

ENHANCING NATIONAL INTEGRATION THROUGH MUSIC: AN APPRAISAL

Ibekwe, Eunice U.
Department Of Music
Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka
Anambra State

DOI: [10.13140/RG.2.2.15954.71365](https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.15954.71365)

Abstract

Human beings have been able to harness the power of music as a mode of expression in their societies to touch people's life and give meaning to their whole being and existence. When we talk of music in this guise, it entails every aspect of musical arts engaged by people, which could be viewed from different perspectives such as dance, instruments and songs. This discourse centred on the contributions of these different aspects of musical elements or components towards enhancing national integration. A critical appraisal of the functions of these elements and analyses of some song texts from the music of some notable Nigerian musicians provided working materials for the work. It was duly observed that among many other functions of music, national integration is optimally propelled and given a pride of place by musicians in the country.

Key words: Music, Musician, national integration

Introduction

Music making embraces all aspects of musical arts. Looking at various arms relating to music, such as composition, dancing, singing, acting, arranging and choreographing, playing of musical instruments and so on, one is left without doubt that music making does not just mean one single form of operation but rather a multifaceted art. All these arms do not exist by themselves; they are fashioned out and executed by individuals with special musical skills and abilities for the achievement of societal goals which include the enhancement of national integration.

Different definitions of music have placed it in various conceptual dimensions. Great scholars of music such as Merriam 1964, Nketia 1974, Blacking 1975, and Nzewi 1991 and so on, have painted a diversified image about this art form – music, and none has ever falling short of describing and bringing out the intrinsic and extrinsic values attached to it. Merriam in his own way describes

music as product of man which has structure that cannot have an existence of its own divorced from the behaviour that produces it. In other words music cannot operate outside its environmental or existential milieu. Copland in Ofose (2010), differs a little when he aligns that, "every artist's work is of course an expression of himself, but none so direct as that of the creative musician. He gives us, without relation to exterior 'events' the quintessential part of himself..." (p.106). This is describing a musician in his own right as an originator of musical work. In a more consolidated opinion, music creation is a consummation of both internal and external factors operating within a prescribed spheres or environment, and none can be divorced from the other for better outcome. This in essence implies that music mirrors its creator - the musician as well as the audience - the environment. According to Ibekwe, (2017) A (musician) is one who creates music by putting sounds together to form a logical and sensible expression that are of societal interest. He is a music maker, an arranger and originator of musical piece either for voices or instruments in such a way that communicates ideas, portrays culture, symbolizes event, socializes people and stimulates emotions. He is not making the music for himself but for the society who are invariably his audience. Musicians employ the three integral units of musical arts namely, dance, song and instrument to bring to bear their artistic prowess to the criticisms and admirations of the audience.

Concept of National Integration

Nigeria has three major ethnic groups with different cultural backgrounds which can be seen in varying traditional values such as cuisine, arts, languages, music and so on. Therefore a situation where all these cultural diversifications are tolerated in what may be regarded as 'unity in diversity' can as well lead to mutual understanding and possibly integration. According to Nwabueze in Ekwereiri (2012) "the term national integration bears the connotation of bringing parts into a whole, of removal of barriers that cause segregation. It involves unification and cooperation. It is equally the method of combining separate parts into one monolithic entity (p. 458). From the same source also, Uji "sees national integration as forging the aggregate unity of the ethnic groups in Nigeria into a common nation state" (p. 458). Music is one of such factors that bring about national integration among various ethnic groups in Nigeria and even beyond. A typical example is the coming together of Nigerian music educators under the umbrella of the Association of Nigerian Musicologists where matters concerning the wellbeing of the members are discussed rather than ethnicity. Music is a universal phenomenon that thrives even in a most stringent circumstance. Its

language is so universally accepted by people of all races in such a way that even when the medium of expression is found wanting, the offense is at times held with levity. Music is heard, presented and appreciated by all irrespective of ethnic inclination. There is no barrier to the enjoyment of good music whether it comes from Igbo, Yoruba or Hausa does not matter, provided it conveys the message required. Therefore the concept of national integration would not be complete without recourse to one of the hubs or unifying factor which is music.

Appraising the contributions of musical arts towards national integration

Musical instruments and national integration

According to Ibekwe (2009), "Nigerian communities harness their environment by making good use of local materials around them" (p. 33). As a result, each ethnic group has instruments which are peculiar to them according to the topographical formation of their area. Similarly, Agu, (2000) had earlier maintained that, "selection process (of musical instrument for each ethnic group) is however not by chance or randomly done, rather, it is a process influenced by folk thought and superstitious beliefs" (99). The use of musical instruments has now become one of the areas where Nigerians are seen speaking with one voice. It is no longer a strange thing to see instruments of Hausa or Yoruba origin in Igbo land and vice versa, topography, folk thought and superstition notwithstanding. In national museum also, one can find instruments representing different cultural groups being deposited and exposed for tourist attraction in a bid to generate income for the common purse of the nation. Some instruments of special qualities and character such as *dundun* drum and *oja* are used for Signature Tunes in both National and some State Broadcasting houses as a mark of unity. For instance, the Hour-glass drum (*dundun*) of Yoruba culture has provided a long time signature tune which is heard before national news, with the interpretation - 'This is Nigeria broadcasting service'. The drum is played in imitation of the Yoruba local language, though it has its origin from a given ethnic group but it is now representing the entire nation.

National Integration through Dance

Dance is one of the cultural activities that receive public acclaim both locally and nationally even internationally. Different Local Governments, States and Federal Government most often organize dancing competitions to select the best dancing group that may represent them in outside performance. The moment a group is selected, having qualified and emerged as local government and state champion

it becomes a national troupe and then starts to enjoy Federal support and equally assume national status, and hence such firm is achieved the question of where is it from becomes immaterial. A very good example is the *Nkpokiti* dancing troupe of the Igbo, *Ijieleghe* of Esan and so many others like that. The moment a troupe has risen to the level of excellence (champion of champions) it is no more ethnic based just like the national football team that symbolizes unity in Nigeria and nobody asks where a particular player comes from. By this instance, dance can bring national integration.

Songs as media for National Integration

This area needs more elaborations than the ones treated before it. Songs employ the use of words. A word can build as well as destroy a nation. When we talk of songs we equally talk of the musicians that compose the songs. Our topic is on national integration therefore our focus would be on the songs that enhance national integration rather than those that bring disintegration or disunity. There are notable Nigerian musicians whose message bearing songs and call for unity need commendation. Examples would be drawn from pop musicians whose musics are more easily assessable by the populace. Such people include, Onyeka Onwenu, Nelly Uchendu, Oliver De Coque, Sonny Okosun, Chief Ebenezer Obey, Funmi Adams, Veno Marioghae, Chief Steven Osita Osadebe and many others. These people mentioned here are some of the crusaders of a kind, who use their music as a clarion call for peace and unity in the Country. The writer decides to exemplify popular music just for precision because there are so many other musicians even from other genres of musical arts that are not mentioned.

The analyses of few excerpts from some of their songs will make an inroad into what this paper is contending. Obviously, song text seems to be the most essential aspect of music that gives it the desired concept and impact. The music may agreeably contain a very sensational rhythmic accompaniment yet it is the content of the song that gives the message and meaning to the performance, hence the text is expected to centre on the events and matters of common interest and concern to the members of a community before it is appreciated. According to Nketia, (1974)

The treatment of the song texts as a form of speech utterances arises not only from stylistic considerations or from consciousness of the analogous features of speech and music, it is also inspired by the importance of the song as an avenue of verbal communication, a medium for creative verbal

expressions which can reflect both personal and social experiences. Accordingly, the themes of songs tend to centre on events and matters of common interest and concern to the members of a community or social groups within it; they may deal with everyday life or with the traditions, beliefs and customs of the society (189).

The above submission is in line with what this discourse intends to propagate. Song text is one of the most essential fabrics musicians employ to give meaning to their musical art. They capture every event around them and with the use of suitable texts create verbal expressions that reflect societal appeal and expectations. The excerpts selected for this work centre on matters of common interest which national integration is part of. Here are some of the songs that focus on oneness and togetherness:-

1. One love by Onyeka Onwenu

Verse 1

Don't be sad, understand
Everybody has a day when the sun stays away
Take heart in a new tomorrow
Living one love between
Looks for a brighter day
You never need worry
Let one love set you free

Chorus: One love keep(s) us together.

Every musician is a member of a society and knows what happens in the society. According to Okafor (2005), a musician "shares a role of keeping watchful eye on the goings-on in the society" (10). From the above excerpts, as one can see, things are hard everywhere; people are sad, hopeless and worried. There is depression and disappointment. Some people are enjoying in the country while some are in helpless situation. There is no love, no good relationship amongst neighbours. Those that have do not care about those that do not have. Onyeka is giving hope to the hopeless and assuring them of a better living and better tomorrow. She pleads with people to embrace love and let it live amongst them. If there is cordiality amongst neighbours the society will be integrated because sadness and worry will tear us apart.

2. Peace song by Onyeka Onwenu

We're the women of Nigeria
And peace is what we bring
Let it reign, let it reign everywhere...
And peace is what we need
So that all can live as one
Chorus:
Let there be peace in our hearts
Peace in our homes
Peace in our nation and the world

Onyeka is exceptionally nationalistic in this piece. She is a woman and knows quite well the powers of women in every home. A peaceful woman will always try to make her home peaceful, bring up her children in a morally sound manner, hence a saying, 'train a woman and you have trained a nation.' This Country Nigeria has always at one time or the other been exposed to serious torture of man inhumanity to man, political quagmire, feudal wars, kidnapping and most recently Boko Haram insurgency, Herdsmen attack and other related crises. All these troubles are fermented and executed by people born of women. Onyeka's song is ever green as it follows every unfolding trend and event in the country. A country that has no peace has no development, no progress and indeed no future. The masses will be suffering and live in fears and disintegration. Onyeka advises that the peace she was advocating and emphasising should start from our hearts where evil thoughts and hatred are bred and when they hatch, the home becomes the closest target of operation, before it then spread to the nation and the whole world. So Onyeka was then beckoning for peace so that there would be unity stretching from home to the wider world.

3. Nigeria my beloved Country by Funmi Adamms

I know a lot about my country
I know a lot because I care
I know a lot about the people
I know a lot because I'm here...
Chorus:
Nigeria my beloved country

Working together is the key
Nigeria my beloved country
Our future is you and me

A musician does not start making music just for the fun of it, there must be some events, emotions, thoughts and feelings that must have ignited it. Funmi Adams has been observing the situation in Nigeria and thus she was bemoaning the Country where people do not care about what happens in it. A country where crises, problems and disintegration are the order of the day yet, people stay calm as if all is well, or that they do not bother. She sounded it loud and clear that people should wake up. She decried that this feat cannot be achieved unless we come together, work together as one. To her the only solution to Nigeria's problem is unity.

4. No more war by Oliver De Coque

My country people - o
Nigeria my country - o
Wetin de happen for Rwanda in Africa
Make ino happen for my country Nigeria
Wetin de happen for Somalia in Africa
I don't want to happen for my country Nigeria.
Na wa o o, na wa oo
Everyday na so so trouble
Everyday na so so trouble
Wetin de caus'am
Na money palaver
Na money crises
Na lack of unity

Why we kill one another?
Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba na one country
Our country is blessed
Oil de o, cocoa de o, groundnut de o
Why we de fight, killing one another
Trouble no good o
Fight no good o
Na wa o we don't want

No more war

In this piece, Oliver condemns war with its consequent killing and destruction of human lives and properties. He wondered why the country that is blessed with so many cultural endowments such as oil, cocoa, groundnut and a lot more would be fighting and killing one another. He attributed it to hatred and lack of unity. He tried to remind his audience that Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba are one country, and pleaded for peace and oneness so that our nation would not be like that of Rwanda and Somalia and other war infested areas.

5. Which way Nigeria? by Sunny Okosun

Chorus: which way Nigeria?

Which way Nigeria?

Which way to go?

I love my fatherland

I want to know

Which way Nigeria is heading to

Many years after Independence

We still find it hard to start

How long shall we be patient

Before we reach the Promised Land?

Tell me, let's save Nigeria

So Nigeria won't die

Inefficiency and indiscipline

Nearly ran the country down

Corruption here, there, and everywhere

Inflation soaring high, why?

Let's save Nigeria so Nigeria won't die

We made mistakes during the oil boom

Not knowing that was our doom

Some people now have everything

While many have nothing, why?

Let's save Nigeria so Nigeria won't die

Our ambition to be millionaires

Is running the country down

We all want to be millionaires
So as to make the country smile
Let's save Nigeria so Nigeria won't die
And so on and so forth

In this song, Sunny Okosun saw Nigeria as one large family bedevilled by many atrocities, and dilemma of life. A country bewitched by corruption, marginalization, inflation and insecurity. A country blessed with enormous wealth yet its citizens are suffering, dying in abject poverty because her wealth is being controlled by a few individuals, while the majority is left with nothing. He attributed it to greed where everybody wants to be a millionaire at the expense of others. Therefore, this rhetorical question - 'which way Nigeria?' is a food for thought type of question which was meant to cause people think or generate a reflective mind and find solution to the nasty situation, in order to save the country from eventual collapse and disintegration. According to Okafor, (2005) "music is of course acceptable as an instrument of change because people digest it and consume it...while it re-directs the person towards a new personality, towards a new activity" (p.277) .

6. Nigeria go survive by Veno Marioghae

If they tief our oil - o
Even if they burn de oil - o
I say if they drain de oil - o
No matter how they try - o
Our root de strong for ground - o
Ancestors no go gree - o
The god of thunder and lightning
United should Nigeria

Chorus: Nigeria go survive
Africa go survive
My people go survive - o
Nigeria go survive

Andrew no check out - o
Stay and build your country
Na who go die for you - o
Blood is thicker than water

If Andrew do him work - o
And me I do my own - o
If our leaders do dem best
Andrew go stay to help - o
Etc

Veno was making a very optimistic and positive proclamation about Nigeria's survival. She was of the opinion and conviction that no matter what happens (crises, civil unrest, Niger Delta crises etc) that Nigeria must still remain one country. Obviously, Nigeria is endangered by political and economic bankruptcy. People's lives and properties are terribly jeopardized and security outfit is just a mockery of what a nation can boast of. People are being forced by adversity to flee the country for better means of living. Amidst all, Veno was giving hope of better condition if only everybody would come together and build the country. Also if the leaders on their own part should lead well, that Nigeria will survive. These examples are not exhaustive of contributions music is making to enhance national integration, there are still many of them that are yearning for attention that are not discussed.

Conclusion

Music is one the factors that advocates and enhance national integration. Judging from the above examples one would confirm the claim that music is one of the central hub to national integration. Therefore, seeing music as nothing but one of the media available to fulfil man's innate desire for pleasure is deceitfully construed and a misconception. This paper contends that music has the potency of addressing issues of national concern. The reality of its efficacy or effectiveness is most evident in the functions and usages which can never be divorced from man's daily existential needs such as peace, unity and or integration.

References

Agu, D. C. C. (2000). Music in Nigeria culture, types and practices. N. E. Ojiakor, G. C. Unachukwu, and A. Obiajulu (Eds) *Challenges of National Growth and Development in Nigeria*. 89-102. Enugu: John Jacobs's Classic Publishers.

Blacking, J. (1976). *How musical is man?* London: Faber and Faber Ltd

Ekweariri, C. S. (2012). The Performative Arts and the quest for good governance in Nigeria: A panacea for national integration. (Eds) A.B.C. Chiegboka,

- T. C. Utoh-Ezeajugh, E. U. Ibekwe, C. C. Nwosu, N. C. Oguno and K. L. Nwadiolor. *The Humanities and Good Governance*.453-468
- Ibekwe, E. U. (2009). The performance organization of igbaeze royal music of the Igbo of Southeast Nigeria. *Awka Journal of Research in Music and the Arts*. 6, 30-36
- Ibekwe, E. U. (2017).*Gender disparity in the production and performance of music in Igbo society: a critical appraisal*. A paper presented at the National Conference of the Association of Nigerian Musicologist held at Abraka.
- Merriam, A. P.(1964). *The Anthropology of Music*. New York: North Western University Press.
- Nketia, J. H. K. (1974). *The Music of Africa*. London: W.W. Norton and Company Inc.
- Nzewi, M. (1991). *Musical practice and creativity: An African traditional perspective*. Bayreuth: Iwalewa Haus
- Ofosu, J.S. (2010). The African composer as a social critic. *Ekpoma Journal of Theatre and Media Arts (EJOTMAS)*,3,1&2, 104-114. Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma.
- Okafor, R. C. (2005), *Music in Nigerian Society*. Enugu: *New Generation Books*.