

DURO LADIPO'S *OBA KOSO*: A MUSICO-TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Adetilewa Toyin Adeyinka

Duro Ladipo was born in Oderinlo in Osogbo in the then Western Region, now Osun State, in Nigeria. He was born into a Christian family of Joseph Oni Ladipo and Towobola Ajike Ladipo. His great grandfather was a skilful *dundun* master drummer who also worshipped Sango and Oya. Following his footsteps, Duro Ladipo developed early interest in the traditional lore and norms of his Yoruba community, and participated in religious festivals and other traditional social gatherings. These elements of traditional lore feature prominently in his theatrical productions.

Duro Ladipo belonged to the first corps of contemporary theatre practitioners to explore oral tradition for creativity, although there are other critics, such as Ebun Clark, who attribute this to Hubert Ogunde. Quoting J. A. Adedeji, Ebun Clark (1990) states as follows:

Duro Ladipo was not the first dramatist of Yoruba theatre to whom oral tradition mattered very much; nor was he the first to explore the wealth of Yoruba myths, legends and history and other prolific poetry, music and dance (9).

Nevertheless, it can be argued that, of all the contemporary theatre practitioners, Duro Ladipo has explored this much more extensively than any other dramatist has done. He was able to make his audience come in contact with their rich cultural heritage through the use of indigenous folklore and local instruments. He also made use of Yoruba folk melodies. This is evident not only in some of his plays, but virtually in all his operas, confirming his theatrical ingenuity. Ladipo explains why many of his operas are based on indigenous and historical facts:

I wrote these plays for the following crucial reasons: First, to ensure that Yoruba folklore and traditional stories are never forgotten; secondly, to amply demonstrate the richness and uniqueness of Yoruba culture, a culture which has resisted the assault of white

Christian religion; thirdly, to ensure that the dances, the music and the splendour of Yoruba as a language never become things of the past, a splendour so easily discernible in such traditional chants as *ijala, ofo, ewi, oriki*, which I have used severally in my works; finally, to proudly enshrine in our hearts the names of great Yoruba Kings and mythic heroes, for, in the end, they are the real gods! (Ladipo, in Ogunbiyi, 1981:340).

Ladipo made use of materials from the society to create historical and social awareness in his audience. The society, in turn, fed him with the materials he used to create this awareness. He, therefore, chose his materials from the past and from the day-to-day events in his society for his artistic usage.

Ladipo's operas were rendered in Yoruba, into which he incorporated traditional forms. These he used to express action of aesthetic appeal, thus helping the audience from any part of the world to understand his productions. According to David Kerr (1995), his opera

tended to appeal to a somewhat more sophisticated audience than Ogunde. Ladipo's plays have a seriousness and self-consciousness which won the respect of Nigerian academics... This high seriousness was justified by the academics because it relates to tragic elements, indigenous Yoruba masquerades and because it gave the operas more respectability in the pantheon of world literatures (98).

One such opera is *Oba Koso (The King Did Not Hang)*. According to the *Webster's Dictionary*,

an opera is a staged drama with orchestral accompaniment in which music is the dominant element, the performers singing all or most of their lines.

In short, opera is drama set to music, in which the characters express their thoughts, feelings and actions in song rather than speech.

Historically speaking, opera is believed to have started in Italy in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The early opera was fathered by religious musical drama. It was originated by a group of musicians and scholars in Italy who called themselves the *Camerata*. These were a group of itinerant singers and amateurs in Florence, who first developed the style of vocal music called

monody (solo song) that was accompanied by *basso continuo* and bass melody instrument.

In Nigeria, opera emerged as a result of European influence, brought about by Christianity and the enlightenment programmes introduced as a means of eradicating traditional religious practices. The newly created African indigenous churches parted ways with the missionary churches as a result of the latter's objection to the use of traditional instruments and songs in the church. These African churches consequently began their own opera which has its model in the western operatic style. They began to make use of traditional instruments and songs in their churches. The opera in the indigenous church thus took a new form, with the introduction of local instruments and songs, and the use of the Yoruba language, which focused on the tradition of the Yoruba people. The opera was removed from the service of songs of the church, and replaced with authentic Yoruba music and dances, reflecting the culture of the Yoruba people. This revolution would later influence the works of Duro Ladipo.

Oba Koso: Textual Analysis

Oba Koso, one of the prominent plays of Duro Ladipo, is a historical opera which centres on the man, Sango, the fifteenth century *Alafin* (or King) of Oyo who was apotheosized at his death. Oba Sango, the fourth *Alafin* of Oyo, unlike any of his predecessors or successors, was said to be tremendously powerful such that he was capable of emitting fire from his mouth whenever he was angry. That is why he is always eulogized as:

*Oloju orogbo,
Eleeke obi' o!
Eegun ti i yo'na l'enu!
Oosa tii b'ologbo l'eru!
Aji-saye-gbege oko iya olorogbo!
Eni f'aju di o, Sango a gbe e!
Oloju orogbo,
Sango olu' koro oooooooooo!*

(*Oba Koso*, 1974:4)

[With eyes as white as bitter kola,
Cheeks puffed out with kola nuts!
The masquerade who emits fire from the mouth!
The god who frightens cats!
Elegant and leisurely husband of the kola nut seller!

He who dares Sango will be taught a bitter lesson!
He whose eyes are as white as bitter kola!
Sango, fierce and fiery one!

This passage simply demonstrates Sango's awesome power.

The story of the play is how Alafin Sango, in an attempt to expand his empire, constantly sends his two Generals, Timi and Gbonka, to wage wars and capture the neighbouring towns and villages. Soon, they become power drunk and unruly and begin to defy Sango's authority, threatening to go to war at will, even against the Alafin's wish. The *Oyo Mesi* (Council of Elders) and the townspeople as a whole become displeased with the attitude of the two warring Generals, and accuse the King of condoning their excesses. Oya, Sango's wife, who is equally against the Generals, conveys the deep resentment of the people to Sango thus:

Gba mi o, Sango, gba mi o!
Onina l'enu...
F'eti si t'awon ara Oyo o!
Ogun ti ko won l'omo lo
Eni ni 'le ko gbe'le,
Eni l'owo ko lee na!
Bee ni Gbonka ati Timi ko y'ogun-un ja!
Dakun o, Sango, gba mi o!

(22-23)

[Save me, Sango, save me!
Fiery-mouthed one...
Give ear to the cry of the people of Oyo
Wars have claimed their children,
Those with houses cannot live in them,
Those with money cannot spend it.
And yet, Gbonka and Timi do not desist from waging wars!
I plead with you, Sango, please save me!]

Oya goes ahead to advise Sango to send Timi away to Ede as a gatekeeper of that border town, in the hope that the notorious Ijesa warriors would sooner or later get rid of him, while Gbonka is rendered idle in Oyo. However, contrary to the plan of Sango and Oya, Timi is crowned as the King of Ede, and the Alafin, unwilling to condone that open challenge to his authority, sends Gbonka to go and bring Timi bound back to Oyo, hoping that one of them gets killed in the process. Unfortunately, Gbonka brings Timi back to Oyo alive, and the King devices another elimination plot by asking

them both to re-enact their fight at Ede in the presence of the Oyo people. Once again, Gbonka defeats Timi and decapitates him. Realising that it is all a ploy to get rid of him, Gbonka now decides to put Oba Sango to shame by demystifying the awe-inspiring fire that the latter always emits from the mouth. Gbonka orders the people to bind him hand and foot and throw him into a burning fire. This order is happily carried out, in the hope that Gbonka will not come out of it alive. But to their chagrin and dismay, Gbonka reappears from the ashes of the fire to openly challenge Sango's authority as King. The townspeople, seeing that Gbonka is as powerful as, if not even more powerful than, the King, declare their support for him, and Sango finds himself completely deserted. In uncontrollable rage, he pounces on his people and kills them mercilessly, before realising the great havoc he has caused. In consequence, he decides to abdicate the throne and leave the town with Oya, his only companion left. In the course of the difficult journey into exile, Oya also abandons him, unable to bear the increasing hardship. On seeing that he has lost everything, Sango decides to commit suicide, and eventually hangs himself on an *ayan* tree. The *Magba* (Sango's loyalists), knowing the shame that Sango's suicide would bring to the town decide to sponsor the myth that Sango did not hang, but has transformed into a god and ascended into heaven. It is from this myth that the play earns its title.

Oba Koso: Musical Analysis

Oba Koso is a very popular folk opera. The libretto was written by Duro Ladipo himself, based on the political life of Oba Sango, the ambitious king who once ruled as the fourth Alafin of the ancient Oyo Kingdom. The opera was recorded on LP or – I – A/B by Ariki Records.

The opera has been re-enacted within the context of contemporary Yoruba society. Ladipo can be said to have followed the Greek trend in his use of myth, legend, lore, mime, chant, dance, music and song, which he makes relevant to the immediate society. According to Tunji Vidal (1997:160),

Oba Koso is a re-enactment of ancient Yoruba tradition within the context of contemporary Yoruba society. Musical and linguistic styles used in this work are often expressed in contemporary idioms; the narrative texts, for example, are composed in hybridized

European church and African traditional musical styles. The hybrid contrasts sharply with specific sections where custom requires that a traditional musical style be used with the poetic texts for the sake of authenticity.

Ladipo makes extensive use of rich imagery of the Yoruba chant culture such as *iyere ifa*, *rara* and *ijala* as well as traditional drumming and dance (*bata*) associated with Sango. His use of the Oyo dialect not only points to the setting of the folk opera, but brings the language closer to standard Yoruba, spiced with some dialectal variations. Samuel Akpabot (1986: 80) attests to the fact that the 'people of Oyo have managed to maintain the purity of their dialect.' Ladipo blends this with invocation and incantation in order to gain his audience's attention.

The opera opens with a thrilling overture of the *bata* drum, after which the *Iwarefa* (Eunuch) recites Sango's praise chant or eulogy, in antiphonal form between the *Iwarefa* and the king's wives (*Oloris*). At the end of the eulogy, the *Iwarefa* sings in praise of Sango while the 'Oloris' provide the chorus. Ladipo makes extensive use of the 'Oloris' in *Oba Koso*, although they have little effect on the outcome of the action. Rather, they serve to support the action in the background, providing vocal response to all the solo songs used in the opera. In other words, they repeat the song after each soloist. In this way, Ladipo's use of the 'Oloris' can be likened to the use of the Chorus in the Greek Theatre. The 'Oloris' are female vocalists, who sing in unison at a very high pitch, while the male vocalists sing in a slightly tensed voice, with nasal colouring. The musical idiom of the chants performed by the *Iwarefa*, in combination with the idiom of the language, is typical of the Oyo provincial style (Vidal, 1977:160). In spite of this fact, Ladipo also makes use of the Ekiti dialect in the reply of the *Aje* (witches) to Gbonka's plea on the latter's way to Ede.

Agba Aje:
F'oju ire ibara wole!
Aye ye-e ye o!
Ika f'oju ire wo o o!

Agba Aje:
Aye atijo!
Aye atijo!
'Mi koo m'obi meji.

Awon Aje:
Heen!
Heen!
Heen!

<i>Ko m'ori aja,</i>	<i>Heen!</i>	
<i>Ko m'ose ojo,</i>	<i>Heen!</i>	
<i>Koo mu sure sori,</i>	<i>Heen!</i>	
<i>Koo mu sure simu,</i>	<i>Heen!</i>	
<i>Kee ro toro toki</i>	<i>Heen!</i>	
<i>Kee ro tipa tiro</i>	<i>Heen!</i>	<i>(Oba Koso, 100-102)</i>

[Look at the ground with friendly eyes, the way the melon does!

Aye – ye-e ye 'o!

He said we should look at you with friendly eyes!

In ancient times!

Yes!

In days of old!

Yes!

I say you should take two kola nuts,

Yes!

Take the head of a dog,

Yes!

Take the head of a snake,

Yes!

Take them to pray to your head,

Yes!

Take them to pray to your nose,

Yes!

Until it sounds smooth and clear,

Yes!

Until it sounds loud and strong.

Yes!]

The tempo of the choral part of this opera is sometimes usually faster than the solo is, and at the end of these choruses, or at the end of each beat of musical sentence, there is an instrumental section, which probably gives room for Ladipo's choreographed dances. The chorus of women often dance to this section which automatically leads into the next musical phrase. There is, however, a slight change in rhythm and tempo, which gradually changes and leads into the next phrase of the opera, depending on the mood of the next musical phrase.

Except for occasional brief remarks such as '*E seun*' ('Thank you'), '*Bi ti boo?*' ('How do you mean?'), '*E e j'ere*' ('May you prosper'), '*E e ti ri?*' ('Why?'), and so on, Ladipo intentionally excludes dialogue from the opera so that songs and dances may be freely used to communicate the dramatic action. The songs, therefore, serve in place of the dialogue. Along with the dances, they comment upon the action in a very expressive manner, thus helping to advance the plot of the opera.

The songs used in *Oba Koso* explicate the hidden messages that are incapable of physical elucidation. It must be pointed out that there is a whole range of differences in the style of singing. It is significant that Ladipo makes use of the *aria* (a lyric song for the solo voice) and *recitative* (vocal music that follows the inflection of

the text), which are integral parts of western opera. The aria, like other songs, can be divided into both songs and chants.

In most of the song sequences, new melodic and textual materials are presented in the course of the composition. This thus emphasises the text and gives the storyline the necessary flow, bringing out the dramatic feeling rather than just contributing to the dialogue or the dramatic action. A good example of this is the dirge that Oya sings after the death of Sango, as reproduced below. It is used to create mood and thus establish the relationship between Sango and Oya. The lyrics of the song and Oya's mood during the rendition show the expression of the personal emotion in the lamentation for Sango.

*Sango so o, oba so o!
Sango so o, oba so o!
Sango ayan ran lna,
Okunrin t'afi n s'epe f'okunrin!
Ajala Iji, baba omode, baba agbala'gha
B'iyas s'ogun odun, e ma ma gbe sonu o!
B'oka s'ogbon osu, e ma ma ju si'gho o!
Olukoso Ajala iji o n padaa bo
Ki ni k'ati gbo o pe Sango so o ni Koso l'ori igi aayan o?
Sango ooooo, Sango ooooo!
Sango ooooo, Sango ooooo!
Kini k'ati gbo o pe Sango so o ni Koso, l'ori igi aayan o?*

[Sango has hanged himself, the king has hanged himself!
Sango has hanged himself, the king has hanged himself!
Sango, the glow of fire,
The man in whose name men swear!
Ajala Iji, the father of children, father of elders!
If the pounded yam is twenty years old, don't throw it away!
If the yam flour paste is thirty months old, don't throw it into the bush!
Olukoso Ajala Iji, he is coming back!
How will it sound to hear that Sango hanged himself at Koso on the ayan tree?
Sango.....! Sango.....!
Sango.....! Sango.....!
How will it sound to hear that Sango hanged himself at Koso on the ayan tree?]

Each of the songs used by Ladipo has specific relevance to the situation that produces it. Another illustration can be deduced from

the following song used in praise of Sango for the peace that reigned in the town during his time as king:

*Igba oba wa dara fun wa,
O dara fun wa o,
Igba oba wa sunwon fun wa
Ija ko si o, ote ko si o,
Ija ko si o, ote ko si o,
Igboro ma dun gbongbon fun wa.
Ara e yo!
Igba oba wa sunwon fun wa.* (Oba Koso: 10)

[The reign of our king is good for us,
It is good for us,
The reign of our king is beneficial to us,
There is no fight, there is no plot,
The town is very pleasant for us all.
Citizens, rejoice!
The reign of our king is beneficial to us!]

Ladipo also makes extensive use of chants in *Oba Koso* to invoke the spirits and praise certain characters. He succeeds in assigning the right kind of chant to specific characters in accordance with the expected mode of chant associated with different characters. Some of the chants used are *ijala*, *iyere ifa*, *rara* and *esa egun*. Furthermore, some of the songs in the play can be classified as recitative, because they follow the inflection of the text and not the music, falling somewhere between speech and song, as seen in the following example involving *Olori* and *Timi*:

*He yaaaaa!
E ma so 'bi ti mo lo!
Oobe o sobi adan re
E ma so 'bi ti mo lo!* (Oba Koso: 38)

[Don't say where I went!
The little bat doesn't say where the big bat went:
Don't say where I went!]

Although most of the pitches are indefinite, from the western musical perspective, it is interesting to note that the *dundun* set of the Yoruba can pitch the note correctly because the song is a direct imitation of the *dundun* pitch.

These songs, at different points in time, are used to enhance the comprehension of what happens under each musical phrase or beat, from time to time. In this way, they clarify the message, elevate the action, and highlight the climactic moments of the performance. Two examples of such musical exchanges between Sango and Oya are provided below:

Sango:

*O to na wayi, aaya mi, Oya,
Oya oriri
Je ka simi die ka to ma lo
Boya awon Ijoye mi, won le tele wa l'ehin
lo si'le Tapa ni ilu iya mi.
Je ka simi die ka to ma lo*

(Oba Koso: 132)

[Now, that is enough for now, my wife, Oya

Oya oriri,

Let's rest awhile before we proceed.

Maybe my chiefs will follow us to Nupe, the land of my mother

Let's rest awhile before we proceed.]

Oya:

*Baalee mi, okoo mi!
Baale mi, Okoo mi!
Olugbiyele! Olugbedo! Olufiran!
Alapara – epe!
Aayan ko gbedun!
Eye kekere boun tiyan rere!
Ko kere, ko gbayi, oko ayaba!
Ajala Iji mo see to fun o o!
Emi n re'le e mi ni'le Ira!*

Sango: *Aaaa!*

Oya: *Emi n re'le e mi ni'le Ira o!*

Sango: *Aaaa!*

Oya: *Emi n re'le e mi ni'le Ira o!*

Sango: *En – en!*

Oya: *Ni'lu t'a bi mi.*

O di'gba ooooo eeeee!

O di'gba ooooo eeeee!

(Oba Koso: 132-133)

[My Lord, my husband!

My Lord, my husband!

Olugbiyele! Olugbedo! Olufiran!

Alapara – epe!

The *aayan* tree is never struck by lightning!

The little bird with a resounding voice!
No small person, yet not respected:
Husband of the queen!
Ajala Iji, I have done enough for you.
I am going back to my home at Ira!

Sango: Ah!
Oya: I am going back to my home at Ira!
Sango: Ah!
Oya: I am going back to my home at Ira!
Sango: What!
Oya: In the land of my birth
Good – bye...!
Good – bye...!]

These two songs are solo songs rendered by Sango and his wife, Oya, in which Sango shows the uncertainty in which he finds himself, in the face of his being rejected by the *Oyo Mesi* and the townspeople. Oya's reply is that of frustration, helplessness and despair. Unable to bear the hardship of the journey into exile any further, she decides to abandon Sango at this critical time. By Oya's betrayal of Sango, Ladipo tries to show the vanity in human trust. Sango, seeing that the only companion left with him in his travails is also on the verge of deserting him, decides to hang himself. The following song conveys his grim determination to commit suicide at this critical moment:

Paa!
Ere kan l'okunri nku!
Okunrin ki i ku lerin meji.
B'apa o ba see san mo.
Omokunrin a ka l'eri ni o!
Aa! N o so o!

(Sango fa okun kan ja. Oya ro mo Sango ki o ma ba so.)
(Oba Koso: 132).

[Terrible!
A man dies but once;
A man never dies twice.
If the arms can no longer be freely swung,
What a man does is to rest them on his head.
Ah! I will hang myself!]

(Sango then pulls a rope free while Oya clings desperately to him to prevent him from hanging himself.)

In the latter part of this song, as contained in the excerpt below, Sango and Oya engage in an interlocking song sequence, done in a call-and-response pattern. The mood of the song is undoubtedly gloomy. Sango proceeds to hang himself, despite all the pleas for reconsideration made by Oya to stop him. The song conveys Sango's strong determination to end it all, to put an end to the embarrassment caused him by Gbonka's rebellion and his wife's desertion.

Oya: *Sango, ma so o!*
Sango: *N o so o!*
Oya: *Sango, ma so o!*
Sango: *Mo ni n o so o!*
Oya: *Sango, ma so o!*
Sango: *Ani n o so o!*
Oya: *Kini k'ati gbo o pe Sango so o ni Koso?*
Sango: *N o so o!*
Oya: *Sango ma so o*
Aaaaaaaa!

(Sango gun igi aayan, o si pokun so. Oya n sunkun)
(Oba Koso: 134-136)

[Oya: *[Sango, don't hang!*
Sango: *I will hang!*
Oya: *Sango, don't hang!*
Sango: *I say, I will hang!*
Oya: *Sango, don't hang!*
Sango: *I say I will hang!*
Oya: *How will it sound to hear that Sango*
himself at Koso?
Sango: *I will hang!*
Oya: *Sango, don't hang!*
Aaaaaaaa!

(Sango climbs an aayan tree and hangs himself while Oya weeps.)]

It should be noted that all the songs are principally *logogenic*, that is, the lyrics for the texts of the songs make more impact than the melody, a typical quality of Nigerian songs. It is also a known fact that African music is rhythmical and highly percussive. Ladipo makes use of instruments that play interlocking rhythmical patterns, to achieve his choreographed dance sequences. An analysis of the transcribed songs reveals that Ladipo makes use of the common meter 4 and the popular Yoruba 6 meter to create his dance

rhythms. These he also achieves through the use of *quavers*, while the final cadences are marked by *crotchets* or *dotted crotchets*, rhythmic patterns used in most of his repertoire. Bell rhythm, otherwise known as *konkolo* beat derived from its onomatopoeic sound, is used all through the opera. The *konkolo* beat forms the basis of percussive rhythm in Yoruba music. In addition, Ladipo makes extensive use of the drum orchestra, the membranophone group of instruments. According to Robert G. Armstrong (Internet source), drum orchestra is

essentially Yoruba, which means that it is a marvellously flexible and sensitive instrument of expression. Its adaptation to the needs of the theatre is easily made, and it makes a tremendous contribution to the success of the work.

The *bata* set, an important set of drums associated with Sango, dominates the orchestra. As Tunji Vidal (1995) explains,

the *bata* drums, as part of the ritual symbol of Sango, are played extensively in the drama. They produce the electrifying force in the mode and are reinforced by the *dundun* drums, which are especially suited to both musical and linguistic functions... Ornamentation, noticeable throughout the music (especially where the *bata* drums use mills and very fast rolls) is a major feature of the drumming (160).

Ladipo succeeds in fusing different drum sets together as *Oba Koso* offers us the holy alliance of *bata* drum set and *dundun* and *igbin* sets. He must have done this in order to depict Sango both as a god (with *bata*) and as a king (with *dundun*). Indeed, this popular royal drum is prevalent all through the opera to herald Sango's entrance into the palace.

One interesting thing about Ladipo's artistic touch in *Oba Koso* is his use of *dundun* and *toromogbe* (gourd flute), as surrogate instruments for the human voice. Timi uses this style when he arrives at Ede, and Gbonka does the same as he recites incantations to cast a spell on Timi and place him under his power. The re-echoing of the voice by the instrument, which is a call-and-response form, is used by Duro Ladipo, to create specific effects and to fill the loneliness being suffered by the affected characters in the circumstances in which they find themselves.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, one can conclude that Duro Ladipo's *Oba Koso* has lived up to the musical genre of an opera, through manifestation and extensive use of forms associated with the Ancient Greek opera. Just like every other African composer of his time, Ladipo made copious use of the *pentatonic five-note scale*, that is to say, his songs are devoid of a fourth (f) and seventh (t) note of the *diatonic scale*. This actually authenticates Akpabot's (1986:103) claim that Nigerian traditional music makes use of the pentatonic scale.

It is also significant to point out that Duro Ladipo's opera is devoid of strict harmony as most of the songs are rendered in unison. However, after Sango has hanged himself, the *Oloris'* rendition of the following counter-claim that he did not hang is surprisingly harmonised, using the conventional parallel 3rd throughout the length and style of the composition.

Ooooooba ko so ooo ooo!
Ooooooba ko so ooo ooo!
Ooooooba ko so ooo ooo!
E mi 'o moun oyin fin s'afara o!
Emi 'o mo'bi oobe ti n'yo'wu o.
Emi o mo'bi oobe ti n'y'owu o
Emi o mo'bi oloo mi, Sango, ti r'oogun gbetu-gbetu se!
(*Oba Koso*:140).

[The king did not hang himself...!
The king did not hang himself...!
The king did not hang himself...!
I do not know how the bees make honeycombs!
I do not know how the little bat gets its fur!
I do not know where my Lord, Sango, has found the
rescue charms!]

There is also the principle of contrast, manifesting in several call-and-response patterns between characters as well as between the chorus and individual characters.

Oba Koso is a folk opera that embraces such arts as costumes, acting, mime, dancing, chant, scenery, with vocal and instrumental accompaniment. It also makes use of proverbs, riddles, chants, and charms, to make clear and distinct statements, and to produce magical effects. To grasp the full experience of *Oba Koso* or any other opera for that matter, the performance must appeal to both sight and hearing, in an audio-visual combination. This is because,

as Joseph Kerman (1980:167) has explained, operas are stage works, the actual performances or telecasts of which one must witness in order not to miss a vital component of the aesthetic effect. To appreciate *Oba Koso*, therefore, it is necessary to visualise the action, scenery and costuming, and to know the dramatic plot of the story as well as be familiar with the music. This musico-textual analysis of the play is based on a comprehensive study of an actual performance.

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