

THE CONTEMPORARY PERFORMANCE SETTING OF JUJU MUSIC IN YORUBA LAND

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Abstract

Yoruba music encompasses rich tradition of choral singing mostly in form of call and response patterns in their performance practices. This study explores the contemporary performance setting of Juju music in Yorubaland, studying the adaptation and the adopted traditional elements in modern contexts. Juju music as a genre of music is rooted in the cultural heritage of Yoruba people and had witnessed the transmission and infusion of new evolutions in performances style while retaining its identity. This has giving rise of Afro beat which was pioneered by Fela Kuti marching Yoruba idioms and its ostinato rhythms in conjunction with political ascertainment, thereby producing some musical genres like Jazz and Funk. Using the descriptive and historical method of qualitative approach, this work examined the contemporary performance styles, content, audiences, factors influencing Juju music as one of the prominent popular musical style, the various exponents of this genre and the significance of Juju music in Yoruba etymology, with the conclusion that, though the music has witnessed the evolvement of new Juju music, globalization and cultural transformation, uprising of contemporary musicians using the Yoruba musical instruments with western instruments and have new genres like Afro beat Modern pop, hip-hop and R&B, yet, the genre still maintain its originality which are deeply rooted in African elements, and sustain its rich Yoruba traditions.

Key words: Juju- music, tradition, performance contexts.

Introduction

Music is a universal language that evokes emotions, inspires creativity and stimulates abilities in terms of affective, cognitive and psychomotor expressions. Music is culturally bond as a means of expressing human feelings (Ajewole 2011). It is a pattern that stimulates the rhythmic flow of emotion in a creative response which represents the speed, pitch and the tone characteristics of a particular song. Music is dynamic in feature of the human experience, and within this context, each culture and society has its own unique style of music. Yoruba music is seen as a medium that channels cultural expressions which connects people of the same identity (Oludare, 2021). Yoruba music promotes cultural values, functions in entertainment, social and political discourse. It is used for sacred, ritual and secular purposes (Yusuff and Olubomehin, 2018). Yoruba music has different varieties of genres of music ranging from traditional, folks to sacred, gospel and popular music. Omibiyi (2013) classified Nigerian music basically into Traditional, Arts, Classical and Popular music. Popular music according to Ekwueme (2006) is music mostly enjoyed and appreciated by many people. *Juju* music is one of the popular genre expounded from traditional Yoruba percussion. *Juju* music is an integral part of Yoruba culture with a rich history of over decades of years. The genre evolves from South-Western part of Nigeria adapting to changes both culturally and technologically, thus preserving its traditional sustainability. The music has the elements of Yoruba forms and styles as well as that of Western styles, preserves historical idioms and it is understandable to the audience. With distinctive characteristics of rhythms, guitar performance, percussive beats, call and response styles, the music reflect historical and modern innovation and are performed at

social gatherings, festivals and religious activities.

Methodology

This paper employs historical and descriptive methods using qualitative study approach. The performance context of *Juju* music was reviewed starting from its origin as *Asiko* to its current *Juju* music relating it to the fusion of other Western styles and forms which resulted to new contemporary Juju names like Afro Juju, Highlife Juju, etc.

Historical Review of Juju Music in Yoruba land

The evolution of Yoruba music had been explored from different existing literatures. Adegbite (1979”1988), Vidal (1990) delved into Yoruba oral literature, Adegbite (1988) Agawu (2003) implied that this type of music has been highly potential as part of play, rituals and worship and thus transmitted orally or aurally within the culture. Dosunmu (2005), Samuel (2012) examined the importance of drums and drumming in Yoruba land, Odunaike (2016) also delved into performance among the Yoruba. Akponome (2014) researched into traditional Yoruba music. Owoaje (2023) in his work mentioned some expedients of Yoruba music.

Yoruba music has been an integral part of the cultural heritage of the Yoruba people being one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria. The Yoruba land shares boundaries with neighbouring countries like Benin, Togo. Their music greatly plays a significant role in religious activities, social performance, ceremonial practices, rituals, entertainment and so on. The music also performs greatly in the aspect of education, transmitting the sociocultural significance of value as well as promoting the ideology of identity (Elegbe & Fadipe, 2017). The major important part of Yoruba music is the use of drums, which are sometimes seen as being sacred. Drumming established the background and foundation of musical

performances and practices through the rhythmic pattern. Different types of drums are used ranging from their sizes, pitches, functions and names, such as Dundun, Bata and Gongga drums. Oral tradition is a major tool used in transmitting these songs from generation to another. Idamoyibo Atinuke (2007) expressed Yoruba songs as style of songs that are performed in social gatherings and ritual functions, majorly through oral traditions. Popular style of music is embedded having different genres of music, such as Apala, Juju, Sakara, Fuji among others which are found and practiced among Yoruba people.

The evolution of *Juju* can be traced to the adoption of new contexts of performance different from highlife music. The music is seen as direct to people of different social backgrounds. The music promotes nationalism with the fusion of cultural elements, dance and music (Omojola 2006). The precedent genres to Juju music was *Asiko* as the performance and musical display always takes place at bars or joint using some plastics, sticks, clapping of hands, tapping of toes and legs to make and accompany their music (Omojola 2006).

Tracing the historical review of Juju music, Akjah Brown corroborated Omojola (2006), *Juju* music it's an interaction between the concept of society and music as well as the correlation and interference with the rascals or area boys and the old Saro (Olowogbowo) in Lagos. Juju music was traced to have started in the Island city of Lagos as far back as 1932 with an ensemble of rattles (Sekere), a tambourine, a banjo together with the lead singer. It later became a large ensemble with the inclusion of other instruments like guitar (Water man 1998), Omojola (2010).

Omibiyi (1981) traces the origin of *Juju* music to palm wine music, which developed from preceded traditions of indigenous recreational music known as Abalabi, that is 'recreational music'. Azikiwe (1970) opined

that *Juju* music came into lime light through a popular guitarist in Lagos around 1925 named Tunde King and his friends in palm wine music and thus re-arrange the music with some Yoruba elements using Yoruba language in form of call and response.

The Definition of the Term 'JUJU' Music

Juju music has been defined by different scholars from various perspectives, Vidal (1983) defines it as a commemorative and panegyrics music of the Yoruba people. Ayodeji (2017) expressed *Juju* as the genre that emerged in the 1930s among the Yoruba people of Nigeria, he further conveyed its role in social and political expression to address discourse on poverty, corruption, injustice and so on. Akinbami (2019) defines *Juju* music as a genre of music that emerged from the fusion of traditional Yoruba music with influence and elements of highlife, Jazz and Cuban music, discussing its role as a form of cultural expression, entertainment and performance which preserve the cultural heritage

John Collins (2007) describes *Juju* music as a genre that emerged from the infusion of traditional Yoruba percussion and Western instruments such as guitar and accordion, having its performance root within the urban Yoruba social environment integrating modern elements.

Juju music is a genre of music that delves in entertainment and social communication of messages among Yoruba's through an infusion of Yoruba percussion traditions with highlife and Western pop music. Ruth Stone (1998). *Juju* music was defined by Merriam (1955) as a syncretic of African and Western elements. *Juju* music is a guitar band music from various palm-wine styles (Collons 1977). It is a genre of popular music derived from a regional style of Nigerian urban popular music developed by the Yoruba from Ghanaian-derived from 'palm-wine' style of popular music in Lagos. The above definitions as therefore highlighted the blend of traditional musical elements with external

influences which has evolve over time and its significance in Yoruba communal practices.

The Exponents of Juju music

Different musicians had explored the performance practices of *Juju* music, some of which will be discussed below;

Juju music was started by *Tunde King* in 1920s and 1930s with a small ensemble group which had him as the lead singer. The transmission later led to the music of Ayinde Bakare (1950).

Isaiah Kehinde Dairo popularly known as I.K. Dairo introduces his *Juju* music in 1957 with an inclusion of harmonica and various traditional drums, accordion and also Samba (Kayode 2019)

King Sunny Ade (1946) started with the introduction of Hawaiian pedal steel guitar, electronic kick drum and keyboard. He has been a dominant exponent of juju music since 1960s and greatly expanded globally. *Ebenezer Remilekun Obey* known as *Ebenezer Obey* in mid 1970s till date was known for his philosophical lyrics with the inclusion of bass guitar and Yoruba talking drums, his music is influenced by gospel elements which enriches lyrical and musical complexity.

Omoba Benjamin Aderounmu known as *Kokoro* in 1926s was a blind *Juju* performer and established a one-man band using tin drum, tambourine and samba.

Ernest Olatunde Thomas, popularly known as Tunde Nightingale engaged in *Owanbe* stlye of *Juju* music (1922-1981), Ayinde Bakare, another *Juju* exponent who was a contemporary of Tunde King formed *jenlenke Juju* style of music (1954) adding amplified guitar into his own style. *Fatai Olagunju* Popularly known as Fatai Rolling Dollars (1926) started his *Juju* style in 1955 with the introduction of Agidigbo (Thumb-Piano) in place of guitar, accompanied by other instruments like Sekere, Samba and Akuba drums. *Emperor Wale Olateju*, (1946) *Juju* icon and emperor.

Sunday Adeniyi (1946) came up with the uses of syncretic style of music in his own *Juju* music. *Shina Peters* (1958) explored the performance of Afro- *Juju* style of music by creating the Afro-*Juju* sub-genre with the blending of *Juju* music and highlife, his music is highly significant and has impact on the evolution of contemporary *Juju* music through his dynamic performance and rhythmic extemporization. Orlando Owoh (1937-1977), Idowu Animasahun (1938 till dates). Sunny Okosuns (1947) uses electric guitar, flute, saxophone, electric piano, percussion and vocals. Contemporary *Juju* musicians include; King Sunny Ade, Segun *Adewale* (1949) who combines Jazz, Fuji, Reggae and Afro beat pioneer the ‘Yo-Pop’ style through the infusion of *Juju*, highlife and Afro beats, he attracts younger audiences through the adaptation of modern innovation. Oludare Olateju (1973) known as Ludare, Ferdinand Dreyssig and Marvin Hey, United Jazz, Admiral Dele Abiodun.

All these exponents have contributed immensely to the growth, modernization, evolution and development of *Juju* music locally and globally consequently ensuring its continuity and relevance within the society.

The Performance Practice of JUJU Music in Yoruba land

Omojola (2013) looked into four idioms that are practicable in Yoruba Nigeria music. These include; Indigenous church music, Urban syncretic popular forms, Modern folk opera and Nigerian modern Art Music. Yoruba music plays a major role in the practice system of indigenous church music, it is primarily used as a tool of worship connecting the worshipers with God. Often, some content of the songs promotes the cultural identity of Yoruba Historical expedients looking into the structure, nature and other elements feature in the songs. The music enriched the indigenous cultures in its survival thus combining different genres of music such as folksongs, pop, jazz etc. The

music often appeases the emotions, feelings, thereby playing therapeutic functions which channel a communication with Supreme God. Urban syncretic popular forms engage the fusion of elements of different popular music. (Lepold 2001) sees syncretism as the bonding of two or more cultures, traditions, beliefs to have a resultant form of expressions. The fusion of indigenous music and that of western counterpart has greatly led to ideas of new musical genres such as jazz style. Modern folk opera involved the use of native songs which are mostly derived from oral traditions. Yoruba music also deploy songs form folklores and folktales which form part of moonlight plays. The songs are performed based on different activities, feelings, emotions and escalations of experience. The content of the songs are the spontaneous events in the society and environs and sometimes with influence of contemporary elements.

Juju music started in Lagos at palm wine bars for entertainment and was later spread out of Lagos to various parts of the societies such as Ibadan and its environment. *Juju* musicians performed in various occasions like nightclubs and higher institutions, with the infusion of lyrics and praise songs as well as rich traditions of Yoruba praise poem (*Oriki*) at a time when invited by their patrons and patroness either at home or open gatherings. The performance also occurs at hotels which often serve as music or dance hall. The performance context also centers on occasions of *Ariya* or *Owanbe* parties with the collaborations of social and cultural aesthetic for celebrations of naming, house warmings, birthdays, funerals and any other ceremonies, live *Juju* music is displayed with essentials of traditional Yoruba folks using Yoruba language as a medium of communication. The performance contexts use a form of call and response patterns, which include vocalization of choral singing and comingling of western and traditional musical instruments. *Ariya* or

Owanbe parties is a Yoruba term which refers to elaborate, lavish and a large social gatherings or parties characterised by music (often popular music; highlife, *Juju*, Fuji etc.), dance, food, to display a particular ceremony which foster on culture, fashion and identity of a society. *Juju* music through its lively and interactive nature plays a significant role in these celebrations to ensure festive mood and foster community warmth. *Juju* music engages the interlocking movement of a rhythms with complex melodies, repeatedly driven with melodies and harmonic structure with the infusion of western traditions but performed in Yoruba language, thus evolved different vocal styles (majorly in call and response forms), reflecting the emotions, mood as well as societal vices and themed towards religious and cultural perspectives in a polyphonic form.

Juxtaposition of the then *Juju* Music and the present *Juju* Music

The present *Juju* music which can also be referred to as contemporary *Juju* music which incorporates western performance styles and practices in form of vocal and instrumental forms resulted in new forms of *Juju* styles such as hip-pop *Juju*, Afro-*Juju*, *Juju* gospel etc.

Omoloye (2016) stressed that Shina Peter, one of the prominent *Juju* exponents started the shift from what can be refers to as ‘old *Juju*’ musical practice to ‘contemporary’ style of practice. He further stated that *Juju* music has shifted in performance both in instruments and instrumentation from what it used to be in the 1950s to early 1980s. The release of Shina Peter’s two Albums in 1989 and 1990 respectively; *Ace* (Afro-*Juju* series I) and *Shinamania* (Afro-*Juju* series II) was rapidly accepted and patronised by the Youths. Also, the tempo of the then *Juju* music is slow and steady unlike the present style that engages in fast and rapid tempo with more thematic variations of rhythmic movements.

Factors Influencing the Performance style of Popular Music

From the period of 19th century, the performance practice of popular music has undergone a transition of changes. Popular Yoruba music has evolved and has been diversified with time, the following are the factors influencing the performance style of Yoruba music.

1. Infusion of Western elements like; Rhythms and melodies: African traditional rhythms are highly influenced with contemporary tempo, rhythms, beat and time patterns.

2. incorporation of new musical instruments: Influence of European musical idioms on Nigerian Traditional music and incorporation of Western musical instruments in the early 20th century, promote the uses of instruments like guitar and piano in the composition of various musical genres such as Afro-beat, Juju and highlife.

3. Trade and cultural exchange: Many musical genres were influenced by trade and cultural exchange such as blues and Jazz, thus reflect in the performance practice of various popular music.

4. Cultural change and Transformation: Musical genre was highly influenced by change and transformation in cultural globalization which resulted in new forms popular music such as Afro pop, Afro Juju, Funk, Yo -pop, hip pop etc. Also, the need to meet the demand of the audience influence the performance of popular music.

Relevance and Significance of Popular Music (*Juju* Music)

Popular music in which Juju music is one of its kind, is culturally significant and plays a major role among Yoruba people and their environs. The music is rich and highly diversified in nature. Juju music serves as a communication tool, storytelling, expression of emotions, feelings, grief, joy. The music is also a powerful form of artistic expressions,

looking into symbolism of beauty and aesthetic. Yoruba music has a favourable impact on Identity and Yoruba heritage, the lineage is preserved through music in term of oral traditions and oral history such as folktale and folklores, thus helps in preserving cultural traditions and values. The music also plays an important role in socio-cultural and didactive functions, social interaction, coronations, rituals, ceremonies and social gatherings through the use of rhythmic patterns, African melodies and harmonies, fusion of African and western musical instruments, dynamic lyrics, forms such as call and response, antiphonal, through composed style and strophic style. The music is deeply rooted with religious and spiritual practices.

The social and political significance of Popular music cannot be de-emphasised. *Juju* music is widely utilized in secular contexts for social and recreational purposes, vocal and instrumental style are employed at social gatherings, communal entertainment and at leisure moment. The music also helps in historical preservation of its traditions and heritage. The music is significant in celebrations of memorial events, also to promotes religious, political and economic issues. Moral enrichment is promoted through this music, themes of love, courting and human emotions are frequently conveyed. Social and aesthetic environment is significantly shaped by music and *Juju* music played major roles in protest and resistance as well as in political movements exhibiting social change within the Yoruba regions and beyond. Music at political gatherings diplomatic missions and other events also communicated messages of authority, loyalty and diplomacy. The Music is also employed to amuse royalty and accompany dances. Cycle of events are also commemorated such as womanhood, youth-

hood, births, deaths, maidenhood and so on. Hence, the music has transcended outside the geographical boundaries reaching audiences both within and outside, thereby promoting globalization awareness. Musicians such as Sunny Ade, Ebenezer and the likes has helped in this evolution.

ELEMENTS OF JUJU MUSIC

Elements of *Juju* music create the dynamic, rich and ostinato expression in its performance context with the infusion of traditional Yoruba music and that of modern elements. The elements include;

- Instrumentation of Western instruments such as guitars (electric, steel pedal guitar and bass guitar) which provides melody and rhythmic movement, keyboards/Synthesizers (for harmonic and melodic movements), Accordions (for timbre uniqueness) and Traditional instruments such as percussions (talking drums, dundun, congas and other traditional Yoruba percussion instruments).
- Rhythm and Beat (Tempo): such as polyrhythms (which involves interlocking and complex rhythms and harmonies), syncopation and regular timeline.
- Vocalization: these involves the use of call and response, lyrics (with special themes on politics and social matters, traditions, morals, conducts, practices etc.), harmonies in different structures.
- Scales: the music often reflect pentatonic scales to express rich traditional Yoruba heritage.
- Cultural and Social perspective: the music depicts elements of Yoruba vices such as community practices and performance i.e. festivals, ceremonies, coronations, political issues, folktale and folksongs, dance, drama to convey messages and to encourage audience participation.

- Forms and Structure: repetition is one of the major elements in performance of *Juju* music and hall mark features of African music, thereby encourage the continual use of text bound to arouse an ecstasy experience. Improvisation also increases a spontaneous performance.

CONCLUSION

This paper has examined the contemporary performance setting of *Juju* Music in Yoruba Land

looking at its relevance among Yoruba practitioners. Music is a total culture, both in time and place. The study has given a descriptive detail of the origin and development of *Juju* music in Yoruba etymology. *Juju* music has been reviewed from different scholastic perspectives. The study undergone different exponents of *Juju* music, the performance contexts, factors influencing the performance of popular music, characteristics elements of both the then *Juju* music and the contemporary practice of *Juju* music. The study therefore concluded that *Juju* music is one of the prominent popular genre which influence both young and old, highly significant and relevant not in terms of artistic expression alone, but also culturally, socially and spiritually, unifying the society in a bond through cultural heritage. The relevance of the genre cannot be over-emphasised in terms of its content and contextual practice as the style is still in practice corroborating both musical and non-musical elements with the fusion of traditional musical instruments with that of western musical instruments. It is therefore of significant that despite all the infusion of Western influence, popular musical genres in which *Juju* music is one of the expedient genre still retain its originality both in vocal and instrumental stylistic form.

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