

“Yoruba Rhapsody”

Ile-Ife

For Bassoon, Percussion soloist, and four Percussionists

By Michael Varner

As Performed on “reVelations: New Music for Percussion and Ensembles”

While on research in Nigeria in 2009 I had the opportunity to experience a wide range of the unique instruments and sounds of the Yoruba People of Nigeria in West Africa. Their Music, Vocal and Percussion based for the most part, represents their cultural identity. After returning home I decided to compose a work that combined many of the sounds I heard to share with audiences the incredible musical experience of Africa. Much of Yoruba music is “parables” or stories that are “sung” by the incredibly expressive “Dun-Dun” or Talking drum. The Nigerian Talking Drum has long fascinated musicians from around the world. Little accurate information about this unique member of the percussion family has been known outside of Nigeria. The traditional performers can literally “speak” mimicking the pitches and rhythms of language.” The Yoruba believe that you cannot talk fully about their culture and tradition without speaking about the talking drum because it is a source of history, poetry, proverbs, and daily life. The drums are often played by a “family” of musicians young and old. In my composition “Yoruba Rhapsody” the bassoon represents the elder member of the family who’s low full voice tells the proverb. The Solo Percussionist represents the father who has learned the parables and can play them back responding to the words of the elder on the Iya-Ilu: the lead Dun-dun. The four Percussion players represent the young new generation of the family, playing repetitive parts and listening/learning the Proverbs. The composition is called a “Rhapsody” because its form represents a number of the most common Song/Dance of the Yoruba people. “Ile-Ife” refers to a very important city in Nigeria that is the center of the Yoruba culture and thought to be the “Birthplace” of the Yoruba. All the patterns played by the accompanying percussionists are authentic to the Yoruba Proverbs as are the instruments some of which are hard to acquire outside Africa. Because of that I am including suggested instrument substitutions that keep the spirit of the piece. For more information on this fascinating culture and music visit my website for my article “**Skin that Speaks:” The Talking drums of Africa.**

<http://www.uta.edu/faculty/mulberry/acover>

I hope you will enjoy the music of a fascinating people and place!

Michael Varner

Instrumentation:

(for a list of possible substitutions see below)

Bassoon Soloist

Percussion Soloist

Dun-dun Talking Drum “Iya-Ilu”

Player 1:

Dun-dun Talking Drum “Isaaju” (high sound)
High Sakara (clay pottery ring with antelope skin head afixed)
Shekere gourd 1

Player 2:

Dun-dun Talking Drum “Atele” (Low sound)
Medium Sakara
Shekere gourd 2

Player 3:

Gudugudu (Pair of drums)
Low Sakara
Shekere gourd 3

Player 4:

Wind Chimes/Mark Tree
Shekere gourd 4
Gankogui (traditional African “Double Bell)

Substitutions:

Percussion Soloist

“Talking Drum”

The “Dun-dun” talking drum is a very unique instrument. It basically performs 3 primary pitches approximately a third apart occasionally hooked with glides between. Therefore good substitutes can be 3 Djembe, 3 Conga, even 3 traditional Tom-toms as long as the sound is toward the low register. I recommend something played with the hands or light wooden mallets

Player 1:

Isaaju:

A “single pitch” talking drum. Good substitute can be a small tom played with single light wooden stick

High Sakara:

Small frame drum played with light wooden stick

Shekere gourd 1:

Shakers are available in many sizes. Try to avoid south American Maraca style shakers

Player 2:

Atele:

A “single pitch” talking drum. Good substitute can be a medium tom played with single light wooden stick

Medium Sakara:

Medium frame drum played with light wooden stick

Shekere gourd 2:

Shakers are available in many sizes. Try to avoid south American Maraca style shakers

Player 3:

Gudugudu:

A “pair” of bowl shaped drums. Good substitute can be a pair of bongo played with medium rubber mallets

Low Sakara:

Low frame drum played with light wooden stick

Shekere gourd 3:

Shakers are available in many sizes. Try to avoid south American Maraca style shakers

Player 4:

Wind Chimes/Mark Tree:

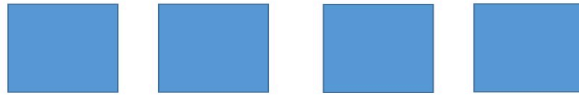
Used to represent the small “ornamental bells” found on the lead Dun-dun.

Shekere gourd 4:

Shakers are available in many sizes. Try to avoid south American Maraca style shakers

Gankogui

African double Bell: use a very low sounding resonant set of cowbell. Avoid the high bright South American “Agogo” Bells



Player 1

Player 2

Player 3

Player 4

Talking Drum

Bassoon

Audience

SAMPLE

Duration: 9 Minutes

<http://www.uta.edu/faculty/mulberry/acover>

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11

Bsn. *mf* *f*

Iya-ilu *mf* *mp*

Pl. 1

Pl. 2

Pl. 3

Pl. 4

16

Bsn. *mp* *f* *subito p*

Iya-ilu *f*

Pl. 1

Pl. 2

Pl. 3

Pl. 4

21

Bsn. *ff*

Iya-ilu *mf*

Pl. 1 *f* *p*

Pl. 2 *f* *p*

Pl. 3 *f* *p*

Pl. 4

Isaaju (H)

Atele (L)

Gudugudu

Bsn. *mf* *espress.* *f*

Iya-ilu *f*

Pl. 1

Pl. 2

Pl. 3

Pl. 4

25

30

Bsn. *mf* 3 *p* *f*

Iya-ilu *mf* 3 *f* 3 *p* *f* 5

Pl. 1 %

Pl. 2 %

Pl. 3 %

Pl. 4 %

35

Bsn. *p* *f* *p* *f* *mp* 3

Iya-ilu 5 *mp* 3 *sfz*

Pl. 1 %

Pl. 2 %

Pl. 3 %

Pl. 4 %

Yoruba Rhapsody

56

Bsn. *f* *p* *f*

Iya-ilu
On Bassoon Cue *f* *p*

Pl. 1

Pl. 2 56

Pl. 3

Pl. 4

Bsn. *fp* *f* *mp*

Iya-ilu *f* *mp*

Pl. 1

Pl. 2 60

Pl. 3

Pl. 4

64

Bsn. *f* *p* *f*

Iya-ilu *f* *p* *f*

Pl. 1

Pl. 2

Pl. 3

Pl. 4

67

Bsn. *subito p* *f* *marcato* *f*

Iya-ilu *subito p* *f* *f*

Pl. 1

Pl. 2

Pl. 3

Pl. 4

69

71

Bsn.

Iya-ilu

Pl. 1

Pl. 2

Pl. 3

Pl. 4

75

Bsn.

Iya-ilu

Pl. 1

Pl. 2

Pl. 3

Pl. 4

107

Bsn.

Iya-ilu

Pl. 1

Pl. 2

Pl. 3

Pl. 4

111

Bsn.

Iya-ilu

Pl. 1

Pl. 2

Pl. 3

Pl. 4

156

Bsn. *Sim.*

Iya-ilu

Pl. 1

Pl. 2 *156* Shekere 2 *f*

Pl. 3

Pl. 4 Gankogui *f*

160

Bsn. *162*

Iya-ilu *f*

Pl. 1 Shekere 1 *f* *mp*

Pl. 2 *160* *mp*

Pl. 3 Shekere 3 *f* *mp*

Pl. 4 *mp*

164

Bsn.

mp

Iya-ilu

mp

Pl. 1

Pl. 2

Pl. 3

Pl. 4

168

Bsn.

f

Iya-ilu

f

Pl. 1

Pl. 2

Pl. 3

Pl. 4

172

Bsn.

Iya-ilu

Pl. 1

Pl. 2

Pl. 3

Pl. 4

176

178

Bsn.

Iya-ilu

Pl. 1

Pl. 2

Pl. 3

Pl. 4

ff

f

f

f

f subito *p*

224

Bsn.

Iya-ilu

Pl. 1

Pl. 2

Pl. 3

Pl. 4

228

Bsn.

Iya-ilu

Pl. 1

Pl. 2

Pl. 3

Pl. 4

235

232

Bsn. *ff*

Iya-ilu *ff* *p* *cresc.*

Pl. 1 *f*

Pl. 2 *f*

Pl. 3 *f*

Pl. 4 Gankogui

236

Bsn.

Iya-ilu

Pl. 1 *mp* *sempre cresc.*

Pl. 2 *mp* *sempre cresc.*

Pl. 3 *mp* *sempre cresc.*

Pl. 4 *mp* *sempre cresc.*

240

Bsn.

ff

Iya-ilu

ff

3 3 3

fz

5

Pl. 1

ff

240

fz

Pl. 2

ff

fz

Pl. 3

ff

fz

Pl. 4

ff

fz

fz

Dr. Michael Varner, Percussionist and Educator

Dr. Michael Varner has been Director of Percussion at the University of Texas at Arlington for the past 35 years. He holds a Bachelor of Music Education from Bowling Green State University, a Master's in Performance from The University of Michigan, and a Doctorate in Performance from The University of North Texas. Varner released his latest CD in 2014 featuring his own compositions.

With a long history as an educator and clinician, he has been invited to give presentations throughout the United States, Japan and Europe focusing on developing musical expression. In recent past years he has presented by invitation at the European Music Educators Convention held in Frankfurt, Germany, and Music Educators National Conventions as well as State Music Education Conventions for Connecticut, Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Kansas, Indiana, Ohio, West Virginia and Minnesota.

He draws from 40 years experience as a performer presenting repertoire from every musical style including Classical, Contemporary, Jazz, and World beat. He brings to each style of music an unequalled sensitivity and exuberance. Doctor Varner recently presented a series of lecture/recital tours throughout Texas, Louisiana, and Oklahoma. Dr. Varner's performances included presentations on Japanese marimba compositions, and a demonstration of the development of solo marimba literature in the late 20th century. Excerpts from Dr. Varner's tour performances can be viewed and listened to by podcast at the Vic Firth Website.

He has performed chamber music and studio work in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area including appearances with the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra. During his time in Michigan he was principal percussionist with the Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra and Principal Timpanist with the Kalamazoo Chamber Orchestra.

Dr. Varner has been a member of the UT Arlington Honors college faculty since 1996. As the only music faculty member to be an honors college professor he was chosen as honor faculty member of the year for teaching excellence in 2004, the first year the Honors College named a recipient.

He continues to be active nationally in the field of marching percussion adjudicating and presenting clinics. Under his guidance the UT Arlington drum line has been nationally recognized performing at numerous marching exhibitions including the 1982, 1988, 1993 and 2000, 2003, and 2008 Percussive Arts Societies International competitions. He has worked with renowned drum and bugle corps, including the DCI champion Chicago Cavaliers and the Toledo Glassmen.

Dr. Varner continues his interest in composition by accepting frequent commission from university and high schools across the United States. He publishes many of his own compositions and has also released works through Southern Music, Studio Four, and Permuis Publications.

Varner's interest in world music led to a sabbatical in Nigeria and "Study-Abroad" classes to Ghana. His article "Skin That Speaks" was published in the 2013 Percussive Notes Journal. In 2009 he received a Faculty Development Leave Grant to accept an invitation from Obafemi Awolowo University in Nigeria to work with their faculty and students.

He maintains an Artist relationship with Remo Heads and World Instruments, Vic Firth, Yamaha, and Sabian cymbals. <http://www.uta.edu/faculty/mulberry/acover>

Michael Varner Music

Ensemble

Imagined diVersions Contemporary Quartet features 3 families of percussion instruments: membranes (bongos, snare drum, toms, bass drum), metals (suspended cymbals, China cymbal, hi-hat), and woods (claves, woodblocks, temple blocks, log drums). A wide range of colors and textures based around the Rondo form using as many variants on "Seven" as possible. Each performer plays the tambourine giving lots of opportunity for various Tambourine technical work. (TEXAS UIL LIST, CLASS 1) \$45.00

Kingdom Five Departed "A rhythm Poem" for 9 Percussionists. A fantasy tale written in Percussion sounds, featuring only Membranophones and Accessories in a Semi-classical vein (TEXAS UIL LIST, CLASS 1) \$45.00

Arabian Sketches A percussion ensemble for eight players based on dances and rhythms from the Mid-east. The composition for western percussion instruments features the "Doubek" which is a goblet shaped hand drum. Mid-eastern "Zil" and "Riq" can be substituted for the Finger cymbals and tambourine if desired for a more authentic effect. "Arabian Sketches" captures the "aura" of the fabled Mid-east described in novels and legends. Grade 5 8 players \$45.00

Tala Experience the unique aspects of Classical Indian music! Based on a rhythmic pattern of twelve beats divided into groupings of 5 and 7 subdivided into 2-3-2-2-3. Written for strictly western instruments, Challenges the ensemble to rhythmic precision and ensemble awareness offering a small taste of the relentless energy of Indian music! Grade 5 7 players (TEXAS UIL LIST, CLASS 1) \$45.00

Phantasm III for Percussion Ensemble Phantasm III is an imaginary "movie sound track" featuring the widest possible variety of intriguing sounds and colors. From its first moment with all performers exploring every imaginable possibility for suspended cymbal through a finale of spatial sixteenth notes Phantasm III drives forward with relentless energy. Grade 5 7 players \$45.00

Celestial Elements" for 7 Percussionists and Snare Drum Soloist

Written to spotlight the snare drum, each movement gives the listener a different view of musical and tonal capabilities. The movements can be performed separately. *"The best vehicle for showcasing the snare drums sound and color that I have ever experienced."* Richard MacDonald, Director of Percussion Studies, Winona State University, Minnesota

1. **Earth** Reflects the orchestral role and sound of the snare drum. Grade 4 \$20.00
2. **Wind** Highlights the sound color aspects of the snare drum. Grade 5+ \$20.00
3. **Fire** Aggressive "outdoor" character of the snare drum. Grade 5+ \$20.00

Sorcery! Orchestral style ensemble with 20th century harmony, and a driving timpani ostinato. 12 players (TEXAS UIL ENSEMBLE LIST, CLASS 1) Grade 5 \$40.00

Mushroom Soup A flashy fusion composition featuring bass and drumset with contrasting musical sections. 11 players, bass and drumset \$40.00

Soul of the new machine A contemporary ensemble for a younger group, that features a wide range of colors and textures. 7 players (TEXAS UIL ENSEMBLE LIST, CLASS 1) Grade 3-4 \$30.00

Solo

The Silence Between.... Advanced Multiple Percussion Solo written for 4 toms, 4 almglocken, and opera gong. This is a minimalist set up that still explores an incredible vocabulary of sounds and effects \$25.00

FireStorm Very Advanced snare drum solo taking the marching idiom to new dimensions \$11.00

Winds of Change Advanced Concert Snare solo featuring every imaginable sonic possibility \$11.00

Challenging Horizons Snare drum collection of 11 solos progressing from intermediate to advanced featuring the latest techniques combined with good musical phrasing. (TEXAS UIL SOLO LIST, CLASS 1) Grade 3-5 \$12.00

Bamboo Dragon Challenging Multiple percussion solo for concert toms, Bass drum, temple gongs, and wood block. Wide variety of colors, featuring sections requiring hand independence."the sounds of the orient!" (TEXAS UIL SOLO LIST, CLASS 1) Grade 5 \$14.00

Counterpane II Advanced snare drum solo highlightig both the visual and excitement of marching percussion. Grade 5 \$9.50

Available through your local music store or direct from:

Michael Varner Music

University of Texas at Arlington

Music Department PO 19105

Arlington, TX 76019

<http://www.uta.edu/mvarner/acover>