

TRADITIONAL MUSIC AND GLOBAL IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract

This paper discusses traditional music performance in Igbo culture, taking into cognizance the attributes as well as the utilitarian commitments / values of the genre in the socio-cultural disposition of the Igbo. It also looked at the impact of globalization on traditional music performance, and viewed from different perspectives avenues open for its inter-cultural transfer; with particular reference to human applications, technological advancements; and other related or relevant mechanisms.

Introduction

Traditional music performance in Igbo culture is a multi- dimensional discourse bearing in mind the fabrics that make up what is regarded as traditional music in African context. In Agu, (82-83a) three main types of traditional music exist, these include; recreational music, occasional music, and incidental music. According to him, recreational music...constitutes all music that (is) not religiously, ceremoniously or culturally bound. Examples (include) all music organized and performed by the young ones, age-grades or peer groups. They also include music performed by social groups, purely for entertainment and relaxation purposes. Occasional music includes all traditional music linked with the rites and ceremonies like festivals, religious worship, kingship and initiation. They also include all music used for celebrating life-cycle, for example, birth rite, burial rite, marriage and funeral ceremonies. (According to him) occasional music, no doubt, is the most frequently used since different activities in which they are used occur all the year round in ...traditional societies. Incidental music is associated with non-ritual, ceremonial, or cultural activities. They constitute music used for enhancing the successful execution of a project. They are usually introduced to induce commitment and steadfastness to work. Incidental music includes occupational music types, usually referred to as unpremeditated music. Examples include songs sung by blacksmiths, truck pushers, canoe paddlers, labourers cutting grass etc, to aid their various activities and also to serve as motivator. Lullabies are also classified as incidental music.

The discussion on the three arms of traditional music performance above has no doubt given an overview of what traditional music practice in African context stands for. Referring to Nzewi in Ibekwe, (55) as quoted by Idamoyibo “music in Africa is a philosophy of life, a transition of meaning and process of communal living...a process of conducting relationships, coordinating the societal systems, coping with the realities of human existence and probing the supernatural realms or forces”. In the same direction, Ibekwe, (55) avers that, “music in African context is (richly) associated with human activities; it revolves around life rites and other events and matters of the moment that are of interest to the members of a (given) community”. The implication is that music performance in Africa and Igbo in particular is functionally based; it is never performed in isolation. Having talked on three aspects of traditional music performance, it is still pertinent to define some of the key concepts that form the bases of this discussion.

Definition of Terms

Tradition: Literary, tradition means people's way of life, a laid down rules, laws and principles which a given culture area is meant to observe or obey in their day to day activities. *Longman dictionary of contemporary English* (1763) defines tradition as "a belief, custom; or way of doing something that has existed for a long time". *The New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of English Language* (1330) extended it by saying that tradition means, "the transmission of knowledge, opinions, doctrines, customs, practices, etc., from generation to generation, originally by word of mouth and by example". Tradition has a lot of impacts on the people's socio-cultural life and any society that is not guided by tradition lacks generational proficiency and is devoid of cultural directives.

Traditional Music: Agu, (80b) defines traditional music as; "the folk music of a people which evolves as a corporate communal experience. It has been handed down from generation to generation and continues expanding and enriching its resources as it evolves". He further says that, "traditional music which is the indigenous music of the people ... forms an integral part of their way of life". It could therefore be said that traditional music means practical application or demonstration of people's tradition. These are showcased in their song texts, costumes, instruments and style of dance. No traditional music operates outside its cultural stipulations, even in the wake of external manipulations; it does not entirely relinquish its identity. This argument does not dismiss the existence of contemporary music genre which, Agu, (82b) defines as, "a new music genre that has a completely new cultural orientation which is not, in any way, committed to the ideals of the traditional types like the intrinsic socio-political values and services, religious inclinations and functional ethos of the traditional types," In other words, he maintains that, "the contemporary music types, though derived from the traditional idiom, have no attachment to the tradition of the people and serve no purpose in the realization of their cultural life".

Globalization: The term globalization has no single definition; there are as many definitions as there are a number of scholars operating within various domains of human endeavours. Defining globalization from cultural point of view where traditional music finds its location, it implies, creating, integrating, interpreting, extending, and exposing the traditional music across borders, to allow intercultural and cross cultural relationships. Uto-Ezeajugh, (205) infers that, "cultural practices (which traditional music is a part) can be and are actively imposed in places distant from their original site of production". She goes on to say that, "the process of globalization of culture is complex and varied in their forms and in their relationship between producers and receivers". (205) In essence, globalization in this capacity is the process of "selling and buying" traditional music to or from different countries; or process of making traditional music spread worldwide. Similarly, Olusanya, in Ajawole (223), remarks that, "globalization implies worldwide movement from local to universal socio-economic system aimed at the unification of the world market". Given the above submissions, one can then make bold to assert that globalization involves a symbiotic process of give and take in different areas of human operations.

Impact of Globalization on Traditional Music

Globalization has both good and bad sides. According to Ibekwe,

it encourages interdependency and interconnectedness among nations... ushers in new forms of technology, economy, politics, knowledge, value system and so on which may or may not be promptly and easily embraced by people. Most often, the development is initially seen as a threat to people's existing culture. (Therefore) peoples, races or nations react differently to the effects and influences of globalization based on their level of "understanding" and adaptability. (395)

In the area of African traditional music, there is some forms of shading and reshaping of some aspects of musical originality through the introduction of external elements. In some cases, the mood and occasion of performances are no more given prominence due to the fact that such music is considered for commercial rather than cultural purpose. At times some exotic musical instruments that have no cultural significant are integrated, thereby removing the original traditional flavor of the music. The implication is that most traditional music is now packaged in foreign mold thereby reducing the originality and quality of the genre. The worst and most dreadful situation is that the attitude of our youths towards traditional music is at zero degree. They prefer exotic brands with synthetic buzzing sounds that signify nothing to traditional music that carry the norms, ethics and morals of the people. Traditional music performances select costumes that are culture expressive and which aesthetically conform to the situation of performance, but the in thing now is a choice based on stage demand. On the stage one needs to appear flashy to boost and emphasize stage light and colours but such emphasis has no place in traditional music performance. The use of stage in place of arena is a borrowed tradition, all these do not imply that globalization has no contribution to the growth of traditional music; adaptation to the use of technological appliances provides the greatest advantages to the improvement of traditional music.

Technology: *The New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of English Language (1288)* in its second definition sees technology as, "the application of science to the arts". This implies technical advancement and improvement in the way of doing things to achieve satisfactory or rather better result, which cuts across all spheres of human life. Technological awareness has made the world to seem so small. In her discussion on the impact of technology, Ibekwe, (395) has this to say,

the outburst of technology has brought in new dimension in teaching and learning especially in cultural education. It has open wide the door of information to all and sundry. Through the internet, information about people's culture, history, economy, politics, musical styles and other ethical issues can be made available, cultural education is no more exclusive or within the bounds of parents, siblings, peer groups, elders etc.

Estela C. Matiano in Ibekwe, (395) decries this deplorable situation, by identifying three prominent problems associated with technological explosion, especially in the use of cyberspace, which include "lack of privacy, adverse impact on children's lives and plagiarism". On the other

hand, technology has been of immense value to the music industry. The following are some of the advantages of technology to the propagation of traditional music and music in general.

Use of Radios and Televisions: The world has gone so advanced that in almost every home, you have either radio or television or both. With these gadgets, one can listen, watch, and enjoy any type of music one wishes to at any time. Be it local, national or international program. In the market, one is exposed to varieties of discs that play any type of music one wishes to listen to.

Recording Studios: With the availability of many recording studios, people now record their performances for other people to enjoy. The recorded works are sold to different places. By this, it now serves as an avenue for making money as well as spreading the art. In the television the recorded works are being displayed and people watch them. This recording facility provides a very good means of preservation because the moment a work is recorded; it is documented, and can be retrieved any time it is needed.

Use of Computers: This has made the works of many composers easier, even the rhythmic complexity of traditional music which has been a very worrisome experience to many transcribers can now be handled with ease. In fact most of the orally transmitted music can now be transcribed into notations so easily. And once music is notated, any literate musician can interpret it. It will no longer be confined to local consumption.

Researches and Documentations: Ethnographers and anthropologists have taken giant strides in the study of man's physical, social, material and cultural existence. Ethnomusicologists on their own part have excelled in the area of ethnic music. They conduct researches in different cultures, including their music, with the help of modern facilities, they can tape or record their works for documentation; they can video tape as well as take pictures and other relevant information necessary for the job. After which, they analyze their findings and publish their works for people's consumption. From the works of these researchers, people are able to read about the culture of a particular area, also about the music of different cultures of the world. The type of music one hears today, most of them are hybrids of intra cum intercultural transfer. Globalization would have not been so easily realized or achieved if technology were not involved.

Other Avenues to Achieve Globalization

Competitions: Musical activities should be encouraged right from home up to village level, for instance, young ones should be acculturated into the musical activities prevalent in their areas. Cultural weeks should be mapped out where competitions on various cultural activities are organized; from there both the young and old would seriously be involved in the process of teaching and learning. By so doing they create a unifying ground that would go a long way in promoting life in the villages and disallow culture decay, thereby making the young ones to appreciate the aesthetic values of their culture. Prizes should be awarded for excellent performances. This practice should be extended to town level, where the best performers at different village levels would converge in the same manner of competition, from town to local government level, state and national levels. At this higher level, people from different places

even from different countries of the world should also be invited. All these activities will help immensely in promoting our traditional music and making it to be known to the outside world.

Teaching and Learning: In almost all the primary and secondary schools in the country; music is not accorded any better position in the school time table, normally the time allotted to music lesson is last periods when the learners are almost exhausted with the day's activities. When eventually, the music is taught, the emphasis is mostly on the western music which is not familiar to the learners, and this become a problem, because the learners' interest is not put into consideration. Even in the tertiary institutions, the few students who offer music courses are faced with the same problem of foreign culture. Faced with these challenges in our school system; it becomes most pertinent that the school curriculum be over-hauled both at primary, secondary and tertiary level; with our traditional music occupying its prime position. So that the students carry whatever they must have learnt from their villages to the school; by so doing, culture is sustained and the principle of learning from known to unknown will make teaching and learning more meaningful. If traditional music is taught in schools and universities, the possibility of making it spread to different parts of other world cultures becomes imminent. There should also be a proper re-orientation for both parents and students in order to erase the already formed impressions that the study of music is for never do wells'.

Festival of Arts and Culture: This is a very good avenue for featuring traditional music and other arts. It is a festival which is organized at both state and national levels. According to Okafor, (396) "Traditional festivals either in themselves or through some of their features are effective agencies of mobilization". This of course entails that festivals encourage movement of people. The venue of the festival serves as a tourist square where people of different timber and caliber, indigenes and foreigners converge to be entertained. Okafor, (393) refers to festival as "tourism promoter". In this festival, communities, states and the nations come out with the best of their cultures, traditional music inclusive. People are entertained; they interacted, exchanged cultural ideas and enriched their experiences. The 1977 FESTAC held at Lagos – Nigeria was a very good example where people of different cultures gather in such a cultural fiesta.

Socio-cultural Implications of Traditional Music

Having journeyed so far, it is necessary and pertinent to look at some of the attributes as well as the utilitarian commitments or values of traditional music in our society. Being an entertainment medium, traditional music has all it takes to make people feel at ease, become happy and momentarily forget the troubles and worries of life. No social gathering is meaningful in any society without one form of musical activity or the other. This implies that music has the capability of giving full satisfaction to people amidst all odds. Music has no enemy; it is universally appreciated whether traditional or foreign. Roger Kamien (76) quoted Shakespeare in *Merchant of Venice* thus-"the man that hath no music in himself, nor is not mov'd with concord of sweet sounds, is fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils". Music draws peoples from all walks of life together either as performers or as spectators. Adesokan (1) says; "In traditional Yoruba societies, many social events attract varying degrees of musical involvement where members of the community share a satisfying musical experiences".

Traditional Music has both communicative and expressive powers: Through body movements, gestures and signs; information are disseminated. The type of instruments, its designs and the costumes, all have some messages to give about its culture. For instance, “The *Ikor* (giant slit drum) was, in many Igbo areas, the principal medium of tonal telegraph”. (Okafor,179) It transfers as well as conveys cultural message of a particular area. It creates a very fertile avenue for cultural stability and continuity. All the elements that make up a culture of a particular area are complete in their traditional music; and that conforms to the observation that, “one method of finding out about the culture of a people is to examine how they conceptualize their music” (Akpabot, 91). Therefore, this traditional music as a culture carrier, evolve from generation to generation through acculturation and enculturation. By so doing, cultural sustenance, continuity and stability are ensured.

In many African cultures musical instruments are constructed tonally. That is why they are able to speak the language of their owners; the people recognize and understand them. It is very common and easy to identify or associate a particular instrument to a particular culture through its sound. Even the way people dance has much to tell about their culture. For instance, people in the riverside areas make swaying or fish-like movements; the Igbo dance more vigorously and acrobatically. The Hausa leap and dramatize as they dance while The Yoruba bend so low, touching or holding the tip of their clothes as they dance. In worship and religion, Agu (51) infers that, “Music is unquestionably the dominant feature of Igbo traditional worship. Each deity or spirit has its special music with which it is addressed during invocation; such music depicts the character and probably the status of the god”. Traditionally, music can never be divorced from worship as it was and still the medium through which the worshippers communicate with their gods either in a way of supplication, invocation or dedication. By singing people’s spiritual states are touched emotionally. Also by playing some instruments that are believed to have some divine powers, worshippers are drowned into a deep psychological trance. Even in the Christian Churches, the influence of the westerners notwithstanding; traditional texts are still part of the lyrics of worship. Some of the traditional musical instruments, such as xylophones; clapperless bells of differences sizes, slit wooden drums, woodblocks; skin drums in form of bongo drums and so on, are still functional. All these help to arouse the spirits of the worshippers, thereby creating enabling environment for full participation.

Traditional Music is Contextual and functional phenomenon. In every activity of man, music is inevitable. When a child is born into a family, it is music that ushers in the child into the world. During naming and outing ceremonies music is there. At marriages, music is what makes the occasion entertaining and jubilant. Funeral songs, dirges, dances are at their best during funeral ceremonies to condole the bereaved and also to provide entertainment. At special occasions or activities such as wars, work, football matches; moon-light games; initiations, coronations; cultic and esoteric activities, recreation, politics and so on, music is the pivot on which all these activities rotate. It could rightly be said that every social event has a suitable music attached to it which can be classified based on the social uses; values, institutions or concepts. According to Nzewi, (19) “The classification of a piece or type of music is primarily in terms of social institutions or concepts which gave it origin and with which it is thereafter associated, and from which the performing group, in some cases derive its name”. That is the reason, why we hear such names as *egwu ozo*, *egwu manwu*; *egwu onwa*, *egwu nwa*, *Igba-eze*; *egwu agha*, *egwu olu*

and so on in Igbo context. Traditional Music has a well guided and recommended reformative power: Individual or societal evils are condemned through music while noble ideas are upheld or encouraged. For example in a community where there are instances of ill behaviour among men and women such as drunkenness, stealing; sexual promiscuity, diabolic killings and so on, the most suitable and safest avenue to send messages across to those erring members of such community is through music. Even in governance, songs of satire serve as a deterrent to a bad government or bad policy. As a matter of fact; traditional music should not be neglected for any reason.

However, having identified to some extent, some of the attributes as well as the intrinsic values inherent in traditional music, the question of how to make our traditional music known to the world is a task for every culture owner. In this instance, let's draw some illustrations from the commercial point of view. If a firm wants to market its products, it will first of all appreciate the products, mount promotion bill-boards at strategic positions; compose jingles to create awareness which indirectly would go a long way in boosting the image and quality of the products. In the process the customers will be stirred to have interest and willingness to buy. In the same vein, if our traditional music is to receive world's acceptance, we should be proud of our culture, defend it, promote it, propagate and above all advertize it. Otherwise, if you do not say I am, nobody knows you are.

Conclusion

In this paper issues bordering on traditional music, technology and globalization were discussed. Traditional music has immense social and cultural values which should not be allowed to go into extinction. In view of this, there is need for its sustenance, and this could only be achieved through continuous and active participation. Massive awareness should be created through the inclusion of cultural education in schools. Also through the utilization of technological equipment which also is the bedrock or gate-way to globalization our traditional music will be spread to other cultures of the world.

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