MUSIC PLURALITY: INEVITABILITY IN NIGERIAN MUSIC SCENE

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Introduction

Music and music making are universal in all human cultures and social life all over the world. The creative and performance processes are emotionally, psychologically, physiologically and physically bound. Musicians, therefore, use it for integration, as well as promoting collective and individual identities among ethnic nationalities. In their submissions, Nketia (1975) and Agawu (2003) reiterate that Africa has a broad range of musical repertoires associated with traditional African societies. Disoteo, in Renata (2013:62), corroborates this by pointing out that "each culture and society establishes its own music 'language' with specific scales, rhythms, rules for creating music and reproducing it, improvisations that correspond to different conceptions of time and space of life and death and, of ideologies and beliefs/religion".

In Nigeria, music has been used as a means through which ethnic, community and individual identities are formulated and expressed. Stock (2009), observes that "virtually all Nigerian cultures have their own traditions of music and dance which are central to the way they remember their past and celebrate their present". Such varieties of music include repertoires of songs and instrumental music which are created in various occasions and ceremonies within the localities. They are orally transmitted and consequently easily spread across ethnic and cultural boundaries in adulterated forms. A people's music portrays who they are, where they come from and their values. Consequently, a composer's work irrespective of the period makes a statement on his root and background through traces of socio - cultural identity which characterize his composition.

Nigeria, being made up of autonomous nationalities, has discrete independent musical practices. "These musical practices are discernable in different genres, instruments, games and dances. And in all circumstances, the ecological environments of the various ethnic groups have, to a high degree, influenced their musical construct" Aluede, (2017). Nigerian numerous music genres are characterized by a plurality of musical cultures which establish multiple cultural identities among its different ethnic nationalities. In addition to being a meaningful and communicative medium that convey signification through non- verbal means, Minsu, P: Ingmar, W.; Naaman, M. and Vieweg, S. (2017), argue that at the level of daily life, music has power. It is implicated in every dimension of social agency.

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, the potential value of the Nigerian traditional music aroused deep interest, not only in musical identity, but also in psychological basis of musical thinking; thus providing good materials for research and studies in a number of related disciplines such as social anthropology, ethnomusicology, the arts, computer science, broadcasting, dramatic arts and film industry, cultural studies, communication, health sciences, medicine and education. Okafor (2017: viii) notes that "folk songs are materials for adventure into art music compositions, folk opera, and use by novelists and dramatist". He argues further that the texts provide excellent materials for the study of folklore, oral literature, poetry and linguistics". Also, the philosophy of the themes shapes the values of the society and, at times, provides guiding principles for inter personal relationships. To the Yoruba, "music is a total art that incorporates all other related traditional performing arts for maximum aesthetic values". Olusoji (2009: 84). Among neighboring communities in Nigeria seems to exist structural and rhythmic resemblances in many aspects of their instrumental and vocal music types, despite the existing independent musical practices.

Concept of Plurality/Pluralism

The Collins Dictionary (2011:1269) defines pluralism as "a person or more than one ecclesiastical benefice, and sociology, it is the term for a theory of society as several autonomous but independent groups which either share power or continuously compete for power". When referring to philosophy, the same Collins Dictionary defines pluralism as a "doctrine that really consists of independent entities rather than one unchanging whole op. cit. And the Encarta English Dictionary (2009) defines plurality as the condition of being numerous, a great number or part of something, particularly when this quantity represents more than half the whole". According to the continuum Encyclopedia of British Philosophy, the term pluralism has been used in many diverse contexts to indicate or refer to multiplicity and plurality, in contrast to unity or harmony. These contexts may include linguistics, methodological to theoretical contrast. (2006:2528). The Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary, New Edition (1983:998), also defines pluralism as "the state or fact of being plural: numerousness: a number, more than half majority over any other – distinguished from majority". It goes ahead to define it as being independent of other things of the same type. Music can be divided into discrete categories". (op. cit) .

In general perspective, plurality can be defined as a social system with multiple cultural identities. With regards to music however, Fraser (2013) used the term pluralism to refer to the different music and non-musical aspects that form part of a musical composition. He goes on to inform that "pluralism is not a matter of tolerance, but the active seeking of understanding across line of difference. This also ties in with the notion that there is a collaboration of different musical ideas which attempt to integrate with each other. (p. 19) Plurality in composition implies diversity of styles which does not preclude resemblances derived from known established backgrounds, Hence Pieslak (2005: 47), observes that "composers and their works are often linked to other composers and works based on stylistic similarities". He asserts further that "compositions tend to be

differentiated or categorized based on the widely varying aesthetic perspectives or backgrounds that produce them"(op.cit.).

Invariably, interculturality implies a mixture or combination of differing musical genres/cultures, and the plurality of one musical identity is usually promoted by the musical activities between members of different generations, communities and ethnic nationalities. This is in consonant with Disoteo's argument (2000:7) that "the plurality of one musical identity can be (and often is) present between teachers and pupils and between members of different generations, ethnic groups or religion". When this occurs, the problem of identity of the music seems to arise. Under this situation, historical background and cultural identity could be employed to ascertain the original source of music.

There exist plurality of discrete music types in Nigeria, and inter-cultural pluralism gives rise to musical plurality between neighboring communities and also among ethnic nationalities. Lots of Nigerian traditional music and folksongs have been pluralized in various ways to serve other purposes other than their originally intended functions in society. Such new functions may include social, religious and entertainment. In the process, the themes, motifs, instrumentation and performance styles, costumes, and of course, the texts of the vocal lines, could be modified to suit contemporary needs and tastes of the period or that of the new performer. In other words, the environmental factors aid, as well as influence the choice of the themes and structural designs of the new creations, and also costumes, instruments and instrumentation.

It has been observed that in some cases, a pluralized music tend to lose its identity to a group that adopts or practices it most often. A good example is the Apala, Sakara, and Waka musical genres which are of Islamic origin, but mostly performed by the Yoruba as entertainment music. According to Olusoji (2005), the extensive application of these music genres in social events by the Yoruba has

led to recent debates on their origins. Olabode (1974), Mustapha (1975)and Akinyemi (1998), claim that Apala, Waka and Sakara music originated from Ijebu and Egba respectively, But Aig – Imokhude (1975), Vidal (1977), Omibiyi – Obidike (1979) and Daramola (2005) debunked this claim by strongly arguing that they are purely Islamic music, considering the linguistic patterns or elements of certain words that constitute the texts of the songs. Olusoji (2005:99) strengthens this argument by informing that "the word, 'wakar' has its root in Arabic language, and it means a "song" in Hausa language". He points out further that "Yoruba words such as Alubarika, Alafia, seriaAlujona, Saari and others are adapted words from Arabic language" (op.cit).

Consequently, the Pop music genre, especially the high- life music, is believed to have originated from the street procession band music known as the kokoma, initially played by freed slaves who returned from Brazil; so also the juju music, which is believed to have originated from the Abalabi music which is a recreational music and dance form. According to Vidal (2012:18), the main success of the juju music "in out – classing its nearest competitor, the high – life, lies in its ethnic appeal to the Yoruba –speaking people, regardless of age, sex or class – structure".

On the other hand, various researches have shown- that all contemporary choral music genres in Nigeria draw freely from the musical repertoires of the traditional music for the development of new musical ideas. While the literary music types known as "Art songs", are characterized by the fusion of traditional and Western musical elements, especially those written for concert halls and Church renditions; the Improvised Vocal music types known as 'choruses' (lyric-airs), further "explore and exploit the common characteristics of the traditional songs, such as antiphony, short melodic motifs, variation and repetition techniques, adherence to tonal inflexion of words, rhythmic patterns involving constant use of notes of short durational values, and spontaneous composition of new works"

(Agu 2016:1). No matter the audience conceived by the composers, both genres originate from the folk and traditional songs of different ethnic nationalities in Nigeria where they are created and performed. As it were, the propelling motive behind the creative patterns is "that of satisfying audiences which have the power to judge, accept or reject pieces of music in terms of their cultural, social and religious qualities in comparison with the accepted existing modes" Agu (1992:22).

Plurality of Nigerian Music and its Implications for Standardization

Composers of contemporary Nigerian songs seem to conduct research on the traditional music of their various societies to construe the component materials, stylistic principles, tonality, function and meaning in society, to make their music sound more Nigerian. And Nzewi (1994: 144) posits that "these composers draw freely from certain elements of traditional music regarded as aesthetically essential." Agu (2004) notes that these processes are propelled by the desire to acquire the grip which is largely nourished by the unconscious assimilation of the social and cognitive processes on which exist as the deep structures of traditional music. By their acquisition of these qualities from the traditional music, Omibiyi – Obidike (2001) strongly believes that the new idiom has provided support for its sustenance and greater acceptability.

How–be–it, the inability of many pluralized music to sustain the special qualities inherent in their original forms deprives them the power to make the required impact on both the performer and his audience. Such power lies on certain factors, some of which are:

- Affiliation to collective and individual identity
- Social and cultural differences
- Environmental and ecological differences; and
- Linguistic and dialectical differences.

Affiliation to Collective and Individual Identity

Traditional musical practices in Nigeria being communal and oral in conception, createunlimited avenues for unchecked spread across ethnic and cultural boundaries. Thusone easily locates for example, Udi music in Nsukka, Ezzamgbo music in Abakaliki, Onitsha music in Owerri, Idoma music in Jos, Ijebu music in Ikorodu, Kalabari music in Ijaw, Muslim Hausa music in Egba, Yoruba music in Igbo land, Calabar music in Benue, Efik music in Anangcommunity, and so on and so forth.

As Nigerians migrate to the big cities where they also practice their varied music genres on socio-cultural platforms, musical integration takes place. People tend to borrow certain aspects of music they fancy, from the music of other ethnic groups. In some cases, they merge the new musical ideas with their existing music. In some other cases, they attempt outright imitation of the borrowed music. In both processes, they come up with two different types or forms, the imitated one closely resembling the original music on the surface, but farfetched in socio – cultural content, which the musical notes are signs and symbols. Consequently, it becomes difficult to evaluate the new music in terms of its motive and emotive qualities as a specific product of the original type of form. These qualities provide contemplative and mood dimensions in any traditional music, as well as provide that sense of collective and individual identity, irrespective of the fact that it may possess the structural properties of the original music from which it is derived.

Social and Cultural Differences

In Africa, music and musical practices are classified under social and cultural contexts; so it is with Nigeria where the same thing prevails. A socially designated music in a given community provides social relevance to a specific social event or activity in that community; also applicable to a culturally designated music in a given community. There exist situations where a group from another ethnic community (not sharing the same social or cultural views and practices with the owner of the music), pluralizes the original music and uses it out of the

original context. The music derived from the original genre may share structural properties with the original one, but provides no references to the performers' experiences in culture. In other words, when the new music derived from the original one is practiced out of the social or cultural platform of the original version, it is said to be lacking in social or cultural content, as the case may be. The socializing influence of music is its most vital contributions which cannot be ignored. Its power lies in its ability to evoke in people, experiences and state of consciousness ranging from exaltation to despair.

Each Nigerian ethnic nationality has organized musical systems, as well as its rules and regulations guiding musical involvement and participation. Among the Igbo for example, there is an age, sex, and status dichotomy in musical practices. This implies that different classes of people are classified as to what music to perform, what instruments to play and what dancetypes to participate in. In most Igbo communities, women are prohibited from wearing masks or participate in masquerade music. They are also barred from playing certain musical instruments such as the oja (notched flute), igba (membrane drum), Ngedegwu (xylophone) et cetera. Conversely, women actively participate in masquerading among the Idoma ethnic communities in Benue State. In many Nigerian ethnic nationalities, royal and chieftaincy music are exclusive reserve of the royalty and title holders. In a situation where a classified music type of this nature is pluralized and used for other purposes outside its originally designated functions, it makes a mockery of the cultural institution of the original source of the music. Above all, it fails to perform the chief function of music which, according to Blacking (1976), is to involve people, in shared experiences within the framework of their cultural experience.

Environmental and Ecological Differences

Among Nigerian ethnic nationalities, ecological environments influence the choice of musical instruments the people use in music making as well as determine the types of materials used for the constructionof

the instruments. Instrument selection in many Nigerian ethnic communities is not a random exercise; rather it is a conscious one to ensure selection of appropriate instruments that suit the orientation of a musical group. In the selection process too, the function and utility of the music is given serious consideration. This determines the size, composition and quality of the instruments to be used by a particular instrumental group. For example, a mobile orchestra uses light instruments to enable the players carry them along as they play and move from place to place; while immobile groups, like a wrestling music orchestra that performs on a set stage, use heavy instruments. Esoteric music groups, whose activities are shrouded in secrecy, make use of instruments that are expected to have a psychological hold on their audiences. The materials they use for sound production may not all be exactly musical. For example, the use of a tortoise shell and materials of such nature is designed to impact psychologically on the public.

Research has also shown that among some ethnic communities, a strong belief exists that trees on the pathway serve better for the construction of talking drums. This belief is anchored on the fact that most musical instruments have human attributes. On this premise, builders of the talking drums prefer making use of such trees to other trees far away from the path-ways.For certain musical groups in Nigerian ethnic communities, the process of materials selection, down to the construction process of musical instruments, portray cryptic or potent symbolism. Among such groups, musical instruments generally pass through ritual celebrations. Such ritual celebrations are usually performed before and, or after use of the instruments involved. For example, for the "igeru drums of Arochukwu" to be played, there must be a libation, and a fowl is killed for sacrifices.

Pluralization of music types in this category demands full adherence to their performance rules and regulations, including sourcing of musical instruments and their proper handling. Failure to adhere to these stipulated processes produce numerous varieties of some music

with different levels of adulteration. Listening to them on the surface gives out their source because of their close resemblance to the structure and rhythmic patterns of the original music. These surface peculiarities associated with the musicality of the various groups have overlapped into our polity; hence it is now very easy for people to claim ownership of a piece of music which does not originate from their ethnic community. This becomes a great task for ethnomusicologists, since it provides a good research material for establishing authentic sources of pluralized music genres in Nigeria.

Linguistic and Dialectical Differences

Eminent scholars like Beire (1956), Bebey (1975), Blacking (1976), Euba (1977), Aning (1977), Anderson (1977), Chenoff (1981), Nzewi (1991), Agawu (1995), Tracey (2003), Uzoigwe (2003), Okafor (2005) and Agu (2010) strongly hold the impression that the interaction of music and language is more intense in Africa than elsewhere in the world. Nzewi (2003) notes that the use of drum syllables to encode and facilitate instrumental music education is fairly common; according to him, drums like the slit wooden and the Dundun drums are designed to encode and transmit messages which cognitive members of the society understand and easily decode. Agu (2010:16) strengthens Nzewi's assertion, stating that:

> *Pragmatics is very essential in African musicpractice and performance. Its knowledge enables one to be at home with various sonic musical sounds, symbols and vocal expressions which role out from the drums or through verbal instructions while music making is in progress. With this knowledge, music is fully laid bare before the listener with the appropriate cultural and socio – environmental background.*

In musical practices among Nigerian ethnic communities, language serves as a vehicle of communication and a means through which signs and symbols are understandably shared among performers and their audiences. It must be pointed out at this point in time that the nature

and depth of communication provided by language depends on the culture where the music is practiced or performed. The linguistic elements found in a piece of music depend on its link with the culture of the society to which the music belongs. This implies that a piece of music could generate different reactions in severallisteners as a result of the differences in their socio – cultural background and language. For example, a traditional Ibibio music will definitely appeal to an Ibibio more than it would to a Yoruba. This is because its communicative power, which lies in the language and culture, is not comprehended and experienced by the Yoruba. This postulation then confirms that the common practice in the Nigerian music circles whereby, for example, a melody of a song, say from Igbo extraction, is presented exactly as it is, but with Yoruba texts, may sound correct on the surface because there is no alteration whatsoever on the melody line; but when deeply assessed, everything about it is improper and incorrect. Since the melody was built on adherence to the tonal inflexion of Igbo words, there is no way the same melody used on Yoruba lyrics of the same meaning with the original Igbo song, could provide same meaning with the original Igbo song until the melody is drastically restructured in adherence to the Yoruba words.

Dialectical differences do not, in the real sense, abuse language sensibility as much as linguistic differences. For example, a song of a community could be performed exactly the same way by a neighboring community with a dialectical difference without much adulteration, except changes in dialect which in most cases, do not initiate alterations on the melody. This is because the two communities share the same language and have resemblance of culture. Among neighboring communities, their songs and instrumental music are pluralized at will, so much so that the exercise becomes a tradition.

Conclusion

Right from the introductory part of this essay, we discussed Nigeria as a country made up of autonomous nationalities. Each autonomous community engages in independent musical practices discernible in

their various musical instruments, games and dances, all of which are influenced by the ecological environments and culture. Consequently, each ethnic community shares emotions, intentions and meanings through music. This therefore, implies that individuals, as well as the ethnic communities, formulate and express their identities through music and its performance, this being the case, their values and attributes are clearly portrayed through their numerous music genres and musical tastes.

The Nigerian social systems, with their multiple cultural identities, promote plurality of music, as the ethnic communities actively seek to understand the differences across musical lines. As intercultural activities give rise to a mixture of different musical cultures, musical activities among members of neighboring communities and different ethnic nationalities, promote plurality of many musical identities.

The importance of language and culture in "pluralization" process cannot be over emphasized.As a powerful vessel of expression, the level of relationship of music with language is the hallmark of Nigerian musical practices because it enhances musical comprehensibility and interpretation. With regards to culture, different musical genres embody different values and these values are embedded in the various cultures of the people who create and perform the music.

The issue of musical identities resulting from musical plurality is not peculiar to Nigeria. It abounds the world over and has made some remarkable impact on contemporary Art music, as composers of this genre also apply "cross-culturalism" in their compositions. Despite these achievements by the contemporary Art music composers, Nzewi (1999), Agu (2009) and Onyeji (2011), emphasize the need for incorporation of traditional music elements and idioms into their works to form the creative foundations for the modern African art music composition for international appreciation and acceptance of the authentic art form.

The fact that "pluralization" of musical genres have presented problems of identification of originality does not imply inability of ethnomusicologists and anthropologists to rise to the challenge, rather it presents a new research dimension in a socio - cultural approach to cognitive pluralism; which according to John – Steiner (1995), are language and cultural practices. Renata (2013: 62) aptly noted that "musical identities in an intercultural context meet, acknowledge, respect, accept, compare, permeate, and promote each other. They become the reality of a multicultural society".

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Interview

Interview with Aluede, C. - Professor of African Musicology, Ambrose Ali State University, Ekpoma, Edo State. 20th April, 2017.