

Historical Background on *Asem yi di ka*

Asem yi di ka was composed in 1944, at a time when apathy was rife and when most people were dissatisfied with life around them generally, but would not take any action themselves and kept looking to someone else to shoulder such responsibility. The song was an answer to the anxiety felt by the composer about the prevailing conditions of the time. *Asem yi di ka* 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@necmusic.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 and The Harmonious Chorale on YouTube.

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

Lyrics

Asem yi di ka, edi ka

hena beka?

Me ara o, me ara,
ennyɛ obiara o, me ara!

Adwuma yi di ye, edi ye,
hena beyɛ? Me ara...

Ɔbra yi di bɔ, edi bɔ,
hena bebɔ? Me ara...

Asem yi be si ne
kwan mua me ara.
Adwuma yi be si ne
kwan mua me ara.
Ɔbra yi be si ne
kwan mua me ara.

Hena beka? Hena beyɛ?
Hena bebɔ? Me ara...

IPA Guide

[asɛm ji di ka, edi ka

hina bɛka?
mi ara o, mi ara,
ɛnjɛ obiara o, mi ara!]

[ɛdʒuma ji di jɛ, edi jɛ,
hina bɛjɛ? mi ara...]

[ɔbrɛ ji di bɔ, edi bɔ,
hina bebɔ? mi ara...]

[asɛm ji be si ne
kwan mua mi ara
ɛdʒuma ji be si ne
kwan mua mi ara
ɔbrɛ ji be si ne
kwan mua mi ara]

[hina bɛka? hina bɛjɛ?
hina bɛkɔ? mi ara...]

English Translation

*This talk has got to be spoken.**

Who will speak it?

*I, myself
It is nobody else, I myself.*

This work has got to be done.

Who will do it? I myself...

*This life has got to be lived,**

Who will live this life? I myself...

*For this talk to be spoken
rightly, I myself.*

*For this work to be done
the right way, I myself.*

*For this life to lived
the right way, I myself.*

*This talk, this work,
This life, I myself...*

* As in truth.

** As in living an exemplary life.

*** Truthfully.

This Talk Has Got to Be Spoken

(Asem yi di ka)

for SATB Chorus unaccompanied

Ephraim Amu (1899–1995)

In moderate time (ca. ♩ = 90)

mf *mp*

Soprano
A - sem yi di ka, e - di ka, he - na be - ka? Me a - ra o. me a -

Alto
A - sem yi di ka, e - di ka, he - na be - ka? Me me

Tenor
A - sem yi, A - sem yi, he - na be - ka? Me a - ra o, me a -

Bass
A - sem yi, A - sem yi, he - na be - ka? Me me

Keyboard
(for rehearsal only) *mf* *mp*

6

f *mf* *mp*

ra, en - nyē ō - bia - ra o, mē ā - ra! A - dwu - ma yi di ye, e - di ye, he - na be - ye?

f *mf* *mp*

mē ā - ra, en - nyē ō - bia - ra o, mē ā - ra! A - dwu - ma yi di ye, e - di ye, he - na be - ye?

8

f *mf* *mp*

ra, en - nyē ō - bia - ra o, mē ā - ra! A - dwu - ma yi, a - dwu - ma yi, he - na be - ye?

f *mf* *mp*

mē ā - ra, en - nyē ō - bia - ra o, mē ā - ra! A - dwu - ma yi, a - dwu - ma yi, he - na be - ye?

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f

Mē ā - raō, mē ā - ra, en - nyē ō - bia - ra o, mē ā - ra! Ō - bra - yi di bō, e - di bō,

f

me me mē ā - ra, en - nyē ō - bia - ra o, mē ā - ra! Ō - bra - yi di bō, e - di bō,

8

f

Mē ā - raō, mē ā - ra, en - nyē ō - bia - ra o, mē ā - ra! Ō - bra - yi, Ō - bra - yi,

f

Me me mē ā - ra, en - nyē ō - bia - ra o, mē ā - ra! Ō - bra - yi, Ō - bra - yi,

18 *mp* *f*

he - na bæ - bə? Mé a - ra o, mé a - ra, en - nyé o - bia - ra o, mé a - ra!

mp *f*

he - na bæ - bə? me me mé a - ra, en - nyé o - bia - ra o, mé a - ra!

mp *f*

he - na bæ - bə? Mé a - ra o, mé a - ra, en - nyé o - bia - ra o, mé a - ra!

mp *f*

he - na bæ - bə? Me me mé a - ra, en - nyé o - bia - ra o, mé a - ra! A -

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A - sem yi, a - sem yi, a - sem yi be si ne kwan mua mé a - ra. A -

A - sem yi, a - sem yi, a - sem yi be si ne kwan mua mé a - ra.

A - sem yi, a - sem yi, a - sem yi, sem yi, mé a - ra.

sem yi be si ne kwan mua mé a - ra o, a - sem yi, a - sem yi, mé a - ra. A -

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sem yi ne a - dwu-ma yi ne o - bra yi, a - sem yi, ne a - dwu-ma yi, ne o -

He-na be - ka? He - na be - ye? He-na be - bo? He - na be - ka? He - na be - ye?

He-na be - ka? He - na be - ye? He-na be - bo? He - na be - ka? He - na be - ye?

sem yi be si ne kwan mua me a - ra. A - dwu-ma yi be si ne kwan mua me a -

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bra yi He-na be - ka? He-na be - ye? He-na be - bo? Me a - ra o, me a -

He-na be - bo? He-na be - ka? He-na be - ye? He-na be - bo? Me me

He-na be - bo? He-na be - ka? He-na be - ye? He-na be - bo? Me a - ra o, me a -

ra. o - bra yi be si ne kwan mua me a - ra, me a - ra. Me me

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ra, en - nyε o - bia - ra o, me a - ra! me a - ra!

me a - ra, en - nyε o - bia - ra o, me a - ra! me a - ra!

8 ra, en - nyε o - bia - ra o, me a - ra! me a - ra!

me a - ra, en - nyε o - bia - ra o, me a - ra! me a - ra!

f

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Review