

THE PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF BICULTURAL AND BIMUSICAL ELEMENTS IN NIGERIA ART MUSIC

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ABSTRACT

This publication explores the prospects and challenges of integrating bicultural and bimusical elements into Nigerian art music. It examines how the rich cultural diversity of Nigeria, with its plethora of ethnic groups and musical traditions can be harmonized within the contemporary art music scene. The article is centered on using music as a communication tool, applying fusion of text, instruments and rhythmic pattern that identified ethnic groups and their musical heritage. Many Nigerian composers have strived to pen down a composition that depicts a bicultural heritage from different ethnic groups within the country in their compositions. Often times such composition is seen during festival of music and cultural heritage. This form of composition is used to express unity in cultural heritage, such as during Nigeria Independence Day celebration. Music of bicultural element is fondly used to identify ethnics and cultural music backgrounds. However, language of the people, their instruments, dance and rhythm are the primary tools for cultural music classification. The study aims to identify the benefits and obstacles associated with this fusion and propose strategies for effective integration to enhance the global appeal of Nigeria art music.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria, with its over 250 ethnic groups, is a nation of immense cultural and musical diversity. Traditional music forms an essential part of the Nigerian cultural landscape, with each ethnic group possessing unique musical styles. Years, there has been a growing interest in integrating these traditional elements with Western art music to create a unique genre known as Nigerian art music. This fusion often referred to as bicultural or bimusical integration, presents both exciting prospects and significant changes. The challenges faced during music performance among the audience who are from different ethnic background, creating momentary division in ethnicity has been the concern of the writer, seeking to bridge that gap by introducing bicultural and bimusical music composition as a tool for unity among ethnics. Some of the primary tools are discussed below which includes language, instruments and so on.

Language Integration

Many Nigerian Art Music composers who compose in particular language and style are most times limited in conveying the message in the music to the audience who are likely to be mixed with people of diverse musical culture and practices. Message in the lyric of composed music, as far as it is a vocal composition is the centre and primary focus of that composition. According to Ekwueme (2001:17), opine “Of what use is the African composer’s effort if it is limited to the African audience – indeed to a specific ethnic group, since other ethnic groups even within his own country and those outside his country may not understand the language or idiom of expression?” Music editors and lyricist has translated most of African indigenous music to English language for the audience benefit to understand the message in the music. Most prominent Nigerian Art music composers who are known for their compositions across the world, such as Laz Ekwueme, Dan Agu, Alvan-Ikoku Nwamara and so on, have composed many works both in Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa, including in Pidgin (broken English), and in other local languages. Some lyricist has transcribed some composed music lyrics into English language for the benefit of wider audience. Such is seen in “Obi Dimkpa (Brotherhood of Youth)” by Laz Ekwueme.

Example:

SOMETHING DON HAPPEN
(A Pidgin Carol Song)

Ekwem Lilian

Moderato

Some-thing don hap-pen E don hap-pen

E don hap-pen E don hap-pen

5 For Beth-le - hem, Dem don born the King of kings E don

For Beth-le hem, Dem don born the King of kings

hap-pen For Beth-le - hem, Dem do born the King of kings.

According to Agu (2002:85) who wrote that “he has broken the barrier of writing only in the Igbo language by writing and arranging pieces in the English language.” However, Ofuani (2016:59) affirms that “a composer can alternatively provide an English translation version option of the local language and aligning the English text accordingly under their specific notes in the score. Laz Ekwueme’s Obi Dimkpa” (Brotherhood of Youth) review the example of translating an Igbo composition to English version to aid the audience understand the meaning and aligning the text under the notes accordingly.

Using Creole Language as a Communication Tool

Wikipedia explained Creole language as a “stable natural language that develops from the process of different languages simplifying and mixing into a new form, and then that form expanding and elaborating into a full-fledged language with native speakers, all within a fairly brief period. Language according to Nwamara (2010) reviewed that it is a “system of sounds and words used by humans to express their thoughts and feelings”. Well understood language in a composed music, aid the composer to speak to the audience in a manner that drives their soul and mind out to a distant places at the cost of reflection. However, language use in a particular piece often controls’ human emotions and thoughts at the moment. Sunday (2015:56) wrote “first, Nigerian composers must decide to be realistically objective and creative enough in tapping from the concept of lingual inter-culturalism”. Composers however, uses language to communicate to both educated and half educated through their artistry creativity in music lyrics arrangement. Ofuani (2011) wrote that “while song entertains, and educates, it intrinsically informs.” Many

Nigerian composers have used language in different forms, such as fusing double languages just to send message across to their audience. A popular saying “WAZOBIA” which is practically derived from three major tribes in Nigeria meaning “COME” has been used in a song, calling the three tribes for unity. Function of language could be entertaining, as well as educating and more. Ajewole (2011) emphasized that “music offers entertainment and it is concerned with the development of a complete being”. However, most Nigerian composers have made use of Nigerian popular language known as ‘Pidgin’. ‘Naija’ or Pidgin language is known to be Nigerian secondly lingua franca, which every average Nigerian citizen can easily identify with. It is an English-based creole language spoken as a lingua franca across Nigeria, and music composed with it makes Nigerians feel and see each other as brothers from one tribe. More so, it earned them to share a momentary cultural value and language communication flows out velvety, while message is sent. Composing music in ‘Pidgin’ gives composer and listener sense of belonging, then passes message in the composed music to every Nigerian including educated and half-educated audience. Most Nigerian composers have composed many pieces using ‘Pidgin’ vernacular such as Lilian Ekwem who has one of her compositions in ‘Pidgin’, titled “Something Don Happen”. The composition was a Christmas carol, narrates about Christ birth and the season Christmas.

Eg.

This piece of music, though a sacred music was aimed to entertain the audience, amuses them and gives them a moment to share biculturalism through language. Language has the ability to unite two clan in conflict, bring peace, heal broken relationships and more. According to Nzewi (2003:pg13), “in a situation of severe mental stress, such as occasioned by trauma of death or despair, music provides therapeutic remedy”. Furthermore, Okunade (2011:p139) stated that “musical presentations in most cases are used to disseminate information to the public”. Therefore, it could be in an informal phrasing or poetic form of arrangement. Furthermore, Onwuekwe (2023:29) added thus: Language is a very important icon of the identity of a people. It is a body of words, and set of methods of combining them, understood by a community and used as a form of communication. Language is the principal method of human communication consisting of words used in a structured and conventional way and conveyed by speech, writing and gesture. Agu (2008) opines: “Music is more appreciated when it truly communicates and dose that most effectively through language influences one’s creativity and expressions of musical terms”. (p. 7). Onwuekwe (2023:29) continued, “Language is a very important icon of the identity of a people”. A popular classical music composition by a German composer Gorge Frederic Handel titled “Hallelujah Chorus”, from the book “The Messiah” has been transcribed into Igbo language and other local African languages. Many choral ensembles have performed it in indifferent languages, including in Nigerian local languages, also has been accompanied with African instruments along in other to bring the music down to the African cultural vibes. Randel (2001: 18) opines: “Music and language are closely associated in the vocal music of all cultures, yet in Africa, the connection is particularly significant”.

Effect of Bicultural Music to the Audience

Nigeria as a nation has approximately 371 tribes across the nation, and over 250 ethnic groups. The tribes include Igbo, Yoruba and Housa-Fulani which has its most prominent minor ethnic groups such as the Ija, kanuri, Ibibio, and Tiv. According to Okunade (2011) stated that “one of the means of transmitting the norms, ethics, and values to the members of the society is through the text of the songs used within the community” (pg.139). Music is owned and cherished by the people. It defines people and gives them sense of belonging. According to Ofuani (2011:49), wrote that “Songs have been people’s watchdog, disciplinarian and objects of caution and ridicule that challenge some addressed individuals to re-examine and redirect their objectionable life styles.” In a contemporary society where there is people of diverse culture and believes, composer is expected to be diverse in compositional style, learn to compose in other peoples’ language and as well use their rhythmic pattern. When the audience sensed a familiarity of their own music in the music of other world culture, they are likely to give it a kin attention, because of the shared value in bicultural music sensation. Omojola (1995) stated that “Music is an important aspect of a people’s culture and since culture is dynamic, it can be assumed that Nigeria traditional music as we know it today is different from what it was several hundred years ago. (p. 1). Nigerian early composers who were trained by the westerners, learnt to compose in their style of music. However, Nigerian music has gained stand in the world music due to the development in their musical idioms. Ekwueme (2001; 19) in his view, suggested that “being aware of the limitations of Nigerian language in terms of “global users’ population” It is my view that Nigerian composers should begin to adapt English language in their vocal music compositions against many other world languages including Nigeria local languages

Bi-Rhythm / Instrument as Means to Relate to Diverse Audience

Nigerian Art Music shares a significant rhythmic pattern in their various indigenous music and dance practices, which was influenced by their distinct traditional creative arts. However, some of the indigenous musical rhythm practices in Nigeria are purely owned by the people. Transition from one indigenous traditional rhythm to another is mostly depends on their musical heritage and rhythmic pattern used in their style of music and their instruments. Generally, Africa music structure most times has danceable rhythm, likewise the music of the Nigeria, which in most occasions requires body movement. Involving a specific traditional instrument in a music composition creates a bi-cultural fusion of peoples' traditional music; it reviews an identity of a music that belongs to another clan. Example of such is when Yoruba music is performing on stage using Yoruba musical instruments, and Oja (flute from Igbo clan) is played in the middle of the music, it suddenly reviews an identity of Igbo music. Likewise the other tribes' music has a distinct instrument that reviews the identity of their owned music once the instrument is being played in between a performance. The major tribes in Nigeria which includes Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo prominent instruments are discussed thus:

Hausa Music and Instruments

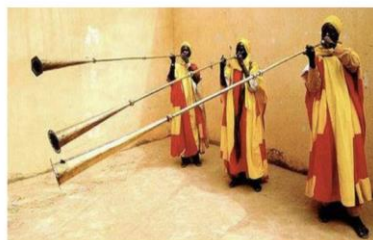
Music of the Northern part of Nigeria is known for its complex percussion instrumentation. The music of the Hausa tribe was influenced under Muslim insurgence since the 14th century their music uses free rhythmic improvisation and the pentatonic scale, similar to other Muslim Sahelian tribes throughout West Africa; such as Bambara, Kanuri, Fulani and Songhai. The rhythmic pattern in Hausa music is shown in their drumming which differentiate their rhythm from other tribes' traditional music rhythm.

Hausa music is known with some of their peculiar percussion instruments which includes Talking drum, Kakaki, Goje, Kukkuma, Kintigi, Algaita etc.

- i. **The Algaita** is a double reed wind instrument from Sahelian region of West-Central Africa that is used by the Bamum, Hausa and Kanuri peoples in Cameroon and Nigeria. It has similar construction with Oboe. Algaita plays a prominent role in Hausa traditional music and create a bicultural music when used in other Nigeria tribe music. Air is brown through the small opening at the tail just as clarinet instrument, the note pitches are controlled with fingers by covering and opening the three holes by the side of the instrument.



- ii. **Goje** is tied to various pre-Islamic Sahelian rituals around jinn possession, between the Bori, Hausa, Zarma, Borori,. And Songhay. It is held high esteem and are linked to the spirit world, or as a carrier for voices aimed at or from the spirit world. Goje is played with a bowstring.



- iii. **Kakaki** instrument is about four metre long metal trumpet usually found in Hausa and Yoruba music. Its sound is associated with royalty and it is only played at events at the palace of the king or sultan in Hausa societies. Kakaki which is also called Malakat in Ethiopia is exclusively played by men.
- iv. **Kukkuma** instrument is a small spike lute or spike fiddle used in Hausa music. It is made from calabash gourd covered with skin, with the neck (a stick) that impales the gourd, the bottom poking out one side to form a spike. It is played with a horsehair bow and strung with horsehair.

Igbo Music and Instruments

A tribe located at the South-Eastern part of Nigeria natively called “Ndi Igbo”, are gifted in music making by creating their own music and invented by themselves a wide range of musical instruments. The music of the Igbo people is very vast and complex in instrumentation, which can be identified through their owned instruments. One of the most prominent instrument of the Igbo society is called “Ogene (Gong)”, others includes Igba (cylinder drum), Oja (flute), Udu (Pot drum), Ekwe (Slit drum) etc.

- i. **Ogene (Gong)** is viewed as one of the most prominent metal instruments in Igbo instrumental music orchestration; it has its own instrument family and own a music popularly known as “Egwu ogene”. Ogene plays an important role in in Igbo tradition and music and folk music as the lead instrument. In Igbo land, Ogene is used locally to call for attention for important information for the community.



- ii. **Oja (Flute)** Igbo music popular Igbo instrument which plays a vital role in Igbo music and culture. Oja plays a significant role in the music of the Igbo people which its role is to high the spirit both in the dancers and the instrumentalists. Oja is used in the Igbo land to usher in the great men in the community, such as the king, the brave (warrior) and so on. It is also believed that it is used to communicate with the spirits. Oja crerates a bicultural music when introduced in a music composition, which reviews another culture and Igbo music traditional



ojà

- iii. **Ekwe (Slit drum)** is one of the prominent Igbo traditional instrument use by the people to create music at different cultural music events. It is carved from wood, hallow and has different shapes. It is two pitch instrument which is played with two sticks. Ekwe is found in every Igbo traditional music because of its prominent role in bring out the Igbo cultural vibes and identity.



Yoruba Music and Instruments

The Yoruba is an ethnic group from West Africa who many of them inhabit parts of Nigeria, Benin, and Togo. They are considered the largest ethnic group all over Africa. Yoruba music is distinguished by its extremely advanced drumming tradition and techniques, especially using the Gongon hourglass shape tension drums. Their music became the most prominent in West African music in Afro-Latin and Caribbean musical styles. Music of the Yoruba

became popular and gain wide range of accomplishment in arts and entertainment industry. Through Yoruba music, many popular music genres were established such as Juju, Fuji, Apala and, Sakara music. This paper review some of the instruments used in the making of Yoruba music that can be used to create an identity of a Yoruba music in other society traditional music. Some of the prominent Yoruba instruments include Ashiko drum, Bata drum, talking drum, Agbe (Shaker), etc.

- i. **Ashiko drum** is one of the prominent Yoruba instruments that review Yoruba identity when used in music performance. The instrument can be traced from West Africa, also in some part of America, while its origin is traced in Yoruba culture. It is made of hardwood and generally has a goatskin hide. Ashiko drum is shaped like a tapered cylinder, and has a long tradition in the culture of Yoruba people.



- ii. Bata Drum is a prominent instrument in Yoruba music and played wide range of functions their tradition. It is a double-headed drum with one end bigger than the other. Bata drum is used for an entertainment and plays a vital role in conveying messages to the people.



- iii. Talking Drum is traced from West African, it plays a vital role in Yoruba traditional music and culture. It has an hourglass-shape and has two drum head connected by leather tension cords, which allow the player to modulate the pitch of the drum by squeezing the cords between their arm and body. It is used by skillful player to mimic ones speech by hitting the drum and squeezing the cords. Due to its vast functions in Yoruba music, Bata drum has retained its traditional role.



Summary

Bicultural music is determined through the artistry of the composer, by using available tools to create a fusion of cultural music identity. Using mother tongue, traditional instrument or compositional style are tools to make a fusion of traditional music composition.

Conclusion

This paper concludes that while there are significant challenges in integrating bicultural and bi-musical elements in Nigerian art music, the prospects are equally promising. With the right strategies and support, it is possible to create a unique and globally appealing genre that preserves Nigeria's rich cultural heritage while embracing contemporary musical innovations.

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