African Culture in Art Music Performance Ethics: The True Position in Nigeria

By

Okoro, Justice Chukwudi
Department of Music
Delta State University, Abraka Delta State, Nigeria

Abstract

This paper is characterized by situation reports on the true positions of African art music practitioners 'performance ethics in Nigeria. It surveys to a large extent, what obtains in the musical repertory of these giants of African music in their individual efforts to realize idiosyncratic musical objectives. In most music traditions for instance, one particular chord rarely feature consistently throughout the musical section. However, this remark showcases an extra-ordinary footing in Nigeria musicianship, which evidently nullifies the claim. The reason is that chord is a Western musical concept. Nigerian musicologists of Africa, irrespective of their level of musical literacy do not as a rule express their African pianism by strictly manipulating linquaphone, xylophone and all other multiple key instruments chordially as the Europeans do on their instruments with discret boundaries. Nevertheless, in an explanatory note, this paper is of the view that the use of convincing music-based technical facts is a matter of great challenge, and the solution to buckle up and tackle it in the interest of music par excellence is personally proffered in this scholarly work, if we must forge ahead in musical right direction. Conclusively, the monograph exceptionally speaks volumes for who are professionally, musicians of no mean repute in Nigerian context. It discloses the principles of musical practices that prevail among them; evaluates the onus of scoring and arranging, putting into consideration chordal relationship in Western notation perspective. It is observed that while the musically lettered resort to music-related white —cola jobs, their mediocre musician counterparts, who commonly practice music as though by instinct, ironically perform exclusively to entertain mammoth crowd of non prepared audience. The reasons for all these are not far fetched; they are meticulously previewed before drawing conclusion on this report.

Keywords: Art Music - Cultural Music - Performance Ethics - Vocals/vocalism – Instrumentation

Introduction

Art Music

"Art music" says Ferris [1985:366] "presented a tremendous challenge to listeners, requiring more effort, concentration, and experience" *Adedeji [2006:1] observes that in the area of art music composition, "the textual contents of most African music repertories with Nigeria as an example address cultural axiom, religious beliefs and messages, love and few didactic topics."* The propagation and promotion of exotic music is attributed to different Nigerian social groups' interaction with city life where Europeans and Islamic music galore abound. The said peoples from diverse calls or walks of life and social environment constitute the non active participants [audience] to the classical music rendition. Undeniably, the advent of Nigerian music hybridization saw drastic change in musical creativity akin to European ideas of musical appreciation styled "aesthetics." Nigerian contemporary musical idioms emerged and advanced under colonial master's era. They championed the actualization of multi-cultural urbanization, modernization in communication system through documentary media coupled with the introduction of Western [formal] education, a trend in scholarship to which a few Nigerian music scholars were beneficiaries.

May I opine that the ecclisia and academic premises were remarkably the breading ground for effecting this developmental change in music discipline? In art music is therefore, witnessed the birth of a new world of sound expressed by talented artistes. This is better explicated by Machlis and Forney [199 1:619], who while referring to art music affirm: *"... passing through a period of violent experimentation with new media, new materials, and new techniques, Artistes are freeing themselves from every vestige of the past in order to explore new means of thought and feeling"* they conclude. It specially considers the amelioration of indigenous musical heritage with emphasis on musical idioms. Regrettably Nigerian art music research project is facing dynamic influence on her musical culture, which has been misconstrued by the musically prejudiced, who blame it entirely on music acculturation factor. All said and done, Idolor [2001: 135] hereby concludes that: Art music remains *"A literary approach to the study of contemplative music which conlai features of.4frican traditional music. Considering the approach to its study, the educational system is seen to be a dominant of its advancement"*

Cultural Music

Culture gives music its definition. "Music is, of course, a cultural expression and every culture decides for itself what is music or not. One social characteristics of folk music is that it is functional- integral with life and the rhythms of life" [Blacking 1976:186]. In the same vein Clark [1922:153] argues, "music is a stable cultural trait and therefore, provides a useful bases for determining the diffusion of other cultural traits". Throwing more light

to this, Akpabot [1986:88] affirms: "Culture as we know, embraces many aspects of human existence, but perhaps in no better way is it expressed than in music and the arts". "One method of finding out about the culture of a people is to examine how they conceptualize their music" [9]. This is because musical culture affects our thought, feelings and regulates the lives of the people. This topical issue leaves much to be desired if not unfolded and appreciated under two distinct perspectives — sacred and mundance [spiritual and circular] music. Art musicians present these facets of music to a prepared audience beyond music performed for its own sake purpose. Assorted social events are relevant to such musical renditions for the fulfillment or accomplishment of social obligations. Examples are the 'ecclisia' and shrine rituals' as well as 'social fete' ceremonial observances. NB, An art musician delivering unwholesome musical keynote address, distributing ill-conceived written musical theories, singing or playing a musical instrument with selfish interest all to the detriment of the innocent music lovers, has by so-doing derailed or departed from the truth enshrined 'in the biblical injunction. Such an art musician is by implication considered to have modernized 'shrine ritual music', which is nothing to —write-home about. The reason is that Divine ordinances question all that mankind does, says or ruminates about.

This study is thought- provoking and bears eloquent testimony to Nigerian cultural music without bias. That a tradition of Nigerian cultural art music is objectively created through a fusion of European and African literary music elements is open to question, misleading, mere assumption and hasty conclusion. To this end, suffice it to emphasize that such music hybridization is not yet cultural art music-specific till it has been documented through the print and other relevant media for scholarship and research purposes. Going by Akpabot's definition, *"Traditional (cultural) music in its setting is not written down. In conception and performance, it is an oral tradition handed down from generation to generation and jealously preserved by those who have come to be known as master musicians" (62)*. In another development, the justification of art music in Nigeria (an integral part of African culture), based on written composition has to be in tandem with the laid down principles of compositional convention. In this case, the composer should be "compos mentis" i.e. sound in mind perfectly rational. This is because, in art music, *"a great deal of attention is given to the musical, technical or artistic interest of the piece as a focus of aesthetic enjoyment"* (Omojola, 1995:6). Besides, performance —compositions and staged musical renditions are beyond reasonable doubt aptly inclusive in the definition with the resolve that absolute performance ethics is observed to the letter. *"Music is all about human feelings and every human art is ultimately human... Creates a powerful and effective medium for cultural communication... Music plays its well — known role of reaching human hearts. It is the be ginning and the basis for social integration in a cultural society"* (Okafor, 2004:2).

Nigerian Art Musical Performance

The out set of Nigerian Art music under the auspices of European music elite bore little fruit in achieving its goal. It suffered unconducive local environment for research and studies; the influence of European mercenary and propaganda which frustrated their Nigerian host politically and economically; spirit of cultural heritage was not encouraged too. A product of this music revival effort in the church is hymnody. The strategic location of Lagos urban as a coastal city, with human welfare goods and services, brought about multi-cultural practices and these grossly spoke volumes for diminished Nigerian cultural art music. At this juncture, different social groups expressed their "Nigerianness" with emotion of imported musical idioms. A pocket of ex-slaves, the Saros were the brain behind the growth of Nigerian-based European concert art music. This they acquired in schools and churches during slavery, while sojourning in diaspora. In Nigeria, Lagos city offered them venue and audience. Indeed *"Works can transcend boundaries when they satisfy the canon of the repertoire of concert music or have particular features that arouse interest outside their boundaries"* (Nketia, 2004:28). The early churches and their mission schools played prominent roles as organs of instituting art musicianship in Nigeria. These strong forces saw the rise to stardom of pioneer musicologists of both classical and indigenous music scholarship.

The then concert halls featured Western-oriented music repertories irrespective of the African nativity of the performance artistes. The communiqué for realizing this objective involved live stage performance, documentaries and print media. Gate fees (where applicable) were unaffordable by the majority, who wished to grace the occasion, while electric light for the night "show" was exclusively available in metropolis. This paper is of the view that Nigerian traditional music (precisely Yoruba), beas the functional nomenclature of the ensemble or orchestra irrespective of the constituent musical sound effect. However, at times the dominant instrument's onomatopoeia can determine the music type. Music specialists exist e.g. the Yoruba "Ayan families". Musicians can eke out a living through other means than musical vocation. The Yoruba musical culture unlike the Igbo's remained uncompromising despite the European music prevalence in their circumjacent cities. This was due to tolerance and consensual solidarity for domestic culture by non 'Saro' Yoruba. With time Nigerian art music finally emanated, though with some western musical touch that predominantly endured for a while. "Cultural nationalism" eventually led to "the earliest use of Nigerian music within the Christian church". This was championed by the Aladura and the Cherubim and Seraphim churches, which originated in Western Nigeria.

Regrettably, Nigerian traditional "music in the new African churches" faced total criticism consequent upon ill impression associated with it. This ugly development was however, successfully challenged by Nigerian traditional music school of thought. The opposition led to the reintroduction of African musical heritage into the eccliastical service, which subsequently dwindled congregational population. In this respect, music propaganda manifested as the order of the day in church musical affairs. With time thereafter, the growth of Nigerian contemporary art music in culture forged ahead.

> *Contemporary musical practice in Africa, inspite of acculturation and the incorporation of external influences has tended to maintain the same predominance of group and vocal activity. The importance of choral music cannot therefore be overemphasized in contemporary African (music) practice... contemporary African composers have written choral works, the introduction of African features (in them) merely gives the work a special effect by which it may be termed African (music)* (Ekwuieme, 16-17).

Adept musicians of Nigerian church music positively influenced many lives in the field of musicianship, with adequate evidence of their impacts recorded in their respective generation churches. To buttress the point, Ekundayo Philips, for instance, saw to the introduction of indigenous music in the church and trained many renowned music scholars. These achievements are appraised by composers and artistes as footprints on the sand of time. His homophonic hymnopdy in G major, common time, titled — EMI O GBE OJU MI SOKE WONNI for four voices, is introduced in three score systems. He solely contributed to Nigerian contemporary church art music by using melodic reflection of lyrics with into national contour and pentatonic melodies modified to European — like diatonic chords. In summation, the Yoruba music is characterized by pentatonic scale, scanty harmony and strange notes given the performer's/composer's emotion or for the sake of embellishment. The presence of skipped cadential semitones; parallel singing giving rise to descant, and unisonous singing is conditioned by European musical influence. All these features yielded stylistic bases for their church music.

The use strictly made of Yoruba — derived rhythmic language and familiar chord structures within an unconventional harmonic context speaks volumes for this sub-topic. In Hausa tribal community, besides music for worship in the scheme of socio-cultural affairs, the people's musical enterprise is political —minded too. It projects their Islamic faith and pledges loyalty to their royal palace nobles, rulership and very important guests. During musical entertainment and solidarity gestures, reciprocity in terms of people-oriented leadership is ensured by the royal fathers to their respective subjects; 'Rok on

fada' music is a case study. 'Bori' possession music is equally identified as Hausa music — typical of their cultural background — employed in obeisance to demi-gods. Islamic influence could not obliterate this practice, thus, it is still in vogue. The Igbo ethnic group of Southeastern Nigeria is distinguished from other sister tribes extra-musically. Music for fellow feeling and promotion of culture in all its ramifications is inevitably prevalent. Wrestling music (Egwu mgba), occupational music and socio-religious music utility are examples to buttress the points. The Igbo hymnody championed by Harcourt —Whyte is of homophonic texture based on protestant hymnals. His works encompass use of parallel sixths, thirds and pendular progression of the texts. Unsophisticated musical elements abound, including harmonic vocabulary affecting the primary chords void of modulations. Evidences to these observations are: use of unconventional cadential formulae, consecutive fifths, plagal cadence, and vocal leadings with unusual progressions, unprepared and unresolved sevenths. His works are mostly chorale and are notated by A.K. Achinivu, who uses variations4to place the songs outside the scope of a strophic form. But the Igbo vocal music in traditional setting is marked with contrapuntal movement, while their protestant hymns harmonic vocabulary is vertical in conception. Their musical forms develop structures with irregular phrasing. Thus the stylistic core of Nigerian church music is shaped by their traditional musical elements, including language inflections and those drawn from European music.

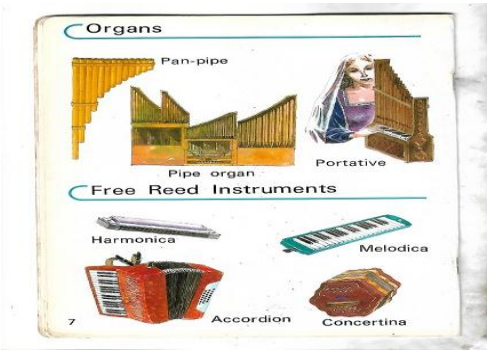
This paper equally epitomizes the invaluableness of highlife music — being of the view that by all implications it originated in Africa-continent venue-wise, and has remained a step in the right direction. Evidences abound to prove that indeed, highlife music commenced as an inter-racial musical interaction among African colonies, South of Sahara: a situation that somewhat shaped Nigerian milieu. This musical genre is wide spread in Yoruba due to much dance music in their socio-cultural festivals. It equally gave rise to imitation of European pop dance forms without affecting socio musical function. Rendition of musical piece accompanied with relevant domestic membranophone of African origin and classical musical instruments characterize highlife band. The music typifies class distinction and expresses spirit of Nationalism? The unanimous opinion that the church was mostly a stepping stone for some of the then highlife music practitioners is a mailer of fact. Bright Chimezie, the band leader of Zigma justifies this claim. With this development, African drums of West Indis origin (West Indis drums imported to Africa) were employed in highlife, which as at then was urban limited in its performance. That highlife manifests both European and African musical cultures is a forgone conclusion. Europe influenced African melodies in highlife, and convincingly, this logical remark is informed by much use of English text by the vocalists. Musical scores that marvelously exemplify the tune of Nigerian highlife music can be deduced from Nigeria Art Music by

Omojola Bode (Ex. 8E bars 122, 136). Again, more pronounced in this issues are alternations of musical systems and descriptive passages of polyrhythmic texture and the model harmonic rhythm. These typify the benefit of the doubt that their manifestations in the people's music are no fables.

Instrumentation

The two musical meanings of instrumentation are both contextually applied here. [1] "The properties and capabilities of individual instruments". [2] "The particular combination of instruments employed in any piece" (Randel, 1986:397). The instrumental context of performance in Nigerian music traditional selling encompasses the musical relevance and significance of Western piano styled pianism in African piano music rendition. The profound qualities in the scheme of piano music making, and art musicians famous in such musical impacts in Nigerian musical situation is a given. When Omojola (1995:81) diagrammatically and theoretically devoted Euba's SCENE FROM TRADITIONAL LIFE to elucidate motive development, the available scores were evidently analysed with focus on the generation of pitch elements in the piece, which include limitation of notes in the row juxtaposed with those whose pitches are not generated from the row. Here, we understand that the row serves as an occasional point of reference, while deviation from I generates melodic variety for the sake of balancing the limited pre-composed rhythmic phrases. The structural features of the musical rendition are concluded under four conspicuous headings with musical facts and figures presented beyond reasonable doubt. Structural reversal of the composite phonic effect is practically common in African pianism and this is meticulously observed without altering the "Nigerianness" in the said musical piece.

> *Of the assorted musical instruments in our reach, much expertise is exhibited in playing indigenous ones capable of imitating the people's tonal inflexion to a reasonable degree, taking cognizance of the resultant acoustic properties that form tonality of the sounding body... These very instruments are thus, highly restricted to remarkable events* (Okoro, 2006:2).





Some Instruments for Musically Generated Sounds across the Globe

An expository state of orchestral composition in Nigeria is a mailer of special attention. Typical of this is contrasting movement, metric variations with divergent notes value. Yoruba instrumental music for instance, manifests choreographic-like melorhythmic pattern. Rhapsodic thematic ideas, off-beat influence of modality, rhythmic and modal melody within which given notes stand out with structurally noticeable manifestation of harmonic support. The harmonic-tonal focus is both restrained and scanty consequent upon linear, cross-rhythmic use of triadic notes. Chromatic language is aesthetically applied in full swing. Omojola (93) keenly acknowledged that even flute, an aerophone instrument contributes to the augumented composite rhythmic activity of the orchestra. The application of parallel homophony involves diverse treatment of pentatonic material. The developmental sections of thematic ideas are invariably, contrapuntally presented abreast with subsidiary notes, hemiola in character. Conventionally, instrumental organization is anticipatory subject to other musical logistics. As a rule, the instrumental performance/composition in its continuity, formally features the modification of theme. This situation report is amplified by Omojola (98). The reposed and the leading melodic notes interrelationship to the scale, mode and chordal progression constitute a mark of identity in Nigerian musical practice.

A motival development in rando form by dint of its episode appends thematic unity to different movements of a piece. In a symphonic orchestra, the third movement is somewhat free in both form and outline as a result of its strict conventional format. To recall the principal theme with extensively dominant anticipation entails cautions adjustment of a three-pitch tonic triad, especially in Yoruba recitative-like poems. Ritual songs with soft tempo, homophonic chords, ambiguity in episodic tone tonal harmony (conditioned by the modal Structure), and chordal treatment of seven degree of the scale are expertly exploited in a bid to achieve well defined movement. What is considered as a resolution movement with unparallel harmonic clarity is the hallmark of the conclusive

section of the instrumental work. This unique movement is realized and represented in rhapsody and key sequences. Melodic ideas with formal and rhythmic procedures as well as lack of substantial middle sectional development (save for intermittent occurrence of reinterpreted highlife melodic tune) abound. Also, peculiar to this section of musical genre are simple diatonic chords and homophonic texture with derivatives of choreographic motivating features therein. Ideally, an embodiment of first movement theme is expressively highlighted in it too. Counterpoints and chromatic harmonies identify its transitional sections. Rapid tempo coupled with much textual density, extended series of motifs, tonal shifts, variations in bar limitations with comparable proportion of factors, sudden and striking emergence of climatic passage and syncopated highlife tune are evidently noticeable. Above all, melodic punctuation involving sequential minor 7ths, first applied as ordinary decorations but later function as tone language is extensively used.

Vocals and Vocalism in Nigeria Musical Practices

According to Omibiyi-Obidike (2001:115),

> *African music serves as means of identity, differentiating it from the music of other cultures. They are manifested in performance techniques and individuals styles-vocal and instrumental — voice texture, choice and use of traditional repertoire, internal structure, vocal intonation, aesthetics of musical performance and so forth ".*

Linguistics demands and musical considerations in part-songs draw attention to challenges facing Nigerian composers over the use of tonal language such as ours, and misconception of African music harmonic parallelism. This misguided notion calls for redress with such suggestive remarks as the use of some compositional styles, conception of part —songs vis-à-vis the pre-compositional demand of tonal languages. This opinion is further amplified in Omojola (110) score exemplary bars. The last paragraph of the aforesaid page epitomizes the analogical review of the part-songs musical resolution from the author's (narrator's) perspective. The structural analysis of the first song yields reciprocative result in terms of individual musical influence prevalent therein.

Subsequent explanations gathered from the passage express how the linguistic demands of the text are shaped in accordance with the network of the musical framework. Singers most often display polytonal feature with supporting speech rhythm derived from the onomatopoeic lyric repeated incessantly to produce ostinato rhythmic phrase. Some songs are thus, characterized by mutual relation between language and musical factor. Here, piano plays complementary role as the need arises to substitute language deficiency — rhythmic accompaniment with stress on vocal part phrases; articulation of harmonic tonal

goals to supplement vocal parts incapacity. Its part writing is determined by the textual contour requisites; the upper and lower voices co-exist in parallel motion with autonomous ostinato techniques. A semi-hocket technique ensues while sustaining interaction between textual inflexion and melodic contour. Exclusive of linerly conceived melodies and anhemitonic pentatonic scale inevitably referred to in this topical context, the rest of jargons prevalent in the vocals are not far-fetched in art musical language, foreign or domestic. Thus, practically expressed in Nigeria songs to create special effects are: fugal part-singing, use of bitonal cadence, antiphonal vocalism, a bar chord cluster and variety of tonal texture reflecting textual contours of harmonic interest.

> *"whatever African music may or may not be, one thing about it is that it communicates... although on the social level communicates with men and women of the society, on the ritualistic and the religious levels, it communicates with the gods and the goddesses of the groups patheon"* (Nketia, 2001:13).

Summary and Conclusion

Idolor, (2005:90) considering African music as an amalgamated general ideas resolves,

> *"it is also pertinent for African to orientate its youths on African music identity through formal and non formal education and the deve1opmen1of media infrastructure in order to resist the repression, at the global level, of the African musical heritage".*

For Art music of Nigeria' to be reckoned with the music practitioners should be positive-minded, draw their attention to musical deficiencies and subsequently proffer solutions to them. Also, since Nigerian cultural art music is geographical location-focused, contextually, it should be concerned with the indigenous music attributes (diluted with music globalization ideology) irrespective of the music makers involved. The projection of Nigerian musical heritage calls for "Cultural Solidarity' and not western "Nationalism". Components of different characters noticeable in Nigerian cultural music scores are — irregular pulse, continual phrasal repetition, strong influence of the row, quasi-improvisational techniques contrasted through variations in accentuation and all other registered idioms. These collectively seem to result in a multi-structural organization.

Improvisational character with steady use of ostinato techniques suitable for choreographic accompaniment; frequent use of referential phrase as a point of focus for other phrases staggered within the bar; improvisatory waiting beats produced from new motivic materials are intermittently resorted to as and when due in the course of the performance —composition. Bars linked to one another are expressively derived from

phrasal intervallic properties united in tandem with tone row relationship. Equally contextually observed are metric inconsistence, contrapuntal texture and lack of systematic approach to pitch derivation versus pre-arranged rhythmic vocabulary. Complex and diversified musical elements abound with less dynamic character. Exceptionally, new distinctive features in motivic correspondences are maintained across the sections, which lead to relatively clear, and discernable sectional functions and delineations. Besides, there exist steady variations with less dynamism.

At this juncture, we emphatically reiterate that unity of purpose and sense of belonging (among pop/art musicians) cannot be dispensed with if we must give true musicianship a pride of place in the scheme of promoting Nigerian music heritage. Furthermore, the establishment of National Institute of Music Academic to be manned by seasoned art musicians for a more focused musical studies, and preservation of scholarly works for research purposes are deemed necessities. Finally, this discourse is rounded off with the summarist's postulation that Nigerian music enculturation should be patronized in all its ramifications, especially in the theory and practice of its idioms. The scope should be original and authentic enough to attract international attention for patronage.

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