

ACQUIRING MUSICAL SKILL TOWARD ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION

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Abstract

Music is a global phenomenon that cuts across every culture and levels of appreciation. Nigeria, as a nation, is rich in music and culture from its numerous ethnic backgrounds, which can transform it. Recently, the traditional musical skill of Nigerian citizens was enriched by the introduction of Western culture and musical expertise. Musicologists and performers combined both traditional African and Western musical skills to boost the economy. The Nigerian economic situation has deteriorated to the point that securing a job is extremely difficult for the youth. It is obvious that without personal effort, the hope of survival could be dashed. Using the ethnographic research method, this paper examines the possible opportunities that adequate musical skill acquisition provides from both African and Western backgrounds. It recommends that Nigerian youths should value music and its functions, and acquire the necessary skills, either for the performance or production of instruments for utility and commercial purposes.

Keywords: Music, Skill, Culture, Economic, Acquisition, Transformation.

Introduction

Every African society has music that has long existed before the advent of Europeans, who introduced their culture to them. To an African man, music does not just exist; unlike in Western musical society, where music is composed to satisfy the curiosity of an individual or groups of people. They also look for the beauty of melody, the form and movement, etc., of the composition before appreciating it. Music in the African society is part of a culture, and culture is part of music. An African child is born into a culture, grows to learn various characteristics of the culture and tradition; the ideals, virtues, norms, and values of the people through music.

Music is a phenomenon that encapsulates the daily life of an African man and is multifunctional across all aspects of society. A few of the functions of African music include the reinforcement of communal work, praise of heroes, exposition and correction of societal ills, fulfillment of rites and rituals during religious activities, historical exposition, teaching of the norms, ideals, and values of the society, and a means of expression of ideas in order to create environmental awareness.

Although music is part of the lives of Africans, some families are professional musicians who are gifted or trained. They are addressed as Ayan (family gifted drummers) or Elere (performer) among the Yoruba of South West Nigeria. These professional musicians perform according to the dictates of socio-cultural activities. Titon et al (2005, p. 21) opines that Human activities involving music also include the way people divide, arrange, or rank themselves in relation to music. Musical ideas and performances are unevenly divided among the people in any music culture. For example, some perform often, others hardly at all. Some musicians perform for a living, while others play for little or no payment. Each group may develop or be assigned its own musical role.

In the African traditional context, professional musicians are the custodians of traditional music because of the training they have received. The features of the music include information conveyed through myths, proverbs, epics, folktales, poetry, history, contextual occurrences, performers' experiences, oriki chanting, and so on (Ayeyemi, 2012).

Music, being an integral part of human life at all levels of society and appreciation, is created in a language that most people understand (Willoughby, 1996). In African societies, for example, music is performed in the language of the people and for the people. This is possible because it has been preserved and transmitted by means that require learning songs and playing of instruments from memory rather than from notated, printed music. Development and civilization brought about a career in the performance of traditional music, and now the traditional music of different African societies has been globalized by those who took it as a career.

Economic Development

According to Loveridge and Morse in the Wyoming Community & Regional Economics Portal (2013), the concept of economic development is often misunderstood. The terms economic development and economic growth are used interchangeably, but there is a significant difference between the two. Economic growth can be viewed as a subcategory of economic development. Therefore, no one prescription for economic development fulfills the needs of all communities. Successful economic development is a process that fills different needs for different communities at different times. Loveridge & Morse (2013) defined economic development as "a sustained community effort to improve both the local economy and the quality of life by building the area's capacity to adapt to economic change." Shaffer (1989) also defined it as the sustained, progressive attempt to attain individual and group interests through the expanded, intensified, and adjusted use of available resources.

Economic development can involve job and income growth; it also involves sustainable increases in the productivity of individuals, businesses, and resources to improve the overall well-being of residents and maintain, or even enhance, the quality of life. Economic development refers to the enhancement of economic activity in the community. This is the starting point of the economic development process. Community group or individual economic analysis is the process of examining the economic state or position to determine the next steps in the development process to improve the situation. In deciding that economic development should be pursued, the concerned people should look at their local economic material accessible to answer economic challenges, thus:

Where are we now? Where do we want to be? Why aren't we there now? What needs to be done to get us there? Who is going to get us there? When is it going to be done? How will we know when we get there? When answers are given to these questions, the needed development will be actualized. This is because people would have learned to do what is needed for economic development.

Music and Economic Development

In many parts of the world, especially in Africa, music is not limited to entertainment: it serves the local community and supports daily routines. Musicians provide appropriate music and dance for work and ceremonies such as religion, birth, naming, rites of passage, marriage, and funerals. Music is used for social purposes: religious, political, or incidental; during funerals; to console the bereaved; to express pain and agony; during cleansing and the chasing away of spirits; during parties; and to praise people in authority. It is also used to welcome back warriors from war, during wrestling matches, during courtship, in rainmaking, and during festivals, divination, and healing. Work songs are performed both during communal work, such as building and weeding, and during

individual work, such as pounding cereals and winnowing. Most importantly, traditional music is highly educative, teaching morals, hygiene, patience in all things, good character, unity, hard work, good friendship, love and trust, preparation for difficult days, time management, wisdom, self-discipline, and self-reliance, communication, and signaling.

The custodians and practitioners of traditional culture and music are the indigenous people, who are apt to teach the traditional norms and values. They are a bundle of oral history and information. However, there are different styles and names of music derived from the traditional music of the different regions of Nigeria. These styles are functional and purposeful. Some of the music, though attached to specific regional and cultural environments, has been brought to the global level of appreciation by traditional performers. These performers not only develop economically but also showcase their cultures globally, reminding culture carriers in both their home and diaspora of the traditional norms and values of their different cultural backgrounds.

Scheaffer (1986) affirms that:

music is something much more than sound, something more than a means of stirring emotions, so much more than a pressure that relaxes or sweeps away the nagging problems, so much more than necessary inspiration for choreographing dance steps, so much more than a medium through which the words of an opera, a cantata, a hymn may be effectively sung music is a very basic part of understanding the difference between a human being and all else in the universe (p3).

Music is an inbuilt and acquired art expressed through performance at all levels of its understanding. These two factors, or either of them, qualify a musician, but, more importantly, one goes further to acquire knowledge as he deems it to enhance his skill and professionalism in the field of study.

It is imperative to highlight the art and acts of music studied by or imparted to. These individuals undertake the course in the conventional school system, which turns them into something different from what society thinks they are. These are:

- (1) Theory of music from which grew: Harmony, Composition, Orchestration, Sight Reading, Analysis, and Perception, etc.
- (2) History and literature of music: Antiquity, Arts-Nova Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Romantic, 20th century, Contemporary Music Appreciation, etc.
- (3) Performance: Choral Ensemble, Instrument ensemble, Dance performance, Music drama, music performance, etc.
- (4) Music technology, where there is manufacturing and repair of musical Instruments.
- (5) Music acoustics, which takes care of the science of sound.
- (6) Music education controls the impartation of music knowledge.
- (7) African music, which gives knowledge of African musical cultures, features, and techniques.

The formal music education courses basically establish a musician considerably at the college level. Advanced ones are added at higher degrees to flesh out the knowledge acquired at the lower levels.

Informal Musical Performance Skill Acquisition in Economic Development

Both African and non-African music are human inventions, and individual notes contain the same elements such as pitch, duration, tone color, and intensity. Traditional African music does not seek

to combine sounds in a manner pleasing to the ear. The aim is to express life in all of its aspects through the medium of sound. The African musician does not merely attempt to imitate nature through music, but reverses the process by taking natural sounds, including spoken language, and incorporating them into the music in a contextual and meaningful manner. To a non-initiate, this is a cacophony. To be meaningful to such non-initiated, African music must be studied within the context of African life.

Nigerian music is a deeply functional exercise that draws heavily on religious, political, sociological, anthropological, economic, and educational fronts, adding that the music derives its socio-cultural power from society in order to make any progress in the future.

Music has an important role in Nigerian society. It is an integral part of the life of every individual from birth, and by the age of three or four, children take an active role in music and making music. For example, musical games played by children prepare them to participate in all areas of adult life, including fetching water, farming, grinding, gathering materials like firewood, snails, and fruits, hunting, apprenticeship, and attending ceremonies such as festivals, weddings, funerals, and dances. They often set out singing and dancing their way from one village to another, or a dance may be held to cement a good relationship with neighboring villages. Such musical games made children acquire the fundamental principles and have an extremely important educational function. Musical training is an intrinsic part of their mutual aesthetic and linguistic education. Most Nigerian traditional performers developed from the aforementioned musical training mode to achieve economic satisfaction.

From the foregoing, Ijeoma in Ayeyemi (2015) identifies two types of Nigerian traditional music performers: firstly, performers who make music through their attachment to traditional institutions, such as religious or ritual institutions, social institutions, royalty, and others. Secondly, musicians whose motivation is the love of music and its economic considerations stand as the other aspect. Talented and inherited musicians, whom the Yoruba of Nigeria called *ayan*, could not be left out in this regard. Several of these performers, from different cultural backgrounds in Nigeria, are globally recognized for their traditional music (p58).

Job Opportunity and Availability

The whole world is a labor market for musicians, since it is a common practice needed in almost all spheres of life. It cannot die, nor can it be abandoned; society cannot do without it. It functions everywhere, and at all times, the thirst for it is so high that even the practitioners put together cannot quench it. The following areas should be considered as fertile land for music personnel to earn their daily living with pride. They are:

- (1) Church and other religious organizations can employ musicians as organists or pianists, choir masters, and music directors.
- (2) Music lecturers or educators, performers, and music directors, who are expected to teach music in school classes from nursery to senior secondary school level.
- (3) Media house as music commentator, producer, presenter, researcher, and analyst. These programs provide a vivid exposition of music of any sort, including discussion of the composer, the year of composition, the context surrounding the composition, and its textual and structural analysis.
- (4) Clubhouse and company as an entertainer. In urban areas, people go to clubs and centers after a day's work to relax and refresh themselves. A musician, through their performance, meets their curious need for money.
- (5) Recording Studios-They are to work as performers or sound engineers in studios where they produce music records, CDs, and others.

- (6) Music consultancy centers
- (7) Business compound of records, songbooks, and musical instruments. All aspects of music are both practically and theoretically intensive. The music theorists, commentators, critics, and analysts develop by reading related books to stay up to date and complete the required assignments. The practical aspects involve performances that make use of musical instruments. Therefore, the sales of both books and musical instruments, together with music records, become a very good business opportunity for a musician who takes an interest in it
- (8) Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture. Those employed in such places are encouraged to research and promote cultural music.
- (9) Writing, editing, printing, publishing, and sale of music books-these are to work with publishing outfits to do the expected for publishing good music books and magazines.
- (10) Concert and performance – Musicians are expected to supply music during official ceremonies, during social and festive ceremonies, musicians could charge fees for their performance.
- (11) Museums and Sound archiving – These are saddled with the responsibility of archiving old music for the purpose of researchers who would need them for their study on charges.
- (12) National Orchestra-Music performance is expected to perform during national assignments and functions like Independence Day celebration, Children's Day, Workers' Day, welcoming and celebration of government dignitaries etc.
- (13) NECO, WAEC, and JAMB examination bodies employ professional musicians to actively participate in item writing for question banks examinations.
- (14) Armed forces band: Here, music graduates, especially instrumentalists, could be enlisted in the Armed Forces or paramilitary because of their musical skills for performance in the bands.
- (15) Musical instrument technology: Professional musicians could engage themselves in repairs, maintenance and manufacturing of both Western and traditional instruments for commercial purposes.
- (16) Music programming: this is the ability and skill acquired to use a computer to produce music. The production could be for art or band music using software.

A focused music scholar who struggles to study and acquires the expected qualifications and skills will control his own social and economic environment, no matter what. As in other disciplines, music is grossly divergent, and each area is worth elevating economically for an individual who specializes in it. It is therefore necessary to break down skill acquisition into units for the sake of professionalism and economic buoyancy.

Conclusion

Obviously, music as a profession in Nigeria and other cultures contributes to economic development. It raises the standard of living of performers who take an interest in it, irrespective of style or genre. Its functions in all ramifications cannot be underestimated among societies; it aids faster learning and memory retention; its performance stirs up the spirit of people; and the beauty of its sounds, whether vocal, instrumental, or both, and its dance create atmospheric excitement at its presentation.

Music is important in Nigerian culture, whether in work and business, play, power and authority, religion, and so on. It exerts its magic upon people; its value is reflected in education. Therefore, scholars at all levels of learning should be allowed to demonstrate their professionalism and intelligence, and at the same time, encourage individuals to enter the vocation. From the analysis above, it is obvious that the financial gains it brings to the practitioner in either specialized area cannot be underestimated. It is a profession that has no economic bounds. It is, therefore, a necessary skill for individuals and groups to acquire to eradicate poverty in our society. However,

musical knowledge can be acquired through natural endowment and formal training. As a vocation, it points out the seemingly hidden prospect found to those who never understood it as living. Music indeed is life.

Recommendations

The study recommends that:

A good number of Nigerian graduates and youths are jobless and roaming about. They need to be encouraged and empowered to take up the challenge of acquiring musical skills from diverse perspectives for commercial gain. This is necessary in order to empower themselves economically. It also provides an opportunity to showcase the cultures of the nation's different ethnic groups. Furthermore, the government should realize the importance of economic development music brings to better Nigerian youths. It should also be recognized that burdens are lifted from the government's shoulders when people pursue self-reliant, skill-based music development. In light of this, the government should make music a core subject in the school system at all levels, recognizing that, as a vocational discipline, it will boost the economy.

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