Similarly, Amuah and Arthur (2013) asserted that "these contacts have very often resulted in both new musical hybrids and recreation of entirely new musical types such as the *Akan* sacred lyric" (p.5). In the Methodist church, however, the Reverend Thomas Birch Freeman, an African-American, in 1835 at the Cape Coast Methodist church, encouraged the non-literate older women to sing Christian scripture to traditional tunes because they could not participate in the singing of the English hymns. He, therefore, encouraged members to sing biblical texts to traditional tunes (Amuah & Nyamful, 2014). *Ebibindwom*, therefore, emanated from the attempt to set biblical texts to existing traditional tunes of the indigenous Ghanaian community creating a sort of 'Contrafactum' concept. "Contrafactum is a vocal composition in which the original text is replaced by a new one, particularly, a secular text by a sacred text, or vice versa" (Apel,1969 cited in Turkson, 1995, p. 160). From the above discussion, we are of the view that Ebibindwom is characterized by an amalgamation of existing Ghanaian indigenous tunes and sacred text.

Ebiawonkasama is an arrangement for soprano and baritone soli, chorus (soprano, alto, tenor and bass) with an orchestral accompaniment. The composer, Godfred Sackey, is a scholar-composer who created the work using the principles of interculturalism. He then combined Western instrumental setup of the orchestra to depict the characteristics of the Ghanaian traditional instrumental setup for the *Ebibindwom* in the work. This idea was aimed at satisfying audiences both locally and internationally. The choice of instruments for *Ebiawonkasama* depended on tone compatibility, pitch implications and their availability. For instance, the timpani in the orchestra was used to interchangeably depict the tones of the *atumpan* and the *donno* of the *Ebibindwom*. We have chosen to unearth the composer's insight into the musical artefact to expand the literature on musical analysis as studied in higher learning institutions. Its distinctive nature is in no doubt a model to provide a clear compositional thought and analytical presentation of a research-based composition within the scope of interculturalism and syncretism; a pursuit, that many African scholar composers want to accomplish.

2. Compositional Context of Ebiawonkasama

As already indicated, *Ebiawonkasama* was created within the framework of interculturalism and syncretism as well as creative ethnomusicology as also used in the works of Acquah and Boahen (2017), Acquah (2018, 2019), Acquah and Ayesu (2021) and Owusu-Ansah and Acquah (2021). Sadoh (2004) identified three levels of intercultural music espoused by Kimberlin and Euba (1995):

Thematic intercultural activity, in which the composer of the music belongs to one of the cultures from which the elements are derived; Domicile intercultural activity, in which the composer, writing in an idiom acquired from a culture other than his own, is involved in an intercultural activity, even though the music that he produces is not necessarily intercultural. A good example of this second category would be an African composer employing European formal structures such as sonata allegro, binary or concerto forms in his music; and the third category of interculturalism is at the performance level. In this situation, the performer and the music are from two different cultures. A good illustration would be the performance of Western art music by a Japanese, Chinese, or African musicians. We must stress at this point that intercultural music includes all types of music: the traditional and contemporary, popular and art, and ranges from the music with mass appeal to the very esoteric. (p. 636)

Situating *Ebiawonkasama* in the framework of interculturalism, Sackey used the thematic intercultural activity, in which the composer belongs to one of the cultures from which the elements of the composition were derived.

In terms of syncretism, Nketia (1982) as cited in Dodoo (2016) defined *Syncretism* as an approach that involves the creative ideas, sources of sound, themes as well as other procedures from traditional music or music in or partly in oral tradition to expand one's mode of musical expression (p. 38).

Many African art music composers, engaging in fieldwork and transforming field data into compositions have entailed appropriation under the umbrella of Euba's creative ethnomusicology. The approach begins with the gathering of field data and ends with its application into creative large-scale compositions (Lwanga, 2013). The scholar-composer of *Ebiawonkasama* based the creation of the work on findings of the empirical data (musical elements of *Ebibindwom*) collected from three syncretic churches in Winneba; *Awoyow*, *Nkansan* and *Musama*. Of course, these indigenous elements which included rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic resources were however combined with some Western elements for the creation of the novelty.

3. Method and Analytical Process

The distinctiveness of the work and its compositional ideals were found when the work was presented at the first time on the stage. This caught the attention of the authors to select the work purposively for thorough analysis and draw meaningful conclusions. As Elder (2009) posited, "purposive sample refers to selection of units based on personal judgment rather than randomization" (p.6). The authors, therefore, resolutely used this sampling technique to pick out the work for critical analysis to serve as a model of musical analysis for students studying music. We felt that the composition was a master piece which should be analysed for students to emulate.

After selecting the work, the authors then used Donald F. Tovey's descriptive communicative type of formal analysis (Bent, 1988, pp. 88-90) to unravel the constituents of the piece. This analytical tool was chosen as it directs an in-depth description and thorough elucidation of sectional analysis of musical works. In this regard, each section of bars that accumulated to form the entire creative product for a better comprehension and appreciation was considered. The authors, within the framework of descriptive communicative type of formal analysis, carefully delved into sectional descriptions and adaptations of twentieth century practices used in the work.

4. Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Ebiawonkasama

Etymologically, Ebiawonkasama is from three terms in content and context. In content, *Ebi* is from *Ebibindwom*, contextually, *awo* is from *Awoyow*, *nka* is from *Nkansan*, while *sama* is from *Musama*. It can however, be explained that Ebiawonkasama is *Ebibindwom* in the perspective of *Awoyow*, *Nkansan* and *Musama*. The composition consists of three movements; *Sunsum Mu* (spirituality) as the first movement, *Atormuadze* (rituals), the second movement, and *Enyigye* (joy), the third movement. The three movements of *Ebiawonkasama* practically exhibit the different types of the *Ebibindwom* performed in the three *syncretic* churches of the study.

4.2 Sunsum Mu (Spiritual)

Sunsum Mu, literally means 'spiritual', is the first movement of *Ebiawonkasama*, purposed for appellations and invocations. It practically exhibits the composer's musical skills in employing some of the elements of *ebibindwom*, and fusing them with the elements of Western music. The composition is dependent on the speech surrogate and the rhythmic inflections of the texts. However, the meaning of the texts was also considered to satisfy the concept of text and tone relationship as indicated in Acquah and Sackey (2021).

The first movement which spans 112 bars, begins with Woodwinds introduction from bars 1 to 30 on a strong beat of a compound duple meter and expressed in a moderate pace combining piccolo, first Flute, second flute, Oboe, English horn, E Flat Clarinet, first and second B flat Clarinets, Bass Clarinet, first and second Bassoons and the Contrabassoon, exhibiting C Aeolian mode and creating a perfect cadence in C Phrygian mode. The example below is an illustration.



Example 1: Sunsum Mu in C Phrygian Mode

The continuation of the Woodwinds is a fusion of Dorian, Phrygian, and Pentatonic scales as illustrated below.



Example 2: Fusion of Dorian, Phrygian and Pentatonic scales

The passages combine pentatonic themes with Dorian and Phrygian modal harmony. There is the use of polarity with a succession of quaver notes, with dynamics to create an eventual C Dorian perfect cadence. The example below is an extract of the passage.



Example 3: An extract of pentatonic themes coupled with Dorian and Phrygian modes

Call and response was ubiquitously used to depict a typical African music performance with a combination of C Phrygian, and quartal harmony adhering to the principle of parallelism. The example below is an extract.



Example 4: An extract of call and response as depicted by the Woodwinds

Indeed, the composition features soprano and baritone soli with piano, timpani, cymbals and strings accompaniment. This section of *Sunsum Mu* is purposed to give appellations to God before He is invoked to come down. The composition is highly dependent on the speech surrogate and rhythmic inflections of the texts. There is a mezzo forte C sub mediant chord, which is otherwise an Aeolian mode, clearly stated with the arpeggios in the piano part. The timpani on the other hand joins with a forte c monotone appellation from the second beat of bar 32. Example 5 below is an illustration.



Example 5: An excerpt of baritone appellation with piano and timpani accompaniment

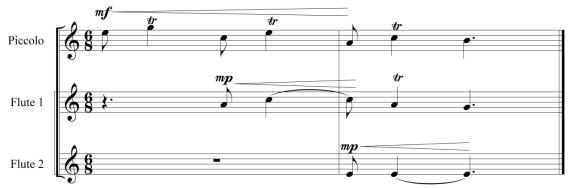
The first movement is coupled with a brass section interlude, exhibiting the principles of pandiatonicism with modes and pentatonic scale. There is an interspersing passage from the second trombone, the first Trumpet in B flat and Tuba revolting a specific tonal centre into C. The whole of bar 55 is a short appellation by the timpani borrowed from the *Bomma* of the indigenous *ebibindwom* ensemble. This appellation precedes a repeated call and response section

by the first and second Trombones, and the first and second Horn in F respectively in bars 56 to 59. One major outlook of the piece is the use of tutti, C major pentatonic movement exhibiting quartal harmony. The example below is an excerpt.



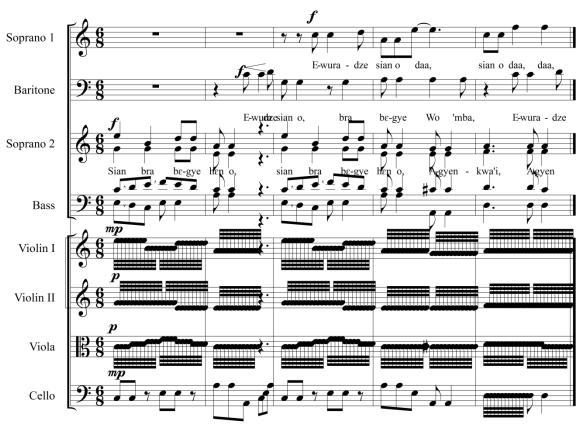
Example 6: An extract of quartal harmony and pentatonic movement

The continuation of the composition from bar 82 to bar 83 in a compound duple time is a bridge by the Piccolo, the first Flute, and the second Flute in counterpoint. It links the preceded call and response section with a chorus in bars 84 to 95. In a crescendo, the piccolo begins from e2 with a mezzo forte sequential passage which has intervals of thirds and fifths in bars 82 and 83. The second note (g2), the fourth note (e2), and the sixth note (c2) of the Piccolo are ornamented with thrills. In counterpoint and crescendo, the first Flute moves in thirds with the Piccolo from the second beat of bar 82 to bar 83. The second Flute on the other hand joins from the first beat of bar 83 with a pedal e1 note in crescendo, which in effect, moves accordingly in sixth, fourth, and third with the first Flute. The chord progression eventually ends with C Phrygian mode in bar 83. The example below is an illustration.



Example 7: An illustration of counterpoint by the Piccolo and Flutes

The continuation of *Sunsum Mu* from bar 84 to bar 95 is a soprano, alto tenor and bass chorus with strings accompaniment. The chorus moves through C Aeolian mode from bar 84 to the first beat of bar 87. From the second beat of bar 87 to bar 93 is a C major tonal centre, and eventually ends with C Phrygian mode in bar 95. Meanwhile, the soprano and baritone soli also provide counter melodies against the chorus from bar 85 to bar 95. This chorus serves as the first part of the invocation with the following texts: *sian bra begye hen o, Ewuradze'i*" (come down and save us, Lord). The example below is an extract.



Example 8: An excerpt of chorus against two counter melodies

In bars 101 and 102 respectively, the chorus response to the baritone call with strings accompaniment in C Dorian mode. The composition, Sunsum Mu, again continues from bar 103 to bar 110 with a three-time repeated theme by the chorus, as against two counter melodies by the soprano and baritone soli with strings and woodwinds accompaniment in C Dorian.

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The theme is stated in bars 103 and 104 respectively. The melody could have been harmonized in the C Lydian mode. However, it was harmonized in C Dorian mode to satisfy one of the predominantly used modes of the indigenous *ebibindwom*. The example below illustrates the two suggested modal harmonies of the theme.



Example 9: An illustration of two modal harmonies of a theme

The continuation of the composition from bar 111 to bar 112 is a set of silent bars. This style serves as a breathing space and a bridge between the first and second movements. The form of *Sunsum Mu* is Through-composed.

4.3 Analysis of Atormuadze

Atormuadze, which literally means 'ritual', is the second movement of *Ebiawonkasama*. The section which spans 119 bars is purposely based on the indigenous *ebibindwom* of the *Awoyow* church, to showcase the *ebibindwom* type which is comparatively different from that of the Methodist church and other churches. The composition basically demonstrates the composer's musical ability in fusing together some of the elements of the *ebibindwom* of the church and that of Western music.

The first thirty-five (35) bars of *Atormuadze* is an instrumental introduction that is made up of the percussion, brass, and woodwinds (flutes) sections of the orchestral setup. In a compound duple meter and allegro, with the tempo mark of crochet equals to 120, the Cymbals, Snare drum and Bass drum start with a rhythmic pattern in ostinato from bar 113 to bar 124. This rhythmic pattern in ostinato serves as a background for the Timpani to present a forte variation of a counter rhythmic pattern from bar 115 to 124. The rhythmic pattern of the Timpani which has an intervallic structure of perfect fifths, is a call, and also serves as an appellation to God. It is again, dependent on the tonal inflections of the text:

Akan Text Odomankoma Katakyi, Daasebre Nyame Otwontwonko Katakyi **English Translation** Supreme Enormous Being The only known God Enormity of Greatness

Opetepirepe Nyame nye'W brɛ brɛ, brɛ brɛ, brɛ brɛw You are the highest God Adoring you're your sacredness

This creative idea, indicated by Webster (1990), was to imitate the patterns of the instrumental setup of the indigenous *ebibindwom* of the *Awoyow* church. According to Prophetess Mary Nyarko, the only spiritual instruments of the *Ebibindwom* brought by the founder of the *Awoyow* church, Prophet William Wade Harris, are the *donno* and the *Karbas* (Personal communication). The Cymbals and the Snare drum concurrently imitate the *karbas* whilst the Timpani and the Bass drum imitate the *donno*. The example below is an excerpt:



Example 10: An excerpt of a percussive rhythmic pattern in ostinato

Just like the 1st movement, it makes use of the combination of Brass with percussive accompaniment in C Dorian. pattern of the Timpani. The instrumental introduction continues from bar 131 to bar 136 with a mezzo forte pentatonic movement in polarity by the brass and percussion sections of the orchestral setup. The movement starts in bar 131 with C pentatonic, and eventually modulates with a common tone to G Aeolian mode from bar 134 to bar 136. Example 20 below is an extract.



Example 11: An extract of C pentatonic, modulating to G Aeolian mode with a common tone

The Flutes (Piccolo, Flute 1, Flute 2 and Oboe) then continue the introduction with a contrapuntal movement in G Phrygian mode from bar 137 to bar 140. The Piccolo in anacrusis begins this movement with a forte theme which independently is considered G pentatonic. However, the harmonic progression of the entire Flutes movement is crafted into G Aeolian mode. The continuation of the instrumental introduction is a one-bar call by the Piccolo in bar 141. The Piccolo calls with g2 and b2 dotted crochet notes. The g2 is decorated with a crossed mordent whilst the b2 is decorated with a turn. The call is responded with a homophonic movement in G Dorian mode by the Flutes (Piccolo, Flute1, Flute2 and Oboe) from bar 142 to

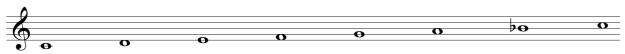
bar 147. The call and response section is accompanied with the percussion up to bar 148. The example below is an illustration.



Example 12: An illustration of homophonic movement in G Dorian mode by the Flutes

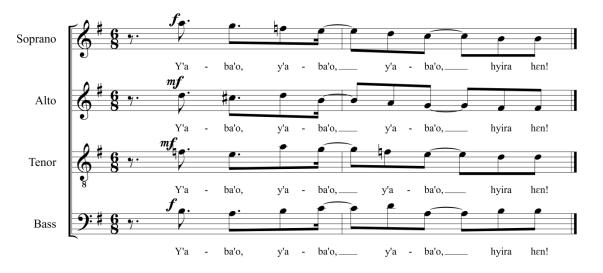
Atormuadze continues from bar 169 to the first beat of bar 185 with an interlude by the woodwinds, strings and percussion sections of the orchestral setup. The piano in bar 169 emphasizes on the G Dorian mode in arpeggios. This in effect, precedes a sequential movement in quartal harmony from bar 170 to bar 171 by the strings, piano, and the woodwinds.

From the pick-up of bar 178 to bar 179 is a call-in parallel third by the B flat Trumpets and the Trombones. The call is done in accelerando, and eventually, the speed increases without a change in the tempo mark. The former tempo mark is maintained, and the diminuendo technique is employed from bar 180 to bar 232. The tutti, on the other hand, responds to the call from bar 180 to the first beat of bar 185 with a variation of the Brass movement in bars 176 to bar 178. This time around, the movement ended in the G Dorian mode. With the diminuendo technique, the original note values of the passage in variation were divided into two equal parts. For instance, crochet becomes quaver, and quaver becomes semiquaver. This technique naturally increased the speed. The continuation of *Atormuadze* from the second beat of bar 185 to the first beat of bar 187 is another forte baritone call organized with the heptatonic scale. The example below is the heptatonic scale.



Example 13: The Heptatonic Scale

Atormuadze continues from bar 209 to bar 215 with a call and response section by the soprano and baritone soli and the soprano, alto, tenor, and bass chorus, with tutti accompaniment. The theme continues with d2 quaver note, c2 quaver note tied to another c2 quaver note, and two b1 quaver notes. The melodic line of the theme is however harmonized in G Phrygian mode. The response is also dependent on the speech surrogate and the rhythmic inflections of the texts, 'y'aba'o, y'aba'o, hyira hen' (we have come, we have come, we have come, bless us). The example below is an extract.



Example 14: An extract of a chorus response in G Phrygian mode

The passage from bar 212 to bar 215 is repeated over and over again from bar 216 to bar 225. This repetition section is preceded by a tutti postlude from bar 226 to bar 231. Bar 232 is a silent bar.

4.4 Analysis of Enyigye (Joy)

Enyigye, which literally means joyfulness, is the third and final movement of *Ebiawonkasama*. The composition which spans 137 bars is dependent on the musical styles of the composer, though the main focus is on *ebibindwom*. As a composer, he probably decided to personalize the style of the third movement, since the work serves as a compositional guide. It is imperative to note generally that, modulation to both related and a distance key is my style. In *Enyigye*, modulations are mostly done with common chords and few Picardy thirds and common tone to make it easier for singers to sing and instrumentalists to play.

In a time of simple duple meter, the first twenty-two bars of *Enyigye* is a tutti prelude in C Phrygian mode and C major respectively. In anacrusis, the prelude begins with forte Trombones call from bar 233 to bar 241 with percussion and strings accompaniment. From bar 233, the first and second Trombones call unison with dotted crotchet rest, g quaver note, a crochet note, and then three quaver notes, with the last note being a staccato. The call continues with two quaver rests, and then the former idea is repeated. The continuation of the call from bar 237 is a quaver rest, two c1 quaver notes, b dotted quaver note, c1 semiquaver note, two quaver notes, g crochet note, and three quaver notes, f quaver note, g crochet note, and three quaver notes, with the last note being a staccato. The example below is an illustration.



Example 15: An illustration of trombones call in unison

The imitated theme is harmonized by the tutti in C Phrygian mode, and with homophonic texture. The continuation of the tutti prelude is a common tone mutation from C major to c minor, and then back to C major with a picardy third. This technique is the composer's style of teasing the listener with the intention of modulating. The movement is however not modulated but rather, mutated. Comparatively, there is a change in the tonal centre with regard to the modulation technique. The mutation technique on the other hand changes not the tonal centre. It is obviously clear that the movement from the pick-up of bar 249 to bar 255 is in both the tonicized C major and the tonicized c minor respectively. The example below is an extract.



The chorus (soprano, alto, tenor, and bass) response from bar 267 to bar 278 is an imitation of the baritone call harmonized in C Phrygian mode. However, the third of the Phrygian mode in bar 278 is purposely raised to assume a major chord (C: V of vi) status. The chord can otherwise be known as A: V. Example 35 below is an illustration.



Example 17: An illustration of chorus response in C Phrygian mode

Based on the above analogy, the composer creatively used the C: V of vi chord as a pivot chord, modulating accordingly to A major, and eventually to F sharp major. In order to achieve this style, the composer stated a mezzo forte e2 pedal note with the second Flute from the second beat of bar 278 to bar 281. The e2 pedal note serves as the root of the pivot chord. The Piccolo also joins the passage a quaver beat just after the e2 note in bar 278 with a forte g sharp2 and b2 semiquaver notes. It continues from bar 279 with a g sharp2 double dotted crochet note, b2 semiquaver note, a2 crossed mordent crochet note, f sharp2 turn crochet note, and then a g sharp2 pedal note from bar 281 to bar 284. The second Flute and the Oboe continue the passage from bar 282 to bar 284 with counter melodies decorated with crossed mordent, turn and thrill to emphasize more on the A: V chord. The second Flute, however, introduced a seventh to the chord in bars 283 and 284 respectively. The first Flute, on the other hand, joins the passage from the second beat of bar 282 to bar 284 with another counter melody to compliment the other counter melodies. The A: V chord is resolved to A: I in bar 285. The chord progression of the passage moves again to the A: V chord in bar 286, and then the relative minor of A major tonal centre is suggested in bar 287. This was done by using A: Vo9 of vi chord as illustrated below:



Example 18: An illustration of a common chord modulation by the Flutes

A picardy third was used in the resolution by the E flat Clarinet to modulate to the F sharp major tonal centre in bars 288 and 289 respectively. The resolution was done by the tutti. The movement from bar 278 to bar 289 serves as an interlude, and an introduction to a series of call and response sections from the second beat of bar 289 to bar 319. The theme of the chorus response from bar 303 to bar 307 is an imitation of the texts of the soprano call and a sequence to the theme of the call. The chorus response is harmonized in C sharp Dorian mode. The example below is an illustration.



Example 19: An extract of a chorus response in C sharp Dorian mode

The response from bar 335 to bar 336 is repeated over and over again from bar 337 through bar 352. However, the tones of the melodic line from bar 349 to bar 352 are changed to double g1 quaver notes, g1 dotted quaver, and a f1 semiquaver note tied to three f1 minim notes. This melodic line is harmonized for the chorus in C Dorian mode. Meanwhile, the soprano and baritone soli also provide counter thematic lines from bar 335 to bar 352 against the response. It is important to state that, the counter thematic lines provided by the soprano and baritone soli are fragmentations of the main theme of the soprano call from bar 330 to bar 334. For instance, a segment of the main theme from bar 331 to bar 332 is imitated by the baritone solo in bars 335 and 336 respectively. Again, the soprano solo also imitated a segment of the main theme of the soprano call from bar 338 respectively. Both the texts and thematic lines were imitated in fragments.

The Brass section of the tutti continues the postlude from bar 366 to bar 367 with a theme in F Phrygian mode using a hemiola pattern. A similar theme is stated by the tutti from bar 368 to bar 370 in F Dorian and C Dorian modes respectively to create pandiatonicism. The Brass, piano, and strings move in F Dorian mode whilst the woodwinds move in C Dorian mode to revolt a specific tonal centre. Example 48 below is an extract.



Example 20: An extract of Tutti postlude in Pandiatonicism

5. Conclusions

The concept of intercultural creative product was achieved through a systematic, logical, and rigorous research process of collecting empirical data from three selected syncretic churches in Winneba, namely; *Awoyow*, *Nkansan* and *Musama*. Clearly, Sackey used together with some

Western musical elements and compositional techniques such as modulation, mutation, diminution and pandiatonicism in *Ebiawonkasaama*, *Ebiawonkasaama*, with its compositional ideals, can be described as an obvious demonstration of how the African and Western musical idioms are fused together in one composition without losing both musical identities. The composition was very consistent with both the indigenous Ebibindwom and Western musical Indeed, the result of the analysis of Ebiawonkasama using Tovey's descriptive communicative type of formal analysis shows the compositional thought embedded in its creation,

thereby also defining the compositional styles used by the composer. The analysis also provides a clear compositional and analytical presentation of a research-based composition that does not add to the literature of intercultural music but also exposes a further thought of musical analysis of research-based musical compositions.

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