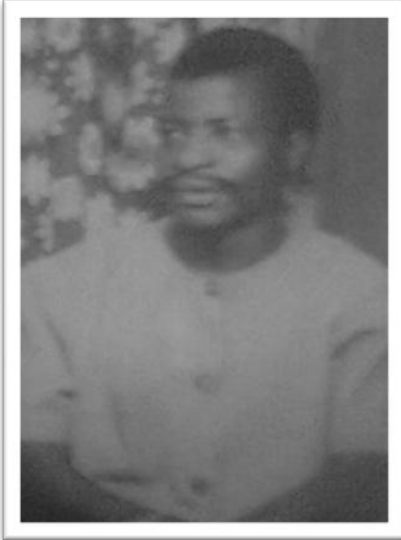


BONIFACE ORSHIO AND SWANGE MUSIC

By

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Boniface Orshio Ada Kever Kweri Yeor was born 1941 at Aba Shitire-Kpav. His father Ada was a King (Kindred Head) and his mother Wan-Torough Ato from Mbagba was a Queen (*Penda-Tyo-U-Tor*).

Orshio who disappeared mysteriously at home on March 25th 1948 reappeared in 1955 when he was 14. Could his fame as world's best trumpeter be associated with his mysterious disappearance at home as a child – undergoing training under the tutorage of the gods or spirits of the ancestors – we are yet to come to such thoughts.

In the course of Orshio's sojourn in the music world among his people, he met with early renowned Tiv traditional musicians, the likes of Akurega Ajav, Nzuul Genyi and Iorgyer Igbya. In the midst of these people still his crave for aerophones was more heightened.

Orshio's Band of 1965, having separated from Soom was an exception. Been an experienced aerophonist with specialization in *Gidô*, he combined with the best brains and talents selected from previous troupes or bands he had served before and that made a glorious team like never before, apart from Yamuel Yashi's Band from which most of the Tiv traditional music experts of the 1960s to 1980s came.

Orshio's band was made of Orshio Ada Kever, Mike Mbatyelevde, Igbyakor Gbyeke, Akondu Ihwa, Sachia Yughur Abwa also known as Ornookeghakegh, Mengai Tordonga and Tyôvihi Chen also known as Jolly.



Though born and nurtured by different families in different geographical locations of the Nation under varying degrees of social, biological and psychological or intellectual conditions, Orshio's story is in same line, hook and sinker with that of Yamuel Yashi who introduced him.

The legendary Orshio, like Yamuel Yashi, left his native Shitire and came to Gboko to look for fortune. Gboko then was the native authority headquarters that was full of free and vast opportunities for everybody and that explains why everybody's attention was in Gboko city.

Having realized that his ultimate desire to become rich in life would be thwarted by his kinsfolk and delayed by his parents, the boy Orshio decided to leave his people, especially when all eyes – except that of his mother – started looking at him as a wayward or prodigal son.

He left his native Shitire out of indignation and vowed, in a way of preference to waste away than waste around with the hope of certainty to live with freedom and happiness among strangers as against the possible living under captivity and squalor among his family members.

The music icon made very early exit of home to attain fame and greatness among his peers and, with every vigor, sought them. But every lode that sounded at him could not give him the desired satisfaction as much as the love for music. It was this music that finally brought him much fame, greatness and exposure.

This increased love and interest in the trumpet, Orshio came under the mentorship of one of the best trumpeters of his time, Mr Utee Jija. Another of Utee Jija type in the expertise in the area of aerophone was Adema Igbyughur with the use of *Kwabura* or *Akya*. Orshio's keen interest in trumpeting brought him a par with these veterans and came to outshine and maintain his position for many years.



At first, Orshio, like his mentor Utee Jija, used to play in local liquor bars (*iyough-msôr*) – literally [house of beer] but sooner or later Yamuel Yashi called him to play together in 1957. Yamuel Yashi continued the mentorship where Utee Jija left. It was through him that Orshio received wider exposure. However, he was quick to part ways with another Yashi's apprentice Soom Anikpa, supposedly to make more fortune (to be rich). To this, most of his contemporaries such as Chief Ama Ikwe, Akesa Agba, Chive Tyorough, Chief Ikyume Agena Lekke and Agee Ayati all say of Orshio as becoming famous rather than richer, he was much loved for in his career as a trumpeter.

In the moment of popularity, Orshio's fame increased with high velocity for three reasons:

- 1 He was introduced by a man of dexterity in the industry, quite noble and famous, Yamuel Yashi Agbatar was the man
- 2 His talent and skillfulness in *Alaketa* and *Gidô* paved way for him to fame
- 3 Orshio had supporters who were among the most famous men of Nigeria of that day. People like Major Adingi, Shuwa Mama, Ikya, Useni, Abdullahi Shelleng, Atom Kpera, T.Y. Danjuma and others, were among his supporters and fans.

Soom Anikpa and Orshio picked up their independent band in 1963 in Gboko and were favorably welcome by David Wuam Gambe Dajo to his Republican Hotel in Agedam near Gboko central where they were to be performing.

Subsequently, in 1967 Alh Umaru Gwalgwada camped Orshio's band in his hotel in Makurdi, which was then Jubilee Hotel that is no more in

existence. The band of course, extended its performance to other venues like Makurdi Club as well. Temporarily, ladies like Miss Kampala (Cecilia Akaaimo), Mbaningir Zôhôte and Tabitha Gbor participated and were part of the dancing troupe led by Orshio.

Orshio's popularity continued to flourish, the then Governor of Benue Plateau in 1969 requested the Tor Tiv HRH Gondu Aluor to send the Swange musicians to him to represent the Federal Government in Algeria and Canada. In that regard, Ingyôugh from Shangew Tiev, Takerá from Ipay, Hon. Tarker Golozo and his Bubuyaya International and Orshio with his Apollo 16 Swange Band were selected.

More so, Aliyu Akwe Doma conveyed the troupes or bands and handed them to the Governor for screening preparatory for taking or moving them to Lagos for their final departure to Algeria. During the screening Ingyôugh was out on the grounds that the troupe went to USA before and Takerá was screened out because the band went to Dakar therefore, Golozo and Swange were selected for Algeria and Canada.

Other traditional artistes or bands like Dan Maria, Jarawa and Alhaji Chatta also came. In Lagos, the final screening was done leading to the disqualification of Golozo's partner (*Oryeseimo*) in the then person of Mr Tsegba on the reason that when Golozo sings, he repeats the same thing and hence they are going for a competition, there would be no time and need for that backup.

Dan Maraya on the other hand was the most favorite music of the Hausa man then and was, for that reason selected to entertain Colonel Katsina in Enugu on the eve that the Traditional Music Bands were to leave for Algeria. Dan Maria who slept on the upper bunk of the bed with Mike Mbatyelevde, Orshio's team member wept throughout the night since this would have been the first time and opportunity to take his music outside the borders of its country of origin, Nigeria.

Swange music, on the platform of Orshio Ada Kever's band went to Algeria to represent the Federal Government of Nigeria in a cultural dance competition. After one week in Algeria, the band was transported to Canada for another presentation for two days and then back to Algiers.

In Algiers and Canada, Golozo and Orshio's Swange Band were merged and functioned as one entity in their performance. The arrangement was done by Tor Tiv right from home, that Golozo would raise a song and be backed up by Swange music.

Obviously, 1969 was the year that Golozo's songs started to be coerced into Swange and Golozo also started singing or composing many of his songs to the tone of Swange music.

For instance, the following short canticle was composed by Number One Tarker Golozo in 1960 and it is an exponent of Swange music:

Onkasev mba kumbur mo

Er Morgbor Mbanyam

De mliam vaan

We u kuma inja la ga

Ei, ei, Morgbor Mbanyam

De mliam vaan

Girls were consoling me

That *Morgbor Mbanyam* (Potbelly man of *Mbanyam* [*Mbanyam* is a district in Benue])

Stop crying

You are not good for that

No, no, *Morgbor Mbanyam*

Stop crying

After this development, Swange musicians started using other people's songs and other praise singers also started tailoring some of their song patterns to the tune of Swange, most especially, artistes like Mwuaga Ahua, Pevikyaa Zegi, Godwin Adigô, Agugu Igbakumbur and Ajo Ugor.

The Orshio's band in conjunction with Bubuyaya Internationals led by Tarker Golozo performed pretty well in both Algeria and Canada and came back to base in 1969 and since then, Swange music became an Internationally accepted and Nationally leading traditional or cultural music and dance whose origin is clearly from Tiv Nation.

Orshio's Apollo 16 Swange Music Band passed through so many development events, travels and performances in history and still was flourishing well till July 18th of 1972 when Abua Orukuna (Or u Kunav) joined the team.

Major Adingi in 1974 called the band to perform for the entertainment of all Tiv folks who were in Lagos. Abua who brought two girls in the band shortly after he joined Orshio was also very familiar with dancing and adding together with Ornookeghakegh (Ornookeekee) became a tool to taking the band to the next level of entertainment.

1974 was the year the pageant of Miss Swange Contest was instituted in Lagos, and this was as a result of the explicit performance of the two young ladies brought in Orshio's band by Abua.

Stakeholders decided that the best dancer will be awarded the First Miss Swange in history and will be given an air ticket to travel to London on a visit to Mrs Joseph Sarwuan Tarka however; the lady who performed best was disqualified due to her failure to cooperate with elders and stakeholders.

Adingi was pleased and attracted to the dancing skills of Abua and as a result, decided to take Swange music to the next level either by buying western musical instruments for the band or financing it.

When Orshio's band came back to Gboko, Abua had some social clash with Mbatyelevde and as a result, he was suspended indefinitely. Abua later followed Udoo Mbalagh back to Lagos for a performance. Major Adingi then a Captain bought western musical instruments for Abua and he separated from, Orshio's band in that same 1974.

Boniface Orshio Ada Kever has performed in many countries of the world during his life time and his participation in Swange music is so enormous that cannot be overemphasized.

Swange music is a very popular Tiv music and dance that is played all over Tiv nation and everywhere Tiv folks settle in large numbers. Its origin is far back in 1930s and has survived unto this present day.

The music Swange has so many brands or exponents such as Kpingi, Ngigh-Ngigh, Tua (tour), Anzaaior, Kyureke, Divishen (division), Baka, Kucha and Shaba among others. Swange music is so vast that one cannot write on it exhaustively in newspaper pages.

Significantly, it is not in the least good to solemnly suggest that the state government should encourage the move of Swange music in a better perspective by organizing prizeable competitive concerts for both local and international Swange musicians and composers in a more frequent manner.

Moreover, we finally suggest also that the state government should institute what will be known as BENUE HALL OF FAME (BENHOF), which will be for the induction of men and women of greatness in their various disciplines or careers like music, politics, engineering and the like.

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