

THE RELATIVE EFFICACY OF MUSIC AND CULTURE IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

National development is of great significance for the survival, existence and improvement of the life of any nation. It implies the progress of the nation as well as the enhancement and betterment of the lives of the entire citizenry in all spheres of life. In the scheme of national development, culture and music occupy prominent positions. Hence the purpose of this write up, therefore, is to discuss the various ways culture and music can contribute to national development. Apart from relaxational and entertainment roles, as well as their portraying, projection and promotion of our cultural heritage, the paper also tries to investigate their roles in the academic, religious, political, socio-economic development of the nation and the like.

Culture has been generally described as the way of life of the people. It embraces their traditions, customs, beliefs, norms and values. It also, involves the people's language, mode of dressing, music and other cultural practices. Precisely, it is the do's and don'ts of the people.

However, attempts have been made by various writers, authors and bright scholars to define culture in order to bring out its full meaning. But Okafor (1993:11) remarked that "culture has defied precise definition". Every definition of culture according to him contains some vagueness', inconclusiveness, imprecision and loopholes. This however, does not imply that the definitive attempts by some scholars about culture are incorrect. Inferential deduction from his statement is that no one definition can be wholly accepted as the ultimate.

However, to explain what culture is, it will be interesting to have a look at the opinion of some bright scholars mainly, educationists. Majekodunmi (1979) quoting Clydly Klehound opined that culture constitutes that part of learned behaviour which is shared with others. It is our social legacy, as contrasted with our organic heredity. It is one of the important factors which permit us to live together in an organized society. It is an abstract description of trend towards uniformity in the words, deeds and artifacts of human groups.

Since music is an aspect of culture which emanates from man's activities, thus, enabling people to live together, there is no gain saying the fact that the definition above about culture is true because living together in an organized manner leads to national development.

According to Dennis (2006), culture is a powerful human tool for survival, but is a phenomenon. It is constantly changing and easily lost because it

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exists only in our minds. Centre for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA, 2012) sees culture as the shared pattern of behaviours and interactions, cognitive constructs and effective understanding that are learned through a process of socialization.

Music being an organized sound has been described by Nwaneri (1997:52) as a universal language which all and sundry understand amidst ethnic, linguistical and dialectical differences. In concordance with this assertion is Bebey (1997:116) who in relating this aspect of its function to African situation opines that “a characteristic of African music is the fact that it is a common property, a language, all members of any one ethnic group can understand”. If music is a language is an aspect of culture, there is no doubt that music is culture itself. It is therefore, no misplacement when we say that music is a phenomenon that is present in every culture be it civilized or uncivilized. It one of the cultural identifies of any culture area. No wonder Nketia (1982) postulates that there is no community in Africa that has no music. Such a community without music would be considered dead.

Music is an expressive art because of the nature and the psychological effect of the medium it uses. It is an art, which in one way or another permeates every human society. It is a protean art, which leads itself easily to alliances with words as in song and with physical activities as in dance. Human beings, from childhood are sensitive to music and utilize it as a natural means of expressions and pleasure, although their sensitivity may not be highly cultivated.

Throughout history. Music has been credited with the capacity to reflect and influence human emotions. Popular culture has consistently explored these possibilities mostly conspicuously today by means of radio, film, television and the musical theatre. A critical look at all that have been said so far indicates that every culture area practices music and that music is inextricably tied with or to the cultural life of the people. Therefore, no music, no cultural practice.

Relationship between Culture and Music

Music and culture are closely interwoven. According to Nwaneri (2002:111), music is part and parcel of culture, and as such, both are inseparable. No cultural activity can take place or function effectively without music. Music is our cultural heritage. It is the engine that sets all cultural activities in motion. It is the key to open the doors of all cultural activities. As religion and politics cannot dispense with music, so is the case with culture. This calls to mind why Okafor (1986:48) remarked that no study of culture is complete without a close and corresponding study of the music of the people. That music and culture are bound together can be clearly seen in Okafor’s (1988:10) assertion that,

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Music is one of the principal aspects of human culture. To the Africans, as to many other people of the world, Music is a veritable way of life and no occasion whether sad or joyful is without its attendant musical expression.

This confirms the fact that all cultural activities, no matter what, go with music. Music is life and life is music. Hence Adesokan (2000) opined that music is a life-long source of pleasure and satisfaction to the people, helping individuals to express their feelings and ideas especially, during cultural displays. In conformity with the above assertion is the view of Chernof (1979:19) that “music in African traditional setting is a representation of the people’s culture, a replica of their life pattern, and a study of a people’s music can offer an especially valuable approach to their culture”. Kehinde (2000:104) is of the same view, when he says that “music in its traditional setting illuminates culture in its totality. In his view, it is through music that the child would learn more about the songs of his fatherland which according to Ewuueme (1971:4) and Crichton (1980) encourage traditional discourse and make individuals to see beyond themselves. Hence, when we begin to see ourselves the way we see others, we invariably, sow seed of concord, peace, love, harmony and unity, which would culminate and blossom into national development.

From the ethnomusicological perspective, Akpabot (1982) described music as the most potent force in all cultural experiences. This implies therefore, that music according to Nwaneri (2002:11) is a binding force, possessing an alluring, magical cum magnetic power, which draws people together especially in their cultural activities. Music as culture exists to celebrate those parts of contemporary popular music that are not simply about returning a profit, but are about our cities, our heritage, our shared experience and ourselves as people.

Music as culture aims to provide a voice at a time when critical decisions affecting music, creativity and copyright are being made, usually from a purely commercial point of view. Music as culture will mean different things. We live in exciting and challenging times. Digital technologies bring new challenges and opportunities to music as a commercial form. But one thing remains true throughout all of the changes and all of the debates: Music belongs to all of us; it is our culture.

From all that have been said, one can rightly agree that neither music nor culture can dispense with the other. They go hand in hand and cannot be separated. Having gone this far, we can now discuss the place of music and culture in national development.

The Place of Culture and Music in National Development

Culture and music occupy prominent position in national development. Language for example is an aspect of culture, and music has been described earlier on as a universal language. The music we play, listen to, enjoy and dance to its rhythms is composed making use of language. Therefore, the ability to compose and perform music in a language other than one's own culture area enhances good relationship between the diverse culture areas. Also, speaking of language other than one's own creates good relationship too. Good relationship as a matter of fact brings about peaceful co-existence, which leads to national development and national development can only thrive under peaceful atmosphere.

Dance is one of the cultural activities of the people. Therefore, when the music and dance of one culture area is borrowed and performed by another culture area, the cultural tie is strengthened locally, nationally and internationally. This contributes to national development; thus, enhancing the diplomatic relationship.

Through the organization of cultural and musical festivals both nationally and internationally, national development is encouraged. This is because when people of diverse cultures come together to perform, cultural transmission takes place consciously or unconsciously. Consequently, people begin to see themselves as one. This creates the sense of belonging, unity and brotherhood irrespective of where one comes from. A typical example is the FESTAC 77, which brought people from all walks of life together.

Culture and music can also make positive contributions to national development through the teaching, learning and organization of cultural and festivals among schools. By learning about other people's music according to Nwaneri (2002: 114) cultural awareness is created, thus culminating into cultural appreciation and understanding. This as earlier on stated enhances good relationship among people from diverse culture areas and this brings into plays, the theory of 'unity in diversity', which is the bedrock of national development.

Organization of singing competitions among churches can as well contribute to national development. The church is one of the agents of socialization through which cultural transmission can occur. Such musical competitions involve people from different culture areas. When they meet for performance, social interactions take place. Some cultural traits are being transmitted knowingly or unknowingly. Through such interactions, friendship occurs, blossoms into love and can consequently lead to intercultural or inter-

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tribal marriage. This also strengthens the cultural ties because people now see themselves as one. Through this, national development occurs.

Respect for and appreciation of the people's tradition, beliefs, norms and values, including their music encourage national development. When people learn to obey simple rules and regulations in their communities, adhere strictly to the do's and don'ts of the community and carry out instructions as expected, they can extend these to their leaders at the national level. Teaching and learning of morals and any other cultural norms or values becomes more effective when set to music. The understanding, assimilation as well as respect for the peoples culture undoubtedly, contributes to national development.

Another way by which music and culture can contribute to national development according to Nwaneri (2000:78) is by relaying the music of other ethnic culture in the radio and television of different states: for example, by relaying Igbo music in either Yoruba or Hausa stations and vice versa. Through this media according to him, culture assimilation gradually takes place as a result of cultural appreciation. This invariably contributes to national development.

Politics is an aspect of culture. When people learn about the political culture, which is better or even best transmitted through music; elections will be conducted without bitterness and rancour. Bebey's (1975:142) has already stated that no electoral campaign would be complete without the active support of music. Hence, the teaching and learning and assimilation of political ethnics and culture are better done with music as it makes memorization easier. When people understand the political culture, hitch free election devoid of political thuggery is carried out. This leads to national development.

Marriage, New Yam festival, chieftaincy coronations initiation, burial ceremony, title taking and the like are cultural activities that go with music. Under such circumstances people from different culture areas converge for such celebrations. Once again there is healthy social interaction, creation of cultural awareness and appreciation, which invariably culminates into national development.

Dressing is another aspect of culture, which enhances national development. For example, an Ibo man dressing in Yoruba, Hausa attire and the like directly or indirectly consciously and unconsciously sows seed of concord which leads to national development as a result of, and appreciation of the people's culture.

Culture and music make positive contributions to national development through educational enhancement and advancement. Learning about the culture and music of the people widens ones knowledge and thinking horizon. To be a

real educated man means to know more about the way of life of the people, which is incomplete without their music. Music also enhances teaching and learning of various subjects in schools, for example English language, poetry, mathematics and they like. When such knowledge is acquired through culture and music, national development is encouraged.

Religion is an aspect of culture because it has to do with the people's belief. No religious activity dispenses with music. During religious activities especially in the church, people partake seriously in the music that goes with it. Through this medium, people from different cultural background have opportunity to interact and share views. Sense of oneness and brotherhood is developed. This as a matter of fact, ushers in peace and harmony, which is a sure way to nation building or national development.

Conclusion

In this write-up, the writer gives a highlight of music and culture respectively. The relationship between music and culture was also examined. There was a discussion on the role of culture and music in national development. We discovered that music and culture can contribute positively to national development through cultural appreciation and assimilation, organization of cultural and musical festivals both nationally and internationally to mention but a few.

If all that have been discussed so far in this write up are taken into cognizance and put to practice. There will be love, peace, harmony, and unity among the diverse culture areas which would invariably contribute positively to national development.

Recommendation

To enhance national development through music and culture, the writer recommends the following:

1. Cultural/music borrowing among the diverse ethnic groups.
2. Organization of cultural/musical festivals locally, nationally and internationally, especially among schools, churches, communities and the like.
3. Relay the music of other culture areas in the radio and television of other states.
4. Encourage the teaching and learning of other people's language, dressing, and dance both in and outside school.
5. Encouraging inter-cultural or inter-tribal marriage

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