

MUSIC AS A PROFESSIONAL CAREER IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY: EXAMINING PUBLIC PERCEPTION AND EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES

Ebenezer Oluwatoyin AYEYEMI (PhD)

Department of Music
Adeyemi Federal University of Education,
Ondo. Ondo State.
Nigeria.

olueben01@gmail.com
ayeyemioe@afued.edu.ng

Abstract

The love of African societies for music is highly appreciable and commendable. However, despite the centrality of music to African cultural existence, many people still regard music as an unserious profession and an unsuitable academic discipline. Since music-making appears common within African communities, the study of music is often perceived as unnecessary. This misconception has hindered the growth, recognition, and professionalization of music education in Nigeria and many African societies. This paper examines societal perceptions about music as a career and the implications of such perceptions for music education and professional practice. It further discusses the academic backgrounds and professional achievements of notable Nigerian musicians and scholars in order to establish the intellectual and vocational relevance of music. The paper adopts Functionalist Theory and Human Capital Theory as theoretical frameworks to explain the social and economic significance of music in contemporary society. It also highlights areas of specialization and employment opportunities available to trained musicians. The study concludes that music is a viable academic and professional discipline capable of contributing immensely to national development, cultural sustainability, economic empowerment, and moral regeneration. Recommendations are offered for repositioning music education within the Nigerian educational system and changing societal attitudes toward music as a career.

Keywords: Music, Professional, Career, Contemporary Society, Public Perception, Opportunities.

Introduction

Music has been found wanting in our societies, either traditionally or conventionally. Despite the influence of civilization, modernization, and technology on all spheres of life and disciplines, about sixty percent (60%) of Nigerian society remained musically unaffected. Normally, the unlearned and unexposed folks hold to tradition and preserve the originality of our music, and cannot be expected to intermingle or juxtapose Western musical ideas with theirs. This is acceptable because of their location. Below are possible views on music.

Despite the broad knowledge of some academicians, professors, PhD holders, and other highly placed people in different disciplines who have also traveled widely to acquire more knowledge, they have little or no knowledge of music. They discourage ambitious youths who are interested in pursuing music as a career. Some promising musicians have lost their potential because of the influence of their sponsors as students. Several students had sought counseling because their parents disallowed them from studying the course and, as a result, forced them to change to other disciplines. For example, there was a case of a music student who sponsored himself through the

College of Education because his parents did not support his course of study. However, after he was admitted to a private University to study another course, they took up the sponsorship.

These learned ones are those whom the less privileged look up to. When an ambitious young musician seeks encouragement and financial support for their performance and production, they are turned down completely unless the expected sponsors would benefit from it. Some individuals offer scholarships to selected students in the sciences and technology, and in other subjects, but only very few music students have enjoyed such privileges. These actions were put on with the idea that music cannot earn those studying or who are into it any substantial job and that they are not respected in society, they are the 'never do the wells', beggars, the frustrated who never had anything else to do than to roam about entertaining people for money.

Idamoyibo (2002) amplifies this statement as he opines that:

some communities see music as a profession for the idle and lazy, or for the man of low estate. In contemporary times, it is seen as a school subject for the dullards, the playful, the never-do-wells, and a professional practice for the drop-outs, vagrants, deviants, idle men, and vagabonds (13).

Life in African traditional society is marked by various forms of ceremony, usually accompanied by music, because in African culture, there is music, and in music, there is culture. As it were, music, being a product of man's institutions and reflecting his culture, is a pleasant cultural pursuit and socializing force for Africans. Despite its indispensable role in society, it is often underestimated. Idamoyibo further stressed that what people know as music is simply singing, composing songs, or playing instruments. To sing, compose, or play is not a serious study, nor a special straining. Therefore, when one says he is studying music in a higher institution, African society sees it as feminine, laziness, unseriousness, shortsightedness, wit-wittedness, and so forth.

Indeed, some lazy people who claim to make music a profession and career cannot stand the challenges they encounter in society. Graduates of music who took to teaching, for example, are expected to prove their worth in both academic and social performances. An unhealthy example was a student who, when she was in school, was fairly average in theory, applied music, and general musicianship, which are what make somebody a real musician. After graduation, she was the first among her colleagues to secure a job. Immediately, she assumed office; the school keyboard was handed to her so she could manage the music section of the school's morning devotion. The elders of a Christian assembly in that community approached the school's Principal and inquired about the school's service to their church. In their excitement, they met with this young music educator, made their intentions known, but she responded that she would see them later. Before the slated date, she ran to the College where she graduated from, narrating her ordeal - inability to sight sing or read, play, and lead the choir, and so she lost the offer. A heart-wrenching situation like this cannot permit the offer of jobs to those who do not know what they are out for, either by private or government parastatals.

Admission seekers who could not fit into the desired course, consequent upon their academic deficiency, opted for music, having a considerably less demanding requirement for admission at that level, and were admitted to discover later their inability to cope with the standard because their initial thought was that music is ordinarily singing and dancing. These types of students frustrate lecturers' efforts in discipline.

The political factor has crippled music and stagnated its development. The idea of "what comes out of it?" Wasting resources on something that has no future has created a pathetic situation for its existence. The greatest harm to its development is the failure to include and recognize music as one of the core subjects in Nigerian schools, as it was in the Greek era, when it was given prominence in the curriculum from primary school (Aninwene, 2003, p. 41). Furthermore, as lovely and useful as music is to Nigerian politicians, it is only the finished products that interest them, since it is an excellent culture promoter and a medium of evocative reference for the political dignitaries. Mbanugo (1999a), quoted by Aninwene (2003, p.41), said it can compel people to gladly sacrifice themselves to the larger humanity, always ready to sloganeer to infect society with a scientific and technological mentality.

In Nigerian secondary schools, music is placed under the creative arts, as one of the arms of applied arts. However, in contrast, music has not gained or achieved the purpose for which it was included as an academic subject.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Functionalist and the Human Capital Theories. These theories provide sociological and economic explanations for the relevance of music education and the necessity of recognizing music as a viable profession in contemporary society.

Functionalist Theory was propounded by Émile Durkheim in 1895 through his sociological works on social order, integration, and collective consciousness. The theory emerged from the need to explain how societies maintain stability, continuity, and cohesion despite differences among individuals and institutions. Durkheim argued that every institution within society performs specific functions necessary for the survival and smooth operation of the social system (Durkheim, 1895/1982).

The major premise of Functionalist Theory is that society operates like a biological organism in which each structure or institution performs indispensable roles that contribute to the survival and stability of the whole. Institutions such as education, religion, politics, family, and the arts are therefore considered essential components that sustain societal harmony and continuity. The theory further posits that when any institution fails to perform its expected role effectively, social imbalance and disorganization may occur (Ritzer, 2011).

Applied to this study, music is viewed as an important social institution that performs numerous functions within African and Nigerian societies. Music promotes social integration, cultural transmission, moral instruction, emotional expression, entertainment, political mobilization, and religious worship. In African traditional society, music accompanies virtually every stage of life, including birth ceremonies, initiation rites, marriage celebrations, festivals, coronations, and funeral rites. Through these functions, music contributes significantly to societal cohesion and cultural identity (Blacking, 1976).

The theory further explains that the societal neglect and marginalization of music education undermine one of the important mechanisms through which values, traditions, and communal relationships are preserved. The persistent negative perception of music as a career therefore weakens its ability to perform these social functions effectively. Functionalist Theory is relevant to this article because it establishes music as an indispensable cultural and educational institution necessary for societal development and continuity.

Human Capital Theory was developed by Theodore Schultz in 1961 and later expanded by Gary Becker in 1964. The theory emerged from economic concerns about productivity, labor efficiency, and national development after the Second World War. Economists sought to explain why some nations experienced rapid economic growth through investments in education, training, and skill acquisition (Schultz, 1961; Becker, 1964).

The major premise of Human Capital Theory is that education and professional training are forms of investment capable of increasing individuals' productive capacities, employability, income generation, and contributions to economic development. The theory emphasizes that human knowledge, skills, competence, and creativity constitute valuable capital capable of generating social and economic returns (Becker, 1993).

In relation to this study, music education is regarded as an investment in human capacity development rather than a wasteful or inferior academic pursuit. Formal training in music equips individuals with professional competencies in areas such as composition, performance, conducting, ethnomusicology, music technology, music production, sound engineering, music education, arts management, and research. These competencies enable musicians to contribute meaningfully to society while earning sustainable livelihoods.

The theory is particularly relevant to this article because it counters the widespread societal assumption that music lacks economic prospects. The global expansion of the creative and entertainment industries has demonstrated that music contributes significantly to employment generation, entrepreneurship, tourism, digital innovation, and national revenue. According to UNESCO (2022), the creative and cultural industries have become major contributors to economic growth and youth employment globally. The achievements of Nigerian music scholars and professionals validate the assumptions of Human Capital Theory by demonstrating that music education can produce internationally recognized scholars, researchers, educators, performers, and cultural ambassadors.

Therefore, Human Capital Theory supports the argument of this paper that music should be recognized as a legitimate academic discipline and professional career capable of contributing to individual advancement and national development.

The Need for Music in the Curriculum

The negative notions and bias on music as a course for the never-do-well, frustrated, beggars, drunkards, womanizers, drug addicts, non-ambitious and disrespected people is based on nothing but a parochial knowledge of individual or corporate bodies about the discipline Olaniyan (2002, p.44) said individual conduct depends mostly on family background and upbringing, the company one keeps and one's own level of moral and spiritual discipline. Research has shown that this notion is completely false.

Music is a discipline that compels its practitioners to impart discipline in society. However, some undisciplined folks who cannot cope with this discipline do everything they can to castigate and relegate music to their level. Music as a performing art, promoter of philosophical thought and culture, instiller of discipline, has contributed tremendously to political, socio-economic, and religious development, and of course, nation-building. No wonder Olaniyan (2002) amplifies that many contemporary musicians have demonstrated the essence of good discipline and have also succeeded in making their presence felt in the socio-economic and religious development of the society in the right direction.

Few Nigerian academic musicians have really contributed to national development and have also become the cynosure of all eyes in national and international societies. This is to foil the mistaken notion that music is for the less fortunate. Omibiyi (1979) proved that diverse musical typologies characterize Nigeria's musical scene; consequently, there exist various categories of musicians and composers. However, the development of music and the contributions of these artistes are closely connected with and have been influenced by the nation's historical and social situations.

Below is a list of a few musicians who demonstrated academic excellence in the music industry:

Fela Sowande (1905-1987).

A renowned and brilliant composer, pianist, organist, conductor, and musicologist of international reputation. His first contact with Western music came through 'him' (his father). He was a piano and organ student, as well as a member of the choir at Christ Cathedral, Lagos, under T.K.E. Phillips. He proceeded to London in 1934, where he studied European classical and popular music as well as organ, after which he was awarded the Fellowship of the Royal College of Organists (FRCO), the highest English qualification for organ playing. Sowande threw himself into professional performance activities while in England, from which he earned his living. "He was appointed musical advisor to the colonial film unit of the British Ministry of Information in London. Here, my main job was to provide background music for a series of educational films designed for Africa (Omojola, 1995, p. 43).

On his return to Nigeria, he was appointed to the Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), where he headed the music and Music research sections. Part of his activities was to organize field research on music, especially traditional music, to be used as material for enlightening Nigerians on the radio and as a basis for his compositions. Omobiyi (1979) explains that Sowande was concerned with the development of music and music education in Nigeria, and his activities were channeled towards the establishment of a bimusical education in Nigerian schools.

Ayo Bankole (1935-1976)

He was born into a musical family - his father was the organist at St. Peter's Church, Faj (in Lagos), while his mother was taught music at Queen's School, Ede, Western Nigeria. He was a choir boy under T.K E. Phillips, a student of Baptist Academy Secondary School, Lagos. He had a good reputation in the music industry. Inspired and encouraged by his boss, Fela Sowande, at the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation, he went on to study music at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London. He earned his B.A. and M.A. in Music and became a professional pianist composition and organ. He obtained FRCO- "the second Nigerian to obtain the highest British professional qualification for organists. (Omojola, 1995).

Meki Nzewi,

He is another famous musicologist, composer, and playwright who was born in 1938 and received his musical tutelage at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, after which he proceeded to Queen's University in Belfast, Ireland. He studied under "the renowned ethnomusicologist John Blacking" (Omojola, 1995, p. 70).

Laz Ekwueme

In her collection of Nigerian musicians and composers, Omobiyi (1975) underscores the significance of Laz Ekwueme as a composer, farmer-producer, choir director, and musicologist who drew on his musical experience at the Royal College of Music, the University of Manchester, and Yale University, respectively. He was a credited ATCM, ARCM, LRAM, GSM, and FICM.B

Mus, M.Mus, and PH.D. He, as the director of the Ekwueme National Choir Group, has staged various performances and entertainment at national and local functions in Nigeria. He has authored many academic publications in music, including journal articles, books, and other publications. Omojola (1995, p. 68). As a professor, he was the Head of the sub-department of music at the University of Lagos.

Akin Euba,

I cannot close this section without referencing Akin Euba, another giant in the world of academic music. He was born in 1935 in Lagos. His father, a pianist, introduced him to Western music at a tender age. As a student at CMS Grammar School, Lagos, he furthered his studies in the rudiments of European music. At the same time, Major J. G. C. Allen (a colonel administrator in Lagos) took him up in private piano lessons." These initial musical experiences are significant. He made rapid progress at playing the piano. According to Euba, quoted by Omojola (1995):

From 1950, things improved after I won my first silver medal at the Nigerian Festival of Arts. This turned me from an obscure member of the school to a kind of star. This recognition of my achievements may have reinforced my progress towards a musical career.

His excellent performance on the piano led his teacher, Major Allen, to secure a government scholarship for him in 1952 to study music at Trinity College, London. His courses of study were harmony, counterpoint, composition, and piano under different professionals. Three years after he returned from London, he was awarded a Rockefeller Foundation scholarship to study at UCLA. There, he chose ethnomusicology, and by 1966, he had earned his M.A. degree. The return of Akin Euba from London in 1957 offered him a job as an experienced, academically proven musician at the Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) as a producer in the Music and Music Research Unit, where Fela Sowande and Ayo Bankole also served.

The academic careers of these personalities were cited to counter the statement that music is the course of the "never dull" and to strengthen people's confidence that the recognition accorded to people of other disciplines; medicine, law, engineering, etc. could as well be given to musicians especially when they combine performance with academic works and, of course every academic musician is a performer at a very high level of appreciation.

What Makes Music and Musicians

An adage says, "One man's food is another man's poison." "So it is with music; its description is according to the individual concept, which sometimes is not unified, and as a result, the same result could not be expected from the individual describer. No wonder Blacking (1976:32) expressed that to find out what music is and how musical man is, we need to ask who listens, who plays, and who sings in any given society, and why. This is a sociological question, and situations in different societies can be compared without reference to the surface forms of music, because we are concerned with its function in social life. As an ethnomusicologist who understood the differences in ethnic music and people's perception of it, he further stressed that what turns one man off may turn another man on, not because of any absolute quality in the music itself, but because of what the music has come to mean to him as a member of a particular society or social group.

Scheaffer (1986) postulates that music is something much more than just sound, something more than a means of stirring emotions, so much more than a pleasure 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 everything else in the universe.

Music is an innate and acquired art expressed through performance at all levels of understanding. These two factors, or either of them, are qualities one has as a musician, but more importantly, one continues to acquire knowledge as he deems fit to enhance his skills and professionalism in the field of study.

It is imperative to highlight basics of the art and acts of music studied by and/or imparted to an individual who undertakes the course, which make him different from what society thinks he is. These include:

- (i) Theory of music from which grew: Harmony. Composition, orchestration, Sight Reading, Analysis, oral perception, etc.
- (ii) History and literature of music: Antiquity Arts-Nova. Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Romantic, 20th-century Contemporary, Music Appreciation, etc.
- (iii) Performance: Choral Ensemble. Instrumental ensemble, performance, Music drama, Pop music performance, etc.
- (iv) Music technology includes the manufacturing and repair of musical instruments.
- (v) Music acoustics, which takes care of the science of sound,
- (vi) Music education controls the impartation of music knowledge.
- (vii) African music provides knowledge of African musical culture, features, and techniques

These courses provide a solid foundation for musicians at the college level; advanced courses are added at higher levels to flesh out the knowledge acquired at the lower levels.

Pride out of the Price

As in other disciplines, music is grossly divergent in its area of specialization, and it is not easy for an individual to cover even one-tenth of it. It is therefore necessary to break music into a few units of professionalism for the enlightenment of society.

Some Areas of Specialization in Music

1. Theory of music, which has its advanced courses in harmony
2. Composition
3. Copyrighting
4. Music Arranging
5. Performance
6. Music production
7. Conducting
8. History and literature of music
9. Musicology
10. Ethnomusicology
11. Instrument technology
12. Music Education
13. Music Analysis
14. Criticism
15. Music Research and so on.

It is essential in this context to eradicate the fear of "what do I become when I choose music as a career?" The Nigerian music institution has been filled with potential that none of the professional areas could be found wanting in this generation, despite all the odds it faces, as of the year 2004. Nigeria had at least five (5) professors of music, about fifteen (15) PhDs in music, innumerable

Master's degree holders, and NCE holders in music (Adegbite, 2001, p. 81). Consequently, Nigerian holders of certificates, diplomas, and degrees in music from music academics and universities at home and abroad are no longer difficult to come by. These are professionals in one area or another, or even those specializing in two or more areas.

Job Opportunity and Availability

The whole world is a labor market for musicians, since it is a common practice in almost all spheres of life; it cannot die, nor can it be abandoned. People of society cannot doubt it. It functions everywhere and at all times. The thirst for it is so high that even the practitioners put together cannot quench it.

Regarding the following areas as fertile ground for musicians to earn their daily living with pride.

1. Church and other religious organizations can employ musicians as organist-pianist, choir master, and music director.
2. Schools as educators, performers, and music directors.
3. Media house as commentator, producer, presenter, researcher, and analyst.
4. Clubhouse and company as an entertainer.
5. Recording studios.
6. Music consultancy centers.
7. Business compound of records, songbooks, and musical instruments.
8. Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture
9. Writing, editing, printing, and publishing of music books
10. Concert and band performance
11. Museums and sound archiving
12. Music contract in government and Private special programs
13. National orchestra
14. NECO, WAEC, and JAMB examination bodies
15. Armed forces band
16. Musical instrument technology -repair and manufacturing
17. Cultural Centers
18. Record analysis and criticism
19. Music Programming

A focused music scholar who struggles to pay the price or acquire the expected qualification will control his own world no matter what.

Conclusion

This paper has revealed the public's views on music and the discouraging extent of their opposition. It is believed that musical knowledge can be acquired through natural endowment. It needs no formal training. It also pointed out the seemingly hidden prospect found in music to those who never understood it as living.

A great applause is ascribed to the governor of Ogun State for his pronouncement on making music a compulsory subject in both primary and secondary schools in his state. This was held at the Abiola Stadium during the commissioning of a set of musical instruments purchased by a private institution in the state on the 27th of May 2006, at the children's day ceremony.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the governor's action serves as a challenge to all state and Federal governments in Nigeria to respond positively to this discipline to make music one of the core

subjects for its existence. Again, societies, organizations and individuals, including students, have to see music beyond the surface and understand that it is taxing. The integrity, moral and financial prospects, and the undertakers it offered are invaluable. Therefore, everyone should put in every effort towards the achievement and advancement of its purpose.

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