

TEACHING AND PREACHING PEACE AND TOGETHERNESS THROUGH MUSIC: THE PERICOMA OKOYE EXAMPLE

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Abstract

Living in peace and harmony among neighbours and community are critical ingredients that propel growth. When people are happy with themselves it transcends to the overall wellbeing, togetherness and progress of the community. Music is a potent unifying factor for the overall wellness of the people. The study aims to expose the importance of music in propagating love, peace and progress of the people through the musical works of Chief Damian Azubuike Okoye, (Pericoma) a traditional music exponent from Arondizuogu. The work is hinged on Johan Galtung's theory of Peace which acknowledges that peace is a relation between two or more parties and that peace is not a property of one person as it takes two to tango. The study adopts the content analysis approach of the qualitative research methodology to critically examine two music albums of Pericoma as case studies. four-man focused group discussants were purposively selected by the researcher to analyze the data. Two albums of the artist were played during our meetings for them to get more acquainted with the lyrics. The albums were later shared to the discussants and we agreed to meet after one week for the analysis to enable them play and listen to the selected portions of the albums. Result of the analysis show that music is a genuine tool for teaching and preaching peace and togetherness. The study recommends the teaching of music in our schools and the use of music for the sensitization of the populace.

Keywords: Teaching, Preaching, Music, Peace, Togetherness, Progress, Love.

Introduction

Music has been part of African traditional life. It is part of our culture. During ceremonies like child birth, initiations, and death, music has always been used to lighten up the occasions.

Daniela Petrušić acknowledges that “While learning, running, exercising, driving, when getting up and going to sleep, during working hours, etc. Music is a social phenomenon that is present everywhere” (138). Music has a lot of strong effect on people who unconsciously recite, nod and in some cases dance to music from loud speakers as they walk along the road. Music is everywhere with us; in our phones, car, train or airplane. In fact, music is part of our everyday life. Apart from being used as a school curriculum, music teaches morals, ethics self-control and the rejection of vices as well as helps in the development of skills. It is a source of people’s livelihood. Sadie (1993) cited by Sunday Nnamani, defined Music as “organized sound”. According to him, a “musical tone is the product of regular vibration in the air and is perceived when an inner part of the listener’s ear is made to vibrate in sympathy” (105). From this definition, it is important to understand that for music to teach, the inner part of the listener’s ear must vibrate in sympathy to the message.

Music plays educational, social, political, economic, cultural, therapeutic roles. As part of our culture, music is intertwined in our religious and cultural activities. Therapeutically, music is used for “the development of social services that helps patients to cope with the social consequences and hardships with which diseases are frequently associated with” (105). Furthermore, Shakespeare in Act1 Scene 1 of “Twelfth Night” said “if music be the food of love play on, give me excess of it surfeiting...1”. Gregory David Roberts further expounded the above quotation when he enthused that” food is music to the body, music is food to the heart” (np www.goodreads.com).

The Greek philosopher, Aristotle understood the usefulness of music to character formation when he submitted that “Music has a power of forming the character and should therefore be introduced into the education of the young” (2). Similarly, Plato also enthused that “Music is a moral law. It gives soul to the universe, wings to the mind, and life to everything... Without music, life would be an error” (2).

The impact music has on people makes it a valuable tool for the dissemination of information and education of the populace. Traditional African music form part of Africa’s cosmology. During important events like child birth, marriages, installation and burial ceremonies, music form one of their focal points. Poornima S. Diwas. admits that “music is the universal language of humanity, the ubiquitous source of entertainment, the agency that transforms our moods, the catapult that raises us to higher emotions and experiences the medium that influence all levels of human existence” (52).

Music carries messages of unity, peace and trust which touch the emotions of the listener to turn from negative thoughts to positive; to do good rather than evil. A peaceful community or society enables the inhabitants to achieve their aim and wishes. Most musical discussions, meetings, teachings and religion are centered on peaceful co-existence and tolerance. Artists, writers, poets and human rights activists have consistently used peace as a major theme in their music, crafts and discussions.

Microsoft Encarta Dictionary defines peace as a lack of noise, disturbance, disagreement or warfare; the absence of violence or other disturbances within a state; freedom from conflict or disagreement among people or groups of people. Etymologically, peace is derived from Pax, a Latin word meaning pact, deal agreement and treaty. Individuals, communities, state or country enter into agreement or deal to stay peaceful and cohabit.

Conflict resolutions are to either forestall violence or broker peace. One of the traditional diplomacy methods to peace and reconciliation is to appeal to the conscience of the people to maintain peace. This is what Chief Damian Azubuike Okoye, (Pericoma) does in his music, teaching and preaching peace as well as appealing to the conscience of his fans to remain peaceful and eschew rancor and violence, hence this study.

Theoretical Framework

The work is hinged on Johan Galtung's theory of Peace which acknowledges that peace is a relationship between two or more parties and that peace is not a property of one person as it takes two to tango. According to Galtung, "the parties may be inside a person, a state or nation, a region or civilization, pulling in different directions". The theory further acknowledges that:

The root of a conflict is always a contradiction, an incompatibility or clash of goals which then easily translates into a class of parties and violent behavior. At any stage in this process negative attitudes may enter - and attitudes, behavior and contradictions then feed into each other in vicious cycles. In the wake of those processes are traumatized parties and actors with festering wounds on body, mind and spirit.

The theory identifies three types of peace, namely positive, indifferent and negative. The negative or disharmonious peace exists where what is bad for one is good for the other. Indifferent peace is a non-relation where both parties do not care about what happens to the other while Positive and harmonious peace exists where what is bad or good for one is bad or good for the other. Ndeche, Okechukwu and Iroye Samuel O, submit that "positive peace is the presence of harmony with the elimination of structures that inhibit human potential and performance" (23).

The above is supported by the conceptual framework of John Lederach developed in association with United States Institute for Peace (USIP) for analyzing conflict transformation-the process of shaping the outcome of potential and actual conflicts. According to him,

Conflict transformation can be conceptualized through a series of lenses: personal, relational, structural, and cultural...The personal refers to the changes affecting an individual's emotional, perceptual, and spiritual conditions. The relational addresses changes in the relationship between two parties, including communications and interactive aspects of conflict. Structural refers to the root causes of the conflict-patterns of changes in the social structure. Finally, the cultural dimension addresses changes in cultural patterns as a result of the conflict and the ways in which culture affects how a conflict is managed (10).

The music of Chief Damian Azubike Nwankwo Okoye popularly known as Pericoma Okoye seeks positive peace and teaches and preaches for the elimination of structures that eliminates potential and actual conflicts. His music is akin to the popular Igbo adage: “Ana ama okwa nmiri tupu ozoo” (The town crier announces the coming of the rain before it starts).

Biography of Chief Damian Azubuike Okoye, (Pericoma)

Chief Damian Azubike Nwankwo Okoye popularly known as Pericoma Okoye was a traditional music icon from Ndiogbuonyeoma, Arondizuogu. He was also known as Ichie Mezu or Alusi Makaja. He was the King of kings, Father-Father, the unchallenged champion of cultural music, the cultural prime minister of music and a well-liked master of traditional music known all around the south east and beyond.

Born in 1948 into the family of Mazi Nwankwo Okoye Emesuo (Ejezu) of Ndiogbuonyeoma Ndibeuche, Arondizuogu in Okigwe Local Government Area. His journey into traditional music started in 1976 when he was introduced to the Arondizuogu Traditional Masquerade Group popularly known as Njima under the leadership of Mazi I.E. Kanu (Ikan Power) by Chief Almos Omeokachie. He became the lead vocalist of the group and they released a 4track recorded album.

Following an unresolved misunderstanding with the Njima Group, Preicoma broke away from the group and formed his performing group known as “A Pericoma Okoye and his Traditional Music Group Arondizuogu”. He released a 6-track album titled Ekere Mgba which was an instant hit as the period of the release coincided with the Ikeji festival of the year. He remained determined, focused and unwavering, releasing many chart bursting singles that have elevated

the Arondizuogu Traditional music “Egwu Mmonwu” into a prominent genre in Nigeria and made him an exceptional Igbo Traditional Music icon.

His music is filled with the sound of different gongs and piercing sound of a flute, enchanting both young and old with tales of unending proverbs, and miraculous deeds. The themes of his music centered mainly on unity, cultural rebirth, peaceful co-existence among brothers, love and togetherness. He is credited for transforming Arondizuogu traditional masquerade music into the well-known and recognized genre it is today.

He did not relax after the release of the first album with his new group but worked tirelessly and harder to better his performance. Each album he released was usually compared with the last ones. Through hard work and determination, he gave good accounts of himself. In 1980, he released *Isi na Udo ga Adi Vol. 2*, *Ejezuu Vol. 2* (1981), *Oderigwugwu* (1986), *Irigorogwo* (1987), *Uto Nti* (1988) *Anulika-Oforndu Special* (1989), *High Tension* (1998), *Ogba Ahara* (1990) *Aja Egbu Edi* (1991), *Ogbalu Uwa Ghali* (1999), *Napuru Ibe Ya* (2010), *Igbudu Ogwe* (2014), *Ihe Ebuka* (2015).

All over South East, he is easily remembered as “Pericoma na anyi ajo aru”. (Pericoma is too heavy). This sobriquet followed his encounter with some overzealous tax collectors in Onitsha who ambushed him and demanded for his tax receipts. When he could not produce any, they forcefully carried him with intent to forcing him into their van. Once he was lifted up, they could no longer bring him down. They were stuck. Tired of carrying him, his abductors pleaded and were almost gasping for their breath when he told them what to bring for the appeasement of the gods which their colleagues hastily brought. Meanwhile the crowd that has gathered started singing “Pericoma na anyi ajo aru”.

It later became a popular title of an album by another traditional music exponent. (Culled from ucheohia@ndiigboworldwide.com)

Research Method

The research adopted the content analysis of the qualitative research methodology. The primary data is derived from two music albums of Chief Damian Azubike Nwankwo Okoye popularly known as Pericoma Okoye. The choice for the content analysis approach is for in dept examination of the case studies. Again, secondary sources such as journals, textbooks, periodicals, and relevant internet sources were used to deepen the study. The selection of the materials was through simple random sampling guided by the thematic preoccupation of this work. Through the descriptive and interpretative approaches, the data was contextually

analyzed and objectively evaluated with a view to locating the teaching and preaching of peace by the artists in his music. Focused Group Discussion with four men from Arondizuogu was purposively chosen to deepen the investigation. The researcher made the objectives of the research known to them and played the chosen albums with them several times as well as shared the albums to them before discussing the data.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed contextually. Expressions teaching and preaching peace, unity and togetherness were randomly selected from the albums for the analysis with the four men Focused Group.

Teaching and Preaching Peace in *I sina Udo Ga-adi* and *Oderi gwugwu 86*

In the tables below, the lyrics teaching and preaching peace are selected from *I si na Udo Ga-adi* and *Oderi gwugwu 86* for contextual interpretation and analysis.

Table 1

	Lyrics of Peace, Unity and Togetherness in <i>I sina Udo Ga-adi</i>	Contextual Interpretation
1..	anụ nwe mpi nwe mpi, ebune satara mpi asata, mkpi putere mpi n'isi nneya"	What is gifted to one naturally remains permanent but what is borrowed remains fake.
2.	Ibe mmadụ nyuchiri nsị ụzọ, ọ na-aga, anya ya atọ na ya	Whoever commits a crime, the ??will continue to haunt him especially whenever he passed the scene of the crime
3.	Ọkụkọ agwotara n'ogwu, na-eso ogwu ana	Evil begets evil
4.	Anyanwa kobo eje, ibe ọ huna kobo ogburu oso na-eje, n'eti naya je eriya. Ma nke o nwee, ma nkeonwehu, o wee tiwe mkpu naya je eri, ma na ya nwu je anwu ajo ihe	Greed destroys integrity
5.	Asiri jehukwe, ka udo diri unu	Gossip must not be tolerated for a peaceful and progressive society

6.	Ọ bụrụ na aghugho ana an'obodo, mmegbu mmadu anaa, arurana, nsi na aja anaa, udo je adun'obodo	Every community must imbibe the habit of sincerity and uprightness to ensure a peaceful and well-coordinated society.
7.	mkporo na-etogha ima mbu	There is a height one attains in life and cannot be pushed about or toyed with
8.	Ekwuna mmadu ajo okwu, ekwona mmadu emeajo ihe. Ajo ihe na-eri ugwo ya.	Our personal integrity must be upheld and not compromised with as a result of gossiping

Table 2

	Lyrics of Peace, Unity and Togetherness in <i>Oderi gwugwu</i> 86	Contextual Interpretation
1.	Gini ka ebu uzọ aju? Ihe a na-ebu uzọ aju bu nwa. Ebe onye iro sina onye muru omumu enweghu aku na uba. Ejehi m egezi asiri ha ka m mere mgbe m. Asiri ha esigwom.	Children are highly valued more than physical wealth as a child could make millions of wealth and play many vital roles which money cannot do. I will no longer listen to their gossips
2.	Ghara asiri ha na-asiri ha esigwo m. Okoro nke m akoghu nke ha, ne enu na omohu ako, ikoo nke m akohu nke gh, aruru ana egbu ya	People should eschew gossip and strongly be focused to ensure the progress of the society, as it could disrupt progress in the society
3.	Okwa n'ih m na eme mmnwu ka ijiri si na ije egbu m, iwere asi n'ije eche m n'ezi, ginika m mere gh, ginika m mere gh	Our traditions and cultural practices must be encouraged as talents abound in it, no one should be castigated or discriminated against for being traditionally gifted.
4.	Osisi nuru uda ya etigbune m	Let no premeditated or known evil harm me
5.	Atara m ose buo nwannem n'obi, otachaa nke ya bukpoo mu anya, m wee were mma kam gbuo nwanne m, obi nwanne mere m o!, eje m were egbe ka m gbabue nwanne m, obi nwanne mere m, eje m were udo ka m kwugbuo nwanne m, obi	We should always ensure we continue to do good, no matter the threats to our lives. We should avoid revenge to avoid vengeance and bloodshed in the community.

	nwanne mere m. M wee nyara akpa ogwu ka m kpogbuo nwanne m, obi nwanne mere m. Izu ka mma na nneji.	
6.	Dike erighu ariri, nnaya ebiri. Ihe kariiri dike biakwute ya, akwatu ya	No man has achieved greatness without thorough endurance and accommodative spirit in life, otherwise, that greatness will not be attained.
7	Onye mere ihe ana n'aso	Whoever must have committed or desecrated the land must propitiate the soil to put the society on a progress part.
8	Ije atakweye aja, ma obu konkiri	One must be very careful in life in order to avoid catastrophic failure or disaster in life pursuits.

Discussions and Findings

From the forgoing, it is evident that through the lyrics of his songs, Pericoma promoted peace, unity and togetherness, teaching his many admirers and fans and listeners to follow the peaceful path of conflict resolution, for instance, in Table1, no 1, he advices youths to strive to develop their God given talents as that will make them self-sufficient and not to look at others for their sustenance. He concludes that originality pays and lasts forever, while what is borrowed is temporary and, in most cases, must be returned to the owner. In no2, Table 1, he reminds his listeners of the consequences of committing crime even in secret as the memory will continue to preoccupy the person's heart thus distracting his thoughts and direction of moving forward. In Table 1, no3, he still emphasized the need to abstain from evil as nothing good comes from evil deeds rather the person will reap evil while in Table 1, no 4, he condemns greediness and insatiability, reminding them that it causes disunity and leads someone to breaching peace because of his tendency to usurp communal property thus making him to lose his respect and honor. Table 1, no 5 exposes the consequences of gossip and tittle-tattles as one of the major causes of misunderstanding in our communities and prayed for its total eradication for peace to rein. According to him, it is only when there is peace that progress and development set in. Table 1, no 6 is to further consolidate on the gains from no 5 above. He reminds his listeners' that if they are sincere and upright, people will repose confidence in them to deal or do business to the progress of the society. While in Table 1 no 7, he asserts that once confidence and trust

is built, no one will play with the individual again but will always trust and take him seriously. In rounding up in Table 1, no 8, he reminds us to maintain our stand and not give up because of gossip but to be upright and take the right decision always.

In Table 2, no1, the importance of children was highly emphasized. He places children high above material wealth and the roles children play which money cannot and advises people who value money more than children to have a change of heart while calling on parents to train their children to be worthy members of the society to carry out their roles. Table 2, no 2, again discusses gossip as a source of distraction and advises that people should be focused to progress as listening to gossips is counterproductive. In Table 2, no 3, he exposes our rich cultural heritage and pleads that it shall not be let down. He further admits that talents abound in our traditional practices that must be tapped and developed by individuals while urging that those practicing it should be fairly treated and not castigated or discriminated. He uses himself as an example of the practitioners who have excelled. In Table 2, no 4, he assures his listeners that once you are upright; no harm or evil plans shall succeed or affect you. Table 2, no 5 is a continuation of his advice on 4. Here, he is advocating that we must not stop doing good despite the threats from evil men and that we should not take laws into our hands or shed blood in retaliation or revenge. Table 2, no 6, gives a recipe to achieving greatness, averting conflict. According to him, patience, tolerance, open-mindedness and love will help individuals to attain greatness. In Table 2 no 7, he equivocally reminds the populace that evil, wickedness, immorality, strife debases a community and hinders progress and urged that those involved must be reconciled for the betterment of the society. Finally in Table 2, no 8, he opines that one must be cautious and vigilant to avoid misfortune or calamity in our life endeavors.

The above findings were products of the Focused Group Discussion held after listening to the two albums by the four members, the researcher selected the data analysis. From the above summary, they all agreed that Pericoma's music teach and preach peace, unity and togetherness through the use deep Arondizuogu dialect, idioms, proverbs and anecdotes to convey his message.

Conclusion

Pericoma's music is a source of unity for Arondizuogu and indeed to the world. He used his music to foster common identity for all Arondizuogu people. Through his music, he endeared both the old, young, men and women, boys and girls to the cultures and traditions of Arondizuogu, thus helping in the preservation of the people's cultures. Most importantly, his music taught and preached peace and abhorred violence, always urging the youths to be

peaceful, to eschew revenge and to forgive “for we are all brothers”. His approach to peace and conflict resolution is line with theoretical frameworks of Johan Galtung and John Lederach theories of Peace and Conflict Prevention which advocated for positive peace and elimination of violence.

It is evident that peace is golden and all efforts must be geared towards building peaceful relationship to avoid having traumatized parties with festering wounds. Pericoma’s music is hinged on eliminating negative peace which implies the absence of physical violence. This is in line with the submission of Zrinka Mozara who agrees that “music has a huge potential when used in conflict transformation, to prevent or to resolve conflict by non-violent means, it can assist in processes of healing and rehabilitation” (2).

Pericoma realized that the root of conflicts rests on incompatibility or clash of goals, so, the best approach is to nib it in the bud through exposing the dangers of conflict by teaching and preaching peace love and togetherness through his music. This is also in line with the conclusion of Diwase who concurs that “Music teaches us peace and harmony with the power of music we live peacefully” (53).

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