

EMERGING ISSUES IN AFRICAN MUSIC ACADEMIA: THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

Nnamdi C. Onuora-Oguno, Ph.D.

Introduction

Music is germane to the life of Africans, such that every social activity in their lives is accompanied by some kind of music. Many theses have been written on the subject of parental prejudice to the formal study of music in African society. The belief was that the average parent cannot conjecture that a child will go to school to study an art which principally exists and is practiced by rote learning and oral tradition. The introduction of Western Music Education has changed all that. Issues have arisen and have been tackled by scholars of past and present generations. This paper is an overview of what the writer considers issues emanating in the new millennium (2000 – 2016). The participant observatory-method based on empiricism as an active player in the music academia was used, using the Nigerian music academia as case study. Issues were identified, solutions were proffered, projections and possible solutions were suggested towards making the African music academia better.

The writer identified eight plagues that could jeopardize the growth of the music academia in Nigeria in the new millennium if treated with kids' glove. Ironically, most of the plagues identified are more intrinsic than extrinsic to the corpus of music academia in Nigeria. We must look at ourselves more closely before laying blames on non-music scholars. Below are some issues of concern.

Computer Related Issues

The basic deficiencies of the Nigerian music academia are issues arising from deficiency or lack of knowledge of the Information Communication Technology (ICT). The most neglected aspects of the use of computers are those emanating from the following:

Deficiency in the use of Microsoft word: We have reached a stage where Projects, Thesis and Dissertations must be typed by supervisees or at the least a researcher should have his typed work edited by himself. Examinations question papers must be typed by lecturers and printed by the lecturers from the closet of their offices. Personal printers must therefore be a sine qua non to scholars. The mastery of the use of the micro-soft word will enable an electronic data base to be formed in our Departments of Music.

In the course of this thesis, we visited a first generation Music Department in Nigeria recently and the heap of dust-laden files found on a lecturer's table can induce sneezing on any vulnerable individual. Besides heaps of files constitute an eye-sore and offer no aesthetic appeal. Music is an aesthetic art and we must maintain a good level of decency in our offices. Hard copies must be neatly packed in a store-room and called up when needed. It is easier to electronically call up information and print it out if well organized in folders. How many Heads of Departments can with the use of the micro-soft word call up bio-data of their existing students and have a history of past graduates of their Departments? Electronic data base of students will go a long way in determining the Teacher Staff Ratio (TSR) in our various Departments in line with the National Universities Commissions (NUC) guidelines to facilitate employment of staff in needed areas of specialization. Often times, wrong grammatical expressions during Post Graduate Seminars and defenses are blamed on typists simply because we pay lip services to the simple computer application like the micro-soft word.

Music writing software: As coordinator of Post Graduate programmes in my institution, we have discovered that the percentage of music scholars who are conversant with Finale, Sibelius, A capella 1200, and other software applications for scoring music are very few. There must be conscious effort for music scholars to undergo personal courses on the application of power points, Microsoft word and excel work sheets to enhance their efficiency. These applications enhance professionalism in a global world. Caution must also be applied in the minds of scholars for music writing software are meant to enhance neater notations and make publications easier. Computers do not out rightly compose music.

Most of the software are designed based on the Western derived ideologies in music. The task lies with Nigerian music technologists to formulate software or

contribute ideas to software manufacturers that can accommodate Nigeria lexicography and other concepts of Nigerian/African music.

Recording software applications: The use of computer based applications must extend beyond notation, MS-word and the application of the World Wide Web (www) for research.

Practical application of software like fruity loops studio (fl), Cubase, Nuendo must be learnt. Institution must be well equipped with functional studios and good technical hands.

Virus and anti-virus related issues: Watson (2001) wrote that:

By definition a virus consists of a set of instructions that attaches itself to other computer programs, usually in the computers' operating system and becomes part of them. In most cases, the corrupted programs continue to perform their intended functions but surreptitiously execute the virus's instructions as well. A virus is usually designed to execute when it is loaded in a computer's memory. Upon execution, the virus instructs its host program to copy the viral code into, or infect, any number of other programs and files stored in the computer (p.20).

The infection can then transfer itself and code on other computers through magnetic disks or other memory storage devices, computer networks, or online systems. The replicating viruses often multiply until they destroy data or render other program codes meaningless. A virus may simply cause a harmless joke or cryptic message to appear on a computer user's video monitor each time he turns on his computer. A more damaging virus can wreak havoc on an extremely large computer system within a matter of minutes or hours, causing it to crash and by extension destroy valuable data! How many music educators know the intricacies of the application of the anti-virus and back up storage devices to avoid loss of data occasioned by theft, computer crashes and virus attacks?

Most people install anti-virus in their systems and do not know that without updating it regularly, it becomes less effective and leave your system vulnerable to viral invasion. Interchange of mass storage devices between your personal

computers and commercial computer work places without an up-to-date anti-virus are a high risk game akin to having unprotected sex with a stranger.

Poor Literature Base of Scholars

Often times, publications of scholars in the music academia emanate from researches carried out in Project, Thesis and Dissertations which in itself is not bad but often times there are no conscious effort to update the literature base of new papers written by same scholars and often times, references by scholars are copy and paste.

An analysis carried out on five (5) academic journals across the Federation show that sixty percent similarity in references used by one author for different papers. The cause is simple: Most scholars are lazy and make no effort in updating their literature base. It is a sore point that has to be improved upon. Musicians must look inwards first for their problem before facing the external foes. Adegbite in his lead paper during the Association of Nigerian Musicologists' (ANIM) conference, held at Nnamdi Azikiwe University in 2006, warned against regionalization of reference materials. It is now very common for West-based scholars or students to quote authors from the West alone. Same goes for the East and other geo-political zones in Nigeria. We must ensure the maximum use of Wide Area Network WAN as well as Local Area Network and ultimately ensure we do not have a circle liberation movement in our academia (Adedjeji, 2004). If we fail to know what others are researching on, we cannot make progress and collaborative research which is in vogue now will be in jeopardy.

African music nay Nigerian music is fraught with homogeneous practices. It is the nomenclature or taxonomy that often changes. This is as a result of homogeneity in environmental resources. In Nigeria for instance, we have the tropical rain forest, the Sahel savannah, the grassland, and the semi-arid regions of the North. Issues that affect one tribe in a region, affect other tribes within the same geographical zone, so write ups and references in music must not be compartmentalized. The growth in the music academia must be all encompassing. Reviewers of academic papers for publications assessment for promotions must subject papers to proper scrutiny to ascertain the literature base of the researcher under investigation. If we fail to do so, not only will the depth of our researches

wane, budding musicians will find basic Joint Admission and Matriculation Board Examinations (JAMB) questions difficult to comprehend and answer.

Employment Procedures for Music Scholars

Education is all about shaping our thoughts for the better, equipping the younger generations for a better future and to be free from superstition occasioned by ignorance. We must therefore look seriously on the issue of the employment procedure or processes at all levels of music learning. This process must actually start with the caliber of graduates we produce in our institutions; such that degrees must not be awarded on sympathy grounds. Our watch-word should be guided by asking ourselves if we can conveniently place our own child or ward under the tutelage of that student we are graduating with a poor quality grade and feel safe that our child would make progress in learning. If our answer is in the negative, we need to do a self-appraisal of our actions. Objectivity must override emotions. The former Governor of Anambra state, Mr. Peter Obi stated inter- alia: "the society we abuse today will take revenge on our children tomorrow".

The first generation of music educators in Nigeria has made more impacts than hundreds of graduates being churned out from our various Universities, Colleges of Education and Polytechnics. Imagine a scenario where a student waltzes his/her way through a system, such a person may be well connected with the political class and take plum jobs ahead of their more qualified peer and our children and the society are at the receiving end. Kodaly in Onwuekwe (2015) asserted that:

It is much more who is the music teacher than the Director of the Opera House in Budapest---.for a poor Director fails once but a poor teacher keeps on failing for thirty years killing the love of music in thirty batches of children.

Vice chancellors, Provosts and those at the top echelon in Ministry of Education must consult relevant authorities before employing people and on the other hand, those that are being consulted must be honest in our recommendations. Square pegs in square holes, round pegs in round holes!

Emergence of Cultural and Creative Arts as a Subject

We are of a strong opinion that the evolvement of cultural and creative arts as a subject is as a result of the non-performance of the majority of our music teachers at the Secondary School level. It is on record that before its emergence, it is only a negligible percentage of candidates who apply through JAMB for University entrance to study music sat for music at the WASC or NECO levels.

At the University now, we do more teaching than lecturing. The remedial programmes like Diploma have now been scrapped from the Universities. Professional music associations like Conference of Music Educators in Nigeria (COMEN), and Association of Nigerian Musicologists (ANIM) must invite people from the ministry to attend our conferences. Communiqué must be issued at the end of our conferences so our yearnings will be heard. Teachers at the secondary schools must wake up. Even the marginalized allotment to music in the present curriculum is largely unattended to. Teachers must squeeze out time for rehearsals outside official hours to make themselves and their subjects relevant.

We must not be content with the teaching of lines and spaces alone and forget the creative outlet that will engender the love of music in the young ones. We were in a secondary school in the course of this research where the Music Teacher taught civic education on the pretext that the kids were not interested in music studies, by the time we orchestrated a simple tune with the resources on ground, music became the love of all students and today the school has a functional orchestra.

Dynamism in Curriculum Content

The only permanent thing in life, as the popular saying goes, is change. The formal study of Music in Nigeria came with the colonial masters and as nationalist ideologies grew; indigenization of ideas and curriculum in all spheres of human activities was encouraged within the context of the globalized world and the music academia must not be left behind. In line with the National Policy on Education (FGN, 2004):

There is need for functional education for the promotion of a progressive, united Nigeria; to this end, school programmes need to be relevant, practical and comprehensive; while interest and ability should determine the individual's direction in education (p7).

The content of music courses must change to subjects that will position the students for relevance in present society. Okafor observed that when this idea was first introduced in UNN in 1999; it stirred the bee's hive.

In his *Magnum Opus* "History of Education in Nigeria" Fafunwa (1974) stated the seven cardinal aims of African traditional education as follows:-

- *The development of the child's talent and physical skills*
- *The development of character*
- *Inculcating respect for elders and those in position of authority*
- *The development of intellectual skills*
- *The acquisition of specific vocational training and the development of healthy attitude towards labour*
- *The development of the sense of belonging and the encouragement of active participation in family and community affairs*
- *Understanding as well as appreciating and promoting the cultural heritage of the community at large (p.20).*

Today, popular music is given greater attention and ensemble courses have helped explore the creative instincts in the Nigerian student as well as encourage group cooperation. Indigenous music practices must be encouraged and cultural area studies encouraged because it provides a platform for deeper and greater insight in research. A virile curriculum without an empirical teacher base is of no use. We have to encourage what Lucy Ekwueme (2009) postulated as regards the training and re-training of music teachers. Amongst many others, a modern music curriculum must include bench mark courses in Intellectual Property and Copyright Laws, Entrepreneurial Studies, Music as Art and Science, Music Technology and Popular Music Studies. Nwamara & Onuora-Oguno (2013) and Onuora-Oguno (2014) have made different cases to this effect.

The Art Musician versus the Ecclesiastical Authorities

Most art musicians have their creative outlet through the churches. Serious issues have developed between musicians and the men in white—the clergy. The relation between art musicians and church authorities are in most cases neither mutual nor symbiotic. The musician and the church authorities view each other with mutual suspicion. The musician is called upon at the inception of a church

service when the choir files out and is hurriedly forgotten during entertainment. Similar sour scenarios existed between Archbishop Hieronymous and W. A. Mozart (Kamien,1988).

We had elsewhere enumerated how the ecclesiastical authorities maltreat the band of singers (Onuora-Oguno, 2010:63). The services of musicians are invaluable in the Christendom and should not be taken for a ride. The musician too has a role to live up to his billing, have a good carriage and maintain a cordial relationship with church authorities. The relationship between the two ought to be cordial. The churches provide the platform which most musicians use to showcase their expertise. The musician on the other hand must respect constituted authorities.

Music is a high profile job and the musician occupies the top echelon, either as a composer, organist, or choral director. The aforementioned positions often make one a celebrity of a kind and often times the priests think they are being robbed of the shine, and most times look at the remuneration of musicians with envy akin to the biblical Ahab viewing the Naboth's vineyard from his Orchard. The musician is a special breed and must be accorded his rightful place in the church. We advise art musicians to have an alternative source of livelihood outside the church to avoid the kind of treatment Archbishop Hieronymus meted on Mozart. If you do not, you stand the risk of being short-changed once a substitute is found for you or when a new Pharaoh comes into ascendancy. Musicians must avoid scandal, sexual irresponsibility and must learn to live above board.

Motivational Stampede/Mentorship

As young scholars, we looked up to our seniors. Their wishes were subtle commands and it is no good news if one saw a missed call from any of them. You immediately call back to ascertain why you were called. And once you determine it is not for the wrong reason your blood pressure comes back to normal.

Today our students at various levels flash us on phones from the comfort of their phones to know whether lectures will hold before coming to school. How many Post Graduate students attend conferences? When we were junior fellows in the University, seniors would give you an ultimatum to submit your paper for publication in a journal and you dare not fail yourself! The same man would give you summons of what to do towards an accreditation exercise and give you a time

frame of twenty four hours for a four day job and once he is sure you are on it he relaxes knowing that you will deliver a good job. The short time frame was usually to make sure the job was ready well ahead of time. The days in between was used for corrections in case of any. Such was the state in which we met the lecturing job and as younger fellows we were ready to spend and be spent. Such were the motivational stampede we got from senior colleagues and it has equipped us well for greater responsibilities. Primarily, we were ready to listen and work harder despite all the assignment we were saddled with! You did your teaching job, invigilate exams, rehearse the ensemble groups assigned to you, and take a lead role in performances for the University, sometimes at the expense of the comfort of your home. The maxim was “hard work does not kill;” ironically none of us died from motivational stampede.

Today, students are more concerned with the easy way out. Very few want to be mentored and only a small percentage attend conferences; very few invest in books and journals. Many lift their references from the ones done by the senior colleagues and hardly see the primary source of information. Some do not even have library cards neither have they visited any library. Motivational stampede could be a preparatory ground for success through resilience in professional practice. Instruments were fully restored into the instrument room. The big question now is: Are the present breed of students ready to be mentored or ready to accept the motivational stamped strategy? The answer is like that of the six men of Hindustan who went to see the elephant, the one who touched the animal on the tummy screamed he was like the elephant, the one who touched it by the ear said it looked like the fan, the one who grabbed the tail said it looked like the rope. The one who grabbed the legs said it looked like the tree, at the end all were partly right but all were wrong. Today, post graduate students do not read wide. A friend of mine once fancied himself with writing a beautiful seminar paper but without a reference and was asked by a professor rhetorically “is this an academic paper? Ordinarily, when a sage confronts you with such a question then “herdsmen are in your backyard,” therefore you do the needful.

In this era of globalization, unfortunately, the internet facilities at our disposal are used for To-Go, Whats-App, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc., and not even for reading newspapers and accessing research materials. The good scholar must

have a systematic inquiring attitude. The computer is garbage in garbage out and information passed through it must not be taken as a law.

Lack of Maintenance Culture/Craftsmanship

Most acoustic pianos in our higher Institutions are “distuned”. Millions of money go into its purchases. We know what Heads of Departments suffer to get budgets approved for purchases and care must be taken to cater for the ones purchased. Our instrumental technologists must strive to make their marks in the area of maintenance of equipment. There are virtually no repairers for our stringed and woodwind instruments, yet we have people designated for such duties. It is either they are not so proficient or not given a conducive environment to carry out their responsibilities. In Nnamdi Azikiwe University, we encourage students to understudy craftsmen and construct their own traditional instruments. The art of constructing instruments has become a source of livelihood to many.

Conclusion

In this era of globalization, it is suicidal and an anathema for any dynamic minded music scholar to neglect the issue of computer literacy. It is an age we have found ourselves in and we must key into its many uses to be relevant in the scheme of things. The issue of poor literature base must be dealt with by every scholar having what we propose as a yearly academic retreat. It is a period when a scholar hibernates to read new materials to update his literature base. The attendance to academic conferences must be encouraged. It not only offers an opportunity of fellowship and comradeship but also exposes one to new environment and ideas. Conferences afford opportunities for procurement of resource materials as well.

The hiccups we encounter in organization of conferences could be alleviated by members having a firsthand experience of the Nitty-gritty of hosting conferences. There is a wide gap between theory and practice. We do not learn by staying at home and hosting conferences are not learnt by gleaning books alone. We must be firm but kind in our assessment and production of students because the student of today is the teacher of tomorrow and the key to not only the survival of the academia but in shaping the future generations.

Students at all levels must show the eagerness to learn. Learning could be subjecting yourself to some kind of apprenticeship or a voluntarily servitude in order to reach the Promised Land. Many have done it and they are better today. Dynamism in curriculum must be pursued with dynamic approach. Every musician is encouraged to have an alternative means of livelihood other than the church. Save for the rainy day and have a good investment to back you when you are less active or when your art wanes or becomes unappreciated. Having an alternative income source will also give you some measure of respect especially for those whose survival revolves around the church. If one is a lecturer for instance and serve the church as a choral director, he will earn more respect than when he is seen as an itinerant person akin to the troubadours and trouveres of the ancient France. The leadership of our various professional bodies must make conscious effort to invite key players in Government for our conferences. They initiate and take most policy decisions and most times act in ignorance. Effort must also be made to sensitize the vice chancellors, provosts and rectors of our higher institutions on the need for proper consultation in the employment of music teachers. Communiqué of our conferences must get to the world through the electronic and print media because the issues we raise and discuss are community based.

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