

AFRICAN INSTRUMENTATION AND CHILDREN UPBRINGING: A CASE STUDY OF THE ANGLICAN CHILDREN'S MINISTRY ODOAKPU ZONE, ONITSHA

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Introduction

Music plays very significant role in the development of a child; morally, mentally and physically. A child begins to experience music right from birth, during which cradle songs are sung to the child so as to lull it to sleep, to stimulate laughter and so on. In Igbo land children are allowed to socialize according to age and sex, and, as well, get involved into activities which are connected to music such as dancing and playing of traditional instruments. Their music training begins with slow absorption of the music through observation and active participation. This tradition seems to be declining due to urbanization and its attendant agents. In the Anglican Children's Ministry (ACM), music serves as a very powerful tool for children's upbringing. This paper seeks to examine African instrumentation of the ACM Odoakpu Zone in Onitsha, Onitsha South Local Government Area of Anambra State and the roles it plays in developing children.

Conceptual Framework

Upbringing according to *Collins English Dictionary* (2006) is "the education of a person during his formative years." The *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary* also defines it as "the way in which a child is cared for and taught how to behave." Farrant in Nwokenna and Anike (2012) writes, "The child is constantly changing. As he develops new feelings and new attitudes, new habit and skills, and new knowledge and understandings, these form his behaviour pattern...Behaviour changes is one evidence that growth has taken place in a child" (p. 253). What determines the behaviour changes of a person are the learning experiences he received in his developmental stages. The influence of a child's behaviour could come from the home, church, peer group, school, internet, etc.

Every culture has its own specifications which shape the lives of those that belong to it. For instance, the Igbo people of Nigeria believe so much in flogging a child who misbehaves so as to correct the child, whereas the Westerners refer to it as child abuse. This is to say that the practice that is favourable to one culture may not favour the other. Onuora-Oguno in Esimone and Ojukwu (2014) agrees thus, “education has been portrayed by many sociologists and educationists to be an experience which bothers on people’s culture, and which through learning prepares an individual for adult life in his particular society”. (p. 40)

Music’s effectiveness in a child’s all round development is a widely acclaimed fact. It has been included as a compulsory subject in the curricular of the upper basic and junior secondary schools in Nigeria as part of Cultural and Creative Arts (CCA). Parents employ music teachers to train their children on how to play the piano, the violin, saxophone, recorder and so on. But the question is: how do these children who are taught good morals in schools using Western folk songs rather than indigenous folk songs and are taught only the Western musical instruments without giving any consideration to indigenous musical instruments appreciate and respond to the indigenous music? Omibiyi-Obidike in Agu (2014), lamented that the content of music instruction in Nigerian schools since the advent of the European educational system has proved to be self-destructive, and thus laid the foundation of the problems of music education in contemporary Nigeria. Nwamara in Ayeyemi and Okafor (2014) observed that “the Western world is indirectly using ICT to market their ‘products’ globally while Africans ignorantly remain at the receiving end; not thinking of what to use in exchange of the Western imported products they consume” (p. 1).

Agu (2014) put forward these questions which he said has being bothering him:

- What sense does it make by starting the child from the unknown to the known, instead of the other Way round? Why ask a Nigeria student in the secondary school to analyse Western classical musical forms etc. When he is ignorant of the Nigeria traditional musical forms and structure?
- How do we cope with our inadequacies in playing, or even recognizing our musical instruments, appreciating or discussing our own indigenous music?

- Why can't many music teachers sing Nigerian folk or traditional songs correctly for the students to become aware of the contour and the expressive nature of the song to enable them learn the song by note?
- Why do many of us include more of western tunes in our concert programmes, or even ignore Nigerian or African tunes completely, instead of the other way round? (p.3)

The Anglican Children Ministry

The Anglican Children Ministry is an arm in the Anglican Church, whose main objective is raising children with the fear of God, applies the use of music in achieving their aim, whereby children socialize with each other, learn how to play African musical instrument through observation and active participation.



Plate 1. The Children Experiencing Music through Active Participation

Anglican Children Ministry began in 1958 by a group of Anglican boys who were under apprenticeship as traders. They started gathering by the street corner within Odoakpu District, Onitsha (the particular street not known), to pray. The

group that bore no name later fizzled out because their masters did not know what their mission was, and thereby were not in support of their gathering.

In 1962, another group known as the Anglican Store Boys Association (ASBA) emerged and was gathering every evening to pray at no 2 Ogalonye Street Odoakpu, Onitsha. In those days apprentices slept in stores / warehouses so as to guard them from being broken into by thieves. Because of that they were tagged "oke store" meaning "store rats". When some of their masters and some other parents residing around saw that there was light in that gathering, they started allowing their children to join those apprentices in praying. The group continued to increase in number and longed to spread across Onitsha and beyond but their name seems to be a hindrance to their progress. They later changed their name to the Anglican Praying Association (APA) and were fully recognized in 1974 by Late Bishop L. M. Uzodike; the then bishop of the Diocese on the Niger. In 1984, APA was established both in Kano and Kaduna Dioceses.

Furthermore, the need for more suitable men that will vividly define the objective of APA and help in selling their vision to other Anglican Diocese in Nigerian arose. In 1989, Reverend T. I. Umeh, now Venerable came up with the name "Anglican Children's Ministry" (ACM) and it was approved by the Most Rev. Dr. J. A. Onyemelukwe (late). Their motto changed from "Watch and Pray" to "Catch Them Young for Christ" having the biblical backup, "train up a child in the way he should go, and when he grows he'll never depart from it." (Proverb 22: 6), which is in accordance to his assertion, "a child in his mind is restless, curious, credulous, literal, and imaginative...children retain eighty percent (80%) of what they see and hear" (Nduka, 2013, p. 34). The vision of the ACM is not a fruitless one. The author has carefully observed that the majority of those that grew up in the streets of Odoakpu; who passed through the ACM were never involved in any of the illicit practices in the streets. The good characters inculcated in them are made manifest wherever they find themselves.

Music's role in achieving the main objective of the Anglican Children's Ministry, which is raising Godly children, is very significant, especially in their unique style of African instrumentation. "Children thrive on music. It is one of the vehicles for learning in early childhood". (www.kindermusic.com/about/Why-

kindermusic) Writing on the influential power of music, Glennon in Onwuekwe (2006) states:

Music can do many things and have many desirable results. It can stimulate or soothe the mind, help towards a wider education, or at least, a wider mental perspective. It can gently plough the mind so that it will be more receptive to the seeds of learning; it can find response in disciplined physical action. Music can comfort the lonely and the sick, awake pleasant memories in the old, delight the young and lull a child to sleep. (p. 2)

African Instrumentation

Instrumentation according to Jones (1998) is defined as “the art of composing for particular instrument in a manner appropriate to their range and sound” (p.313). Encarta Dictionary also defines it as “the musical instrument used to perform a piece of music.” In the case of African instrumentation, the issue of range is not applicable because the working principles of African musical instruments differ from those of the Westerners; scientific formulas applied in producing Western musical instruments are not so with African instruments. The main focus of African instruments is on rhythm and not melody, hence Okafor (2005) stated that “mechanised instrument with elaborate keys are characteristic of African traditional”.(p. 159)

The instrumental ensemble of the ACM Odoakpu Zone comprises six instrument which of idiophone family according to Curt Sachs’ and Eric Von Hornbostel’s classification of African musical instruments. Some other Zones add *igba* (drum) and *ekwe* (slit –drum). The ACM Odoakpu Zone instrumental ensemble includes:

1. *Okpokolo* (wood block)
2. *Ekpili* (rattles)
3. *Ogene mkpi* (small twin gongs, two pairs)
4. *Alo* (long gong)
5. *Udu* (pot drum)



Plate 2. The ACM's Musical Instruments

Each of these instruments has specific rhythm pattern attached to it depending on the movement the players want to play, except the *alo* (long gong) which does not any rhythmic pattern attached to it but improvises all through. This is in line with the explanation of Nwamara (2006) on the roles performed by particular instruments in an orchestra which he outlined in Nwamara (2008) as follows:

- The pot drum (*udu*) provides the bass background which gives a firm support to the music
- The shakers (*ichaka*) are responsible for providing the basic "phrasing referent" rhythmic pattern according to Koetting (1970) and regularizing tempo.
- The slit-drum and ogenephone, where applicable are for melo-rhythmic essence.
- Other instruments maintain a particular rhythmic pattern often times with little or no variation. (p. 228)

The ACM has two instrumental patterns:

- (*Egwu ije*) Walking pace pattern
- (*Egwu oso*) Running pace pattern

(Egwu Ije) Walking Pace Pattern

Musical score for (Egwu Ije) Walking Pace Pattern. The score is written for six instruments: Okpokolo, Ogene 1, Ogene 2, Ekpili, Udu, and Alo. The time signature is 2/4. The instruments enter in a staggered fashion: Okpokolo starts first, followed by Ogene 1, Ogene 2, Ekpili, Udu, and Alo. The Alo part features a complex, fast-paced rhythmic pattern.

(Egwu Oso) Running Pace Pattern

Musical score for (Egwu Oso) Running Pace Pattern. The score is written for six instruments: Okpokolo, Ogene 1, Ogene 2, Ekpili, Udu, and Alo. The time signature is 6/8. The instruments enter in a staggered fashion: Okpokolo starts first, followed by Ogene 1, Ogene 2, Ekpili, Udu, and Alo. The Alo part features a complex, fast-paced rhythmic pattern.

It is also important to know that these instruments do not begin at the same time. They come in one after the other, according to their order of arrangement on the score, beginning from the top. Each enters after the one that precedes it must have completed one cycle.

The Role of African Instrumentation in Children Upbringing

Plato in his writings, according to Bond (2003), commented that a successful blend of education involving music and gymnastic is vital to the development of a righteous human being; that playing the right kind of music could produce a well-rounded individual, why the wrong type would cause violence, instability, and even insanity. Plato's statement suits African music which educates, builds morality and is as well characterized by its rhythmic complexity; in that the sound of African instruments could generate kinetic movements and other displays, and so music, dance, mime, and become one. The Anglican Children's Ministry's instrumental music has its own roles which it plays in the life of children, aside from the vocal songs that convey specific messages, some of which are listed below:

- Development of African rhythmic sensibility.
- Speech development
- Physical fitness/mental alertness
- Moral instruction

Development of African Rhythmic Sensibility

African rhythm is characterized by its polyrhythm, cross-rhythm, syncopation, and cyclic nature which make it complex. The syncopated beats are usually accentuated by rhythmic stamping on the strong beats.

African rhythm is extremely complex, and is characterized essentially by the permanent sense of tension it creates: different interwoven rhythmic figures are repeated cyclically and uninterruptedly. The interlocked structure may involve irregular accentuation as well, making it extremely difficult for even the trained listener to analyse it by ear. (Arom, 1991, p. 206)

Senghor and A. M. Jones, according to John Miller in Nwamara (2008) states that "rhythm is the basis of African art...rhythm is to the African what harmony is to the Europeans" (p. 229). It is said that in an African Man is rhythm. This statement becomes justifiable when a child in his formative years begins to experience African music through observation and active participation and it is so with ACM children. Those who did not take part in activities that involve African music in early childhood find it difficult to maintain strict rhythm while singing or even dancing.

Speech Development

Speech development is another important factor in a child's development. A person that has impaired or delayed speech feels emotionally down. Studies show that:

children diagnosed with speech delay are more likely to present with behavioural and social emotional problems both in childhood and as adults. Decreased receptive language, reading and learning skills are common side effects for children that from a speech delay and do not receive adequate attention.
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/speech_delay)

Impaired speech in a developing child can be improved using music. "Music therapists provide services for children and adult with psychiatric disorders, developmental abilities, speech and hearing impairment...depending upon the need of the client involved, music therapy session are offered on an individual or group basis" (Nwokenna, 2006, p. 204). Instrumental music of the ACM usually accompanies songs. The instrumentalists set the tempo which the singers follow. A child who stammers on trying to sing along with others to the tempo specified by the instrumentalists improves on his speech, and gradually would conquer his problem.

Morality Building

The instruments play along with the songs and in those songs are embedded instructions and information. Some of the songs address love, peace, unity and so on. Biblical stories are also taught them through songs. These tend to mould their lives because at stage of life they believe and accept everything they are taught. And again the instruments attract some children whose parents do not go to Church and from there they will also receive their training.

Physical Fitness and Mental Alertness

At the hearing of the instruments being played, the children are spurred into dancing. By so doing they dance off fatigue and are always hardworking. "Exercise for children may do far more than improved physical fitness. It may also stimulate brain growth and boost cognitive performance."
(<http://www.parentingscience.com.exercise-forchildren.htm>)

Conclusion

The role of music in a child's development cannot be over emphasized. Early exposure of a child to music leads to the development of a well-rounded individual. Training an African child with western folk songs and musical instrument without also exposing a child to African music, both vocal and instrumental makes the child respond to African music like a European man and thereby becoming culturally alienated to his native land. I therefore recommend the use of our indigenous music as instructional material for early child's education.

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