

THE IMPACTS OF THE BROADCASTING MEDIA IN GLOBALIZING AFRICAN TRADITIONAL MUSIC.

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ABSTRACT

The world is currently shaped in both positive and negative dimensions by network communication factor called “globalization”. This has in no small measure affected all facets of human endeavours, which include: commercial business, education, sports, tourism, the entertainment industry (music and films), the broadcasting media, etc. The African societal affairs are no exceptional cases. Some Africans appear to perceive globalization as a favour to only developed nations, which diffuse their cultures to the so-called third world countries with the aid of their powerful communication media. These act as threats to African musicultural heritage in the global music making media scene. The media broadcast, an offshoot of technological advancement, has played a crucial role in globalizing traditional and contemporary music of any society, due to its world-wide coverage. This paper therefore examines the place of the broadcasting media in globalizing African traditional music among the comity of nations. Apart from participant/observation method employed in this study, the researcher also consulted relevant literatures to support the information gathered from personal observations. Through empirical research, this paper highlighted how the broadcasting media globalize African traditional music. The end result proved that if African music globalization is tailored towards the renaissance of African traditional music, it can be used to preserve and project its rich cultural heritage, thereby attracting tourists and researchers’ attention.

INTRODUCTION

The renaissance of African traditional music through the broadcasting media has been an issue of interest and concern to African nations in the age of globalization, due to its roles in preserving and promoting African cultural identity among the comity of nations. According to Leon (2001:1), “songs are important cultural forms through which people assert and preserve their own histories in the face of changing social conditions”. Globalization brought about a social change in the documentation and transmission of African traditional music. Its relevance in African contemporary society is fast declining due to similar role played by global technology such as the print and the electronic media. These technologies have made it possible for Africans to disseminate their musical heritage within and outside the shores of Africa as a way of preserving and projecting their culture. Idolor (2005:83) asserts that “the dissemination of musical ideas and practices to distant places made it possible for people to use the new form to augment or spice their own heritage”.

Music Globalization, the Broadcasting Media and African Traditional Music

Music globalization has been an issue of discourse in the 21st century by music scholars across the globe. For a clearer understanding of the term, it will be appropriate to define the concept 'Globalization'. Osazee-Odia (2008:356) defines globalization as "the interconnectedness of the world into a single geographical entity". Globalization creates a new world that is void of space, time and boarder barriers, which in time past affected humans and their culture among the comity of nations. In line with this, Soola (2003:17) states that "globalization seeks to universalize the culture and economies of the global system through technology and telecommunications, as well as ensure an unhindered inflow of information, goods and services".

From the aforesaid analogy, music globalization is therefore the interconnectivity of the various musical activities of the world into a single geographical entity for social interaction and global exchange. In the world today, "no single country or sound dominates the new musical landscape" (Rafer, 2008:1). In a global society, musical sounds are drawn from the various cultures of the world with the aid of information and communication technology; thereby making the world a global village. Any musical genre or activity that has reached a global status is styled 'global music'. Idolor (2005:85) defines global music as "that which has reached many people in the world through the electronic, print, academic and practical performance media". In Idolor's definition, it could be asserted that, global music is made possible with the agents of globalization (global technology) which include: the print (music journals and magazines) and the electronic (broadcast, webcast i.e. internet and mobile phones) media, etc. that provide access for musical information to spread universally.

Generally, the broadcasting media comprise the radio and television devices. These devices are used by their audience/viewers in receiving electronic signals sent from the transmitter. The act of disseminating such signals is known as broadcasting. The Online Collins English Dictionary (2003) defines broadcasting as "a transmission of programmes on radio/television". These programmes are meant to inform, educate, entertain and enlighten the populace about their immediate and far environment, through documentaries news and musical programmes.

According to Wikipedia (2010), "broadcasting is the distribution of audio and video signals which transmit programmes to an audience". Audio broadcasting through radio information disseminating is transmitted on Frequency Module (F.M.), Amplitude Module (A.M.), Short and Long Wave (S.W. and L.W. respectively). The television on the other hand makes use of audio-visual (sounds and pictures) in its message signals which is transmitted on Ultra High Frequency (U.H.F.) and Very High Frequency (V.H.F.). Music broadcasting is a process of transmitting musical information (audio or audio-visual) in order to educate, inform, entertain and enlighten the populace about their needs and aspirations via radio or television with the aid of a transmitter.

"African music" according to Idamoyibo (2007:39) is "any music that originates in any African society". From the above definition we can deduce that African music consists of traditional and contemporary musical genre associated with the diverse ethnic nationalities in Africa. In another development, Agawu (2003) opines that:

African music is best understood not as a finite repertoire but as a potentiality. In terms of what now exists and has existed in the past, African music designates those numerous repertoires of songs and instrumental music that originate in specific African communities and performed regularly as part of play, ritual and worship and circulate mostly orally/aurally, within and across languages, ethnic and cultural boundaries. (p. xiv)

In recent time, African music has outgrown the conventional medium (orally/aurally) of transmitting its musical culture as a result of globalization. For Africans to transmit their musical heritage to posterity they have to harness the print and the electronic media information mechanism; this done will enable them to preserve and project their identity.

The Positive Effects of the Broadcasting Media on African Traditional Music

In a globalized society, musical cultures are drawn from all continents as a result of advancement in science and technology. In line with this Ekong (2008:17) observes “in contemporary times, technological development has brought music to every door step”. The broadcasting media as offshoots of technological advancement have been media of transmitting and globalizing musical culture across the globe irrespective of race, tribes, culture and boarder. According to Odogbor (2008:69), “music is a vital aspect of culture, which finds expression in a people’s life in their desire to promote their culture in its broadcast term to ensure cohesion and continuity”.

In time past, the broadcasting media, to some extent, favoured the developed nations, who in turn diffused their musical cultures across the globe; Africa being at the receiving end. In recent time, there are clarion calls by Africans to project their musical identity towards global appreciation. Akinjide (2007) notes that:

The developed countries are knocking at our door, insisting that we let them in and give them access ...what should be our response? Do we oblige them for the asking? What do they promise us in return?... We must put our house in order before opening the door to outsiders. As a sovereign and indeed as a continent our action must be dictated purely by our nation’s interest (p. 42).

Leonard (1967) had earlier called for “a cultural revival, cultural propagation, cultural preservation, cultural conservation, cultural promotion, cultural display and cultural exhibition of African traditional music in its contemporary society.” Africans have identified this fact and they resolved to use their local/international owned broadcasting media to preserve and promote their diversified musical heritage. Some examples of such broadcasting stations are: Botswana TV, Burkina Faso television, Heritage TV (Burundi), television Equatorial Guinea (Equatorial Guinea), Soweto TV (South Africa), Nigeria Television Authority (NTA), Cine Afrique (Ghana), Voice of Nigeria, Ray F.M. (Nigeria). These stations allot at least 60% of its airtime to documentary news and musical programmes pertaining to the development of African identity. And they have aired African musical festivals which include: the ‘*Homowo*’ associated with the Ga people of Ghana, *Fête du Dipri* in Abidjan, *Eyo* festival among the Yorubá of western Nigeria, *Voodoo* festival of Togo, *Wodaabe Gerewol* celebrated among the Fulani and *Touareg* of the Saharan desert, the *Rose* festival in Morocco, and so on.

The place of international broadcasting media in globalizing African traditional music is not left out. Foreign broadcasting media like Cable News Network (CNN) and British Broadcasting Corporation (B.B.C.) have both been in the Vanguard of projecting Africa music through their respective documentaries programmes. In order to satisfy their African viewers, C.N.N. and B.B.C. have created cultural programmes namely: C.N.N. inside Africa and B.B.C. Africa, with the sole aim of bringing the various musical cultures in Africa to the notice of the world.

C.N.N. inside Africa is a 30 minutes documentary centered on African music and musicians. The programme tends to educate and enlighten the world on African musical heritage. B.B.C. Africa on its part focuses on African political, economic and entertainment activities within the African milieu. These international broadcasting programmes have created a niche for African music in the global musical scene.

During the pre-world cup preparation, super sports, an international broadcasting media on sporting activities in the world, aired documentaries on South African people and culture and this entails its traditional music. These documentaries aimed at displaying South Africa in particular and Africa in general as centres for culture and tourism. African musical instruments played a crucial role in the entertainment of fans and players alike, and the *Vuvuzuela* is one of such. This African traditional musical instrument associated with the people of South Africa was made prominent then. Initially, it was seen by foreign players and their fans that lack understanding of African music, as a noisy instrument and was blamed for their poor performances. The *Vuvuzuela* musical performance was later accepted and appreciated by the left over teams and their supporters in the competition as African way of music making. Today, it has become a global musical instrument, whose usage is not restricted to African community alone, but all over the world. Recently, they were used by some Irish protesters to protest against Queen Elizabeth II's visit to Ireland. From the foregoing, one may agree that the broadcasting media have indeed aided the globalization of African traditional music in the face of cultural music promotion beyond immediate environment.

Factors Militating against the Broadcasting Media on African Traditional Music Globalization

The broadcasting media have recorded success on the globalization of African traditional music. Despite their laudable achievements, the media are faced with some challenges. Evidence gathered from the research observations reveals that African traditional music is not given adequate airtime by the broadcasting media to project African musicultural heritage, compared to its contemporary African music that dominates the airwaves. What most African broadcasting stations such as *Owambe* in African Independent Television (AIT) Nigeria, Soundcity, Game Up on Galaxy, Music Africa on Silverbird, MTV Based Africa, Channel O Africa etc, termed African traditional music is not a true reflection of its musical culture. As observed by Nzewi (2004):

Globalization is divesting contemporary practice of musical arts in Africa of such spiritual, healing and humanizing roles. What gets re-fashioned and exhibited internationally as African musical arts are anemic abstractions of the substantial virtues and values of heritage – bastardization of traditional genius that is intended –

to reflect the flippant European-American imaginations as well as proscription of African creative integrity. (p. 2)

In a similar development, Idolor (2005:85-86) laments the neglect of the broadcasting media of traditional African music and promotion of foreign music thus, “media operators select materials, which indoctrinate the African masses in favour of European or other cultures of the world... In consequence, some artistes abandon their African musical heritage in favour of foreign musical practices”. This act of cultural negligence by the broadcasting media, has acted as a hindrance to the effective preservation and propagation of African traditional music.

Suggested Solutions to the Problems

In contemporary society, the broadcasting media have been the most powerful tools in propagating African musical heritage through its entertainments and documentary programmes. Thus, the African broadcasting media should give more airtime to African music that portrays its true culture; this should be done with the creation of more African traditional music programmes to aid in preserving and promoting African culture.

The African Union has been an organization that comprises 53 African countries except Morocco, with the sole aim of promoting African positions and cultures in matters relating to the development of the continent. The African Union as part of its cultural promotion should establish a centralized cable music network, dedicated solely for disseminating African music and culture from any of its communities. In conclusion, if African music in the broadcasting media is tailored towards the revival and promotion of African traditional music, it can be used to sustain African musical heritage in a changing society.

Summary/Conclusion

The broadcasting media have played a crucial role in the globalization of African traditional music through its own local and international radio and television network, with the sole aim of informing, educating and enlightening the comity of nations on African music and culture. Today, African traditional music has gained global coverage and has given Africans a cultural identity across the globe.

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