

MUSIC: A VEHICLE FOR UNITY AND NATIONBUILDING

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Abstract

In a diversified country like Nigeria where every ethnic group has its cultural norms and values that guide them, there is need to create an avenue of uniting the various ethnic groups that make up the country. This paper presents music as one of the avenues through which unity can be achieved despite the pluralistic nature of the country. In this paper, music is seen as part of the culture of every ethnic group and unites members of each group as they come together to perform. Through musical performances, people from different ethnic groups are brought together to form a performing group who see themselves as one, undermining their different ethnic backgrounds. Music from the different ethnic groups can be performed together. It also sees music as a means of preserving the culture of the ethnic groups and Nigeria in general through the musical performances, musical notation and different electronic media. It sees music as a way of making Nigerians to be self-reliant and making money for the government especially through the ministry of arts and culture and boosting national events in the military, police force and other sectors. The paper adopted the historical method and secondary source collecting data. It concludes that music should be given the important place it occupied in the past in our various communities, government and school curricular to enable it serve the purposes of unity and helping to build the nation.

Conceptualization: Music, Vehicle, Unity, Nation Building, Ethnic Group.

Music

Kokkidou (2021) quoting worldwide acknowledged dictionaries defines music as “the art or science of combining or of arranging vocal or instrumental sounds in order to produce “pleasant sounds” (or “sounds in a pleasing way”), and compositions that have beauty, form, harmony, melody, rhythm, unity, continuity, emotional content etc. Music is an art that brings sounds (vocal and instrumental) together to express ideas and emotions in organized, harmonious and interesting manners. They involve creative thinking. Ibekwe (2020:1) sees music as two sides of a coin and an art with artistic features and characteristics such as styles and skills of performance as can be seen in dancing, singing and playing instruments. It can be seen as a science in that it deals with the study of acoustics, sound productions, mathematical relationships and intervallic applications.

Vehicle

Vehicle can be seen as a medium or an avenue through which a motive, purpose or an idea can be executed or achieved. It is a means used in achieving an end.

Unity

Giorgi, A. (1985) sees unity as “singleness”, integrating diverse parts without any difference. Unity is a state where many different parts agreeably work together as though they were one; all the members of the group speaking with one voice and working towards achieving the same purpose.

Nation Building

According to Igbini (2020), nation building can be seen as a process of constructing or structuring a national identity using the power which aims at the unification of the people within the state so that it remains politically stable and viable in the long run. Nation building is everything a government puts in place or does to bring about development such that the country becomes strong and viable. It is the process of working for the advancement of a nation by harnessing the natural resources human talents in the various parts of the country for the purpose of moving the nation to its greatest height.

Ethnic Group

Zagefka, H. (2015) defines ethnic group as “a collective that has a shared common name, a shared myth of common descent, shared historical memories, one or more differentiating elements of common culture, an association with a specific “homeland” and a sense of solidarity for significant sectors of the population.” While Hamer (2020) defines it as “a unity of persons of common culture and language or of common blood and descent”.

Introduction

Nigeria is a nation of many states, ethnic groups, languages/dialects, cultures and religious beliefs. Her pluralistic nature has led to different challenges including differences in opinions while taking decisions on important issues that affect the governance of the country. This has hindered peaceful co-existence, unity and progress Akpotor (2019). Music is part of the culture of every ethnic group/community in Africa. It has served and still serving different purposes in our African communities. One of the purposes music serves in our communities is that of bringing people together to perform different kinds of music as a group at different occasions. Irrespective of the challenges caused by ethnicity and religion, music can still serve as a means of bridging the gap that has existed between the different ethnic groups and religions so that they begin to see themselves as one.

This paper shall therefore look briefly at how Nigeria has fared over the years in her ethnic and religious/ pluralistic nature, the challenges, the consequences on the

nation and how music can serve as a means of uniting the ethnic groups and contribute to nation building.

Methodology

The paper used historical method to recapture events and ideas of the past that have influenced and shaped the present and suggested the way forward.

Theoretical Framework

This work was based on Daisaku Ikeda's philosophy of peace. This philosophy was propounded in the 1980s. The ideology of this philosophy is that a peaceful society should be that where everyone can maximize their potential to live a fulfilled life free from threat to their dignity. He went further to say that peace can only be established on the basis of respect for the dignity of human life and a recognition of shared humanity. He added that strengthening the bonds of connection and mutual respect among different people is the first essential step to building a robust and inclusive culture of peace on a global scale. Ultimately, such a culture of peace represents the only fundamental solution to the challenges of war and terror. In relating the theory to this work, if members of the different ethnic groups and religions in Nigeria can be connected and bonded, taught to have respect for the dignity of human life, they can coexist peacefully so that the society will be free from all forms of insecurity that we are experiencing today and be able to use their potentials maximally to contribute to national development.

Review of Related Literature

Nwauba and Chieji (2019:7) quoting Anas (2011) state that "Nigeria originated from forcible amalgamation of disparate nations that, in the period proceeding their colonization, scarcely interacted with each another beyond the mundane spheres of commerce, marriage, war, alliances and diplomacy. Even common tribes maintained divisions along cities and areas". They further stated that at the attainment of independence in 1960, "the seeds of ethnic politics sown during the pre-independence days were already grown." This means that the ethnic groups brought together to form one nation under one leadership had lived as independent kingdoms. The ethnic ties and interests already established during the pre-independence days were still maintained and often times protected more than national ties and interests. The protection of the different cultural groups at the detriment of national interest has hindered national unity and development.

Added to the problem of ethnic politics is the differences in the religious beliefs of members of the different ethnic groups in the country. According to Akpotor (2019:46), the Nigerian society today is religiously pluralized to the extent that there are clear boundaries and demarcations between denominations and faith traditions. Members of each religious group look out for the interest of their

members just like the ethnic groups. This has made the situation worst and put us where we are in Nigeria today.

According to Nwauba and Chieji (2019:5), the past leaders of Nigeria have adopted different administrative strategies like the “power sharing model,” the colonial method of three separate administrations and others to bring the different ethnic groups together and be led as one Nigeria. None of these strategies has helped matters. Instead, it tended to create a wider gap between the ethnic groups that make up the country. they added that the mismanagement of the oil situated insome parts of the country and competition for it has caused more problems instead of ameliorating the already existing ones.

Consequences on the Nation

Differences in ethnicity and religious belief have caused serious problems in the country over the years. It has affected political decisions and scio-economic policies of the nation. It has disrupted peaceful co-existence, governance and national development. Akpotor (2019:47) states that religious and ethnic differences have led to misplaced revolts and protests such as those staged by maitatsine and boko haram. It has resulted in killings, loss of lives and properties, abduction, anxiety etc. Ajayi and Owumi (2019:928) observed that inspite of Nigeria’s independence and enormous revenue from oil since the 1970s, the nation’s economy remains underdeveloped, distorted and disarticulated. Consequently, the society is plagued by a high level of illiteracy, mortality rates.....waves of crime and violence, poor and insufficient but largely unaffordable transportation, communication,.....healthcare services, robbery etc. The consequences are evident in all areas of human life in Nigeria.

The Way forward:

Since we are operating in a country with different ethnic groups who were far apart, where the different administrative strategies adopted by the past leaders have failed, music which is part of every culture, loved and performed by all canbe used to bring these ethnic groups together irrespective of the differences in their backgrounds and religious beliefs. Below are some of the ways it can be achieved:

1. Music Unites people

Music is one of the activities where people from different walks of life, communities, age, gender and religious belief come together to listen to or perform music together. It is natural for people who come together to enjoy music to be closer. They can become friends who identify with each other. Henon (2021) says that “the power of music compels us to become closer to people than ever before”. It can bring people from all around the world from varying walks of life together in a powerful unity. According to Hanon, studies have shown that listening to and singing music together greatly impart the neurochemicals in the brain that play a crucial role in

connection and closeness. He says music is one of the activities that create group identity and a positive reactor to group conflict and threat. Music has the power to unite different people who form a bond such that it will be difficult for them to fight each other. This according to him is an important factor in human evolutionary success and societal stability.

2. Music serves as an avenue of sharing emotions

Suttie (2019:3) states that “musicians pour emotions into their art and their fans whether they number in their tens or in their millions experience that emotional journey along with them, connecting with the artist and even with each other through their shared experience of the songs”. Emotions of the music composer, some other individuals or the society are often times expressed through music. The emotions of music performers and even the audience are usually influenced by the emotions expressed through the music being performed.

Such emotions can make people laugh, cry, angry or nostalgic. Some can send the listeners to sleep or encourage them to take action. The mood of a particular music influences the listeners to feel the same way with the composer and performers. They share in the same mood/emotions at the same time. When a group of people sit to watch a musical performance where they were influenced by the emotions of the music that they laughed or cried or expressed anger or felt nostalgic together, they cannot help talking to each other about the music, the lyrics etc. This can bring people from different ethnic groups to become friends, thereby helping to bridge the gap that may have existed between their clans/ethnic groups.

3. Music is a vehicle of experiencing other cultures.

Suttie (2019:2) opined that “when music from one culture is shared with people from another, they may get a meaningful glimpse into another way of life. This is especially important in situations of conflict.” Some music groups comprise of people from different cultures. Performing music from the different cultures that make up the group and beyond helps to unite the members of the groups more i.e. seeing themselves as one even if they come from different cultures. In such groups, no culture is superior to the other. Other members of the different ethnic groups that make up the music group will also be influenced to unite with each other as they watch the musical performances presented by the group. This will help the cultures to understand each other more and even practice each other’s music.

4. Music helps to develop team spirit

Nobody is an island of his own in any music group. Everything done must be in harmony. In singing, playing instruments and dancing, every member of the group must follow a given rhythm and time. If one person or part fails, it affects the other parts. In attempt to achieve harmony, every member co-operates with each other for the group to achieve success. Suttie (2019:3) says that “performing music involves coordinating our efforts... when we try to synch with others musically,

keeping the beat or harmonizing, we have positive social feelings towards those with whom we are synchronizing”.

Working closely with other members of a group helps to build the ability to work with others (team spirit). It can also lead to trust among the group members. This trust can be extended to the other members of the group members’ society in the present and future relationships. Team spirit will enable us work with people from other communities and cultures in Nigeria, seeing each other as from the same country.

5. Music Increases National Unity

Okafor (2010:14) describes music as “the expression or art that is most accessible to human beings in any situation in their lives – crisis or calm, work and worship, play or war, recreation or reflection, music is implicated in life and people go all out to use it to communicate, move, to express emotions and ideas and to mobilize people or rally them to solidarity.”

There are different kinds of music. Some music talk about individuals, a group of people, adults, men, women, youths, children, communities/languages and nations. Some are composed to encourage, spur the listeners to action, some talk about unity. Music can help to build harmony and solidarity among other values in individuals. Some kinds of music suggest peacefulness, moderation and self- control. Those kinds of music gradually build the virtues/values contained in them in those who perform and listen to them.

Music whose theme is on unity reminds the people that they are one and whenever such music is performed, it works magic in the minds of the listeners of the need to live together as one entity irrespective of their communities, languages and cultures. An example of such music is the national anthem.

Nigeria’s First National Anthem After Independence (1960-1978)

Nigeria We Hail Thee

(Lyrics by Lillian Jean Williams, Music by Frances Berda.)

1. Nigeria we hail thee,
Our own dear native land,
Though tribe and tongue may differ,
In brotherhood we stand,
Nigerians all and proud to serve
Our sovereign Motherland.
2. Our flag shall be a symbol
That truth and justice reign,
In peace or battle honour’d,
And this we count as gain,
To hand on to our children

A banner without stain.

3. O God of all creation,
Grant this our one request,
Help us to build a nation
Where no man is oppressed,
And so, with peace and plenty
Nigeria may be blessed.

Nigeria's second national anthem was written in 1978 by Mr. Ben. Odiase.
Below is the lyrics:

Arise o compatriots

1. Arise, o compatriots, Nigeria's call obey
To serve our fatherland
With love and strength and faith.
The labor of our heroes past
Shall never be in vain.
To serve with heart and might
One nation bound in freedom, peace and unity.

2. Oh God of creation, direct our noble cause
Guide our leaders right
Help our youth and truth to know
In love and honesty to grow
And living just and true
Great lofty heights attain
To build a nation where peace and justice shall reign

Almost every line of the two anthems has something to teach us about having value for our country, living together as one irrespective of our ethnic groups, ensuring peace and justice and so on. More of such songs can be used to unite the different communities in Nigeria without minding our languages, cultures and religious beliefs. Below is another one by Sonya Spence on unity and peace:

Whooh whooh yeah
O oh, hmm-hmm
Tell me why can't we stop the killing?
Why can't we stop the fight
And live and live in unity
Every day we 're fighting
Taking our brother's life
It's time for peace
Yeah, it's time for peace
Look at the beautiful world

The father has given us to live in
And all we do is make war, yeah war
You know, it's time we start
To live like human beings
And not like untamed, untamed animals
Remember, the boys and girls of today
Will be the men and women of tomorrow
We have to live yes, we must live
For them to see
So come on brothers and sisters
Let's join hands and hearts
And live in peace, live in peace and unity
When we begin to live as it was planned
Then we build, we must build a better land
Oo yeah let's put away the guns, people
Put away the ammunitions and live in peace,
Live in peace and unity.....

Dan Sa' aba by Abubakar Aminu
I pray may peace reign in Nigeria
And all over the world
Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa yan Nigeria etc, etc.

In stanza one of the first national anthem, words like “ our own dear native land, though tribe and tongue may differ in brotherhood we stand; Nigerians all are proud to serve our sovereign motherland” In stanza two, words like : our flag shall be a symbol that truth and justice reign... to hand on to our children a banner without stain. These lyrics tell so much about unity among the numerous ethnic groups that make up the country. Stanza three is a wish and prayer to build a nation where no man is oppressed and so with peace and plenty, Nigeria may be blessed The second national anthem still in use now starts with a clarion call for all Nigerians to arise and serve our father land with love and strength and faith and so on.

The lyrics of the anthems are patriotic enough to captivate the hearts of the citizens to work towards peace and unity and I think they served that purpose for many decades. The song by Sonya Sprince speaks of doing away with fighting and killings to live in peace and unity.

Abubakar Aminu and Timi Dunkolo is also on peace and unity. Kush wrote “Let's live together” which emphasizes together we stand, divided we fall. King Sunny Ade wrote “Lift up Nigeria” where he talked about unity amongst all tribes in Nigeria. These songs have helped to unite the different ethnic groups to a large

extent over the years. Many other songs have been written by different people on peace and unity. The list is inexhaustible.

Music is oftentimes captivating. It arrests the attention of its listeners who are carried along with the music as they enjoy it. The lyrics of music can be so touching that they prick the hearts of the listeners, and move them into action, making them see themselves as one. These kind of music according to Heron (2021:2) can create a world and a macro society that cares and co-operates.

Music and Nation Building

This paper has discussed extensively the different ways that music can bring people of different origins, cultures, and languages together to become friends, bonded together to a level that they can work as a team. When the people that make up a nation are united, building it becomes possible. In agreement (unity), they can contribute their quota to building the nation. Below are some of the ways that music can be used to build a nation.

1. Music is Used to Create and Strengthen Cultural Identity.

Music is part of the culture of every nation. The music of the different ethnic groups that make up Nigeria can be harnessed and used at national events to strengthen and preserve the cultural identity of the nation.

2. Music Serves as a Means of Imparting Cultural Norms, Values and Morals.

It is used in teaching the people morals, norms and values to keep members of the society on the right path. Okafor and Okunbor (2022:5) quoting Baker (1960) state that through the ears and eyes, music transfers wisdom.....to the soul. Plato (1908) asserted that a person who knows music but has no understanding of good and evil cannot be expected to be treated as an ethical individual. This shows the power of music in moulding the character of individuals so that they become responsible individuals who can team up with other Nigerians to build the country. It does this through the lyrics, rhythm, melody, harmony etc. Some kinds of music suggest peacefulness, moderation and self-control. Plato (1908) believes that music, education and morality are connected.

It is still used in correcting wrong behaviours in our communities. Music was used recently to express people's feelings about the wrong attitude exhibited by some individuals during the just concluded elections. Through music defaulters are made to know that what they did is wrong and frowned at by the society. In order to fit into the society as good citizens, they know that they need to change. Abor-ngogy (2019:1) states that "ideologies conveyed through the medium of music seem to carry a greater power of assimilation than spoken words". He went further to say that "societies have long imbibed such medium in transmitting fundamental values like love, patriotism, justice and equity".

3. Music, an Avenue of Gaining International Repute

Through musical activities, a nation can gain international recognition. This can be possible by organizing the music of the different ethnic groups that make up a nation to present at national events and as planned by the organizers. This will help to showcase and preserve the rich cultures of the country. They can form a music theatre that will attract people from within and outside the country. It then becomes a tourist center. This can be done through the ministry of arts and culture.

4. Music Helps to Build a Nation's Economy

Sanjen (2022:3) states that music is a strong element, a vital and viable way of enriching the country. Music brings money to the nation through musical activities in music theatres, tax on export of music. Through the purchase of musical instruments especially traditional musicians who patronize local craftsmen that produce traditional instruments. Tourism and musical performances at other times can bring money in to the country's economy. Music also provides job opportunities for the musicians and other people they employ to work with them at different levels.

5. Music Helps to Build the Education Sector of a Nation

Music has always played a supportive role in teaching and learning in schools especially in nursery and primary schools. Many concepts in mathematics, English language/poetry, religious knowledge, social studies, geography, history and other subjects are taught with the aid of music. It makes teaching and learning easier, more lively/interesting, it helps to sustain learners' attention, it aids retention and memory i.e. concepts learnt through music are easier to recall when needed. Through learning with music our educational system can produce intelligent individuals in their areas of specialization who will use their knowledge and talents to develop the nation. Through music, more traditional songs in the different dialects can be composed and the already existing ones written musically for posterity.

Conclusion

Mylonas (2021:1) quoting Wimmer (2018) opined that "the desired outcome of nation building is to achieve social order and national integration. Success in nation building results in societies where individuals are primarily loyal to the nation". It has become necessary to integrate the ethnic groups in Nigeria and make conscious efforts to impart the right character that will promote peaceful co-existence through music, putting aside tribal and religious sentiments, nepotism, bribery and corruption, greed, violence, banditry, abduction and other vices so that we can have a nation whose members are united and in that state of unity, build the country to an enviable standard.

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