The Warrior's Wives: a Tragic Opera in Two Acts with a Prologue

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THE WARRIOR’S WIVES: A TRAGIC OPERA IN TWO ACTS WITH A PROLOGUE

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THE WARRIOR’S WIVES: A TRAGIC OPERA IN TWO ACTS WITH A PROLOGUE

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The Warrior’s Wives is a tragic opera in two acts that tells the stories of each of three women – Ikuku, Imiri, and Oku – married to the warrior, Ekpe. Inspired by Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, this tragedy allows the audience to gain three different perspectives on the shared narrative of the women. I have adapted the story into my own libretto, developing the wives through my own original stories. These stories serve the greater storyline of identity, destiny and a person’s ability to shape their fate through their actions. Through this, the project explores issues of duty, love, fear, motherhood, loyalty, oppression and vengeance.
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Introduction

In this paper, I will explain the development and theoretical concepts behind my first opera, *The Warrior’s Wives*. Among the topics to be discussed are the narrative structure, musical form and larger extra-musical concepts that pertain to the opera. I will also explain how my approach to the story affected my ideas for staging.

My desire to write this opera was the result of having recently read Chinua Achebe’s (1930 – 2013) novel *Things Fall Apart*. Published in the 1959, the novel is the story of an Ibo (now spelled Igbo) warrior named Okonkwo and his struggles for finding prosperity and happiness in the face of his own fears and foibles. Achebe’s tale bluntly reveals the brutality that can arise from fear in the persons of Okonkwo and the Christian missionaries that ultimately take over the land.

Generative Questions

Reading *Things Fall Apart* led me to ask myself several initial questions, which became the generative issues I considered in developing my opera project.

“Why do these women stay?” was the question I asked most frequently. In the novel, Okonkwo’s village is a place where marriage is arranged and women are excluded from making decisions for the good of the society.¹ As I read it, I was not surprised by how rigidly the sexes were defined. My impression was that the Igbo world that Achebe described was not one that recognized a woman’s free will. However, Okonkwo’s

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behavior towards his wives could be so beastly and inhumane that it seemed unfathomable, no matter how patriarchal that society, these women would stay.

In fact, there is precedent in Achebe’s novel of women leaving their husbands. Specifically relating to Okonkwo, the narrator explains that the warrior’s second wife – Ekwefi – first fell in love with Okonkwo after witnessing his prowess as a young wrestler, some twenty years prior to the setting of *Things Fall Apart*. However, she married another man because Okonwo could not afford her bride price. Eventually, she left her first husband to be with Okonkwo. It seemed to me that this could not have occurred without a certain amount of controversy, yet according to the narrator, these events were twenty or more years in the past, and there is no indication of her having a diminished reputation.

She ran away from one husband to be with another man that became her husband. So, within the societal structure there was precedence for a woman leaving her family, one that all adult members of the family knew. Yet, the other wives chose to stay with the brutal and capricious Okonkwo. Ekwefi suffers mightily at the hands of Okonkwo; at one point, she is almost shot to death. But the most touching story recounted in the novel is a moment shared between Ekwefi and Okonkwo. Upon reflection it was clear to me that the wives emotional motivations were in some way stronger than external cultural pressures to stay. That is not to say that these motivations were not influenced by social mores, but the emotional attachment, in my estimation, made each woman’s bond to Okonkwo more visceral.

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3 Ibid, 1.
4 Ibid. 95-109.
After coming to the conclusion that each wife must have different motivations for staying with Okonkwo, I began to wonder about each wife’s perception of her husband. Different motivations suggest different interpretations of his behavior, or at least different justifications. To me, this meant that one action by Okonkwo would have three different interpretations, four if you include the perspective of the reader. This interested me because each individual could recount the details of Okonkwo’s life truthfully but potentially there could be wild variance between each story. I wanted to capture the tension between these perceptions. At first, this meant isolating my protagonist Ekpe’s interactions with his wives, but in the final version of the opera, I decided that the juxtaposition of Ekpe as the absentee husband, the ardent lover, and the menacing tyrant would be stronger.

The next question I considered was “What are the universal themes of Things Fall Apart?” and whether I wanted to keep some or all for my opera. The first part of Achebe’s novel explores Okonkwo’s pervasive use of fear to control others, both within and outside his family. This use of fear is so prevalent and powerful that Achebe often describes the characters in terms of animal behavior, as in the following passage:

“At the mention of [Okonkwo’s daughter] Ezinma’s name Ekwefi jerked her head like an animal that had sniffed death in the air.”\(^5\) Okonkwo’s own fear, as mentioned before, leads to incredibly brutal attacks on members of his family, and even the murder of a young boy who had been placed in his family’s care.\(^6\) This particular incident becomes very important in my reinterpretation of the story, as described below.

\(^5\) Ibid, 100.
\(^6\) Ibid, 61.
Okonkwo’s fear also led to his tight control of the family, which was reinforced by the patriarchal structure of the society of which the family was a part. The idea of the worth of a woman and her agency within a family built on polygamy was a constant theme in the novel. There is systematic delineation between masculinity and femininity: “[Okonkwo’s] mother and his sisters worked hard enough, but they grew women’s crops, like coco-yams, beans and cassava. Yam, the king of crops, was a man’s crop.”

There are male and female distinctions in chores, stories, and food. The most senior men in the village negotiate treaties with other villages, and settle disputes in their midst. Women are expected to cook, feed their families, prepare their daughters for marriage, and raise feminine crops. Achebe also points to the position of women in the village by never referring to Okonkwo’s first wife by name. Although she holds the position of “ruler of the women folk,” she is identified only as the mother of Okonkwo’s heir, Nwoye. Her agency is so devalued that she is not afforded the courtesy of having a name independent of her oldest male child.

Other themes I noticed were the tension between one’s identity versus one’s destiny or fate. Achebe ruminates on Okonkwo’s struggle to distance himself from the legacy of his father, and to tightly control his own identity among the village elders. His single-minded pursuit of success leads to a meteoric rise from poverty to village elder. However it also leads to a myopic view of propriety within the village. He rejects all

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7 Ibid, 23.
8 Ibid, 20. In the novel, Achebe is referring to a different woman, whom he names. So Nwoye’s mother’s lack of a name is particularly significant.
things that are feminine and, therefore, weak. “You, Unoka, are known in all the clan for
the weakness of your machete and your hoe.”

Okonkwo’s musician father Unoka was famous for amassing large debts that he
never repaid. Okonkwo fiercely fought against his father’s legacy of lack of industry
and titles by becoming a high profile wrestler and warrior among his people. Unoka’s
pacifism particularly offended Okonkwo, because he viewed such a stance as particularly
feminine.

Ritual

Also of importance to me regarding these themes of identity and destiny is the
role that ritual plays in the village culture in reinforcing the belief system. One effective
feature in Achebe’s novel is the pervasiveness of Igbo spirituality throughout the
narrative. The reader becomes familiar with members of the Igbo pantheon and the rituals
that are meant to encourage good crop yields. I wanted to keep some sense of this
spiritual world in my adaptation, but I did not want to invent or borrow any deities for
this purpose. Instead, I decided I needed something that at once focused on the
interpersonal relationships between wife, husband and village, but also hinted at a
societal belief in a higher power.

In her article “Defining the Need for a Definition,” religious studies scholar
Catherine Bell defines ritual as “those activities that address the gods or other

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9 Ibid, 17.
11 Ibid.
12 Evangelos Kyriakidis, “Archaeologies of Ritual.” in The Archaeology of Ritual, Edited by Evangelos
Kyriakidis (Los Angeles: Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, 2007), 296.
supernatural powers.” Bell goes on to lay out other aspects of ritual that are not explicit in the definition. Specifically, she focuses on the impact of systematic adherence to ritual, societal memory through ritual, and ritual’s relationship to power. On the last topic Bell states: “...ritual is the thing to do when one is negotiating for authority, and when the power one needs to tap must have an extra-communal source.”

It is Bell’s last assertion that I was focused on when I decided how to construct the main ritual of the opera. The wedding rituals of *The Warrior’s Wives* are the final acts in Ekpe’s negotiation for power and dominion over the women he is marrying. They gain their legitimacy from the presence of the village and the collective memory of past weddings. The ritual allows the villagers to enter into a pact with each other and their ancestors. I also wanted to include a significant amount of symbolic gesture, as this is also a vital part of ritualistic behavior.

A wedding is a particularly elegant way for me to accomplish my aims of demonstrating the women’s loss of power in a societally sanctioned fashioned. It also appeals to societal memory – the ritual is as it has always been, as far as the current society can tell. I will go into more specific detail about each of the weddings in Chapter 5’s discussion of Act I.

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14 Ibid, 286.
Chapter 1

Influences

_The Warrior’s Wives_ has a clear place within the history of opera. Perhaps it is easy to see how it fits within contemporary opera, but there are roots that extend back to the 18th century works of composers including Mozart and Gluck. In addition to the influence of Achebe’s novel, three operas in particular had an impact on my approach to my piece.

**Don Giovanni**

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s (1756 – 1791) opera _Don Giovanni_, written in 1787, is the story of the exploits of an immoral aristocrat in medieval Seville and his eventual downfall. There is no question about Giovanni’s moral character. At the beginning of the opera the audience sees him, in disguise, attempting to flee a woman he has spent the night with – in more modern productions, he has raped her. Giovanni then murders her father, who is trying to defend his daughter’s honor. The audience witnesses further scandals and insults perpetrated by the count until his inevitable, fiery demise.\(^\text{17}\)

As I read _Things Fall Apart_ and Okonkwo’s narrative arch unfolded, I was reminded of Mozart's masterpiece. Given the scale of a novel compared to a libretto, the warrior is understandably a more complex character than the Count, and the reader is able to relate to Okonkwo’s humanity at times. Still, I was struck at certain similarities between the opera and the novel. Okonkwo and Giovanni are flawed men at the center of

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\(^{17}\) Mary Ellis Peltz and Robert Lawrence. _The Metropolitan Opera Guide_. (New York: Random House, 1939), 35.
societies with prescribed notions of proper behavior and inherent disdain for women. In each narrative, there are three women that are vital to the continuation of the action. In turn, the women are each drawn to the men despite mounting evidence that they should not be. Last, they both commit murders that lead to their ultimate downfall.

The Death of Klinghoffer

John Adams’ (1947) opera The Death of Klinghoffer is based on the 1985 hijacking of the Achille Lauro cruise ship. The libretto was written by Alice Goodman and the original stage direction was by Peter Sellars. The plot follows the passengers of the Achille Lauro on the fateful day that Palestinian terrorists take control of the ship. By the end of the ordeal, there is one death – paraplegic Jewish-American Leon Klinghoffer is thrown overboard and drowns.¹⁸

The Metropolitan Opera was embroiled in a controversy over its 2014 staging of this work, with accusations of anti-Semitism and victim-blaming directed at the institution and composer. Goodman’s and Adams’ attempt to present the Palestinians as more than one-dimensional villains was the main source of consternation. The opening of the opera addresses the founding of Israel and its impact on Palestinians. The connection is made between this incident and the hijacking. The controversy is especially fueled by the fact that the events depicted in the opera actually happened. Leon Klinghoffer’s daughters are on record disapproving of the opera – their objections were printed in programs provided by the Met – on the grounds that the libretto is anti-Semitic and glorifies terror.¹⁹

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¹⁹ Alex Ross, “Long Wake: The Death of Klinghoffer at the Met.” Newyorker.com, November 3,
Politics aside, I found the attempt to present two “truths” in order to give a greater context to be a desirable approach for me to adopt for my opera. Because of the recent attention Adams’ opera has received, I became keenly aware of the unintended impact a new work can have on the public discourse. In *Klinghoffer*, this issue was enhanced by the notoriety of the artists and institutions involved, but I think it is still important to be aware of how people may interpret my work, and how it relates to my intent. In my opera, I wanted to avoid close ties to a particular culture or time, in part to prevent my ultimate intent being obscured by features like the race and culture of the characters.

**Entanglements**

*Entanglements* is a site-specific opera written in 2013 by Charles N. Mason, who also wrote the libretto. This sprawling work concerns the lives of four main characters: Akala, an artist; Sulla, a dictator; Janice, a person who suffers from epilepsy; and Marcus, a soap opera star. Mason explains:

“…*Entanglements* is, besides its sociological meaning, a term in physics that refers to particles having an effect on each other without having physical contact. And thus it is with the characters of the opera. Each of the four characters is independent from the other, yet there are unseen events that connect all four and that influence each in different ways.”

Staged at the Lowe Art Museum at the University of Miami, the opera fills the space and allows the audience to choose his/her own path through the narratives. In all, there are 20 scenes, but in his synopsis, Mason states that it is not necessary for an audience member to see them all to form their own narrative. This is an opera that endeavors to strip the

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21 Ibid.
necessity for a completely linear, beginning to end progression from the audience’s experience.\textsuperscript{22}

This opera had a profound effect on me. Having the opportunity to see and experience an immersive work like this opened my eyes to the possibility of a similar approach to my work. In past projects, I became interested in circumventing the traditional separation of audience and performer. What Mason showed me through \textit{Entanglements} was the importance that the immersive experience needs to grow organically from the construction of the piece itself. Though the final version of \textit{The Warrior's Wives} is more traditional than \textit{Entanglements}, I still preserve some of the immersive quality I admired in Mason's opera, though the story structure is much simpler.

\textbf{Past Output}

In my own output as a composer and improviser, I have experimented with changing extra-musical parameters to enhance the audience’s experience of my work. Improvisation turned out to be a relatively easy way to invite audience participation beyond applauding or booing at the end. In 2010 I held a series of solo improvised concerts in which I explored the sonic possibilities of the venue, changing locations to find the different resonant tones of a house or black box. I also attempted to force the audience to move around and abandon the traditional proscenium orientation. After some prompting initially, the audiences would eventually feel that they were part of the performance and would interact with me.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
Composing such an audience experience proved to be trickier. I have experienced three interrelated obstacles to the success of non-traditional staging: insufficient instructions from the composer that lead to lack of performer dedication, which is met with disinterest from the audience. In my experience, when these three problems arise, the piece becomes a gimmick in the eyes of the audience.

My first attempt at subverting the audience’s expectation of how the action unfolds was my ballet, _Elvrutu’s Fall_ (2012). The ballet originally called for a mixture of live dancers and stop-motion animation projected onto elements on the stage. West African folklore, Greek and Norse mythology, and fairy tales inspired the scenario, which I wrote in 2011. Elvrutu, the princess of Avianalia, must choose a husband from amongst the deities of her kingdom. Her choice leads to her banishment to the underworld as the first bird, a vulture.

I am still waiting for the opportunity to stage the ballet as I originally intended, but I was fortunate enough to get six performances of a version using marionettes instead of animation in 2013 as a result of winning a commission from the Miami Light Project. What this experience taught me was how to deal with practical details for such interdisciplinary productions; especially how big a factor time is in creating a ballet or opera. The importance of a good dramaturge that is dedicated to my vision became apparent during this process as well. It also gave me the confidence to know that I could write more detailed scenarios for other theatrical projects.

I also benefited from attending the John Duffy Institute. Under the direction of composer Libby Larsen, I was invited to observe readings of several operas and listen to the feedback of dramaturges, producers, and librettists. They consistently raised questions
about motivation and how the action develops on the stage. Larsen often reminded the composers to be clear to themselves about what role the music plays in the opera.

*The Warrior’s Wives* represents a maturation of my ideas on opera and ballet. After my experience with *Elrrutu’s Fall* and my participation in the John Duffy Institute, I had a more nuanced view of how to approach my own opera. I will discuss staging further in Chapter 4.
Chapter 2

The Story

*The Warrior’s Wives* is my own story of a family brought together by the ambition and conquests of Ekpe, an acclaimed warrior. After the Prologue, the audience watches as three seemingly independent story lines combine into one. As the narrative unfolds over eleven scenes and a finale, we become acquainted with the different sides of Ekpe's personality. He is ambivalent towards one wife, deeply in love with the other, and eager to subjugate the third.

**Table 1.** Cast for *The Warrior's Wives.*

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Voice Type</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ikuku</td>
<td>The first wife, represented by the element air. She is Ekpe’s most dutiful wife.</td>
<td>Contralto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imiri</td>
<td>Ekpe’s second wife and true love. She is represented by the element water.</td>
<td>Lyric Soprano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oku</td>
<td>Ekpe’s third wife. She is a slave to Ekpe and loves another man. She is represented by the element of fire.</td>
<td>Coloratura Soprano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ekpe</td>
<td>The titular warrior. His acquisition of power and conquests in battle allow him to draw the other characters to him.</td>
<td>Bass-Baritone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oha</td>
<td>Oku’s original love who is given to Ekpe as a ransom to prevent war between Oha and Ekpe's tribes.</td>
<td>Tenor</td>
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Synopsis

The opera begins on the day of Ikuku's wedding as she arrives to her betrothed's village. She announces her arrival and her intention to marry the warrior, Ekpe. He arrives shortly after to formerly present Ikuku to the village, before the wedding begins. During the wedding ceremony, Ekpe presents a bowl of white flowers to Ikuku. He beckons her to blow the flowers out as a representation of her identifying element of air. He then offers her a mask, which she is to wear at all times when she is seen in public.

In a hut in another village, we see Oku as she sleeps. She awakens excited about the vivid dream she has just experienced. In it, she encountered a young man with magical eyes. While she continues to ruminate on this wonderful premonition, we change scenes and find another excited young woman. Imiri, a young woman from yet another village, excitedly exclaims that soon she will be married. Barely able to contain herself, she is unaware that she has a visitor. Ekpe is standing behind her, smiling. He shares Imiri’s excitement about their upcoming nuptials. We next see Oku in a field with friends, playing hide-and-seek. Weeks have passed since she had her dream, but it is still on her mind. As she runs and laughs, she also obsesses over the word “love.” Meanwhile, Oha observes the frivolity. He is from a neighboring village, but his family knows Oku’s. He falls madly in love with her. He finally gets her attention, and there is an instant recognition of their mutual love. Ecstatic, the couple serenade each other about the improbability of their meeting, and how it is wonderful to be in each other’s arms.

Imiri’s wedding day arrives. A solemn affair, it is nevertheless a happy occasion. Ekpe assigns her the element water, because she quenches his desire for love, and soothes him when he is troubled.
Oku runs home to tell her family about her encounter with Oha. However, her parents inform her that she is no longer an available woman. The village has given her to another village as a ransom to prevent war with a neighboring village. Stunned, she is led away as her family proclaims, “You must go.” We next see her in chains, unable to stand as the village calls for the start of the wedding. Ikuku supports her weight, as Imiri looks on. Like the other two women, Oku is given a mask and a bowl. In honor of her youth, Ekpe assigns her fire.

Six months later, Ekpe returns from battle to much fanfare. He calls his wives out to the common area to show them his new acquisition, his slave Oha. Oku is stunned to see her love standing there, though Oha is unable to recognize her because she is wearing a mask. Still, he finds that one of the strange women seems familiar to him.

Ikuku, who is six months pregnant, requests that Ekpe spend the night with her. He scoffs at this notion and instead sends Oha. Oha explains that he was given away by his village to avoid war. She then tells him that the youngest wife came to the family the same way. She reassures him that the young wife is evidence that he will be treated well by the family. When Oha asks who this woman is, Ikuku tells him her name is Oku.

While this conversation is going on, Oku paces in her hut, unable to believe that Oha is again so close.

Ekpe decides to spend the night with Imiri. After a brief discussion of Ekpe’s family, they eagerly reaffirm their love for each other. Meanwhile, Oha sneaks out and makes his way to Oku’s hut. He bumps into Oku outside, in between Oku’s and Imiri’s huts. They hug and kiss, and Oku’s mask falls to the ground.
At the break of day, Oha makes his way back to Ikuku, who he finds in pain. Ekpe looks for Oku, determined to finally consummate their marriage, who has repeatedly refused his company since their wedding day. As he chases Oku, Ikuku suffers a miscarriage, while Oha looks on helplessly. When Oku is unable to fight Ekpe off, she lets out a weak but desperate cry for Oha. This sends Ekpe into a rage. He calls for Oha to show what happens to slaves in his family. A struggle ensues, and Ekpe kills Oha.

Stunned, Oku looks around herself. She finds the remains of her bowl, which she dropped as Ekpe chased her. She picks up a piece and resolves to use it. She walks up behind a stunned Ekpe and slits his throat. Imiri, unable to bear the sight of her dead husband, takes her own life with the same shard of the bowl. Oku sees a weakened Ikuku hobbling out of her hut. She walks over to her and supports the elder woman’s weight as they walk off to an uncertain future.
Chapter 3

Developing the Opera

Despite the powerful effect Achebe’s novel had on me and my process in creating this piece, I preserved very little. The similarities between The Warrior’s Wives and Things Fall Apart are fairly cosmetic. Both stories are about a warrior and his family. The family lives in a compound that has the main hut where the warrior lives and three smaller huts for each wife. Also, there is a boy who is given to the family as a ransom for peace, whom the warrior eventually kills.

However, there are many substantial differences between the two. The narrative is told from the perspective of the wives as opposed to that of the warrior. Due to the focus on the wives, we witness each of the weddings. In Things Fall Apart, Okonkwo was already married to his wives, though it is not completely clear how long. Also, the slave in the opera is never accepted in the family and has a romantic past with one of the wives who is herself a ransom to the warrior. The ransomed wife has a strong desire to leave the family, because she is essentially Ekpe’s slave. These last two are key deviations from Things Fall Apart. In Achebe’s novel, Okonkwo eventually regards the slave Ikemefuna as a son, and none of the wives attempt to leave.23 Oha’s murder at the hands of Ekpe is the final act that encourages Oku to kill Ekpe out of a desire for vengeance, another key difference with Things Fall Apart.

The setting for my piece also differs from that of Things Fall Apart. As I was creating the opera, it was very important to me to place the story outside of a cultural and temporal context. I was afraid that drawing a strong association with a West

23 Achebe, Things Fall Apart, 52.
African tribe where polygamy was a normal practice, or making it an American family, would have deleterious effects on *The Warrior’s Wives*. Explicitly identifying a culture would make it seem, I believed, that I was attempting to comment on specific customs that in reality I was not concerned with depicting accurately. It is a subtle distinction, but I am not commenting on the practice of polygamy, nor is it clear that any of the women involved are against the practice. Oku, the third wife, was against her marriage to Ekpe because it was against her will, not due to perceived subjugation within a polygamous family structure.
**Chapter 4**

**Dramatic Structure**

The opera consists of two acts with a Prologue. Act I is comprised of seven scenes. The time covered in this act is best counted in years. The action unfolds quickly, in order for me to introduce the characters and provide fuller character details. When I was writing the opera, I wanted to reflect the optimism that accompanies Ekpe’s career advancement, the satisfaction that Ikuku feels from being the first wife of an important man, Imiri’s ecstasy for her coming nuptials with Ekpe, and Oku’s excitement for her uncertain, but promising future. The denial of Oku’s happiness that occurs in Scene 6 is further portrayed by the musical shift in mood.

I wanted to emphasize the suddenness of the change in Oku’s fortune. In order to accomplish this, I paid special attention to when the weddings would occur. Since they are nearly identical musically, I felt that setting up an expectation of when the weddings occurred and then subverting it would help me deliver the emotional impact I needed at the end of the act. In table 2, I show the placement of the weddings and the mood that they are associated with. The expectation is that I continue to place the weddings multiple scenes apart, but instead Oku’s wedding occurs only two scenes after Imiri’s.

**Table 2.** Act I scenes and the general mood associated with them. Wedding scenes are in bold.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene 1</th>
<th>Scene 2</th>
<th>Scene 3</th>
<th>Scene 4</th>
<th>Scene 5</th>
<th>Scene 6</th>
<th>Scene 7</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scene Title</td>
<td><strong>Ikuku’s Wedding</strong></td>
<td>Oku Awakens</td>
<td>“The day is near!”</td>
<td>“Could it be?”</td>
<td><strong>Imiri’s Wedding</strong></td>
<td>“You must go.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mood</td>
<td>Optimisic/Ecstatic</td>
<td>Pessimistic/Frightened</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Entr’acte represents the passage of six months between Oku’s wedding and the beginning of Act II. In contrast to the predominantly happy atmosphere and mostly attacca transitions in the music, Act II relies more on spoken dialogue and long breaks between musical numbers. Act II features the wives together and their stories overlap each other. Scene 9, entitled “Oha the slave,” is a particularly good example of this. Ikuku and Oha have a conversation with each other, which is the main action of the scene. Meanwhile, on the other side of the stage, Oku, accompanied by marimba, sings an improvised monologue, in which she voices her disbelief in seeing Oha in her village. I will go into more detail about this scene in Chapter 5.

**The Wives**

Each wife is assigned an element. Ikuku is represented by wind; Imiri is represented by water; and Oku is represented by fire. The remaining element, earth, represents Ekpe, from which this family has sprung. The bowl ceremony is the moment at which the women cease to define themselves, and are given new identities by Ekpe. The wives accept an empty bowl, made of clay, from their betrothed and listen as he explains the significance of the receptacle and the wife in question’s identity. They are then required to carry the bowl wherever they go, only setting it down when they are in their respective huts.

In the Achebe, the wives are more repertory stock characters with superficially realized back-stories. This is not a criticism, but I did want to elevate the women and allow them to have their own stories. I wanted to explore more deeply the nature of each woman’s relationship to Ekpe. I also wanted to define Ekpe through the three perspectives of the women. I liked the irony he initially defines each wife while the final
verdict on his character is reached after the wives define him in their own stories. I wanted to experiment with truth when it is observed in different circumstances.

I also wanted to explore the three types of relationships I observed in the Achebe. Ikuku represents a transactional, contract based relationship in which she performs her duties as a wife. In exchange, she does not want for security and wealth. Imiri, on the other hand, has a relationship based on mutual love. As the audience watches her story unfold, this is the relationship that humanizes Ekpe. Last, Oku’s marriage is one based on fear. She is coerced into a relationship with a man she does not know in order to prevent her village from being destroyed.

The stories occur simultaneously and the audience will be asked to move between them, choosing which subsequent wife to see next. The ideal experience would be for a group of three friends, where each sees a different wife’s story then rotates to the wives they have not seen yet. How would this affect their perception of the events, and specifically Ekpe’s character? This was an exciting thing for me to consider as I was developing the opera.

**Staging**

Staging for *The Warrior’s Wives* has evolved from my original idea. Initially, I had intended for the action of the play to unveil in separate rooms, and to keep each wife's story isolated. The reasoning behind this was to allow the audience to see each wife in her own self-contained world and to abandon the typical proscenium arrangement. I particularly liked the modular nature of this set up. The audience would be allowed to experience the wives’ stories in whichever order they chose.
However, narratively, I began to grow leery of some of the repetitions required, specifically the recurrence of the murder. I feared that it would overpower other elements of the opera. This particular stage design would have relied upon a significant amount of sound reinforcement and coordination, since the main instrumental ensemble would not be in the same room as the wives except during the weddings. For this opera, I desired an acoustic sound world without amplification, which considerably alters the sound. Though I avoid setting the opera in a particular time and place, it still felt like the use of amplification was antithetical to the atmosphere I wanted to create. This last point persuaded me that I needed to design a new staging approach. In the future, I intend to create another opera that uses such a layout, but that one that relies on an electro-acoustic score as a compliment to the setting.

The approach I decided upon preserves some of the modular and immersive aspects of my original idea while doing away with the isolation and coordination needed in the first iteration. My new staging utilizes a carousel that is initially partitioned into thirds. Each wife lives out her narrative within her assigned section of the stage during Act I. Scene to scene; there will be one wife that is highlighted while the other wives pantomime everyday life. It is up to the individual audience members which wife they observe and at what time. They are allowed to walk around the stage and choose different vantage points. In this way, I preserve the three operas-in-one narrative structure. As the women marry Ekpe, the partitions are taken away. The first partition, separating Ikuku and Imiri, is removed during Imiri’s wedding to symbolize her inclusion in Ekpe's family. The remaining two partitions are removed just before Oku's wedding, when her family informs her that she has been given to Ekpe.
**Figure 1.** Stage plot for *The Warrior’s Wives* Act I. Arrow indicates direction in which the stage rotates.

During the Entr’acte, the partitions are rearranged to resemble huts for each wife.

Act II is staged for proscenium viewing to emphasize that the women are now part of the same family and story. This nod to theatrical tradition is also meant to represent how supposedly conventional the women’s lives are.

**Figure 2.** Stage plot for *The Warrior’s Wives* Act II.
Chapter 5

Analysis

In this chapter, I discuss my approach to writing the music for *The Warrior’s Wives*. The methods I employ are not unique to this piece among my output, but I used them more extensively for the opera, in order to ensure that the piece is cohesive both musically and narratively. When I am trying to generate material, I normally work with sets of four pitches, as I did with the opera. I find that when I engage with my material in this way, it allows me to work within this pitch world in a way akin to tonal composers. The structures available to me become quite familiar and begin to take on functional tendencies.

Musical Materials

I first considered the overarching themes of the opera. The essential theme in *The Warrior’s Wives* is the struggle against the unstoppable march of fate. I wanted a motive that could serve as a shorthand for the inevitability I associate with thoughts of destiny. I decided that I wanted the fate/destiny motive to be an ostinato or a passacaglia. At key moments, the musical fragment returns to further solidify the close association the narrative has with fate. I eventually settled on the pitch-class set (0156).

Figure 3. Pitch-class set (0156), the generative musical material for *The Warrior’s Wives*.

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
0 & 1 & 5 & 6 \\
\end{array}
\]

I was drawn to the tonal implications of this set. The relationship of the tritone to the major third it surrounds clearly calls to mind the common practice period dominant-tonic...
axis. However, I did not want to write a tonal piece. Instead, I wanted the tonal ostinato to be a musical reminder of the adherence to social norms and expectations.

**Figure 4.** The destiny motive found at the beginning of *The Warrior’s Wives* with pitch-class set analysis.

![Solemn](image)

The issue became one of how to generate more material out of such a restrictive set. It only contains the intervals of a minor second, major third, perfect fourth, and tritone. First, I reconsidered my set and its characteristic intervals. Analyzing the set yielded an interval vector set of (200121) where each integer represents the frequency of each interval-class starting with the minor second. Then, starting on pitch-class C, I chose the subsequent pitch by the distance of the next largest interval. In other words, to find the new set I started with C3 then added a half step, resulting in D♭3. Next, I chose the pitch F3, which is a major 3rd above D♭3. Then, after F comes B♭3, and after B♭3 comes E. In figure 5, I show the set as I derived it, out to seven pitches. I also show the prime form. I call this a progressive derivation, since the intervals are increasing in size, including inversions. That means I start with a minor 2\textsuperscript{nd}, then a major 3\textsuperscript{rd}, perfect 4\textsuperscript{th}, tritone, perfect 5\textsuperscript{th}, minor 6\textsuperscript{th} and so on. Despite mapping the original set through F, the resulting set has much more possibility.
Figure 5. An Intervallically Derived Set, progressive form and its original form.

It is also an aggregation of three transposed forms of the original set (0156). I primarily use this set melodically.

Figure 6. Pitch-class set (0123678) and its (0156) subsets.

Voice-leading Using (0156)

The primary set influenced my voice-leading decisions in this area as much as it did with regards to melodic and harmonic structures. I employed two types of voice leading practices: oblique motion and what I call Set Influenced Motion. Oblique motion occurs when two transpositions of the primary set share the same pitch in the same voice. Within the category of oblique motion are three types. The first type is Common Tone Motion (CTM). This occurs whenever the two harmonies share one pitch in the same voice. The second type is Common Pair Motion involving a minor second (CPM-1).
This motion occurs when two harmonies share the same minor second. The third type is
is **Common Pair Motion** involving a tritone (CPM-6). In the early stages of writing the
opera, this was my preferred means of voice leading.

**Figure 7.** The three types of oblique motion that occur in *The Warrior's Wives.*

I found the limitation of moving between transpositions of the primary set helpful as I
became familiar with the sound world I was working in. Strict application of CTM yields
the most varied progressions, since each pitch in the set can be one of four members of
the following set. CPM-1 and CPM-6 are more restricted, allowing strict adherence for at
most two additional harmonies to the original. That means to have any sort of variety in harmonies, the CPMs must be paired with CTM.

Figure 8. Example of CTM usage in The Warrior’s Wives, mm 706-712.

In the figure above, there is an instance of CTM. In measures 709-710, the alto flute, bass clarinet, and horn are scored in octaves. As the horn remains on pitch, the flute and clarinet parts move outward, settling on an incomplete form of the primary set, transposed by a minor 7th.

As I progressed through the opera, I developed another system of voice leading, which I call Set Influenced Motion (SIM). In SIM, I utilize the primary set and the interval-class vector map as blueprints for the harmonic motion. Pitch-Class Set Motion (PCSM) is a case where the bass line is the primary set. There is a progressive and regressive application of this method. Progressive application of SIM means I use the
original set in prime form, while regressive means I use the retrograde form. Most instances of voice leading in *The Warrior’s Wives* are progressive.

**Figure 9.** Examples of Pitch-Set Class Motion (PCSM) and Interval-Class Motion (ICM), strict.

The second case of SIM is what I call **Interval-Class Motion.** In this method, the interval between bass pitches expands according to the IV with each new harmony. This is very similar to the **Intervally Derived Set** mentioned earlier in this chapter. In figure 9, I show the strict forms of PCSM and ICM. Strict in this case means that the harmonic structure remains (0156) for all harmonies in the progression. Even with this restriction, SIM is a much more dynamic means of voice leading than CTM or CPM.

There are also “free” forms of both PCSM and ICM. When the progression is free, the set order is applied to the entire harmony. The goal is more diverse voicings, as opposed to maintaining the same structure for all harmonies as happens with oblique motion.

A mixture of SIM and oblique motion voice leading is typical of the music of the opera. It first appears in the first scene, just before the wedding (figure 11). The bass is
particularly illustrative of this technique. In measures 94-96, I outline the primary set, in an example of PCSM. The excerpt ends with the bass line moving in ICM.

**Figure 10.** Free versions of PCSM and ICM.

In measures 94-95, the viola holds A3 as violin II holds B♭ as the rest of the voices move to fill in the new harmony, a clear usage of CPM-1. Meanwhile, the cello part is an example of free application of ICM and the bass is controlled by PCSM. The upper voices demonstrate a mixture of CPM-1 (mm 94-95) and CTM (mm 96-97). In 11b, the bass motion is dictated by ICM.
**Figure 11.** An example of free PCSM as the upper voices display CPM-1 and CTM in Scene 1 of *The Warrior’s Wives*, mm. 94-96, 98

[Sheet music representation of the example]
In the next example, an excerpt from scene 3, I applied ICM freely to all voices, and there is a little use of CTM, and CPM-6.

**Figure 12.** A completely free application of CTM, CPM-6, and ICM found in Scene 3 of *The Warrior’s Wives*, mm. 405-411.

**Harmonic Possibilities in (0156)**

Set (0156) serves as both a motivic and a harmonic cell. This coupled with the intervallic process I described above influenced the bulk of my musical decisions, which
I then further refined by ear. This means that there are few examples of pure usage of the derived sets that I will describe, but they are the starting point for the resultant music.

**Figure 13.** Pitch-class set (0156) as harmony. Chord Type-1 (CT-1.0).

![Figure 13](image)

I essentially worked with two structures, or chord types. The first, CT-1, is simply the verticalization of the set (0156). This is the primary chord type for the opera. For the purposes of this analysis, I will refer to different CT-1s by their transposition number. For example, when dealing with the prime form of the set, its harmonic form will be referred to as CT-1.0, whereas the harmony a tritone away will be called CT-1.6.

**Figure 14.** CT-1 harmonies in Scene 2, mm 217-223.

![Figure 14](image)
Figure 14 is a clear example of CT-1 harmony. In this example, an early excerpt from Scene 2, the progression is CT-1.11 to CT-1.10 then CT-1.9. The motion type here is mainly CTM. In measure 218, there is an example of an anticipation of CT-1.10 using free ICM. This takes place in the vibraphone. Starting on the down beat F4, the intervals proceed as follows: a tritone up to B4 then a perfect 4\textsuperscript{th} up to E5, which reinforces CT-1.11. This is followed by a descending figure starting on with a tritone down to B\textsubscript{4} followed by a perfect 5\textsuperscript{th} down to E\textsubscript{4}. Shorty after this excerpt, perhaps the most free application of the tools described in this chapter can be observed.

**Figure 15.** An interpolation of CT-1.4 and CT-1.8, mm 229-231.

In this excerpt, the harmony is less clear. Measures 229-231 are an interpolation of two harmonies, CT-1.4 and CT-1.8. The pitch-class A serves as the common tone between the two, but at this moment of joy for Oku, I wanted the music to reflect weightlessness and unknown possibility. Oscillating between these two harmonies was
the best means for achieving this. I then support Oku’s singing with CT-1.9, when she enters at measure 234.

I also derived another harmony type, Chord Type-2 (CT-2). Earlier, I explained what I meant by intervallically progressive derivation of new sets. CT-2 harmonies are examples of intervallically regressive derived sets. In this process, I build the harmony using intervals that get smaller as I ascend. Unlike CT-1, which I identify by transposition type and transposition, CT-2 is more of a process for deriving a harmony. Thus I don’t identify them by transposition, as the process fundamentally stays the same. The resulting harmony would not necessarily have a strict transpositional relationship with other CT-2s. Figure 13 illustrates one voicing of CT-2.

Figure 16. Chord Type-2 (CT-2). Intervals are indicated by half steps.

Using CT-2, I would most often start with a minor 9th interval between the bass and next voice. At other times I would build the harmony starting with a major 10th or a major 7th. I would also skip intervals in this process, especially the tritone.
I also derived more melodic sets, this time emulating the original set. The resulting material was more symmetric. I call this particular process **symmetric augmentation** (SA). This is a process in which I choose an axis, either a pitch or the original set, around which I expand using an alternating sequence of major 3rds and minor seconds. This process yields an additional four pitch-classes when I expand \(0156\). In prime form, the resulting set from symmetric augmentation was \(01235678\), which is my intervallically-derived set plus the pitch-class 5.
The more productive process was **pitch-centered augmentation** (PCA), which I used most often. As described above, in this process I use the pitch C as my axis of
symmetry. PCA-1 is the process of generating a set by alternating minor 2nds and major thirds. Ascending, this means the resultant pitches are C, D♭, F, F#, while the descending form is C, B, G, F# (see figure 20). The PCA-2 process also alternates m2 and M3 intervals but begins first with the M3 instead of the m2.

**Figure 20.** The initial process for deriving sets using PCA-1 and PCA-2 and their prime forms.

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**Formal Considerations**

I see *The Warrior’s Wives* as having two characters. Excluding the Prologue, the mood of Act I is optimistic nearing ecstatic. The music unfolds with occasional pauses and unaccompanied speaking. This was to suggest a swift, breathless progression toward the type of future desired the wives desired. A darker mood takes over when it becomes apparent that Oku’s happiness is mutually exclusive with Ekpe’s.

The Prologue serves as musical foreshadowing of Act II. The irregular rhythm and heavy marcato articulation in the cellos and basses is meant to suggest the unyielding passage of time towards an inevitable and tragic ending. Structurally erratic, Act II has longer stretches of unaccompanied dialogue. I wrote in this manner to counterbalance the light atmosphere of Act I. I wanted to demonstrate through the presence and absence of
music the disruptive influence Ekpe has on these women’s lives. How they conduct themselves day to day is dictated by whether Ekpe is present and what his mood is. I also wanted to invoke a musically hesitant character to match how the wives feel when Ekpe returns from battle. At this point of the opera, I am aligning the audience’s point of view to that of Oku’s. She becomes the dramatic voice of the second act, though she rarely sings in this portion of the opera, due to her fear induced silence. Even when she sings in this act, it is during the improvised ninth scene. She is no longer carefree and prone to vocal acrobatics. Instead, her style of delivery is clipped and sporadic, and she only utters a couple of words at a time. Her love scene in Act II occurs during music associated with Imiri, further emphasizing her loss of identity. She remains silent after Scene 9, except to call out for Oha one last time when Ekpe threatens her.

*Table 3. The Warrior’s Wives – Overall Structure.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>The Warrior’s Wives - Overall Structure</strong></th>
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<tbody>
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<td><strong>Act I - Rondo</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Prologue: Passacaglia</td>
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<td>Sc1: 55-216 Ikuku’s Wedding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sc2: Oku Awakes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sc3: The wedding day is near!</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sc4: Could it be?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sc5: Imiri Wedding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sc6: You must go</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sc7: Oku Wedding</td>
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<td><strong>Act II - Through composed</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
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<td>D</td>
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<td>B’</td>
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<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td>Entr’acte</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sc8: Ekpe returns</td>
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<td>Sc9: Oha the slave improvised</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scn10: Imi/Ekpe Oku/Oha Reprise of scene 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sc11: It’s time Oku/Ekpe</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finale Passacaglia</td>
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Act I

Prologue

I began the Prologue with the “destiny” theme, scored initially for the double bass. I chose to use that timbre to invoke the gravitas of the concept of destiny. I have always heard the double bass as the dark shadow to the motion of other instruments that project better. The bass timbre reminds me of how ominous yet ephemeral destiny is. By measure 8, I added the upper strings, and the cellos double the bass at the octave so the line can project more. I chose the $7/8$ time signature because the uneven gait of the music reminded me of an evil force in a horror movie, slowly but relentlessly pursuing its victims.

I use the Prologue as an opportunity to show vignettes taken from or inspired by action that follows in the opera. At certain moments the stage lights brighten to reveal the wives in masks, Oku and Oha seated and in a deep embrace, and Ekpe and Oha’s dead bodies. Through this use of the Prologue, I set the mood and atmosphere of the opera. The contrapuntal approach I use is my musical representation of the melding of unique individuals into a turbulent whole.
Example 1. The opening measures of the Prologue.

A horn solo begins at measure 13, a new color to the texture. I chose the horn to exploit its heroic, aristocratic associations. As the opera unfolds, the horn comes to represent Ekpe. After the strings, the horn is the most prominent instrument during the first act.

I wanted an ambiguous sense of meter initially, to suggest the impossibility of knowing where destiny leads. This changes at measure 25 when the violas begin playing a figure that reinforces the 2+2+3 division of the 7/8 time signature. This viola part adds a little more motion to the texture, though the Prologue remains harmonically static. This
Example 2. Figure in the violas gives a lift to an otherwise static texture. mm. 23-29.

stasis is purposeful. This is my musical answer to a question I posed during the creation of this work; can one change one’s destiny? For the men and women in *The Warrior’s Wives*, the answer is “no.” Plus, I wanted to reflect my own single-minded obsession with fate as it pertained to this opera. The lack of harmonic motion makes the theme feel heavier, and the atmosphere more foreboding.

I transposed the ostinato up a major third when the first violins play their solo, at measure 37. This is the first of two major shifts in pitch center before the ostinato
reappears in its original key. The second change is anticipated by the entrance of the timpani, which cues another tutti section for the orchestra in measure 43. The ostinato is,

**Example 3.** The climactic section of the Prologue, which features the conclusion of the first violins’ solo and the modulated ostinato in the bass, mm. 41-44.

![Musical score](image)

at this moment, in the horn and timpani for the climax of the Prologue. In addition to the new instruments playing the ostinato, the upper winds and high strings are more active.

The flute and first violins play in unison, while the clarinet is in canon with them, an octave lower and a measure later. At this point, the audience will see the dead bodies of Ekpe and Oha, revealing the fate of the two male characters of the opera. As the Prologue draws to a close, the ostinato emerges again as the main musical feature.
Scene 1: Ikuku’s Wedding

Example 4. The beginning of Scene 1. mm. 55-58.

Scene 1 begins as a pastorale that features the clarinet prominently. The destiny ostinato continues for three measures in the bass and cellos, which switch to pizzicato from arco (measures 55-58). The music here elides with the end of the Prologue to illustrate the connection between Ikuku and fate.

By using the new, faster tempo and more metrically predictable 6/8 meter, I invoke a light and airy mood for the opening of the scene. In contrast to the Prologue, this scene begins with a high woodwind timbre. The bass range is not utilized until measure 68. Violas, cellos, and bass have pizzicato, a fresh color for the piece. Also, the harmonic rhythm is faster, changing on average every four measures, instead of three times over the entire scene.
The clarinet is such a prominent color in this scene because I associate it with Ikuku. The timbre of the clarinet chalumeau register is a nice compliment to her contralto range. For as long as I can remember, I have associated the clarinet with a woman’s voice. I also have a strong affinity for the bass clarinet, which I use throughout the opera as a timbre to show Ikuku’s willingness to submit to Ekpe, yet establish her own hegemony over the other wives.

When Ikuku finally makes her entrance and begins to address the village, her soon-to-be new home, she exclaims that she marches “…t’ward my destiny!” (measures 81-82). The orchestra responds with the destiny theme in the cellos and bass, now arco, and the retrograde of the theme in the second violins.
Example 6. Occurrence of the destiny theme in Scene 1. mm. 83-86.

As Ikuku concludes her solo, the village comes to life, excitedly repeating her name and providing the rhythmic foundation for the scene, as they wait for Ekpe to address them. When he finally sings at measure 102, the chorus ceases singing, listening intently to what he has to say. His musical avatar, the horn, also enters at this moment. At the mention of Ikuku’s name (measure 120), the chorus begins its chant again.
Example 7. Ekpe addresses the village, mm.116-19.

Ekpe regains control and proudly announces that his wedding draws near,

“Today, I ascend,” (measures 124-25). This concludes the first portion of the scene, which also coincides with the end of the larger introduction that also includes the Prologue (Table 3). Ikuku’s wedding follows, beginning at measure 134. Because of how they are interrelated, all three weddings will be discussed in depth at the end of the analysis of Act I.

After the wedding ends, there is a brief restatement of the destiny theme. At measure 196, the destiny theme appears in the bass clarinet, then the low strings and marimba enter at measure 200. I wrote this as a sober reminder to the audience that the events in this opera are locked into a march toward destiny.
Scene 2: Oku Awakes

“Oku Awakes” was the first scene I wrote. It began as an etude of sorts. I wanted to write a scene that was entirely voice and percussion. As I kept thinking about the timbre, I thought of sunrise and waking to angelic voices. That is the mood I convey here. The voices are heard from off-stage and provide the harmonic support and the percussion, specifically the vibraphone, gives the scene musical direction. The vocal writing here became the basis for the vocalise in the weddings, which will be discussed later. The first time I used an orchestration like this, it was for the scene in my ballet *Elvrutu’s Fall* in which Elvrutu makes her entrance. She was similar to Oku in that she was facing an uncertain future, but she was optimistic about what awaited her.

**Example 8.** An example of the chorus and vibraphone texture towards the beginning of Scene 2, mm. 220-23.
This scene begins at measure 212, moments before Oku wakes. The chorus begins simply singing the vowel “O” on an E4. The vibraphone follows, first echoing the E4. The range is widened considerably by measure 217. The chorus also sings its first consonant, the “k” in “Oku.” The nebulous nature of the sound world invokes an ephemeral optimism. At this point of the opera, Oku is young, beginning to experience life as a woman, and to her the possibilities of the future are boundless. The scene is infused with her youthful energy.

Example 9. Duet between percussion and voice, mm. 250-51.

The percussionist switches from soft mallets to drumsticks, to emphasize the attack. This section coincides with Oku awakening and trying to contain herself while she thinks of the young man she dreamt of. When she concludes her reverie, the chorus takes over and echoes Oku’s excited utterance of “love.”

As the stage darkens, the chorus part changes from simply “love” to “destiny and love.” In contrast to Ikuku’s scene, when we hear destiny the destiny theme does not appear. The chorus represents Oku’s inner thoughts, so it is expressing her inner desire for her destiny to be with the one she loves.
**Example 10.** Chorus sings “Destiny and Love,” mm. 267-69.

Scene 3: “The wedding day is near!”

Scene 3 is full of nervous energy. Imiri is anticipating her fairy tale ending. As I was writing this scene, images of the heroines of Disney’s *Cinderella*, *Snow White*, and Toei Animation’s *Swan Lake* kept coming to mind. At least in the cartoons featuring these women, the elation of marrying the man they love is palpable. In a nod to a common trope in those films, the flute was at first meant to be a bird singing along with Imiri as she busies herself around the hut.
Example 11. Imiri sings excitedly as she is accompanied by the flute, mm 292-295.

Imiri's optimism for the future and her desire to embrace her destiny is reflected by a fast tempo. The initial asymmetrical meter of 5/8, an off-kilter duple meter that is similar to the uneven gait of the 7/8 “destiny” theme represents her unbridled joy to be part of Ekpe’s family. At measure 350, as she sings “The wedding day is drawing near! We wed tomorrow!” (measures 350-352), Imiri is able to gain a bit of control over herself, and the music settles into a dance-like 6/8. Ekpe surprises Imiri and they begin their duet. In contrast to the last time Ekpe was on stage, his vocal line here is lighter and more nimble, and uses more of his upper range. Ekpe is as excited about the next day as Imiri is.
Example 12. A more animated Ekpe joins Imiri, mm. 370-73.

The scene switches from being a duet for Imiri and Ekpe to a dance sequence. The low strings switch to pizzicato, there are accents in the percussion section in the triangle and wood block, and the flute line is nearly as florid as it was at the beginning of the scene.

Example 13. Imiri and Ekpe dance, mm. 407-10.
The exuberant display of emotion subsides into a tender moment, as the two are seated on the floor, in a loving embrace and kissing. I wanted to invoke the sunset and the coming evening at this moment, so I set the music in violins and cello. For me, the association of these instruments with night stems from early experiences with of the opening of Richard Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde* and the “night music” of Béla Bartók. The violins play a descending motive as the cello reprises the violin solo from the Prologue.

**Example 14.** Imiri and Ekpe kiss, mm. 424-26.

![Example 14. Imiri and Ekpe kiss, mm. 424-26.](image)

**Scene 4: “Could it be?”**

As Imiri and Ekpe fade out of sight, the audience begins to hear laughter and the noise of people at play. The instrumentation now consists of marimba, wood block, triangle and pizzicato viola. The lights fade in to reveal Oku in a game of hide-and-seek with four people from the chorus. Some months have passed since the last scene and the audience gets to see a different side of Oku’s personality. She is confident and playful, and enjoys chasing as much as being chased.
Example 15. Opening of Scene 4, mm. 430-33.

This scene shares some key features with Scene 3: they both begin in 5/8, both are energetic, and the men they love each eventually join the women. I wanted to exploit the agility and range of the coloratura vocal type. A scene featuring children at play was a perfect occasion to do just that. Oku's part showcases the most melismatic setting of my text of any written for the main cast.

Example 16. Oku happily sings the word “love,” mm. 445-47.

Oha enters the scene and is immediately struck by the beauty of the girl everyone seems to be chasing. He gets closer and realizes he knows her. Awed, he exclaims, “Could this be?” This is my first use of a solo tenor voice. His entrance is an alteration of
the bass clarinet and flute entrance in measure 37. By measure 485, Oha begins to give chase as well, accompanied by chromatic sixteenth note flourishes in the violins.

Example 17. Oha sees Oku, mm. 484-88.

When I first conceived the character of Oha, I thought of a young man, like Rudyard Kipling’s Mowgli from the Jungle Book. Both are men who are becoming more aware of the world around them. Unlike Kipling’s creation, Oha is not a feral child, but they share the same tentative curiosity that gives way to joyful discovery. Musically, I portray this by restricting Oha’s vocal range with an even simpler rhythmic delivery. As the scene unfolds, Oha’s range expands and rhythmic demands increase, which corresponds to his own growing boldness. He is still hesitant, but by measure 487 his range covers a major 6th.

Oha finally gives in to the energy of the scene when he gets Oku’s attention. The two of them excitedly sing together, in octaves. Oha has now found a person that helps him define himself. His identity is wrapped up in his love for Oku, and he is now liberated to sing about an emotion he had not felt previously. As they sing their duet, Oha and Oku’s vocal lines are a compromise between their solo styles. Text setting is largely
syllabic matching Oha’s vocal style, while it is also rhythmically active like Oku’s earlier passage in this scene.

**Example 18.** Oku and Oha meet, 496-498.

**Scene 6: “You must go.”**

Narratively, this scene occurs directly after Scene 4, but in the opera, Imiri’s wedding interrupts the flow. In the same vein as the Prologue, Scene 6 is harmonically static while becoming progressively more dissonant in order to build suspense. It begins with Oku calling to her mother and father, two members of the chorus in shrouds, to tell them about her encounter with Oha. A solo first violin plays C5.
Example 19. Oku calls for her parents, mm. 606-09.

As the scene progresses, the other strings join in, forming a high-pitched cluster between G5 and C5. Just as in Scene 2, the chorus is connected to Oku’s psyche. Here, I wanted to portray her view of her parents as dispassionate overseers who wield enormous influence over her life. I felt a good way to accentuate this perception and to add distance between Oku and her parents was to utilize the chorus as a stand in.

This scene represents the true turning point of Act I. The harmonic stasis and the unyielding recitative delivery of the news of Oku’s forced betrothal reinforce the idea that Oku’s course is set, and she cannot alter it. As it dawns on Oku that her destiny is not what she wanted, but what her village has doomed her to, her parents try to reassure her. However, the truth can no longer be ignored any more, and as the chorus sings “You must go!” the destiny theme reappears again. I reference Oku’s new family by giving the destiny theme to the piccolo, clarinet, and horn – instruments associated with Imiri, Ikuku, and Ekpe respectively. I also used the harsh sound of the winds to represent the violence of this betrayal. Though not physically harmful, Oku’s family has committed emotional violence against their daughter.
Example 20. Destiny theme, as it is used in Scene 6, mm. 635-37.

Weddings

The weddings have a special importance in the opera. As a ceremony, they serve as a symbol for the subjugation of the women in *The Warrior’s Wives*. I also used them as a way to hold the structure of the first act together. They serve as musical destinations,
the inevitable outcomes to three different story lines. They are also the point at which those three story lines are fused into one. As such, I decided that I would not deviate much from the first iteration of the ceremony. There are subtle changes in orchestration and pitch selection for each, but during the course of a performance, they will sound virtually identical to each other.

Through these ceremonies I introduce ritual into the narrative. Though not explicitly religious, the weddings still act as a reminder for the participants that the village has vetted the various traditions and proclamations involved in the ceremonies over the course of generations. This connection to the past adds a quality of inevitability to the ritual. The women are not only declaring their submission to Ekpe to the witnesses standing around them; they are also acknowledging the power of the village ancestors on their own lives.

*Call to Witness*

The Call to Witness is the first part of the wedding ceremony. It is a brief moment that is entirely sung by the chorus, acting as village elders. This is a scene that calls attention to the communal aspect of the wedding, and establishes the village as the entity that bestows authority upon Ekpe. The village’s presence is the source of the ceremony’s legitimacy.

*Vows*

The Vows are largely unaccompanied, save for a pitch held over by one of the strings, usually the viola. The vows can be split into three sections: general vows, Gift of the Bowl, and Gift of the Mask. The general vows establish the standard to which Ekpe is
to be held by his wives. The Gift of the Bowl establishes the wife’s identity within the family, while the Gift of the Mask obscures her identity outside of it.


The Bride Walk

After Ekpe recites the vows, the bride walks out to the audience and back, while the chorus sings vocalises. I find vocalize creates a haunting mood that suggests a moment of reverence and purity. In the first two weddings, this connotation holds true. However, for Oku’s wedding I subvert my normal inclination. The dissonance between action and music of this scene is most profound for me during the Bride Walk: the audience witnesses Ekpe's enslavement of Oku against this pristine, angelic backdrop. I also wanted to demonstrate how the other wives are complicit in the subjugation, further undercutting the reverence for the ceremony that the music implies.
The roots of this section can be found in the opening of Scene 2 (see example 8).

At the end of her walk, each bride is supposed to say “I submit to your will.” Ikuku says it, Imiri sings it, and Oku refuses to say anything, so Ikuku speaks for her.

**Example 22a.** Ikuku’s (top) and Imiri’s Bride Walks and submissions to Ekpe, following their Bride Walks.

IKUKU: I humbly submit to your will. My greatest pleasure is to be among your family. Ekpe, please accept me as a prized jewel.
Example 22b. Ikuku voices Oku’s submission to Ekpe, following Oku’s bride walk.

The Promenade

The final stage of the wedding is the Promenade. After the bride accepts the gifts and agrees to submit, she then dances with Ekpe. I was inspired by weddings I have attended where the first dance is an important indication of union between bride and groom. The template for this portion was the second half of Scene 3 (see example 13). The orchestration is winds and pizzicato strings, with clarinet and horn having the most prominence. The horn and clarinet are representative of Ekpe and Ikuku, who are present at each wedding. Again, during Oku’s wedding I demonstrate that the ceremony is merely a formality for Ekpe. Since he has enslaved his youngest bride, she is powerless to stop it. Even though she refuses to interact with anyone, Ekpe still forces her to dance with him.
Example 23. Ikuku’s Wedding, The Promenade, mm. 179-81.

Act II

Entr’acte/Scene 8: He Returns

The beginning of Act II features an elision similar to the beginning of the opera (see Table 1). The form could be seen as a prelude and passacaglia. The Entr’acte is somber, with the alto flute, bass clarinet and horn recalling Oha’s opening refrain, “Could this be?” I wanted to use this gesture again to prime the audience for the shift in perspective from following all three wives to essentially observing the action of Act II from Oku’s perspective. The music here is subdued. The vibraphone part at 718 is more active and out of character with the more staid surrounding orchestration. I add this as a form of aural irritant, the listener is meant to try to reconcile the presence of the vibraphone line in the midst of this slow moving Entr’acte.
Example 24. Example of the "Could it be" gesture in the horn, followed by an excerpt of the vibraphone part in the Entr’acte, Act II, mm. 709-12, 722-23.

At the beginning of Scene 8, the passacaglia starts. The contrast of the slow moving ostinato versus the active percussion and faster harmonic rhythm in the winds gives the impression of music at odds with itself. This is another portrayal of the state of Ekpe’s family. There is a dissonance between his desires for the family and reality. I also am juxtaposing the march of destiny against a military march to further emphasize Ekpe’s reputation as an accomplished warrior in his village. I imagined this as a triumph, such as those that were customary for military leaders during the years of the Roman Empire.
Scene 9: Oha, the slave

The music for this scene is improvisatory. Oku is shocked to find that the new slave is the same man that she fell in love with. I wanted to portray the inner struggle she goes through as she tries to come to grips with the happiness she feels seeing him and the despair at seeing Oha in bondage. With the music in the background, Ikuku and Oha have a conversation.

**Example 25.** Excerpt of music for Scene 9.

(The marimba plays, gradually getting faster. They enter the hut and Ikuku clumsily takes seat on a stool near the entrance. Oha stands in the doorway.)

IKUKU: What is your name, young man?
(Ikuku notices that Oha is uncomfortable and tries again, with a more motherly voice)

IKUKU: There, there... I won't hurt you. You must be hungry. Only if you tell me your name. I am Ikuku, mother wife of the family.

OHA: My name is Oha, ma'am. (Oku sings.)

IKUKU: Well Oha, help me up and I'll fix you some food you must be famished.

OHA: Yes ma'am, thank you!
(Oha helps Ikuku up, Ikuku brushes herself off and begins to prepare a plate. She hands Oha a plate and points at a stool in the center of the room, inviting him to sit with her...)

I like to use improvised sections to score moments of confusion. The performers are meant to seem unmoored from reality and from the form of the opera. Oku obsesses over the impossibility of Oha returning to her life. Meanwhile, the marimba represents Oku’s futile attempt to regain her composure in the face of her predicament. The scene concludes when Ikuku falls asleep and the last person we hear is Oku, when she says “Here?”
Scene 10: “We are one”

In scene 10, when Ekpe and Imiri are reunited, I wanted portray to musically how Ekpe and Imiri still love each other with the same passion they had before they were separated. I decided to reprise Scene 3. My reliance on speaking in Act II reflects the sobering realities the women find themselves in. In this scene, Imiri and Ekpe inhabit their reality while remembering the ferocity of their love for each other as demonstrated in Act I. They still love each other, but the character of their love has changed.

Meanwhile, against this musical backdrop, Oha and Oku furtively reconnect. The juxtaposition of the continuation of Oku’s loving relationship with Oha against the music of Imiri and Ekpe’s love music from Act I serves as a point of unity between the two wives. I also emphasize the furtiveness of their reunion by allowing Imiri’s music to remain unchanged by Oku’s action.

Scene 11: “It is time”

The scene begins suddenly with a wrenching scream from Ikuku who is experiencing a miscarriage. The lights come on after the fade out from the previous scene. The music is metrically unpredictable, switching between 3/4, 2/4, 7/4 and 5/4 respectively in the first four measures.. In addition to the metrical manipulations, I achieve the rough, heavy and unbalanced mood of this scene with low strings playing double stops followed by a melody in the bass clarinet and piccolo written a minor 9th plus three octaves apart.
Ikuku’s cries of pain are heard throughout, though not scored, adding another element of mayhem to the proceedings on stage. Ekpe wakes in a strange mood, showing little compassion for Ikuku and demanding sex from Oku. The rapid shift in meter portrays the fraying of the tenuous family bond Ekpe has with Ikuku, Ikuku’s pending loss of position in the family, and Oku’s imminent danger. It also reflects Ekpe’s state of mind and how unpredictable he is.

The tessitura of Ekpe’s part is lower than in Scenes 1 and 3. I wanted Ekpe to be menacing. This is a scene in which he is asserting his dominance over Oku. He sings mostly on the staff, with one last exclamation of “Now!” on pitch E2 (measure 870).
Example 27. An example of Ekpe's vocal part, mm. 857-59.

When it finally appears that Oku will have to acquiesce to Ekpe's wishes, she sings for Oha (see example 28). This pushes Ekpe into a frenzy. In comparison with Scene 6, when Oku learns of her fate against a backdrop of a high tone cluster, the active bass clarinet against the pedal B2 in the low strings reinforces Ekpe's anger and ferocity. The timpani rolls A2 when Oha finally appears. I added long horn and bass clarinet blasts to add to the suspense in this at this moment. A roll and crescendo on the suspended cymbal connects the music of this scene with that of the Finale.
Example 28. Oku calls for Oha, mm. 884-87.

The Finale

In previous iterations, the destiny theme was predictable and appeared at essentially the same tempo. At the start of the Finale, the orchestration I use is the thickest and loudest of the opera. I utilize the full strings, timpani and toms, and full winds and brass. This becomes a highly dissonant polyphonic texture featuring three primary voices: the bass ostinato, percussion activity, and the horn’s high melody. The chromatic passagework in the high strings is background orchestration to reflect the final collapse of the status quo of the family. To put a finer point on it, I utilize an extended technique in the bass clarinet that I first heard in the music of jazz multi-reed specialist
Eric Dolphy. This technique requires that the clarinetist fingers the pitch indicated with a diamond-shaped notehead while he or she sings a pitch that is high enough to make the bass clarinet overblow its first available overtone above the fundamental. The clarinetist glissandos up to the appropriate pitch and then back down. The resulting effect is that of a wailing person.

**Example 29.** Beginning of Finale, *The Warrior’s Wives.*

Ekpe attempts to strangle Oha as the latter tries to escape. The new tempo of the destiny theme reflects the tempest that occurs when a member of Ekpe’s family takes a
decisive action towards their ultimate end of the family. He finally catches Oha, strangles him, and Oha dies.

There is a grand pause after Ekpe kills Oha. The low strings begin playing the destiny theme again, close to the original tempo. The harmonic stability that unified the previous iterations quickly disappears as the consonant relationship between the low strings is abandoned.

**Example 30.** Beginning of the second part of the Finale, mm. 933-37.

As seen in example 30, by measure 933 the double bass part modulates down a half step, as the cellos continue to play the ostinato as before. The polyphony is more pronounced in this portion of the Finale as a four voice canon with different permutations of the destiny theme unfolds. I associated each string entrance with a wife; the violas represent Ikuku, second violins represent Imiri, and and firsts represent Oku. Each wife is also represented by a specific permutation of the original theme. Ikuku’s sense of duty is also connected to a sense of tradition, which she looks back upon fondly; thus I used the retrograde form of the ostinato. Imiri’s undying love for Ekpe led me to use the inverse
form of the ostinato, while Oku’s unwilling inclusion in Ekpe’s family is represented by the retrograde inversion.

**Figure 21.** Ostinato forms in the upper string parts in the Finale.

![Ostinato forms in the upper string parts in the Finale.](image)

The focus of the Finale changes to Oku and her emotions upon seeing the love of her life killed. She runs to hide from Ekpe who mimes loud boasting immediately after murdering the innocent Oha. When she returns to her hut, Oku notices she’s dropped her bowl and the remains are strewn around the ground. At the sight of this, she resolves to avenge her lover’s death. This is reflected in the music at measure 945 when the texture switches from polyphony to a homophony. I score the strings here in rhythmic unison while still maintaining the permutations for the higher strings I mentioned in the previous section. The reduction in voices reflects Oku’s single-mindedness toward her goal of revenge.

The texture switches again when Oku finally approaches Ekpe from behind and begins stabbing him. The music becomes highly active again, though the tempo is slower. After the final stabbing stroke, Ekpe collapses to the ground. The orchestration changes drastically at this moment to clarinet and alto flute. This thinner texture is appropriate for
the denouement after a dramatic murder. The alto flute and clarinet are not as rich in overtones as the strings and horn, which gives a more distant quality. This music underscores the dawning recognition for Imiri and Oku that life has changed irrevocably. Imiri kisses Ekpe as he dies in her arms. She then spies the shard of bowl that Oku used on Ekpe and plunges it into her own stomach. Meanwhile, Oku searches for Ikuku, the only person in the family that attempted to help her. The music continues as Oku helps Ikuku walk out of her hut. It accompanies them as they leave the stage supporting each other, leaving behind Imiri who lays prostrate over Ekpe.
Conclusion

Upon completing The Warrior's Wives, I began reviewing the various forms my vision took. The form I ultimately chose best answers the concerns I raised in Chapter 4. Though I sacrifice the isolation and audience control over how the narrative unfolds for them, the audience still chooses what they wish to see; if a member of the audience decides he or she only wants to observe one wife throughout, they can do that. I think this adds a new dimension to the opera. Specifically, there is a juxtaposition of the women's public life versus their private life. I am inviting the audience to see what happens “behind the scenes.”

The Warrior’s Wives is a significant piece within my output. The process of writing it allowed me to experiment with new ways to present dramatic material. Plus, I wrote for voice for the first time. Speaking with other musicians and artists about the premise of this opera proved to be a valuable way to get new ideas for plot and stage design. In addition, these conversations also led me to think more contextually. Shortly after I began writing the opera in 2014, violence against women and children was in the zeitgeist. High profile American athletes were implicated in heinous acts of brutality. By the end of the writing process, the national conversation had switched to identity and the definition of race and gender. I feel that I have written an opera that is topically current yet will endure beyond this particular cultural moment.
Appendix A

Libretto
ACT I

Scene 1: Ikuku’s Wedding

Fade in. A bright day. The set is predominantly green and blue, as if in a field. The chorus wanders around the stage in a state of anticipation.

Ikuku enters slowly from stage right. She looks around regally. She continues to move about the stage, returning to center in time to sing...

IKUKU
The day has come.
I march t’ward my destiny!
Village, please accept your new daughter, Ikuku.
Your son chose me as his first wife, his ally,
his partner in matters domestic.
Please accept me as yours,
I am Ikuku!

(As they begin singing, the chorus surrounds Ikuku.)

CHORUS
(chanting) Ikuku!

(Ekpe enters slowly from stage left. He walks around goes inside
their huddle and brings Ikuku out. The crowd disperses and regroups
upstage right from Ekpe and Ikuku.)

EKPE
Behold! My Bride!
Ikuku! dutiful one.
Today, I ascend.
Ikuku, stand with me.

CHORUS
Children come!
Stand before us.
Today you wed!

EKPE
I welcome you to my family.
Your presence brings me joy!
I pledge to protect you;
I pledge to provide for you.

(A soprano from the chorus walks over with a clay pot full of white
flowers. She hands the pot to Ekpe. He speaks...)

This bowl, made of earth and water, dried by air and fire, is my family.
I am the earthen bowl you hold.
Your cooperation is key to our survival. Ikuku, you are the air that dries my bowl.
Your influence makes my family sturdy.
Please accept my gift.
Fill it with your breath.

(Ekpe hands Ikuk the bowl. She blows the flowers out of the bowl. A tenor from the chorus walks over with a white mask with vertical green stripes. He hands the mask to Ekpe. Ekpe places the mask on Ikuku’s face. He speaks...) 

The mask you wear bears the symbol of your place in the family,
The element you are.
You shall always where this mask,
To show you me and the world your fealty for me.

(The chorus begins to sing.)

CHORUS
Ah...

(Ikuku slowly walks towards the audience and then stage right, then up stage, and back to the center with Ekpe.)

IKUKU:
I humbly submit to your will.
My greatest pleasure is to be among your family.
Ekpe, please accept me as a prized jewel.

(Ekpe and Ikuku join hands and begin to dance in a stately manner. Fade to black.)

Scene 2: Oku Awakens

Fade in. Spotlight on Oku in a bed. The chorus sings off stage, evoking a sunrise. As the light slowly spreads to reveal her room she gently stirs.

CHORUS
Oku…Oha…

(Oku leaps from bed. She looks renewed and fresh…excited…)

OKU
I looked into his eyes!
I looked into his wonderful eyes!
A presence both alien and familiar
Tender, yet strong!

I looked into his eyes.
In them I saw destiny.
Love awaits me,
His embrace is my shelter.
Ah! my love!

CHORUS
Love!
Love and destiny!
Destiny and love!

(Fade out.)

Scene 3: “The wedding day is near!”

Full lights. Imiri dances around the stage, hugging herself and humming happily.

IMIRI
Electric!
Kinetic!
The air around me is
Electric!
Kinetic!

As each second passes,
My elation rises.
Soon, I will marry Ekpe!
Ekpe my love, we’ll be one!

Electric love,
Kinetic life!
Come to me.
Delay, no more, my future!

Love drives my heart,
Excitement is in the air!
Electric!
Kinetic!

The wedding day is drawing near.
We wed tomorrow!

(As the music continues, Ekpe quietly enters the room. Imiri, absorbed in her thoughts, slowly turns and is startled to see Ekpe in the room.)

IMIRI
Oh! Ekpe! How wonderful to see you! You frightened me.
EKPE

(laughing)
Come here my darling.

(He kisses her on the forehead)
You seem excited today. Is there something special happening?

IMIRI

(a little sullen)
Oh, nothing, if you don’t know.

EKPE

Of course I know, I just like hearing you say it.

IMIRI

(excitedly)
Tomorrow is our wedding day!

(They embrace and sway to the music. When the flute solo begins, they kiss.)

EKPE

Our wedding day is drawing near
And soon we’ll be one,
A husband and is his bride.
I can’t believe it’s coming,
Our life together begins!

IMIRI

Ekpe, my love!
What wonderful dreams I’ve had,
Dreaming of our life.
You and I joined at long last!

EKPE

Imiri, I must have you now!

IMIRI

Patience my love you must wait!
Soon my love!

EKPE

I promise I’ll wait for you,
Imiri!
IMIRI
Ekpe!

EKPE
Imiri, my true love,
Tomorrow we are one.

IMIRI
O Ekpe,
I love you!

(Fade to black)

Scene 4: “Could it be?”

Intermittent laughter. Fade in to reveal Oku and members of the chorus engaged in a game of hide-and-seek.

OKU
Love!
Love, come to me!

(A spot light slowly reveals Oha in the audience. He rises and walks toward the stage.)
Come to me, love!

OHA
Could this be?
Could it be...Oku?
My! She has grown!
Such beauty, my heart can’t take.
Ah! Love!

(Overcome, Oha runs after Oku. Oku runs faster. She trips and falls. The two of them finally look into each other’s eyes.)

OKU & OHA
(together)
You were in my dreams!
Just a dream!
A mirage of my imagination
How can you be here?
Flesh and blood!
Breathing, laughing

OKU
Beautiful!
I am yours,
You are mine!
How can you be here?

OHA
When I dreamed of you,
I dared not wake!

OKU AND OHA
(together)
You were in my dreams!
Just a dream!
A mirage of my imagination.

OKU
How wonderful to hold you!

OHA
How wonderful to embrace!

Scene 5: Imiri’s Wedding

CHORUS
Children come!
Stand before us.
Today you wed!

EKPE
I welcome you to my family.
Your presence brings me joy!
I pledge to protect you;
I pledge to provide for you.

(A soprano from the chorus walks over with a clay pot full of water. She hands the pot to Ekpe. He speaks...)

This bowl, made of earth and water, dried by air and fire, is my family.
I am the earthen bowl you hold.
Your cooperation is key to our survival. Imiri, you are the water that moistens the earth. Your love slakes my thirst. Please accept my gift.
Your influence makes my family sturdy.
Please accept my gift.
Fill it with your breath.

(Ekpe hands Ikuk the bowl. She blows the flowers out of the bowl. A tenor from the chorus walks over with a blue mask with vertical green stripes. He hands the mask to Ekpe. Ekpe places the mask on Imiri’s face. He speaks...)

The mask you wear bears the symbol of your place in the family,
The element you are.
You shall always where this mask,
To show me and the world your fealty for me.

(The chorus begins to sing.)

CHORUS
Ah...

(Imiri slowly walks towards the audience and then stage right, then up stage, and back to the center with Ekpe.)

IMIRI
I submit to your will.

Scene 6: “You must go.”

Fade in. Standing downstage and stage left are two members of the chorus, a man and a woman, dressed in white. The rest of the chorus is off stage. Oku enters from stage right...

OKU
Mother! Father!
I have wonderful news!
I have met a young man!
He us beautiful and kind!

CHORUS
Listen child.
Your situation has changed.
You are no longer free to choose your mate.
You have been promised to a great warrior.
Don’t despair, Oku,
Your sacrifice has saved your people.
You can’t fight your destiny.

You must go.

Scene 7: Oku’s Wedding

CHORUS
Children come!
Stand before us.
Today you wed!

(Ekpe drags a catatonic Oku to center stage. The chorus surrounds them)
EKPE

I welcome you to my family.
Your presence brings me joy!
I pledge to protect you;
I pledge to provide for you.

(A soprano from the chorus walks over with a clay pot, which holds a candle. She hands the pot to Ekpe. He speaks...)

This bowl, made of earth and water, dried by air and fire, is my family.
I am the earthen bowl you hold.
Your cooperation is key to our survival. Oku, you are the fire that hardens my bowl. Your energy pushes my family forward.
Please accept my gift.
Light the candle.

(Ekke hands Ikuku the bowl. She lights the candle for Oku. A tenor from the chorus walks over with a red mask with vertical green stripes. He hands the mask to Ekpe. Ekpe places the mask on Oku’s face. He speaks...)

The mask you wear bears the symbol of your place in the family,
The element you are.
You shall always wear this mask,
To show you me and the world your fealty for me.

(The chorus begins to sing.)

CHORUS

Ah...

(Ikuku slowly walks Oku towards the audience and then stage right, then up stage, and back to the center with Ekpe.)

IKUKU:

She submits to your will.

(Ekke pulls a limp Oku into his embrace and awkwardly dances with her.)

~ ENTR’ACTE ~
ACT II

Scene 8: “He returns!”

Fade in to reveal Ikuku, Imiri, and Oku in their huts on stage, working diligently. Ikuku is pregnant.

CHORUS
He is here!
Ekpe is here!
Ekpe returns!
He returns!

(Ekpe enters, stage right. He stands center stage and calls out...)

EKPE
Wives! I have returned. Come out to greet me. I have brought a new member to the family.
(The wives, except for Oku, hurry out of their huts. Oku follows, reluctantly. Ekpe continues...)
This boy is a prize for my exploits on the battlefield. His cowardly village would rather give him away than continue to face me in battle.
(Ekpe glances at Ikuku)
I see you are progressing nicely. The boy will stay with you until you deliver. Go to her boy.
(Oha hesitates, he has noticed Oku, though he can’t recognize her, since she is wearing her mask. Oku, having recognized Oha, tries to conceal herself more. Ekpe angrily yells at Oha...)
Get over there!

IKUKU
Thank you Ekpe, but would you please visit me?

EKPE
(amused and dismissive)
What business do I have with a pregnant woman? The boy is enough.
(Ekpe grabs Imiri’s hand.)
Now, leave me. I must rest
(The wives go their huts. Oha follows Ikuku, Oku walks back to her hut shaken.)
Scene 9: Oha, the slave

Spotlight on Ikuku’s hut. Oha and Ikuku walk over.

IKUKU
What is you name, young man?
(Ikuku notices that Oha is uncomfortable and tries again, with a more motherly voice.)
There, there…I won’t hurt you. You must be hungry. Only if you tell me your name. I am Ikuku, mother-wife of the family.

OHA
My name us Oha, ma’am.

OKU (singing)
Oha?
He is here?
Impossible.
My love!
Here?

IKUKU (while Oku sings)
Well, Oha, help me up and I’ll cook you some food. You must be famished.

OHA
Yes ma’am, thank you!
(Oha helps Ikuku up. Ikuku brushes herself off and begins to prepare a plate. She hands Oha a plate and points at a stool in the center of the room, inviting him to sit with her. They eat for a few moments before she speaks again…)

IKUKU (to herself)
Quite a fanfare…yet he ignores me…ungrateful man…does she carry his child?

OHA
Ma’am?

IKUKU
Nothing, dear. How’s your food?

OHA
Very good, thank you. May I ask you a question?

IKUKU
Of course. What’s on your mind?
OHA
The woman in the red mask, she seems different from the rest of you.

IKUKU
Poor thing, she came to the family in much the same way as you. She hasn’t uttered a word, except she’ll thank me when I help her. Her name is Oku.
(Oha chokes on his food at the mention Oku’s name.)

IKUKU (patting Oha on the back)
Are you okay? There you go. (the coughing subsides) I need to get some sleep. Very exciting day.

OHA
Good night.
(When Ikuku falls asleep, Oha sneaks out of the hut.)
Could it be?

Scene 10: “We are one.”

Spotlight fades in on the center hut. Ekpe and Imiri are seated finishing a meal. Imiri is allowed to take her mask off.

IMIRI
Are you fed?

EKPE
As always, you alone confirm that I am not whole until I am home.

IMIRI
You embarrass me…what would the other wives say?

EKPE
Ikuku understands how our family works. She is here to serve. That young one...(darkly) she’ll learn.

IMIRI
She still hasn’t spoken since joining us here. She must be scared.

EKPE (lets out a derisive laugh)
That girl knows what she’s doing. She believes she is not part of this family. But I’ll teach her.

IMIRI (showing concern)
Let’s not talk about this anymore. You must be tired. Come, join me in bed.

(Spotlight fades out on Imiri’s hut, and fades in on Oku’s Hut, Oha at the door. Oku comes out and sees Oha, grabs hand and pulls him into her hut. They kiss in the middle of her hut. Her mask falls off her face, in between them. Instinctively she kneels to retrieve it, but Oha kneels and prevents her. They embrace and kiss, in the pose seen during the Prologue, Entire stage fade to black.)

Scene 11: “It’s time!”


EKPE (sleepily)
Always complaints with that one.

IMIRI
That sounds really serious.

(Oha finds Ikuku seated and in obvious pain. She’s sweating. She’s unable to speak, throughout the scene she continues to scream. Ekpe, with Imiri following close behind, goes to Ikuku to see what is the matter. He sees Oha tending to her.)

EKPE
It is too soon for you. Are you not strong enough to hold the child in?

IMIRI
Ekpe, you must not say such a thing. She has no control.

EKPE (spits on the ground, and let’s out a derisive laugh)
I have another wife to bear my child. This one is unable. It’s time that she joins the family.

(Ekpe storms out of the room on his way to Oku’s hut.)

(sung)
Oku!
It’s time!
Come here!
Prove you are my wife!

(Ekpe enters the hut and grabs Oku. She pulls away, knocking her bowl on the ground, where it shatters.)

Insolent girl,
You have denied me my rights for far too long!
Oku! It’s time!
Come to me now!

(Ekpe continues to chase Oku. Oku runs out of the hut and falls to the ground. Her mask falls off and shatters.)

CHORUS
No!

EKPE
Now!

(Ikuku ceases screaming and passes out as Oha holds her. Oku crawls away from Ekpe. He grabs her ankle and pulls her towards him.)

OKU (weakly)
Oha! My love!

EKPE (stunned) (spoken)
Oha?

(More angrily)
OHA!
You want to love a slave? I’ll show you what becomes of such people.
Then, I’ll deal with you! Ring the boy here!

(Imiri, who is standing at the door, runs for Oha.)

Finale

(pantomime)

Oha enters the room, and Ekpe leaps at him. Oha runs. Ekpe continues to chase Oha until he finally catches him. Ekpe proceeds to strangle Oha, who struggles mightily, but to no avail. Oha dies. He leaps up and pounds his chest in a fury.

Oku witnesses this and runs back to her hut. She paces around the hut and sees the shards of her bowl. She picks up the sharpest piece. She walks back to where Ekpe continues to gesticulate wildly. She walks up and stabs him in the stomach.

Ekpe collapses next to Oha. Imiri runs to where Ekpe lays. She sobs uncontrollably. She kisses Ekpe passionately. Ekpe dies.

Imiri sees the shard on the ground, picks it up and plunges it into her stomach. She falls on top of Ekpe. Meanwhile, Oku walks over to Ikuku’s hut.

Oku helps a barely conscious Ikuku to her feet. She then helps Ikuku walk, in the same manner that Ikuku helped her. The two women walk off stage. Fade to black.

Fin.
Appendix B

Score
Matthew Evan Taylor

The Warrior’s Wives

a Tragic Opera in Two Acts with a Prologue

Full Score
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*Entire Cast*

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*Entire Cast*
Characters

Oku, Third Wife – Coloratura
Imiri, Second Wife – Lyric Soprano
Ikuku, First Wife – Contralto
Oha, the Slave – Tenor
Ekpe, the Warrior – Bass

16 Chorus Members SATB

The Warrior’s Wives is set in a village of unknown location and era.

Instrumentation

Flute (doubling Piccolo and G Alto Flute)
B-flat Clarinet (doubling Bass Clarinet)
Horn in F
Percussion (2 players)*
4 First Violins
3 Second Violins
2 Violas
2 Cellos
Double Bass

*Timpani, Glockenspiel, Xylophone, Vibraphone, Marimba, Snare Drum, 3 Tom toms, Suspended Cymbal, Wood Block, Triangle
Transposed Score

The Warrior's Wives
Matthew Evan Taylor
6.01.2014 – 09.20.2015

Prologue

Solemn \( \frac{1}{2} = 60 \)

(An empty stage, dimly lit.) (Fade out.) (Stage rotates clockwise.)

Flute
Clarinet in Bb
Horn in F
Timpani
Vibraphone
Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Cello
Double Bass

(Spotlight fades in to reveal silhouettes of three figures in masks arranged by height, tallest stage right, shortest stage left. Fade out.)
(Stage rotates clockwise.)

(Spotlight fades in to reveal Oku and Oha seated and embracing, her mask is on the ground between them. Fade out.)
(Fade in to reveal two male figures on the floor, dead. Fade out.)

(Stage rotates clockwise.)
(Fade in. Spotlight on the three masks are strewn over the ground. Fade out.)

(Stage rotates clockwise.)

(Fade in. Spotlight on the three masks are strewn over the ground. Fade out.)
Act I
Scene 1: Ikuku's Wedding

(Fade in. A bright day. The set is predominately green and blue, as if in a field. The chorus is milling around.)

Pastorale

(Scene 1: Ikuku's Wedding)
(Ikuku enters slowly from stage right. She looks around regally. She continues to move about the stage, returning to center in time sing...)

The day has come. I march toward my desire.
(Upon hearing "Village" the chorus takes notice of Ikuku. They stand and gather up stage left from Ikuku.)

Please accept me! as yours I am Ikuku.

Your son chose me all his...
(As they begin to sing, the chorus surrounds Ikuku...)

(As they begin to sing, the chorus surrounds Ikuku...)

(Exe enters slowly from stage left. He walks around goes inside their huddle and brings Ikuku out. The crowd disperses and regroups upstage right from Exe and Ikuku.)
EKPE: I welcome you to my family. Your presence brings me joy! I pledge to protect you; I pledge to provide for you.
You are my greatest treasure; No other can have you.

(A chorus member (soprano), standing stage right, walks over with a clay pot full of white flowers. She hands the pot to Ekpe. He speaks...)

EKPE: This bowl, made of earth and water; dried by air and fire is my family. I am the earthen bowl you hold. Your cooperation is key to our survival. Ikuku, you are the air that dries my bowl. Your influence makes my family sturdy. Please accept my gift. Fill it with your breath.

(He hands her the bowl. She blows the flowers out of the bowl. A chorus member (tenor), standing stage left, walks over with a white mask with vertical green stripes. He hands the mask to Ekpe. Ekpe places the mask on Ikuku's face. He speaks...)

EKPE: The mask you wear bears the symbol of your place in the family, the element you are. You shall always wear this mask, to show me and the world your fealty for me.

(The chorus begins to sing. Ikuku slowly walks towards the audience and then stage right, then up stage, and back to the center with Ekpe.)
IKUKU: I humbly submit to your will. My greatest pleasure is to be among your family. Ekpe, please accept me as a prized jewel.

(Ekpe and Ikuku join hands and begin to dance in a stately manner.)
(Fade out.)
(Stage rotates clockwise.)
Scene 2: Oku Awakes

(Fade in. Spotlight on Oku in a bed. The chorus, off stage, sings, evoking the sunrise. As the light slowly spreads to reveal her room, she stirs gently. The chorus sings from off stage)
(Light at full intensity, but still cool.)

(Oka faces the audience. She looks renewed and fresh...and excited...)

(She leaps from the bed!)
Vib.

looked in to his wond-ful eyes.

S

T

B

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vln. I

pre-sence both fa-mi-liar and a-li-en

Ten-der yet strong!

O - ha

O - ha

O - ha

O - ha
I looked into his eyes. In them I saw my destiny.

Love awaits me. His embrace is my shelter. Ah! my love! My love!


Scene 3: "The wedding day is near!"
(Imiri dances around the stage, hugging herself and humming happily.)
The wedding day is drawing near. We will tomorrow!

Lightly \( \frac{8}{4} = 66 \)
(As the music continues, Ekpe quietly enters the room. Imiri, absorbed in her thoughts, slowly turns and is startled to see a smiling Ekpe in the room.)

IMIRI: Oh! Ekpe! How wonderful to see you! You frightened me.

EKPE: (laughing) Come here my darling. (He kisses her on the forehead)

EKPE: Oh! nothing, if you don't know.

EKPE: Of course I know, I just like hearing you say it.

IMIRI: (excitedly) Tomorrow is our wedding day!

(They embrace and sway to the music, when the flute solo begins, they kiss.)
Our wedding day is drawing near

soon we'll be one a

husband and his lovely bride

I can't believe it's coming

Our life to go the together

My love, what

drawing near

Our love

...
dreaming of our life
You and I joined at long last!

You and I must have you now!

I promise I'll wait for you

Love you must

Be patient my love you must
(Unable to control himself, Ekpe grabs Imiri and they begin to dance wildly.)
407 poco più mosso

(Too tired to go on, the couple collapse in each other's arms
Slow fade to black. Stage rotates counter clockwise)
Scene 4: "Could it be?"

(Intermittent laughter. Fade in to reveal Oku and members of the chorus engaged in a game of hide-and-seek.)
(A spotlight slowly reveals Oba in the audience. He rises and walks towards the stage.)
460

Perc. 1

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Mrb.

466

468

(Oha climbs on stage. He moves upstage to hide from the others)

472

475

Could this be?
The two of them finally look into each other's eyes.)

(Overcome, Oka runs after Oku. Oku runs faster. She trips and falls.

You were in

You were in

A mir-a-cle of my im-age-of-a-tion
How can you be here? Flesh and blood! Breathing, laughing! I am yours, You are mine!

How can you be here? Flesh and blood! Breathing, laughing! When I dreamed of you, I dared not wake!

You were in my dream! Just a dream! A mirage of my imagination!
Scene 5: Imiri's Wedding

[527] Andante $ \quad \frac{\text{d}}{\text{4}} \quad \text{q. = 60}

(Imiri and Ekpe walk to center stage. The chorus surrounds them.)
EKPE: I welcome you to my family. Your presence brings me joy! I pledge to protect you;  
     I pledge to provide for you.  
     You are my greatest treasure;  
     No other can have you.

(A chorus member (soprano), standing stage right, walks over with a clay pot full of water. She hands the pot to Ekpe. He speaks...)

EKPE: This bowl, made of earth and water; dried by air and fire is my family.  
     I am the earthen bowl you hold. Your love is key to our survival.  
     Imiri, you are the water that moistens the earth. Your love slakes my thirst.  
     Please accept my gift.

(He hands her the bowl. A chorus member (tenor), standing stage left, walks over with a white mask with vertical green stripes. He hands the mask to Ekpe. Ekpe places the mask on Imiri's face. He speaks...)

EKPE: The mask you wear bears the symbol of your place in the family, the element you are.  
     You shall always wear this mask, to show me and the world your fealty for me.

(The chorus begins to sing. Imiri slowly walks towards the audience and then stage right, then up stage, and back to the center with Ekpe.)
(Imiri and Ekpe walk to center stage. The chorus surrounds them.)
Scene 6: "You must go"

(Fade in. Standing downstage and stage left are two members of the chorus, a man and a woman, dressed in white. The rest of the chorus is off stage. Oku enters from stage right...)

605 Ominous

616

Listen child. You are no longer free to choose your mate.

You are no longer free to choose your mate.

Your situation has changed.

You have been promised to a great

You have been promised to a great
Don’t des-pair O - ku, Your sac-rifice has saved your peo-ple You can’t fight your

Don’t des-pair O - ku, Your sac-rifice has saved your peo-ple You can’t fight your

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Your sac-rifice has saved your peo-ple You can’t fight your
You must go.
Scene 7: Oku's Wedding

Andante $\frac{4}{4}$ = 60

(Ekpe drags a catatonic Oku to center stage. The chorus surrounds them.)

To-day you wed

switch to C Flute

vlns. D.B.
EKPE: I welcome you to my family. Your presence brings me joy!
I pledge to protect you; I pledge to provide for you.
You are my greatest treasure; No other can have you.

(A chorus member (soprano), standing stage right, walks over with a clay pot which holds a candle.
She hands the pot to Ekpe. He speaks...)

EKPE: This bowl, made of earth and water; dried by air and fire is my family.
I am the earthen bowl you hold. Your cooperation is key to our survival. Oku,
you are the fire that hardens my bowl. Your energy pushes my family forward.
Please accept my gift.
Light the candle.

(He hands Ikuku the bowl. She lights the candle for Oku.)

(A chorus member (tenor), standing stage left, walks over with a white mask with verticle green stripes.
He hands the mask to Ekpe)

(Ekpe places the mask on Oku's face. He speaks...)

EKPE: The mask you wear bears the symbol of your place in the family, the element you are. You shall
always wear this mask, to show me and the world your fealty for me.

(The chorus begins to sing. Ikuku slowly walks Oku towards the audience and then stage right, then up stage,
and back to the center with Ekpe.)
Maestoso

(Elpe pulls a limp Oku into his embrace and awkwardly dances with her.)
(Fade out.)
Scene 8: He returns

(Fade in to reveal Ikuku, Imiri, and Oku in their huts on stage, working diligently. Ikuku is pregnant)
(Standing in the middle of the stage, Ekpe calls out...)

EKPE: Wives! I have returned. Come out to greet me. I have brought a new member to the family.

(The wives, except for Oku, hurry out of their huts. Oku trails, reluctantly. Ekpe continues)

EKPE: This boy is a prize for my exploits on the battle field.
    His cowardly village would rather give him away than continue to face me in battle. (Ekpe glances at
    Ikuku) I see you are progressing nicely. The boy will stay with you until you deliver. Go to her boy.

(Oha hesitates, he's noticed Oku, though he can't recognize her, since she is wearing her mask.
Oku, having recognized Oha, tries to conceal herself more, even though she wears a mask.)

EKPE: (Angrily) Get over there!

IKUKU: Thank you Ekpe, but would you please visit me?

EKPE: (Amused and dismissive) What business do I have with a pregnant woman?
    The boy is enough. (He grabs Imiri's hand) Now, leave me. I must rest.

(The wives go their separate ways. Oku walks back to her hut, shaken.)
Scene 9: Oha, the slave

(Spotlight on Ikuku's hut. Oha and Ikuku walk over.)

(The marimba plays, gradually getting faster. They enter the hut and Ikuku clumsily takes seat on a stool near the entrance. Oha stands in the doorway.)

IKUKU: What is your name, young man?

(Ikuku notices that Oha is uncomfortable and tries again, with a more motherly voice)

IKUKU: There, there...I won't hurt you. You must be hungry. Only if you tell me your name. I am Ikuku, mother wife of the family.

OHA: My name is Oha, ma'am. (Oku sings.)

IKUKU: Well Oha, help me up and I'll fix you some food you must be famished.

OHA: Yes ma'am, thank you!

(Oha helps Ikuku up. Ikuku brushes herself off and begins to prepare a plate. She hands Oha a plate and points at a stool in the center of the room, inviting him to sit with her. They eat for a few moments before she speaks again)

IKUKU: (to herself) Quite a fanfare...yet he ignores me...ungrateful man...does she carry his child?

OHA: Ma'am?

IKUKU: Nothing, dear. How's your food?

OHA: Very good, thank you. May I ask you a question?

IKUKU: Of course. What's on your mind?

OHA: The woman in the red mask, she seems different from the rest of you.

IKUKU: Poor thing, she came to the family in much the same way as you. She hasn't uttered a word, except she'll thank me when I help her. Her name is Oku.

(Oha chokes on his food at the mention of Oku's name)

IKUKU: (patting Oha on the back) Are you okay? There you go. (the coughing subsides). I need to get some sleep. Very exciting day.

OHA: Good night.

(When Ikuku falls asleep, Oha sneaks out of the hut.)

OHA: Could it be?

(He runs to the other end of the stage looking for Oku. End Scene.)
Scene 10: "We are one"

**Titling** \( \frac{\text{Lilting}}{\text{j} = 69} \)

(repeat as necessary)

(Spotlight fades in on the center hut. Ekpe and Imiri are seated finishing a meal. Imiri is allowed to take her mask off. Repeat music during this dialogue)

IMIRI: Are you fed?

EKPE: As always, you alone confirm that I am not whole until I am home.

IMIRI: You embarrass me...what would the other wives say?

EKPE: Iku understands how our family works, she is here to serve. That young one... (darkly) she'll learn.

IMIRI: She still hasn't spoken since joining us here. She must be scared.

EKPE: (lets out a derisive laugh) That girl knows what she's doing. She believes she is not part of this family. But I'll teach her.

IMIRI: (showing concern) Let's not talk about this anymore. You must be tired. Come, join me in bed.

(Spotlight fades out on Imiri's hut, and fades in on Oka's hut, Oha at the door. Music continues.)

(Oka comes out and sees Oha, grabs his hand and pulls him into her hut. They kiss in the middle of her hut. Her mask falls off her face, in between them. Instinctively, she kneels to retrieve it, but Oha kneels and prevents her. They embrace and kiss, in the pose seen during the Prologue. Entire stage fade to black.)
Scene 11: It's time!

(Ikuku screams. Lights flash on. Everyone jerks awake. Oha runs out of Oku's hut to check on Ikuku. Ekpe and Imiri stir.)

EKPE: (Sleepily) Always complaints with that one.

IMIRI: That sounds really serious.

(Oha finds Ikuku seated and in obvious pain. She's sweating. She's unable to speak, through out the scene she continues to scream. Music begins)

(Ekpe, with Imiri following, goes to Ikuku to see what is the matter. He sees Oha tending to her.)

EKPE: It is too soon for you. Are you not strong enough to hold the child in?

IMIRI: Ekpe, you must not say such a thing. She has no control.

(Ekpe spits on the ground, and lets out a derisive laugh)

EKPE: I have another wife to bear my child. This one is unable. It's time that she joins this family.

(Ekpe storms out of the room on his way to Oku's hut.)
836

844

(Elpe stands at the door. Ikuku continues to scream in the background.)

Elpe

O - ku!  O - ku  It’s Time!  Come here!  Prove you are my wife!

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.
(Ekpe enters the hut and grabs Oku. She pulls away, knocking her bowl on the ground, where it shatters.)

(Ekpe continues to chase Oku around the hut.)
(Oku runs out of the hut, falls to the ground, her mask falls off and shatters. Ikuku ceases screaming and passes out as Oba holds her.)

It's time! Come to me now! Now!
EKPE: Oha?

[Music notation]

EKPE: You want to love a slave? I'll show you what becomes of such people, then I'll deal with you! Bring the boy here!
(Imiri, who is standing at the door, runs for Oha.)
Finale

(Oha enters the room, and Ekpe leaps at him. Oha runs.)

911 [Furious] $q = 108$

914

915
(Ekpe finally catches Oha, who continues to struggle.)
(Ekpe begins to strangle Oha.)

(Ona dies. Blackout.)
(Spotlight on Oku, still on the ground next to the shards of her mask. She can't believe her eyes)

(Spotlight on Oha, dead on the floor.)
Ekpe appears in Oha's spotlight. He gesticulates wildly, ranting and raving about what has happened.
(Oku walks back into the hut, unable to continue to watch the scene)
(Oku sees the shards of the broken bowl on the floor. She picks a piece up.)
(Oku runs out of her hut, shard in hand, approaches Ekpe from behind, and taps him on the shoulder. When he turns around, she stabs him in the gut.)

(Imiri runs to where Ekpe lays. She sobs uncontrollably. She kisses Ekpe passionately. He dies.)
(Imiri sees the shard on the ground, picks it up, and plunges it into her stomach. She falls on top of Ekpe. Meanwhile, Oku walks over to Ikuku's hut.)

(Oku helps a barely conscious Ikuku to her feet. She then helps Ikuku walk, in the same manner that Ikuku once helped her. The two women walk off stage. Fade to black. Fin.)
Bibliography


