



Akin Euba

an interview
with Nigeria's
distinguished
composer

Music and poetry are traditionally linked in Africa, and both are a part of daily life. State ceremonies, religious rites, work in the fields, selling in the market place, the arrival of guests, the departure of friends, marriages, funerals, puberty ceremonies, sickness, are occasions for music. The itinerant praise-singer is a familiar sight even today in West Africa. Through him history and local legends are kept alive.

This bonding of poetry and music is not always maintained by contemporary artists. The composer of music is involved in a transition from performing to writing a score to be played by others. The poet now shapes a written language, rather than a common oral tradition.

But the links between poetry and music have not been broken entirely. As Leopold Sedar Senghor, the poet-statesman of Senegal, says: "The poem is not complete until it is sung, words and music together." Many of his poems are published with notations: "For two flutes and a distant drum" or "for balafong (xylophone)."



Armstrong, Robert Pierson. 1974. "Akin Euba." *Field Museum of Natural History bulletin* 45(3), 3-16.

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