

# **SOCIAL IMPACT OF ABIGBO DANCE MUSIC GROUP IN UMUOKIRIKA MBAISE COMMUNITY, IMO STATE**

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## **Introduction**

Music is part and parcel of every culture. In Igbo land in particular, Music making forms the integral part of their lives; starting from birth, marriage to death. Agu (1990) opines that “in African societies, all aspects of life ranging from birth to death are believed to be targeted with music making”. (p.49). This implies that music is a life cycle that takes place in all activities of man. Outside its entertainment and performances, it brings unity and love to a particular society. Euba (1969) sees music as “a powerful tool that encourages unity among people irrespective of their age and social status” (p.480). Music performance knows no age limit as it concerns social activities. There are children’s types of music, maiden, youths, male, female, mixed (both males and females) age grade, royal music and so on. For the substance of social activities in Igbo Social Musical performances are organized in different areas which include chief’s palace, village square, market places, and personalities in the village open places like school playground and so on. Traditional music forms the heartbeat of social activities in Mbaïse communities and in Igbo land at large. Abigbo dance music group of Umuokirika in Mbaïse is not only for social activities but also for cultural identity.

## **Historical Background of Abigbo Dance Music Group**

Abigbo Dance Music is one of the cultural dances performed in Mbaïse community. Although there are other dances in Mbaïse like ekpe, Uko, agbachaekurunwa, egbangelenge, eseala, eseelu and a host of others. The researcher deemed it fit to work on Abigbo cultural dance music of Umuokirika in Ahiazu Local Government Area of Mbaïse. According to oral interview which the researcher had with Ogu Sunday although not the leader but the elderly one in

the group, Abigbo present day is traced to early 1930s. Onyeji (2012) noted that; “Abigbo is social/entertainment choric – dance music that is not strictly event-bound. The intention is to promote the social and cultural lives of the Mbaise people primarily within the Igbo interactional milieu”. (p. 50) in line with Onyeji’s statement, Abigbo cultural dance music of Mbaise perform in all social activities in Mbaise and that is why it is enjoyed by Mbaise community. Some of these social activities where this ensemble performs include traditional weddings, chieftaincy installation, iriji Mbaise festival and others. This is why it is loved and enjoyed by Mbaise community. Abigbo is a traditional music group which uses both traditional musical instruments and Igbo language during their different performances both within and outside Mbaise community.

To prove that part and parcel of Mbaise man is music, Imo (2011) observes that: “When they say Mbaise loves music; we say it is an understatement. Music is part of our life and we have varieties”. (p. 9). What Imo means is that in Mbaise Community, they are blessed with so many types of traditional dance music; which means that Abigbo dance music is not the only music they are known for. Njuko (2009) states that:

*While providing entertainments to people in homes and at work, the main purpose of music and dance in our (Mbaise) culture is to bring the community together and forge a social aesthetic or mystical link among its members. Music and dance are for the community and instruments for creating social emotional and aesthetic solidarity and are also for ritual and religious purposes (p.198).*

This is an indication that music and dance play important roles in Abigbo cultural dance of Mbaise community of which when combined with the instrument of the ensemble creates social, emotional and adds beauty to the music performances.

Musical instrument of Abigbo Dance Group Nketia (1982) observes that “The instrumental resources at the disposal of performances naturally tend to be limited to these in which their respective communities specialize. They may be instruments believed to be of local origin. (p.67). all the instruments used by Abigbo are locally made by Mbaise people with the exception of the bell

(*Mgbiringba*) and whistle (*Opi*). Their instruments include drums of different sizes. The biggest is *adimala*, followed by the middle *nduduala* and the smallest *ekelebe*. Other instruments used by this group are bell (*mgbirimba*), whistle, rattle (*oyo*) and wood block (*okpakoro*).

Okorodu (2014) opines that “culture comprises the entire gamut of a people’s way of life which is reflected in the social, political, economic system of such people (p.87). Generally, culture is the totality of the life of a particular society. This could be their type of music, dance, communication, musical instrument, language, food, hair style, work of arts and a host of other things that look alike which may be used in identifying a particular set of people or community. Nwoga (1978) says that “The people of Mbaise cultural achievement are in its music and dance, in its songs and literary skills. Every form of native Igbo dance ensemble is to be found in Mbaise. (p.33). Culturally Mbaise communities are blessed with music and dance which they are identified with.

### **Song Texts**

Ojukwu and Onuora – Oguno (2015) observed that:

*Indigenous Nigerian Music springs from the womb of the people’s culture. It does not have to confirm to the music of other people, though it could share in some common factors and elements. It is often a people chosen expression but is part of the universal language of the people which is called music (p.36).*

Abigbo dance music is part and parcel of the culture of Mbaise community. Whenever the name Abigbo is mentioned, it is traced down to Mbaise community. They make use of their indigenous language during their dance performance in order to understand and communicate easily among themselves.

Nwoga (1978) says “Abigbo music band and singers philosophize, criticize, and admonish praise in language expressions which not only makes its points but also pleases while it hurts” (p.2). They make use of their language as they sing to avoid mixing words. They sing about a woman who has good character (Lolo Joy Emeka). “lolo Joy Emeka, ***oke nwanyi a na eji amatu ebekanyi***”. Lolo Joy Emeka, a woman of good examples life in our community.

### Song 1

Lolo Joy Emeka, okenwonyi  
Anaejiamatuebekanyi  
Were obi nwayochemeegwu  
Unu were obi nwayo egwe n'abia

Lolo Joy Emeka, a woman of good  
exemplary life in our community  
calm down and wait for dance  
calm down dance is coming

*Arri. by Anugwa U. L.*

Song 5: *Oke Nwanyi Anaji Ama Atu*

UMUNNIM

ghafu na hu ru nde nwere kwu o - pra na hu ru ndi nwe akwu we - ro - bi 'we - yo chie bu - la

La - lo Joy e - me - k'e - me o - ke nwanyi i - ju - na kpa - be in - nyi we - ro - bi 'we - yo chie me 'gwu

## **Song 2**

Abigbo dance music group also sing when expressing their anger

Resp. *Onwereokwu di mkpo*

*anyiriekwu government ntige*

*onwere okwu di mkpa anyijiribia*

Call: *umuAbigboanyi*

Resp: *Ndiochawetaraoriaedisn'alanyi*

Call: *Dede le*

Resp: *Eburulaha Ebola bubaanyi*

*Umumadugejiakpannu asawaahu*

*Ebeufodumadugejiakulu mere nri*

Call: *Wogu le*

Resp: *AnyiariolaChukwukere*

*Anyibikonyereanyi aka, ima*

*Naoriaebolajoron njo*

Call: *UmuAbigboanyi le*

Resp: *Iwe di anyin'obi o e a e iwe e a e*

*Iwe di anyin'obi e a e*

we come with an important talk

government listen

we come with an important talk

our Abigbo people

the white men brought aids in our  
country

brother see

they brought Ebola everywhere  
people are bathing with bags of salt  
while some feed on bitter cola

Wogu O

we are pleading that God our  
creator should help us because  
Ebola is a very bad sickness.

our Abigbo people o

we are angry o e a e angry ea e

we are angry e a e

U. L. Anugwa: *Social Impact of Abigbo Dance Music Group in Umuokirika ....*  
**Arr. by Anugwa U. L**

This particular song was directed to the government on how Aids and Ebola have attacked community and it goes this way:

The musical score is titled "UMU NNEM" and is arranged for a vocal group and a traditional ensemble. The vocal parts include a Call (CALL) and two Responses (RP.1 and RP.2). The instrumental parts include Twin Gong, Bell, Obele, Obele Ikwe, Chaka, and Drums. The lyrics are in Igbo and address the social impact of Aids and Ebola.

**UMU NNEM**

**CALL**  
u-otu A-hi gha-e-nyi la u-mun - na - ah

**RP.1**  
ge-otia-eremes/du-ku olo kpa e-nyi non bin n-dia-cha un-r'u - iu Aids i na la nyi n-dia-cha un-r'u - iu Aids

**RP.2**

**CALL**  
da - da la u - ya - ru - la e - lu - la na kpa - nyi

**RP.1**  
i - lu - ru - la nyi a - wa - ru - la e - lu - la na - ru - bin a - ya - ru - la e - lu - la na kpa nyi u - mun - na - da

**RP.2**

**TWIN GONG**

**BELL**

**OBELE**

**OBELE IKWE**

**CHAKA**

**DRUMS**

U. L. Anugwa: *Social Impact of Abigbo Dance Music Group in Umuokirika ....*

**Arr. by Anugwa U. L.**

UMU NNEM

The musical score is titled "UMU NNEM" and is arranged by U. L. Anugwa. It features a variety of instruments and vocal parts. The vocal parts include a CALL part and two solo parts (RP.1 and RP.2). The instrumental parts include TWIN GONG, BELL, OGBLE, OBELE EKWE, CHAKA, and DRUMS. The lyrics are in Igbo and are written below the vocal staves. The score is divided into two systems, with the first system ending at measure 100 and the second system starting at measure 101. The tempo is marked "199" and the time signature is "2/4".

**CALL**

**RP.1**  
ga dlo-nu 'kpan do-a-ee la fu a-b'u - (o)-du jin kpu re ki i - me-re nyl aji la rio-m Chi-ne-ka 'ke 'fa-nyl hi - ko nye-'a-ny'a-ka

**RP.2**

**TWIN GONG**

**BELL**

**OGBLE**

**OBELE EKWE**

**CHAKA**

**DRUMS**

**CALL**  
u-mu.A-bi-ghu-a-nyl lo

**RP.1**  
mu-ku-ris-a-ba - la jo-ee-jo i - we-a danyi no bto ahu ahu eh eh ahu eh i - we-a danyi no bto ahu ahu eh eh ahu eh

**RP.2**

**TWIN GONG**

**BELL**

**OGBLE**

**OBELE EKWE**

**CHAKA**

**DRUMS**

## **Functions of Song Text in Abigbo Dance Group**

Song texts in the Nigerian or African context are cultural indicators and most of the cultural traits peculiar community or people are often reflected in their song text according to Okafor in Onuora-Oguno and Nwamara (2014). "Through song text, a person learned moral codes of his land .he also learned about his own language, the things his people lived by and how the society worked". (p.116)

Due to the fact that Abigbo ensemble during their performances, make use of Igbo language, the Mbaise people learn more of their moral conducts, language and norms and values of their community. In their music performances, they sing revealing the history of Abigbo Dance Music Group. "Abigbo o si na nnenanna rue anyi aka". (we learnt Abigbo through our parents).

Other songs serve special functions to depict certain aspects of people's behavior such as songs of social control. These songs are usually topical and specially selected either in form of praise or abuse to regulate the social order in the community while others may also serve mainly for entertainment. Furthermore, social views such as corruption, stealing, adultery, going to native doctors to acquire powers by some of the church priests, and a host of others are usually revealed during traditional "iriji" Mbaise festival which is done annually being a collective art, often seen to reveal elements of oral traditions which are handed down from generation to generation. This is observed in one of their songs that say "Abigbo wunu ihe okpu" (Abigbo is an aged song).

The rich cultural heritage of Mbaise communities is showcased as they perform the above mentioned dances during their festivals and other ceremonies.

In support of the above explanation, Onyeji (2011) writes:

*Abigbo as a group employs the agency of entertainment to maintain the moral norms of the community such as crime control and avoidance of deviant behaviours through the lyrics as well as performance dynamics. Defaulters are used as themes of satiric texts to serve as a deterrent to others. Abigbo members say, "We also sing about any bad person in the community". In this way, they directly and indirectly contribute to social music. Such music becomes a veritable instrument for social sanctions and erring members of the community (p.56).*



During their performances, as nobody's name will be mentioned, the person(s) involve will adjust his or her life to a better one. By so doing errors or bad characters are being corrected in Mbase community.

### **Social Impact of Abigbo Dance Music of Mbase**

- Music is an essential component of the festival, it serves as the accompaniment to the rhythm of this dance and it makes it easier for the performers to perform well. Also during performance, the rhythm of the music makes the dancers get to the climax.
- Music brings out the excitement and attitude to dance in all these festivals... some of their songs unveil the good and bad attitude of the members of the community. They also sing in praise of their parents who initiated the rich cultural heritage of Mbase.
- They sing in praise of their elderly ones who are always in support of these dance groups.
- They also make use of verbal and non-verbal method in conveying messages to different communities who have come to witness these occasions on festivals and events thus have a long historical inter-relationship with musical performances in Mbase community.



**Instruments of Abigbo Dance Music of Mbase**



### **Members of Abigbo Dance Music Group of Mbaise**

Musical instruments used by Abigbo dance music group have different functions they play. Okafor (2005) observes that:

*They feature in dances instrumental ensemble and in spirit-manifest displays. They also play accompaniments to some vocal music. Some instruments play a double role depending on the social context. For example, the xylophone, flute and some slit drums (ushe/uvie, ikoro, ododem) are both melodic and melo-rhythmic instruments. (p.178).*

In Abigbo dance group, the instruments they use play vital roles. One of these instruments play double role. The big drum (*edimala*) is for cueing in dancers for a change of dance steps and also as melodic and melo-rhythmic instrument. The other remaining two drums are for compliment. For example middle drum (*nduduala*) smallest (*ekelebe*). Other instruments that are used for accompaniments including wood block (*okpokoro*) rattle (*oyo*) while bell is (*mgbirimba*) for timing. They also have a lead singer whose duty is to always introduce the song for the chorus to respond.

Generally, Abigbo traditional music is loved by almost all the communities of Mbaise. This is because of the way and manner they perform. Abigbo music and dance always bring people together. People from all works of live visit Mbaise whenever this dance music is performed.

## **Conclusion**

From this research work, it is well believed that Abigbo cultural dance is the main music of Mbaise community. The culture they cherish and keep for posterity. Also Mbaise community appreciate Abigbo dance as a culture that communicates through music and dance in order to correct ills in the community and at the same time recognize those that do good things in the community. Due to use of language by the group, people have been touched emotionally for a positive change in their lives. This communication is not only for Mbaise community, the audience is also inclusive. This is because, during Abigbo, this group communicates to both indigenes and non-indigenes. In conclusion, the Igbo and even Nigerians as a whole gain a lot from Abigbo dance group of Mbaise during their music and dances performances.

## **Recommendations**

Due to the information's gathered from this work, these recommendations are made.

1. Traditional dances should be practiced in schools from nursery to secondary levels, so that the younger generation will grow with it as their culture.
2. Government should encourage people in the state, Local Government Areas and the community by awarding prizes to the best performance in the cultural display.
3. The elders should as well encourage the younger ones to form their own Abigbo dance music group in order to sustain Mbaise culture.
4. On no account should Abigbo cultural dance music group of Mbaise be asked to stop performance because of the way and manner they correct errors in the community through music and dance.

## Oral Interview

NAMES	AGE	OCCUPATION	PLACE	DATE
Casmir Emeribe	32	Civil Servant	Ahiazu	15/08/2018
Anyanwu Ikechukwu	40	Business Man	Ahiazu	25/10/2018
Ogu Sunday	32	Builder	Umuokrika	25/10/2018
Ebuka Nworie	32	Builder	Umuokrika	25/10/2018
Uzochukwu Okereke	35	Tailor	Umuokrika	25/10/2018



The researcher with Casmir Emeribe (Leader of the Group) and Ikechukwu Anyanwu (Secretary of the Group) as the interviews to the leaders during Iriji Mbaise on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August, 2018

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