

MUSIC: A VERITABLE TOOL FOR CULTURAL REPRESENTATION AND PRESERVATION

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Abstract

Culture can be said to be a given people's way of life. It is a term that cuts across every area of existence of a people inhabiting a particular geographical location. These cultural practices include their language, the type of food they eat, the kind of clothes they wear, their means of livelihood, etc. People are many times differentiated from others by their culture. This culture which is different from place to place, has experienced some kind of preservation, which is why cultures that have existed for lots of centuries still exist today, although many have been greatly influenced by the unending sweep of acculturation. There is therefore the need to explore more media through which culture can be represented and preserved. Using document study and interview, this paper explores the role music can play in helping to preserve cultural materials, and also how music can be used to represent culture. Findings from this study show that among other things, music is an effective tool for cultural representation and preservation, through costumes, language use, telling stories of myths, etc.

Keywords: Culture, music, Preservation, Cultural Preservation, Cultural Representation

Introduction

Aristotle maintains that man is a social being and that without the society, there is no man. He believed that man by nature is a political animal and the state is the terminus of man. For Aristotle, the state came into existence because of the inability of man to satisfy all his needs alone. Hence people began to come together; a man and a woman to form a family and this formed the first aspect of the society. When man saw that all his needs could not be satisfied by the family, there was then a need to expand the horizon and this thus led to the emergence of second aspect which is the village. The village thus emerged by the conglomeration of different families. However, the process did not end there, it later metamorphosed into the state which Aristotle saw as the relation between different villages. However, our point of interest here lies in the fact that in societies, different people come to live together. Gradually, people began to learn from one another via dressing, types of work done, different means of survival, arts, craftsmanship etc. In early Greek civilizations, there were also corrective measures used to compel compliance to the state law such as the ostraka which was about ostracizing defaulters and men of nuisance. Others were pharmakos, Atimia etc. (Kuokkanen, 2020, Credo, 2020) The totality of all these, form what we know today as culture which is way of life of a particular people.

Every human born, is born into a particular family, environment and a particular culture. Every society has its unique way of dressing, language, dance styles, festivals, customs, traditions, norms etc. These and many more express the culture of a particular society. As a human person grows, he acquires culture through the learning processes of enculturation and socialization. Culture is the set of patterns of human activity within a society or social group. However, due to the wavering storm of modernity, the cultures are changing and gradually replaced by acts unheard of in the past while most of the laws have gradually been relaxed because of the modern structure of the society.

One major problem encountered in culture is tourism and migration. Due to the search for greener pastures, people travel out from their environment and society and gradually adopt the culture of the foreign environment in total disregard of their own culture. Some children however are not born at home hence they do not grab that early training and exposure to their particular culture. Some people have lost their originality and do not even know the language of their people, nor the traditions, periods of festivals and their people's way of life and these things are taken lightly. These preliminary considerations have necessitated this discourse which seeks to intimate and enlighten the general public about the importance of culture and the need to identify with one's culture and people. This study shall also examine various ways of representing and preserving culture while laying more emphasis on the role and importance of music towards preserving human culture.

Music

Music is a term we hear and use almost every day of our lives. When the term is mentioned, the first thing that comes to a person's mind is the production of sounds. Thus music can literally be defined as an organized sound. It could be produced with the voice or with an instrument or perhaps combined in such a way as to produce beauty of form, harmony and expression of emotions. Erhiegeke (2020) opines that:

Music has been a part of man's existence from the beginning. As a result it is often said that music is as old as man. Music coexists with man in numerous forms and its functionality is multi-faceted. Man has found a way to include music in almost every human activity as every culture has peculiar ways of making music to suit their occupation, environment and experiences. A culture's inspiration for music making is therefore drawn from its environment, its people's experience and ideas. p. 260.

Music is a form of art; an expression of emotions through harmonic frequencies. It is a form of entertainment that puts sounds together in a way that people like, find interesting or dance to. Most music includes people singing with their voices or playing musical instruments such as the piano, guitar, drums or violin.

Types of Music

In the modern times, there have been many developments and advancements in music due to technology and the sophistication of science. Music is basically classified into three:

Traditional Music

There are two basic types of folk music. The first is normally very old and nobody really knows who the composer is. It is music that belongs to a people or a culture. It is the music of the ordinary people within that culture. The other type of folk music is music that is written to sound like the other sort. It is music by composers that sounds a bit like the old folk music. Or it could even be the old folk music itself written or played differently from before.

Folk music reflects the culture of a particular people. It is employed in order to communicate certain important aspects of a particular culture and society. Through listening to this type of music, one can come to grips with the culture of a particular society. Oral transmission of folk music from one generation to the next has led to its current thriving in rural areas, which is home to the people who are the guardians of these diverse traditions. (Nwamara, 2017). Folk song texts contain allusions to the benefits of upholding moral principles, charitable deeds, judging individuals by their deeds, and contemplating the world as it ought to be. (

Popular Music

Popular music is any commercially oriented music principally intended to be received and appreciated by a wide audience generally in literate, technologically advanced societies dominated by urban culture. Unlike traditional folk music, popular music is written by known individuals, and does not evolve through the process of oral transmission. Characteristically, they quickly fade away, as the themes on which they are written fades. This includes blues, jazz, rock and roll, rock music, hip-hop etc.

Art Music

Art music is a general term often used to describe thoughtfully cultivated music, particularly in Western societies and as in contrast to pop and folk music. Art music is a term that encompasses music traditions that apply advanced structural and theoretical considerations with a written musical tradition. Art music alternatively called classical music is a type of music that is first and fundamentally a written music tradition in contrast to the orally transmitted folk music. This type of music is carefully written, with adherence to musical rules. It is believed to be written by trained musicians. This musical training can come in any form - formal and informal.

Culture

Etymologically, the term culture is taken from the Latin root *colo, colere, colui, cultum*. These Latin words could mean: to cultivate, to till the ground, to tend, maintaining, adorning, fostering etc. From these words, one can infer that culture is that which molds and helps the human person develop effectively to be worthy to bear the name human. Linton (1936) states that, 'The culture of a society is the way of life of its members; the collection of ideas and habits which they learn, share and transmit from generation to generation'. In Clyde Kluckhohn's elegant phrase, culture is a 'design for living' held by members of a particular society. Culture defines accepted ways of behavior for members

of a particular society. Such definitions may vary from society to society. To a large degree, culture determines how members of a society think and feel. It directs their actions and defines their outlook on life.

Culture encompasses our belief systems, the ways we eat, dress, how we eat, the kind of food we cook, how we dance, our dressing style, system of marriage, architectural designs, lifestyle, gender, music etc.

Elements of Culture

The elements of culture include the following:

Social Organization: Every society is essentially grouped according to different strata and classifications. Social organization refers to how a society divides people. In African traditional setting, the society is grouped in a hierarchical form where we have rulers who are mostly respected and revered and govern the affairs of the society to enhance peaceful coexistence. We have the chiefs and titled men and then the average persons. In other societies however, there are also others ways of classifying people, examples, family structures; we have nuclear families, extended families etc. This is an important element of culture as it shows how people relate with one another.

Customs/Tradition: The word 'tradition' comes from the Latin *traditio* (handing over) which is derived from the word *trader* (hand-over, deliver). It encompasses all manners and customs, morals and cultures within a group which were passed from one generation to the next. Every society has its norms and values through which they establish, affirm and differentiate right from wrong actions; prescribing their corresponding punishments. These punishments attached help to compel obedience and promote peace. These traditions are passed from one generation to another and the younger generations get to learn and know how their ancestors behaved and lived.

Beliefs: Every society can be said to have a belief system which alternatively could be called religion. Religion connotes a relationship between two beings, man on the one hand and a religious being believed to exist. Religion demonstrates or shows a society's belief systems and interpretation of situations. Some cultures are monotheistic while some are polytheistic. Muslims believe in Allah, Christians in God. The Christians revere the cross of Christ and believe in the resurrection, judgment, heaven or hell.

Language: A group of words or ideas having common meaning and is shared to a social situation is called language. Language is the entrance to a culture. Language is a set of socially sound pattern, words, and sentences having specific meaning and terminology common to the same culture. These helps people relate with one another and live their lives in the society. It is pertinent to note that most languages are only understood within a cultural group while one word can mean different things for different cultures.

Symbols: Symbols are anything used to represent, express and stand for an event or situation. Symbols direct to guide our behavior, it is used to show past, present or future events. For example the heap of ash show that something has been burnt or the wet street shows that it has rained. Other examples of symbols could be bowing one's head when one sees an elder in order to show reverence and respect etc. shaking of hands to show friendship and brotherhood.

Types of Culture

1. **Material Culture:** This refers to the physical things which are the products or handiworks of man. These include dressing, food, buildings, inventions such as art works, sculpture, etc. Through these, the culture of a particular society is shown and they get distinguished from other cultures. For example the type of food eaten by an African man is quite different from that of the Westerners.
2. **Non Material Culture:** This refers to the unquantifiable, intangible and immeasurable products of a culture. These aspects cannot be seen nor touched but we are fully aware of their existence. These includes: language, religion, customs, norms, values, traditions, poetry, beliefs, ethics etc.

Characteristics of Culture

There are several characteristics of culture, so the following assertions about culture are true:

1. **Culture is Dynamic:** This implies that culture is not static but can change. Due to social relations and traveling, people and societies come to learn about the cultures of other people, exchange ideas, symbols and certain ways of administration of others and gradually, these features are incorporated into the culture of the society.
2. **Culture is shared:** Culture is typical of every society and every society is made up of many individuals and peoples. Hence culture is not an individual thing but is shared among members of a society. This enhances our social relations with other members of our society.

Culture is learned: Culture is in no way genetically transmitted neither is it biologically inherited. Culture is learned through observations from families, peers, institutions and media. The process of learning culture is known as enculturation. While all humans have basic biological needs such as food, sleep and sex, the way we fulfill those needs varies cross-culturally. As a child grows, it observes carefully the environment, gradually learns the language, how they eat, respect for elders, and other things including the kind of clothes to wear, etc. they apply these different aspects in their lives and thus adapt gradually to their culture.

Culture is Integrated: This is known as holism, or the various parts of a culture being interconnected. All aspects of a culture are related to one another and to truly understand a culture, one must learn about all of its parts, not only a few.

Culture Varies: Culture varies from one society to another. Although there are universal aspects of culture which is found everywhere, nevertheless, the way they are expressed may vary. For example the system of dressing of Africans during the pre-colonial era varied from that of the colonial masters though both were ways of dressing. Others include ways of eating, type of food, etc.

Culture is continuous: Culture is not an invention of today. It has existed several thousands of years and yet it still exists in our time. This manifests the continuous nature of culture. The cultures of our forefathers have been handed over to us and it shall continue till posterity. We cannot negate the fact that there have been some modifications of the present day culture due to exposure to other cultures, nevertheless, our culture and way of doing things still remain.

Importance of Culture

The importance of culture in any given society cannot be overemphasized. Culture identifies and differentiates societies. Without culture, we cannot meaningfully talk about any society. The various aspects of culture explored above justify this claim. Without the set of belief systems, clothing, language etc which specifies each culture and society, there cannot be a proper functioning of any society. Culture helps to promote peace and order in a society. Through the traditions, norms and sections, people come to know what they ought to do and go about it and in situations where some refuse to comply; they face the consequences of their actions. Culture leaves a great material for the future generations. They come to learn and appreciate how things have been done in the past and in like manner, model their lives in order to fully actualize their potentialities. Through the help of language and symbols, we relate with one another, exchange ideas and improve the society. Other importances of culture include the following:

Ancestry: Our cultures help us gain valuable information about our ancestry. Cultural traditions are like pages in a history book which should be read with interest. Human beings do not live for eternity, but their cultures do. Cultures give us a gateway to study about our ancestors. Through oral traditions, we get to connect with our ancestors and our origin and get to know even the history of our names.

Inculcation of Values: Every culture is rich with values. Through culture, people learn what really matters to their people and society and strive from early childhood towards self-actualization and fulfillment of one's potentiality. Through cultures also people come to learn about good moral values such respect for elders, hard work and cleanliness.

Culture regulates human behaviour: Through various norms and sanctions expressive of every culture, people are tamed, controlled in order to promote peaceful coexistence amongst citizens. The norms however are there to discipline one, while the punishments are attached to prevent non-compliance.

The Role of Music in Cultural Identification

Music has always served as one very potent media and symbol, through which cultures are identified. Music cannot be defined and appreciated outside the context from which it is created, costumed, taught and performed. This therefore means that every music is associated with a given culture, and can therefore not exist in isolation, but bearing the identity of a given culture. This musical identity can further be tied to different social events within a given culture. Its functionality is multifaceted, and can perform various roles in culture.

Music can also be said to be intertwined with culture, as every culture employs available materials in its music making. These materials can include both tangible and intangible materials which intertwine with each other to create music. One of the intangible materials of culture which is an ever present component of music is language. Language and music are interwoven, and are constantly allowing alterations of themselves, to accommodate the other.

Music is an intrinsic part of every society, whenever people gather, music is there, and it could be used to pray or exchange pleasantries. It is used during festive periods, during celebrations such as graduation, weddings, funerals etc. even personally for leisure. For instance, during child dedications, the songs rendered emphasize the importance of a child and the joy of motherhood or fatherhood. During weddings, we hear songs which show the societal interpretation of marital union, likewise other festive periods etc. It is pertinent to note that music is not just composed out of nowhere or without any relevance. Most of our music reflects something in reality and is implored as a tool to convey certain pieces of information. Every enterprise engaged by man has a background. No man writes or composes in isolation. There are various factors that condition his output. This could be due to family background. The influences of one's family and behaviors condition their output, another is the environmental influence otherwise called sociological influence. This refers to the influence from his environment. All the activities in a particular society form their culture; hence we can rightly say that culture influences music composition.

Writing about the importance of music in Ghanaian tradition and culture, Salm & Falola (2005) asserts:

Music and dance have social roles and functions through which Ghanaian societies express their culture. The names and instruments used for traditional music are sometimes taken from the nature of the social occasion. The Akan, for example, have a category of songs, *asrayere* (visiting the wives), which were performed by women while the men were away at war. These songs functioned to unite the women and show their support for their warrior men. The Akan also have songs called *bradwom* (*dwom*: song) for puberty rite (*bragoro*).in general, music reveals the customs and ideals of a society. (p. 1)

Music is surely a cultural phenomenon because culture influences its composition, interpretation, performance etc. Music surely gives us relevant information about a particular culture through its instruments, instrument makers and the lyrics. Music is the expression of culture, a culture that values money and materialism will express this through music by the glorification of these items etc. that is to say that from the music of a particular society we can come to understand certain aspects of their culture. Music is a tool for communication; which means that inherently when we read the lyrics of every music, we come to understand the message the composer is trying to convey and his background influence. In African communities, most music emphasize the importance of being of help to the other, from songs like this, we can understand the culture of solidarity existing in African societies. Singing, as a familiar way of music-making cannot be separated from any culture; it is part and parcel of any culture of the world (Ugoo-Okonkwo, 2013). Some songs were composed to cajole the laziness of the society to show the need to be hardworking and resourceful. Music thus implicitly represents culture.

Towards the Preservation of Culture

From the foregoing, we can agree that culture is very important in every society and thus should be preserved and transmitted for the betterment of posterity and for man to

come to the full actualization of his being. This furthermore leads us to explore the various ways through which culture can be preserved.

There are many ways of preserving culture which includes literatures such as novels, e.g. the books of Chinua Achebe which reflect great deal of the Igbo culture likewise so many other books from other authors. When these books are properly preserved, generations coming many years after can just pick up the books and from there know about their people and their ancestors.

Oral tradition through folklores also helps to preserve culture. In earlier times in Africa, from time to term, the parents gather their children to tell them stories about their people and the circumstances that have shaped them. It was famously called 'moonlight tales'. Here, children are given opportunities to ask questions about any aspect of their culture and are enlightened and thus become abreast with the culture of their people. Others may include visual art, clothing; people should not be shy to identify with the dress code of their culture, people should also speak their native languages and native languages should be taught in all institutions of learning and even used during meetings and gatherings. Culture can be preserved through participation in traditional festivals, crafts, art work and music. For the purpose of this paper, we shall explore more on the role of music towards preserving culture.

Music and Cultural Preservation

In discussing music as a tool for cultural preservation, we are considering the role music plays in ensuring that culture remains, and culture is not eroded by alien identities, which are always seeking seemingly weak cultures to assimilate. The following are areas through which music has and can contribute to the preservation of the culture which it represents.

Folk songs which are usually passed from one generation to another are usually embedded with, and are rich in stories, rituals and sometimes history, which are passed down through songs for numerous generations who do not even know themselves. In a generation where speaking local or indigenous languages have become an uphill task for many young ones, songs in indigenous languages help a great measure, in preserving languages, and preventing them from fading away.

Music also within cultures, convey legends, myths and beliefs, and helps in ensuring that they are passed on to future generations, thereby keeping alive, stories of exploits of individuals and groups within a given culture. It can therefore serve as a source of documentation of historical events, since it can capture great events of the past. Folk music, especially minstrel shows, is a kind of oral literature that captures people's past. (Ibekwe & Umeojiaka 2023). Also, the use of traditional instruments in music making does not only add to the enjoyment of music, but helps to showcase cultural heritage, as well as preserve it, and can also be a medium of cultural export, for more exposure.

In a traditional African society, music is an indispensable component of ceremonies and rituals, and therefore helps in no small measure, to reinforce practices and beliefs, within a given culture. Community songs help to create communal living within cultures,

therefore creating a bond between inhabitants of a given geographical location, who share same culture.

The Effect of Modernism on Culture and Music: Towards a Solution

Man in the contemporary age is referred to as a technological man. Due to technological advancements, there have emerged; new and better ways of doing things. As the days keep going, we notice a deviation from the traditional ways of doing things, people now prefer the easier ways of doing things, most of the values and culture people learnt in their early years have gradually been abandoned for easier life and way of doing things free from the stringent measures of norms and customs or traditions. This modernism has pervaded virtually all spheres of life; arts, architecture, literature, religious faith, social organization, dressing and music compositions. The types of music we hear today are no longer really culturally oriented. This modern way of making music do not help in transmitting culture to people like the traditional folk music we had in the past.

Ludwig Van Beethoven believed that "Music can change the world". This is because it is communicative and can spread easily. It is pertinent to note that music has a lot of impart on people especially the youth and adolescents. When they play some of these songs, they unconsciously internalize them and may begin to adopt such lifestyles or manner presented by these songs. When immoral types of music are played always, they gradually learn bad slogans and get influenced; but when music is positive and rich in cultural idioms and phrases, this will go a long way to help them positively.

If we are to preserve culture, we must continue to create it. With regards to music, we can actually do better than we are doing now. This paper is not in any way castigating the modern ways of making music but is simply advocating for a kind of blend, and integration of traditional folk style of composing music which contains rich lyrics representing culture into modern music. This will go a long way in sustaining culture because through this means, people will always keep abreast of their culture and equally maintain originality in the practice of the same.

Conclusion

Music is undeniably a viable and wonderful tool in the preservation and representation of Culture. Culture gives us our identity and makes us who we are. Hence every effort ought to be made to preserve and promote our cultural heritage and traditions, for the coming generations. Among other forms of cultural preservation, music stands tall, as it embeds sounds (melody), rhythm, dance, lyrics (language), musical instruments, costumes (attire), etc. The major problem encountered in culture arises from the diversity in cultures and the wave of the modern time. Irrespective of all odds, one must endeavor to always identify with his people and be proud of one's cultural heritage. We should never give up in our quest to preserve our culture for posterity hence we ought to employ whatever means at our disposal to ensure this. One of such means is through music because it is first a form of expression and can actually travel easily to any part of the world.

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