

## UNDERSTANDING THE PROFESSIONAL HAZARDS OF MUSIC

**Dr. Ikedimma Nwabufo Okeke**

Department of Music

Faculty of Arts

Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

Email: in.okeke@unizik.edu.ng; +2348038562309

*Bach died blind, Handel died almost blind, Paganini bonded with the devil, Mozart died a pauper, Beethoven died stone deaf, Tchaikovsky attempted suicide twice, Bob Marley survived many assassinations attempts and finally succumbed to cancer, Lucky Dube was murdered in cold blood, Presley Elvis got electrocuted on stage by his guitar, Luciano Pavarotti surrendered his life to cancer, Celine Dion, presently paralyzed; yet no one taketh these to heart!*

--- Ikedi okeke (2023)

*What you received from the gods you will in one way or the other pay back*

- - - Anonymous Medieval Philosopher

### **Abstract**

The need for music practitioners to be properly enlightened on the hazards associated with the music profession was captured in this paper. Several musicians have lost their lives due to ignorance and negligence to these hazards. Some of these hazards have been identified to be physical, psychological, mental, and even spiritual and all have been recorded to have induced serious health challenges, permanent bodily injuries, psychological trauma, mental distortions and hallucinations, and death. The paper took a historical perspective in divulging several struggles and causes of death of many musicians and musicologists, renowned and unrenowned such as hearing impairment, deafness, heart problems, sight deterioration, blindness, infectious diseases, fracture, psychological trauma, loss of identity, loneliness and depression associated with stardom, drug abuse, sexuality chaos, etc. Highlighted also is the unstableness that comes with musical genius. The essence is to sensitize practicing music professionals and prospective music practitioners of the dangers intrinsic to musical art.

(Keywords: music professional hazards, musical genius, psychological trauma)

### **Introduction**

Musicians have grappled with several issues such as blindness, depression, loneliness, poverty, drug abuse, deafness, electrocution, rheumatoid fingers, lung and vocal cancers associated with the music profession. Kamien (1986) reports that: "During the 1740s, Bach's eyesight deteriorated, yet he continued to compose, conduct, and teach. In 1750, the year of his death, Bach became completely blind (P.173)". The same fate befell Handel, the great composer, and so many other composers that one is poised to ascertain the reasons for these misfortunes and possible solutions.

Some music professionals are aware of these hazards while some are not, some also pretend they do not exist, and some also never want to discuss them from the fear it might jeopardize the music industry by scaring away enthusiasts and fans. But the first step towards avoiding or solving such a problem is not to wave it off but to identify and understand it. This paper therefore has sought to identify the various hazards connected to music and understand their implications for the musician with the aim of finding solutions to the problems.

## **Review of Pertinent Concepts**

### **Professional / Occupational Hazards**

Professional or occupational hazards are dangers and risks associated with working in specific professions or occupations. There are five categories of occupational hazards namely, physical safety hazards, chemical hazards, biological hazards, physical hazards, and ergonomic risk hazards (Wikipedia, 2023).

### **Music Professional Hazards**

There are hazards involved in the various aspects of musical practices such as vocal music, instrumental music, composing, performance, concert directing, etc.

#### **An Overview of some musical hazards**

##### **Hazards Associated with sight-reading**

Music performance invariably involves so much sight-reading exercises. This is manifest in sight-playing for musical instruments and sight-singing in vocal music. This practice mounts enormous pressure on the eyes and has induced several sight problems for musicians such as myopia, macular degeneration, blurred vision, fluid retention in the eyes, high pressure of the eyes, etc. Unfortunately, many musicologists inadvertently engage in long-hour sight-reading practice in poorly lit places and this destroys the eyes.

Some musicians have also reported severe headaches and migraines after sight-reading sessions.

##### **Hazards associated with Dance**

Dance is a major form of music which cuts across virtually all cultures. There are dance composers, dance tutors, choreographers, dance troupes, etc., The major hazard in dance is bone fracture, dislocation, and even induced osteoporosis, muscle pull, muscular and phalangeal cramps, etc. Several dancers have also incurred some of the aforementioned hazards while in rehearsals and performance. Dancers have always had stage induced accidents such as colliding with fellow dancers and falling off the edge of the stage in the frenzy of performances.

##### **Hazards associated with Composing**

A music composer organizes raw artistic materials such as folklore, folk tune, melody, idioms, instruments, sounds, cultural norms, costume, dance styles, etc. and churns them into music. Composers exist in virtually all forms and genres of music such as classical music, sacred music, traditional music, folk music, jazz, popular music, ritual music, religious music, country music, etc.

Professional composers sit through hours, go through deep meditations, travel around strange places, and work on diverse and complex musical materials to churn out compositions. The composer is the bridge between the natural world and the musical cosmos: the sounds they hear and notate, the ideas they receive and transmute, and the music they receive and transfer to us are beyond the reach of the non-initiate. These dimensions also expose them to certain dangers such as chronic fatigue due to long hours of churning complex raw materials into music. The hazard of deteriorating sight and blindness is also present as we shall see in the cases of Handel and Bach respectively. The constant search for and contact with sounds expose the composer to the risk of meddling with some strange esoteric elements. Some composers have heard strange sounds and voices which have altered their psychological balance. The case of the famous Russian composer Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky is a case study. The late popular Nigerian Highlife music maestros, Stephen Osita Osadebe and Oliver De-Quoque, mentioned without equivocation that their music and inspiration is from the marine world. Chief Osadebe even

warned all his children not to take up his art when he dies because they cannot sustain nor bear the spiritual and esoteric demands involved.

### **Hazards associated with Performance enhancers**

Stage musicians have had a history with performance enhancers such as marijuana, heroin, cocaine, alcohol, crystal meth, tramadol, etc; the list is inexhaustible. The presumed need for these drugs is to become 'high' in order to overcome strange fright. The problem with these 'enhancers' is that they stick to the individual until the romance gets to the level of addiction. The hazards of drug addiction are numerous and usually unsurmountable such as mental breakdown, neurosis, hallucination, anorexia, schizophrenia, dementia, just to mention a few. Several musicians have also been destroyed by these so-called performance enhancers despite dazzling the world with their stage craft. Whitney Houston was a case in question who was drowned in her bathtub following cocaine overdose. Majek Fashek, the Nigerian ragamuffin maestro, was also ruined by performance enhancers.

### **Hazards associated with musical activism**

The world has witnessed several musicians who protested against societal ills, imbalances, oppression, racism, social profiling, inequality, tyranny, dictatorship, terrorism, religious intolerance, and all kinds vices using their music. This musical art is common amongst black and African musicians around the world in the quest for freedom from apartheid, racism, white supremacy, etc. The most popular ones are Bob Marley, Lucky Dube, Miriam Makeba, Brenda Fassie, and several others.

Musical activism exposes the musician to all kinds of life threats including incarceration, assassination, mob attack, poisoning, planned execution from governments, implicating false allegations, etc. These threats invariably come from the perpetrators of the vices which the musician has chosen to oppose through his music. The circumstances surrounding the gruesome murder of Lucky Dube, a foremost south African Anti-Apartheid reggae musician, have remained shrouded in mystery till date.

### **Stage Performance Hazards**

Stage craft goes with several hazards just like we see in gymnastics and acrobatics.

In a bid to bamboozle and impress the audience several performers have gone off tangent and incurred severe injuries and even death. Some others too, under the influence of drugs, have flipped off entirely wounding themselves terribly. A popular Indian musician (Irma Bule) lost her life on stage because she was bitten and strangled by a snake she cuddled on her neck for performance during her April 7, 2006 concert! ([www.india.com-shocking-!](http://www.india.com-shocking-!) Singer Irma Buke dies).

### **The Hazard of loss of Identity**

Many musicians have lost their names, color, gender, sexuality, origin, family tie, morality, culture, religious affinity, physique, appearance, manners, education, etc. just because of the need to blend to trend. Serious sexual perversion, cosmetic surgeries and tattooing for body positivity, pornography, skin color transformation, gender transformative surgeries, sexuality chaos, modernistic reeducation, cult affiliations, clandestine maneuvers, etc., are trending and going on in the music world now! Michael Jackson for instance, had several skin toning experimentations and cosmetic surgeries on his nose just to transform his identity to white but unfortunately his death was quickened by the surgeries when his nose finally collapsed.

### **Hazards associated with performance travel**

Musicians travel a lot. As the demand for performance increases so the pressure of travelling mounts and then the associated travel hazards. Whether by air, sea, or road, hazards abound for musicians. Plane crashes, road accidents, armed robbery and kidnapping are frequent hazards faced by itinerant musicians.

### **Hazards connected with blown Musical instruments**

Playing blown musical instruments (brasses and woodwinds) is not just physically demanding but poses several health risks to the player. The brasses- trumpet, tuba, trombone, Cornett, bugle, etc., and the woodwinds- saxophone, clarinet, piccolo, etc., require copious flow of air streams from the lungs via the respiratory canal to the mouth cavity and this demand distresses these organs over time. The lungs are basically made for respiration even though they can comfortably adapt to the demands of blown musical instruments but organs wear out easily when they take up secondary evolutionary roles.

Several brass and wind players have been reported to experience severe lung and upper respiratory tract infections due to bacteria trapped inside the tubes, tone holes, and mouth pieces of these instruments. Many brass and wind players share their instruments and mouth pieces with other people thereby increasing the risk of infectious diseases.

The nature of these instruments also poses a higher risk to individuals with orthodontic and respiratory health challenges such as braced dentition, underbite, asthma, bronchitis, sinusitis, nosebleed, shallow breath, etc. This explains why enthusiastic brass and wind players who have these underlying health issues are usually advised to avoid the instruments.

Hoffer (1990) captured this succinctly:

Only general guides can be offered regarding what instruments should be assigned to individual students. If a youngster faces a lengthy session with braces on his or her teeth or has an underbite (lower teeth in front of upper) or crooked teeth, the student should be guided away from brasses (pg. 239).

Also Hunt & Bachelder in Okeke (2020) advise that:

Before pursuing the performance of a brass instrument or selecting appropriate candidates for an instrument, consider certain requirements: (i) proper lower and upper jaw alignment, (2) straight teeth, (3) lip formation conducive to vibration, and, (4) adequate muscular development of the lips. If any one of these four requirements is not met, performance on a brass instrument will be difficult, if not impossible (p.17).

Certain lung problems, infectious diseases of the oral cavity: mouth, tongue, lip, and throat have been reported by brass and wind musicians particularly those who share their instruments. Distorted facial muscles and bruised lips have also been noticed amongst brass and wind instrumentalists due to friction from long hours and years of lip buzzing and tonguing on the instruments.

### **Hazards connected with Keyboard Instruments**

The nature of keyboard musical instruments such as the piano, organ, piano-keyboard, etc., makes them pose the health challenge of rheumatoid fingers to the players.

Also, because these keyboard instruments are mostly not personalized musical instruments, that is, they are usually open to various performers and this makes them a susceptible agent and contact point for harboring and picking infectious and contagious diseases such as leprosy, viruses, etc. There is also the danger of the Carpal Tunnel syndrome which bedevils pianists and organists which has already been mentioned.

### **Hazards associated with stringed instruments**

Stringed instruments can cut during the fixing of the strings, tuning, or on stage thereby posing threats to the eyes because they are usually held close to the face. The strings of stringed instruments usually leave sharp penetrating marks on the fingers which have sometimes developed into infected blisters and wounds. Stringed instruments have been known and reported to have drawn electric currents from amplifiers through the strings to shock people even to death. The case of Elvis Presley is an example.

### **Hazards associated with some music elements such as Rhythm**

The heavy rhythmic pounce of the bass guitar has been reported to interfere and affect people's heart rate adversely. It can induce arrhythmia, palpitation, etc., and people with such underlying conditions are at risk of getting worse if exposed to the heavy rhythmic pounce and bounce of the bass guitar.

### **Hazards connected with sound gadgets**

Electronic sound gadgets such as synthesizers, amplifiers, microphones, mixers remote sensors, etc. emit and transmit waves at different frequencies and some of these emissions and transmissions are injurious to health. The modern digital pin-up microphone, with its hazardous wave emissions, is worn very close to the body. The connection between electromagnetic waves and cancers have long been established in research.

Speakers blast away sound at frequencies above 100 decibels or more and these ranges are injurious to the human auditory system. Musicians, by virtue of their career which requires constant exposure to speakers on stage, are at very high risk of deafness. Some of these advanced gadgets are susceptible to fluctuation and malfunction thereby causing injury or death on stage. Many have been known and reported to have malfunctioned during performances. The case of Elvis Presley or Jimmy Hendrix who got electrocuted by his guitar while in concert on stage is a case study.

Walker et al (2016) in a group study observed the impacts of exposure to noise: "The results of the study suggest that exposure to noise, and in particular, to low-frequency noise negatively impacts Heart rate variability (HRV). The frequencies of noise should be considered when evaluating the cardiovascular health impacts of exposure".

Also, Basner et al in Walker et al (2016) expatiate that:

Associations of long-term noise exposures with actual disease manifestation such as hypertension, myocardial infarction, and ischemic heart disease have been observed. ... noise affects cardiovascular health through a stress mechanism via the autonomic nervous system and endocrine system. Over short time periods, noise exposed individuals experience increases in blood pressure, changes in heart rate variability (HRV), and the secretion of stress hormones including cortisol and amylase. Over longer periods, continued exposure-response stress loops begin to affect the homeostasis of the human organism, giving rise to risk factors such as increased blood pressure, increased blood lipid concentrations, lower blood viscosity, and increased blood glucose concentrations that are well known for promoting the development of poor cardiovascular health.

Sim et al (2015) in a related study reveal the health risks associated with different types of noise:

The effects of noise on the human body are extensive, ranging from hearing loss to annoyance. The direct health-related effects of noise on humans are hearing impairment, speech disturbance, performance issues, mental problems, sleep disturbance, and annoyance. While indirect health-related effects are dysfunction of the autonomic nervous system (ANS) and cardiovascular system.



These are all research-based evidences of the health risks associated with noise and musicians are constantly bombarded by all kinds of noise, distortions, and blasts from speakers on stage. There is the possibility of more health hazards connected to noise other than the ones listed already.

### **Hazards of Contact with some Esoteric and Terrestrial elements**

Music attracts all kinds of terrestrial, celestial, and esoteric elements. Obviously not only humans are interested and involved in music: celestial, terrestrial, and esoteric beings have also been part of music from history. Some of these elements engender the wellbeing and art of the musicians through inspiration or the muse but some have been known to subtly subvert the soul of the musician. Several musicians from history have publicly declared that their inspiration is from the mystic world, some from the marine, and some from arid places etc. Niccolo Paganini, the violin virtuoso who performed superhuman feats on the violin, traced his inspiration to Satan. Chief ostia Osadebe, the late highlife maestro, had somewhat metaphorically declared to the world that his music is from the water. So many legendary musicians have also declared allegiance to Satan and claimed they sold their souls out to him.

Snakes have shown noticeable interest in music as observed by humans in several circumstances. Musicians who prefer to rehearse or play music in remote, serene, and quite environments have observed snake visitations.

Naturally snakes love to crawl very close to soft musical performances even on musical instruments. A confirmed story from my village church (Ebenezer Anglican Church, Umunnealam, Umdim Nnewi, Anambra state, Nigeria) in the early nineties has it that famous organist and choir master (Roland by name) once witnessed a snake crawling up to his hand while playing at the organ and directing the choir. Most of these snakes are highly venomous but usually drop that instinct to the sway of soft music.

### **Hazards in Ethnomusicological studies**

Understudying certain musical groups is somewhat dangerous because of the rituals, covenants, taboos, and spiritual connotations connected to such music. Some ethnomusicologists have studied some marine cult music which required they be initiated before they were permitted to record or transcribe the music. There have been reported cases of lost recordings, blindness, madness, and even death to people who were defiant to these terms of such music groups. For example, the famous *Ajofia* masquerade music maestro of Nnewi does not yield nor reveal himself for interviews to non-initiates.

### **Complexes associated with music stardom.**

Musical talent and stardom usually come with some noticeable personality complexes such as utopia, paranoia, dual personality syndrome, superiority complex, pride, promiscuity, sexual perversion, loneliness, etc. Several celebrated musicians labor under some of these syndromes. Musical stardom also comes with the peculiar hazard of loneliness and this is triggered by the influence of a growing fan base and audience who celebrate the musician and this creates an insatiable psychological craving for continuous acclaim. The chronic psychological problem of loneliness craves in when this craving is not always satiated due to the fact that big concerts and shows are usually not regular events.

The realization that one can hold an audience of thousands of people spell bound for hours with a performance fuels the personality syndrome of superiority complex. This explains why many acclaimed musicians particularly of the pop genre have been caught up in the crimes of bashing, assault, battery, and rascality.

Some Pop musicians have also been caught in the net of sexual promiscuity: fathering several children from several women.

The cases of sexual abuse, pedophilia, rape, homosexuality, and all kinds of sexual pervasion have become common among popular musicians.

### **Unstablens associated with musical genius**

One peculiarity with highly gifted and talented people is unstablens and musical genius is no exception. Musical geniuses have unstable characters. History is saturated with great musical minds who live with unstablens of the mind, character, perception of life, and their relationship with people and things. It must be understood that musical geniuses are not normal people. Beethoven was a most unstable character! There is a very thin line between genius and insanity. As a matter of fact, genius is an abnormality! Musical geniuses are abnormal people because it takes abnormality to achieve such feats recorded by geniuses. Therefore, people who notice they are exceptionally gifted in music must be careful with the unstablens that comes with it.

### **Hazards associated with the taboos of musical groups**

Some musical groups or troupes have their taboos which are spelt out to guide the initiates towards preserving the sanctity of the group. But the problem with taboos is not in instituting them but in keeping them and the tenets of some of them stipulate the loss of manhood, loss of child, madness, or even death as penalties for defaulters. Remembering to keep to the dictates of the group is not always sustained and this presents serious hazards to the members. Some of these tenets specify and recommend fasting, abstinence, isolation, restricted movement, avoiding contact with a menstruation woman, staying away from the pounding of the mortar, etc. These rules are not so easy to keep or maintain and the penalties for defaulting are grave!

### **Some other Music Occupations with their intrinsic hazards**

Several other occupations and specializations exist in music with their intrinsic hazards and it is necessary they are highlighted and clarified at this point of the paper.

### **Instrumentalist**

Some musicians specialize in some musical instruments such as guitar, *ogene*, *bata*, piano, trumpet, *goje*, violin etc. Most musical genres of the world feature instrumentalists and some of them virtuoso instrumentalists who play to interpret the music, accompany the soloist or singers, or just perform as a solo instrumentalist. Playing musical instruments comes with the peculiar hazards of getting wounded in the hands, arms, feet, eyes, and other body parts while engaging with musical instruments. Some musical instruments are plucked, blown, beaten, strummed, fingered, hammered, and matched with all levels of friction on the fingers and hands. Some are also played with metal and sharp objects which are injurious if not properly handled. Then drum sticks for instance can rupture the eye balls they mistakenly get come in contact with the eyes. The strings of stringed instruments bore into the tip of the fingers and sometimes cut deep to create unsightly marks on the fingers and palms and even cause bleeding.

### **Chorister**

Some musicians have domiciled their musicianship in choral music where they function as practiced, practicing, or virtuoso voices on soprano, alto, tenor, baritone, or bass singing in parts with other members of the choral group. Constant practice and performance with the voice wearies the voice and most choristers and singers come down with oral-laryngeal problems such as sore throat, throat cancer, irritation of the larynx, collapse of the larynx, etc. Exposure to public microphones has proven to be the easiest way to contract air-borne and fluid

–borne diseases due to droplets from infected persons littered on the microphone. Also because choral music involves singing in and with a group of persons, the rate of spread of diseases is high such as the dreaded COVID-19 VIRUS and other deadly contagious diseases.

### **Choirmaster**

The choirmaster is in charge of a choir which includes the choral group's rehearsals, voice audition and placement, arrangement of pieces, performances, and outings. Choirmasters go through all kinds of humiliations in the hands of churches, patrons, court masters, and aristocrats whose choirs they direct. The reason being that every shortcoming of the choir is usually directed to the choirmaster. He or she bears the brunt of every failure but the glory of every achievement goes to the employers and patrons. Bach was imprisoned for a month for just demanding to be relieved of his duty.

### **Music Tutor/Teacher**

Teaching music involves engaging learners in formal or informal setting to learn music. This can take place in a school, church, home, online, or even through correspondence provided the objective of teaching -learning music is achieved.

The strange hazard associated with school music teaching in certain is that most parents see music as a distraction to their ward's pursuit of 'better' careers in medicine, law, or pharmacy and thereby antagonizing music teachers even on the slightest provocation. I once escaped by the whiskers in a primary school when a father came upon me with rage because I dared punish his son's unruly behavior during a music class.

### **Music Lecturer**

This involves teaching music in tertiary institutions such as colleges of education, polytechnics, and the university. This type of teaching requires high certification and qualification for competent engagement. Lecturing in music particularly in certain climes where the ruling class demeans indigenous education such as Nigeria is suicidal. The reason being that the lecturer is expected to teach competently, research, and also render services to the immediate community with paltry pay or nothing at all. The remuneration is never commensurate to the services rendered. When lecturers demand for better conditions of service they get scorned and rebuffed. If they venture into strike action, they are ignored, taken to court, sabotaged, demonized and their pay seized. Nigerian lecturers are still struggling to recover from the distress of their eight months' salary seized by government as punishment for going on strike. Many lecturers have died in the ensuing quandary including musicologists.

### **Music director**

A music director directs music in an institution that engages in musical activities regularly or periodically such as a school, church, university, conservatory, community, market, company, public and private organizations etc. The job involves organizing musical performances for meetings, festivals, celebrations, church services, annual general Meetings (AGM), funerals, concerts, competitions, birthdays, etc. The pressure of rehearsals, composing, and regular performances to meet up with the demands of the employers puts the music director into difficult health challenges. Music directors break down regularly on account of the pressure emanating from these demands.

### **Conductor**

The conductor is in charge of stage performance of a choir, band, orchestra, symphony, and virtually all art music performances involving a staging. The work of the conductor goes beyond beating time with his hands or baton but the actual interpretation of the pieces to capture the intricacies of dynamics and rhythmic flow of the composition. The enormous task of studying pieces to be conducted and standing on the podium conducting for long hours affects



the health of the director adversely. Sometimes when a performance goes awry, it is usually the conductor that bears the brunt just like the experiences of football coaches and referees in some football matches. The scandalous Viennese ‘‘ Scandal Concert’’ of March 31, 1913, in which a performance of Alban Berg’s *Altenberg Lieder*, op. 4, led to an open revolt of the audience is a case study. One of the organizers of the concert was arrested for striking the operetta composer Oscar Strauss (Bond, 2003).

### **Musical Instrument testing**

Musical instruments are usually tested after production to ensure they meet the standard of its specie. The art of musical instrument testing is usually handled by accomplished and experienced musicians. This aspect of music was highlighted by Okeke, I.N. & Okadigwe, M.N. (2022):

Under the umbrella of musical instrument production and sales comes the business opportunity of musical instrument testing after production and before sales. Just like aircrafts and automobiles are subjected to test run before final certification for use, musical instruments are also tested for tone quality, range, pitch sense, natural and chromatic tone articulation, and durability. The business of musical instrument testing is handled by accomplished instrumentalists who know the expected capacities of a given musical instrument. Companies producing musical instruments have so many well-paid instrument testers in their employ who help to curb the embarrassment of faulty musical instruments after delivery. Also, individuals who wish to buy musical instruments always engage the services of instrument testers before purchasing because from the point of manufacture to the point of delivery and sales something might go wrong with even the most certified musical instrument. Musical instrument testing, therefore, is a viable music business opportunity for Nigerian Youths (pg. 14).

The hazard associated with this musical profession is the contact with chemicals, varnishes, and preservatives trapped on the surfaces, bodies, mouthpieces, tone holes, and boxes of the instruments. Those chemicals serve to preserve the instrument from rust, tarnish, and distortion but some of them have been found to induce irritations, allergies, and sicknesses to people particularly instrument testers.

### **Musical Instrument Tuning**

Musical instrument tuning is another occupation which is connected to musical instruments. Several musical instruments require after-purchase, regular, periodic, on stage, or prior performance tuning. This music occupation has also been captured by Okeke, I.N. & Okadigwe, M.N. (2022)

Musical instruments such as the piano, organ, jazz drum set, violin, viola, cello guitar require tuning before use. African musical instruments also such as the thumb piano (*ubo*), *ogene*, *igba*, *une*, conga drums, undergo some kind of tuning. Tuning the Grand Piano or organ, for instance, is a special art requiring peculiar skills because the instruments are delivered in fragments which need to be pieced together and tuned to standard pitch before use.... African traditional musical instruments such as the membranophones- those with animal skins fixed over the surface of the instrument such as *igba*- also require a kind of tuning where the membrane is proportionately spread and strapped to the body of the instrument. Some people also specialize in that peculiar art and their services must be engaged before the *igba* sounds in an ensemble or any event(pgs14-15).

The hazards associated with musical instrument tuning are several and severe. The strings of some stringed instruments such as guitar and violin have the propensity of snapping and breaking

during tuning and this can be very injurious to the eyes. The strings are usually metallic and would completely rupture the eyes by accident.

### **Musical Instrument repair**

Musical instrument repair is also an occupation within the domain of music which requires the services of a professional in order to restore the acoustical soundness of damaged instruments. The hazards involved in this occupation have also been discussed by Okeke, I.N. & Okadigwe, M.N. (2022):

Musical instruments sometimes get damaged by accident, mishandling, and inappropriate packing or wear out as a result of use. Sometimes the levers of a piano could start falling off or the fingerboard of a guitar or violin could bend or break. A trumpet's valve could start malfunctioning or the key levers of a saxophone could stiffen. The membranes of the percussions, let us say, the jazz drums or the *igba* could get torn or the strings of a stringed instrument gets cut during a performance. All these are some of the happenstances regarding musical instruments and fortunately, most musical instruments are serviceable and repairable....The apparent risks in this endeavor are the dangers of damaging a musical instrument entirely if not properly attended to and the risk of getting wounded by some sharp and strung parts of some instruments. The strings of stringed instruments can snap off during repairs and pose some hazards to the repairer.

Caution is called for when engaging in instrument repairs(pg.14).

### **Adjudicator**

A music adjudicator renders the services of judging a musical performance of a group of performers such as choirs, orchestra, dance, choreography, miming, etc. in concert, competition, or festival. Music adjudicators come under sever attacks or even lynching in cases where some contestants in concerts become aggrieved for losing. Venting anger on adjudicators, referees, and even judges has been a major hazard in these professions for ages.

### **Music Criticism**

A music critic engages in the noble practice of appraising, analyzing, reviewing, and critiquing musical works. Bernard Shaw was a renowned music critic. The idea behind this profession is to make a musical work better by highlighting the flaws, nuances, and the aesthetic ramifications of the work. The danger involved in this noble profession is that some composers and musicians take it personal when their works are criticized beyond their positive expectation and the criticism made public or published. The perception is that is an effrontery to demean their works and sometimes seek out ways to take revenge on the critic.

This has been the foremost hazard of investigative journalism where critics encounter serious threats for publishing the findings of their investigations.

### **Dance tutor /Choreographer**

Dance being a major aspect and genre of music requires a tutor. Some musicologists are dance experts who are usually engaged by groups and ensembles for coaching. The main hazards in teaching dance as mentioned earlier are bone dislocation or fracture, muscle pull, tendon break, nerve damage which are usually incurred during rehearsals, performances, and coaching sessions.

### **Costumier**

Musical ensembles, orchestras, choirs, dance troupes, etc., engage the services of a professional costumier who sources for or designs their costumes for performances. Because some materials required are dyed, designed with chemicals and paints, and some also sourced from strange places, so many health hazards abound for the costumier. Allergic reactions to the chemicals used in producing materials for costume, asthma from harsh and pungent dyes, skin reactions and rashes on exposure to material design chemicals are all part of the hazards associated with the profession.

### **Stage engineer/Console manager**

Stage or console engineers are trained to man the console during performances. This requires professionalism due the technicalities involved in sound adjustment, balancing, looping, feedback, and monitoring.

The sound engineer mans the console prior and during performances. It is a very complicated job with regards to the input-output systems of the sophisticated gadgets involved, plug in-feedback system of the amplifiers, speaker system management, and trouble shooting. No serious music performance goes on stage without a professional sound/console engineer. Several hazards are associated with this profession such as explosion of faulty or heated gadgets, electrocution, exposure to electromagnetic waves from the console, hearing impairment from proximity to loud speakers.

### **Music promoter**

A music promoter is preoccupied with music advertising, sales, label contracts, promoting concerts, music shows, music brands, and musicians. It involves heavy financial deals for sustenance. Musicians, music brands, music contracts, music concerts and shows etc., are usually sustained by a music promoter. The inherent risks and hazards in music promotion is that there are torrents of litigations that come with it over copyright issues, profit sharing deficits, bankruptcy due to unprofitable promotions. Several fights and attacks have also been unleashed on music promoters by aggrieved musicians who felt shortchanged in music deals. Some have also been incarcerated, sustained serious injuries, and even died from unresolved deals.

### **Accompanist**

The accompanist accompanies a soloist, choir, orchestra, ensemble, etc., during performances using accompanying musical Instrument such as the piano, organ, harpsichord, guitar, xylophone, marimba, etc. There is a major hazard associated with piano playing called **Carpal tunnel syndrome** which induces pain, weakness, numbness, and tingling in the hands due to time spent making music on the piano.

On the hazard of 'Carpal Tunnel Syndrome' *Piano Emporium* explains:

Carpal tunnel syndrome is the compression of the median nerve as it passes into the hand. The pain in the carpal tunnel is due to excess pressure in your wrist and on the median nerve. The main causes of carpal tunnel syndrome are underlying medical conditions and repetitive movement.

(Www. Pianoemporium.com).

### **Minstrelsy**

A minstrel is a singer, musician, and a reciter of poems who travels around from place to place giving performances (Encarta Dictionaries, 2009). Minstrels have existed and still exist in many cultures of the world but

Okafor (2005) captured Igbo minstrelsy succinctly thus:

Minstrelsy is a dynamic art form among the Igbo. The Igbo minstrel is not only a musician and singer, he is a respected member of society, a hero. A preacher, a voice of the people and a terror to those who deviate from the accepted norm. minstrelsy was one of the earliest genres of vocal music known to the Igbo. The minstrel was solo performer who entertained his audience with songs, storytelling and even buffoonery of a highly witty and sophisticated kind. The coming of the whites brought its wake in Western concepts of music, music making, professionalism, and so on. But long before this, the minstrels stood out from the crowd as persons whose presence was thought indispensable at practically all ceremonies in Igbo community life, at traditional worship, at social festivals, title-taking, funerals, etc. (pp. 26-27).

Minstrelsy comes with the peculiar hazards of physical attacks from the audience who become unruly whenever they feel the minstrel has performed below expectation. Sometimes these attacks can come from drunken people in the audience who boo, heckle, and unleash their intoxication on the musician for no just cause. This is why many musicians travel with body guards to tours.

### **Music therapy**

Music therapy involves the engagement of the healing powers of music to individuals with various ailments such as psychological breakdown, nervous breakdown, stroke, speech defects, autism, insomnia, Alzheimer, etc. It sets individual goals within a therapeutic relationship including client's assessment, treatment planning, therapeutic intervention, and evaluation (Department of Music Undergraduate Handbook, NAU Awka 2022. Pg.51).

Most music therapies are administered in specialist hospitals, correctional facilities, psychiatric hospitals, psycho-analytical clinics and this makes the profession prone to several hazards. Patients under therapy can turn against the therapist and attack without warning or with the slightest provocation.

### **Ensemble management and Concert planning**

Ensemble management and Concert directing deals with the management of musical ensembles and initiatives beginning from planning to execution of musical performances. It also deals with available resources and the target audience in concert planning (Department of Music Undergraduate Handbook, NAU Awka 2022. Pg.46).

The peculiar hazard involved in this art is the life threats emanating from misgivings in the sharing of proceeds and profits of concerts. The music industry is filled with tales of assassinations, attacks, gun battles, etc. ranging amongst concert planners, artistes, promoters, producers, and event planners.

### **Musical arts and events management**

This involves the techniques of managing musical arts and events within reasonable resources. It also deals with integration, management, cost management, communications management and time management, in the planning and execution of music and other arts events (Department of Music Undergraduate Handbook, NAU Awka 2022. Pg.47).

This lucrative art is also inundated with the similar life threats as mentioned above.

### **Music Curator**

Music curator stores, identifies, archives, safeguards, and retrieves musical instruments and gadgets. The job of a curator is much needed in bands, orchestral groups, ensembles, churches, conservatories, and music academies. The peculiar hazard associated with this job is the exposure to the reactive and hazardous chemicals used in making musical instruments. Usually musical instruments are produced with certain chemicals which help in the varnishing and preservation of instruments but these chemicals become odoriferous when the instruments are packed for some time. Exposure to those reactive chemicals can cause respiratory irritations such as asthma, bronchitis, sinusitis, and even nosebleed.

### **Music editing and publishing**

Music editing and publishing involves several hours, days, weeks, and even months of reviewing, arranging and rearranging, type setting, and documentation of voluminous music materials from several music creators. This creates serious health problems to music editors and publishers whether offline publishing or online. Sitting long hours at a stretch has been linked to diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular diseases.

### **Studio Music Engineer**

Studio music engineer records music using sophisticated software and hardware. The music we hear on tapes, CDs, on air, on television, internet, on social media platforms, on DJ console are all recorded, mixed, and mastered by the studio music engineer. Some music recordings are done using analogue recording systems while some are done with digital recording systems. Working with electronic gadgets for music recording exposes one to all kinds of dangers such as electrocution from wrong connections or faulty gadgets, cancers and tumors from electromagnetic waves emitted from the console and the gadgets. Most studio engineers have come down with sleep disorders, hypertension, and stress disorders due to long nights of working at the studio.

### **Music producer**

Music producer oversees the complete production of a musical work on CD, Video, or any other recordable template. He is at the helm of the studio recording, editing, mastering, sequencing, streaming, and launching of a given musical work and sometimes sponsors the entire output. The music producer runs the risk of similar hazards faced by the studio engineer mentioned above,

### **Disc Jockey (DJ)**

Disc Jockey (DJ) music occupation involves entertaining people with recorded music using playback gadgets. Okeke, I.N. & Okadigwe, M.N. (2022) highlighted the nature of this occupation and the inherent risks involved in it:

Disk Jockey, popularly known as DJ is an aspect of music entertainment that features a device which can play, remix, enhance, distort, and synthesize numerous recorded music. Both the operator of the Disc Jockey and the gadget itself are called DJ. DJ is a viable business in virtually all social events. It saves space, time, energy, resources, and money due to its compactness and handiness. Electricity, few speakers, sound amplifier and the Disc Jockey gadget are all that is required for music to roll. The modern DJ unit has even replaced the Disc Jockey with laptop which can access, download, store, and replay any kind of music on digital format with ease. This form of music is worthy of scholarship in the University to ascertain its dynamism and ways of improving on it since it can, and has been a source of livelihood to many Nigerian youths. This music business is fraught with the major danger of faulty gadgets which can disorganize an event without any signal. Power outages, power surges, wrong electrical and electronic



connections etc., are some of the eventualities that can cause a malfunction. It is advised that spare gadgets be kept in place for immediate substitution in the event of a problem (pg. 13).

Beyond the entrepreneurial risks associated with this occupation which have been captured above, several hazards abound in the practice. The issue of the danger of faulty gadgets can lead to, explosion, burning, or electrocution. The Disc Jockey operator also stands the risk of heart problems such as palpitation and also deafness due to constant exposure to bombarding speakers around him.

### **The lives and Experiences of some Western Great Musicians**

*What you received from the gods you will in one way or the other pay back*

- - - *Anonymous Medieval Philosopher*

As strange and doubtful as this philosophy may appear, one still muses with awe on the misfortunes of great musicians. Why would they end up with strange illnesses, troubles, and misfortunes such as depression, suicide, premature death, sexuality crisis, deafness, blindness, abject poverty, marital crisis, etc.? Could there be a force behind all these that mortals have failed to see and understand? Obviously there are unfathomable mystical hazards associated with musical genius.

#### **Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)**

Vivaldi shook the world of music during the Baroque era with his virtuosity. He gave us *The four seasons* but was finally cut down by a strange illness and poverty. Kamien (1986) reports:

Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741), a towering figure of the late Italian baroque, was born in Venice, he was the son of a violinist at St. Mark's Cathedral. For most of his life, Vivaldi was a violin teacher, composer, and conductor at the music school of the Pieta, and institution for orphaned or illegitimate girls in Venice.... Vivaldi was famous and as a virtuoso violinist and composer. Bach arranged some of his concertos. But Vivaldi's popularity waned shortly before his death in 1741, and he died in poverty. Although he was acclaimed during his lifetime, he was almost forgotten for 200 years after his death (pg.167).

Despite the acclaim, he died in poverty and was forgotten for two hundred years! This is a peculiar hazard associated with musical virtuosity. Perhaps 'what he received from the gods', he paid back in poverty and abandonment!

#### **Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)**

Tchaikovsky's life was chaotic. Kamien(1986) reports:

Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893), the most famous Russian composer, came from the small town of Votkinsk, where his father was a mining inspector.... So rapid was his progress in music that after graduating he became professor of harmony at the new Moscow conservatory, a position he held for twelve years. As though to make up for his late start, Tchaikovsky composed furiously; a symphony, an opera, and a tone poem flowed from his pen, and by the age of thirty, he had composed his first great orchestral work, *Romeo and Juliet*. The year 1877 was bitterly dramatic. Tchaikovsky took the disastrous step of marrying a twenty-eight-year-old conservatory student who adored him and his music. Tchaikovsky seems to have married only to conceal his homosexuality. A few days after the wedding, he was writing of "ghastly spiritual torture." Two weeks later he waded into the icy Moscow River, intending to commit suicide by getting pneumonia. But a strong constitution saved him, and he fled to St. Petersburg, where a nervous collapse put him into a coma for two days. He separated from his wife, never seeing her again (pg. 359).

Smith (1957) also gives credence to this report about Tchaikovsky:

Although he was no longer concealing his prodigious talent, he felt compelled to conceal himself from others, he suffered from the tormenting guilt of his homosexuality- and the fear of exposure and disgrace. Even in company he was alone with himself. When he conducted before an audience, he held on to his head with one hand, for he was convinced it was about to fall off (pg.159).

What a chaotic life! Were all these mere coincidences or could there have been some forces making demands on his musical genius? The hazards that come with music are strange and unfathomable!

### **Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)**

Bach, one of the musical giants of the baroque era, had a fair share of the hazards of musical genius. Kamien(1986) reports:

The masterpieces of Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) mark the high point of baroque music. Bach came from a long line of musicians: his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather were all church organists or town musicians in Germany. When he was eighteen, Bach became church organist in Armstadt, a town not far from his birthplace. Here he came into conflict with church authorities, because they felt his music was too complicated; they also questioned his meeting “a strange maiden” in the empty church to accompany her singing... His reputation as an organist was growing steadily through his virtuoso performances, which included improvising elaborate fugues and, reportedly playing with his feet (on the pedal keyboard) better than many performers could with their fingers. After these two jobs as church organist, Bach obtained a more important post in 1708 as court organist in Weimar. He stayed there for nine years, becoming concertmaster of the court orchestra, but decided to leave when he was passed over for promotion. The Duke of Weimar was annoyed at Bach’s obstinacy in requesting dismissal that he put him in jail for a month!... During the 1740s, Bach’s eyesight deteriorated, yet he continued to compose, conduct, and teach. In 1750, the year of his death, Bach became completely blind (Pp171-173).

The report about Bach is so revealing that the name J.S.Bach usually evokes grandeur but no one has ever observed the throes behind the grandeur. He once suffered the humiliation of imprisonment in the hands of a minor German aristocrat! Blindness finally struck rendering him completely blind in the year of his death! No great person wishes to go this way but these are the issues behind this paper. Was the blindness a payback for his musical genius?

It should also be noted that in that era, 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries, composers wrote their works using ink pen and lantern. The demand for new compositions in churches and courts put composers into so much pressure to deliver. Composing for hours with poor lighting of the lantern invariably destroys the eyes. Bach must have induced the blindness through the long nights of rigorous composing or whatever.

### **George Fredrick Handel (1685-1759)**

The name Handel echoes with musical genius with one of his masterpieces *Alleluia Chorus* from *The Messiah*. Smith (1957) reminds us about Handel:

Handel was a man to respect.... Work was his endless preoccupation.... It was nothing for him to compose an opera, or an oratorio in a couple of weeks, nothing to compose through the day, the night, the following day. He composed almost as much as Bach and Beethoven together. And he was such a practical performer that the keys of his harpsichord eventually had hollows in them like spoons.... His sight began failing when

he was sixty-six, in 1751. There was an operation. Two years later he was almost blind (Pp.18-22).

Such was the greatness of the man Handel who gave the world a masterpiece **Hallelujah Chorus**, from the **Messiah**, churned out in just twenty-four days and whose first bars during the premiere so overwhelmed King George II that he got to his feet and stood for all of its rendition!

In all the grandeur, Handel finally came down with a deteriorating sight which left him almost blind. Just like Back his contemporary battled blindness one wonders if blindness is the recompense for being a great composer?

### **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)**

Mozart, arguably, the greatest of the great composers dazzled the world of music with his musical prodigiousness. But he, just like the others before and after him, grappled with some issues associated with music. Behind the fame and acclaim were humiliations from patrons and finally poverty.

kamien (1986) informs:

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791), one of the most amazing child prodigies in history, was born in Salzburg, Austria. By the time he was six, he could play the harpsichord and violin, improvise fugues, write minuets, and read music perfectly at first sight. At the age of eight, he wrote a symphony; at eleven, an oratorio; and at twelve, an opera. By his early teens, Mozart had behind him many works that would have brought credit to a composer three times his age.... When he was fifteen, Mozart returned to Salzburg, which was ruled by a new prince-archbishop, Hieronymus Colloredo. The archbishop was a tyrant who did not appreciate Mozart's genius, and he refused to grant him more than a subordinate seat in the court orchestra. With his father's help, Mozart tried repeatedly to over the next decade to find a suitable position elsewhere, but there were never any vacancies. The tragic irony of Mozart's life was that he won more acclaim as a boy wonder than as an adult musician.... Mozart's health grew worse... died shortly before his thirty-sixth birthday.... Mozart's funeral was the poorest possible. His body was laid in a common grave assigned to paupers (pp. 243-247).

It is mysterious and disturbing how great musicians nosedive into oblivion despite much acclaim and grandeur in their blossoming seasons.

### **Ludwig Van Beethoven (1770-1827)**

Beethoven, another musical genius of the classical era astonished the world with his musical prowess and virtuosity and finally submitted to the same mysterious and inexplicable force that cut down his predecessors and contemporaries.

Smith (1957) captured the life of Beethoven succinctly:

One of the very few simple facts about Ludwig Van Beethoven is that he was deaf through the years he was changing the course of music. You'd think a composer would have to have functioning ears. He didn't.... He played the piano as the musical Viennese had never heard it played before, that is, with wild, ferocious abandon and limitless and often lawless imagination. Soon he was astonishing them further- and upsetting some- with compositions which showed evidences of veering away from the polished formal perfections of Mozart and Haydn, into entirely new and so unknown directions.... His last years were marked by a series of illnesses of vague types, and also by compositions of extreme profundity- the last quartets and the *Grosse Fugue*, for

instance.... On his return to Vienna, he got pneumonia. Recovering from that, he took to his bed because of an illness whose nature we don't know although it may have been cirrhosis of the liver. On March 26 1827, at the age of fifty –six, he reared up from his bed quite suddenly, lifted a clenched fist at the ceiling, and fell back. After that there was “not another breath, nor a heartbeat more,” said a witness. The defiant child and the defiant man left life with defiance. But of whom? Of what? (Pp48-54).

### **Luciano Pavarotti**

Pavarotti was a celebrated Italian operatic tenor who rattled the world with his tremolos tenor but was cut down by what appears to be laryngeal cancer (cancer of the throat) even though there are conflicting reports whether it was laryngeal cancer or pancreatic cancer. It is not unusual for soloists to develop laryngeal problems due to the strain on the organ due to hours and years of practice and performance.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has made effort to highlight and sensitize on the professional hazards of music which are quite disturbing and require serious attention. The idea is not to scare people away from music but to sensitize people particularly prospective and practicing musicians to be proactive in dealing with the hazards. Every profession comes with their intrinsic hazards and music is no exception. When these hazards are properly understood, it behooves practicing musicians to make positive and necessary adjustments. When we understand also that wind and brass instrumentalists face the hazards of respiratory and oral cavity diseases, it becomes pertinent for every wind/brass musician to be sensitive to their oral hygiene and also the hygiene of their respective instruments. It should also be understood that musical genius comes with the prize or hazard of unstableness! Exceptionally gifted people in music should brace up for the unstableness that comes with it.

Musicianship also should not be a covert for drug abuse, sexual pervasion and promiscuity, personality complexes, allegiance to Satan, loss of identity, brigandage, and several other maladies associated with music as traced in this paper. The music profession is a noble, lofty, lucrative, sensitive, and demanding profession and therefore, all practitioners are enjoined to embrace the practice with circumspection and discretion in order to overcome the inherent hazards

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