

Nigerian Perspective to Musical Altruism and Nation Building

Johnson James Akpakpan, Emmanuelabur-Ngogyo

Department of Music University of Uyo, Uyo

Research Postgraduate Student Department of Music University of Uyo

Corresponding Author: Johnson James Akpakpan

Abstract: Music has earned its reputation among the various disciplines of life as an indelible tool for socio-cultural transformation. Ideologies conveyed through the medium of music seem to carry a greater power of assimilation than spoken words. Societies have long imbibed such medium in transmitting fundamental values like love, patriotism, justice and equity. This paper holds the view that having an altruistic penchant for transmitting ideologies and societal values through music both by art musicians and other indigenous songwriters, is an indication that music has shifted from just being an item meant for entertainment into a valuable cognitive tool for societal development in Nigeria. Furtherance, the research corroborates previous findings using the descriptive method, gathering sources from related bibliographical evidence and some personal observations. Findings from this research indicate that musical altruism can lead to a patriotic contribution to nation building and can be a panacea even in extremely non-conformist societies by promoting the development and sustenance of individual, group, cultural and national identities.

Keywords: Musical altruism, Nation Building

Date of Submission: 30-05-2019

Date of acceptance: 15-06-2019

I. INTRODUCTION

Music is embedded in society, resulting not only in the way people behave but also in their general attitude to life. It is also a reflection of society, revealing some of the values that it possesses. Merriam (1964) states that music is a universal human behavior, a defining trait of man having the following functions; emotional expression, aesthetic enjoyment, entertainment, communication, symbolic representation, physical response, enforcing conformity, validation of social institutions and religious rituals, contribution to the continuity and stability of cultures, as well as contribution to the integration of the society (citation Needed). Different generations have different texture and flavour of conveying goodwill, which is expressed and generated through music. A good example is the Beethoven's 9th symphony which reverberated in Germany on December 23rd 1989 as conducted by Leonard Bernstein a month after the fall of the Berlin wall. With the zest of oneness and cry for freedom and unity, people have anchored their memory of that event with the song of Joy (Freude) or Freedom (Freiheit) as Bernstein would prefer. Interestingly, the autograph score of the ninth symphony which was initially under the custody of the Berlin State Library was added to the United Nations World Heritage List in 2001. It is the first Musical Score to be so honoured.

The apartheid riveted country of South Africa echoed out the Nkosi Sikelele'i Africa (which means God bless Africa) with greater enthusiasm and national pride at the international rugby tournament in 1995. All these acts characterise one thing; that the human person is intrinsically expressive of goodwill when the right ambience is created. In Africa, nation-building according to Adigun (2014) is a concept that gained prominence in the late 1960s and early 1970s when President Julius Kambarage Nyerere of Tanzania strongly advocated it for fragile post-Colonial African States. The fragility of these states soon became apparent and was exposed in several lights. Nationalism had a pan Africanist posture as outstanding people rose from the ranks to become a significant representation of their ideas of a nation with sovereign powers. Adigun goes on to outline several African leaders who tilted towards authoritarianism than an all-inclusive government. In his words;

Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda of Malawi declared himself President-for-Life; In Lesotho, Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan voided the 1970 election which he had lost; King Sobhuza of Swaziland abolished the Parliament and the Constitution and reinstated a monarchy. Concurrently with the period when Zambia and Malawi were dissolving the Central African Federation coinciding with the merger of Tanganyika and Zanzibar to form present-day Tanzania. A large number of African States soon fell into Military dictatorship. In Nigeria, a series of events led to the collapse of democratic institutions in 1966 and subsequently, a bitter Civil War. The price to pay for not building a nation can be very costly.

Nigeria is a pluralistic entity with diverse cultures and ethnic variations. Therefore, maximising any component within its reach to secure a national character is not out of place. Music in Nigeria has proven to be a

credible tool as evidenced in her over half a century of existence. It has been used for wealth creation, advocacy and mass orientation, boosting tourism potentials and a whole lot more. The correlation between all this and altruism is the core of this paper. Some hypothetical questions may be asked, like;

- i. Are there composers who are driven by altruism in the quest for a greater Nigeria?
- ii. Do music listeners see the altruistic motive to songs and musical compositions around them?

The paper begins by laying a foundation to the perception people have of music as it relates to nation-building. One of the most agreeable definitions of music is aptly captured by Blacking (2015) when he asserts that music is humanly organized sound (even when gotten from the most unusual of material) An ideological expression with a deliberate musical thought is already music.

Events in history have clearly shown altruistic driven activities which use(d) music as a rallying point. A case in point is the USA for Africa, a musical gathering of performers and artists coming together to raise more than one hundred million dollars to help curb poverty in Africa and the United States. Related musical cover content was organised at the wake of the earthquake in Haiti in 2010, raising approximately twenty-five million dollars. From the examples above, one can infer that there is a seemingly motivating factor that prompts people to get committed for a cause.

Altruism

The word altruism is explained in the Catholic online encyclopedia to be a term formed by Auguste Comte in 1851, on the Italian adjective *altru*(other) and employed by him to denote the benevolent. Comte held that people have two distinct motives in life: egoism altruism. It was introduced into English by George H. Lewes in 1853 and popularized after that by expounders and advocates of Comte's philosophy. Though used primarily, in a psychological sense, to designate emotions of a reflective kind, the immediate consequences of which are beneficial to others, its vital significance is ethical. As such it defines a theory of conduct by which only actions are having for their object the happiness of others possesses moral value.

From a psychological perspective, Gaines (2018) gives four types of altruism. These include nepotistic (altruism based on family. example is the self-sacrifice to care for the needs of your child), reciprocal or mutualism (altruism is seen from a perspective of giving and take relationship) an excellent example of this type is an invitation for dinner by a friend. The chances are that you might reciprocate the gesture. A third type is group-based altruism (this emanates from the concept of solidarity). Zwick (2011) affirms its importance inhuman society and occurs at multiple levels ranging from small groups with other members of one's community or ethnic group. Nationalism is also a potent historical force as is class solidarity. Moral altruism is yet another type of altruism which holds that the moral value of an individual's actions depends solely on the impact on other individuals, regardless of the consequences on the individual(Wikipedia). This extends to other disciplines like biology and other humanistic and socio-cultural realms (Zwick et al., 2011). Zwick offers a specific level of altruism called species altruism where the human "other" is to be regarded as self. Hence agreeing to the biblical axiom of loving your neighbour as yourself (ibid P.7) or the "other" in the golden rule (do unto others as you would want them do to you- Mt. 7:12).

Some Theoretical Debunking

A theory in psychology known as psychological egoism holds the view that humans are always motivated by self-interest even in what seems to be an altruistic act. It claims that when people help others, they do so ultimately because of personal benefits that they...expect to obtain directly or indirectly (Wikipedia/Psychological_egoism). This view is descriptive and only takes into cognisance how things are and not how they ought to be. The theory of psychological egoism does not seem to hold sway for Hume (1751) who illustrates thus "what interest can a fond mother have in view, who loses her health by assiduous attendance on her sick child, and afterwards languishes and dies in grief, when freed by its death from the slavery of that attendance?" it seems incorrect to describe such a mother's goal as self-interested. (ibid, Wikipedia). From the ongoing, there is a clear convergence of philosophical, psychological and to some extent sociological underpinnings to the concept of altruism.

A glimpse into what is usually referred to as the "third force" in psychology offers us a humanistic approach. Kass(2013) extensively gives an insight into a "Maslowian" approach to altruism which readily provides a safe posture to the quest in this paper. Maslow criticised the emphasis on sickness and pathology regarding human nature and declared that kindness, generosity, benevolence and charity have too little place in the social psychology textbooks. He asserts that psychology was fixated on the negative aspects of social exchange. He rhetorically asked, "Where are the researches on unselfishness?"(Maslow 1954). Some research works have studied the lives of exceptional altruists like Mahatma Gandhi and Mother Theresa, but their studies had no roots in empirical scientific dimensions. However, researchers like Yeung (2006), crave for some paradigm shift in research in altruism which should involve an exploration of everyday experiences and views of altruism through a combination of survey and qualitative data.

Musical Altruism: Conceptual Considerations

Except for academic or intellectual conjecturing, there may be a paucity of resources with a direct designation to the expression "Musical Altruism". That is not to say that inferred implications do not abound. A lingering question that can help advance an insightful premise would be: what musical benefit can be achieved from an altruistic behaviour? An attempt to answer this question opens up a plethora of physical, psychological, spiritual and social gains, most of which are inexhaustible. Contributing to national cohesion from an altruistic standpoint as a musician can yield an array of productive results because this would mean a selfless action that is done without counting the cost or waiting for any pecuniary reward. In the Nigerian setting, memories of Fela Anikulakpo Kuti readily come to mind. Although he may not be a textbook case of altruism, but he is purported to have said he chose to make music, not for entertainment but to use it in fighting societal ills like injustice, poverty, and freedom in Nigeria. According to Ozah (2012) Fela performs music, and honors the Yoruba deities who he believes, bestow the gift of music /musicianship which is to be used for the good of mankind.

Many people may have felt the moral will to practice or indulge in altruistic activities but may have met stiff constraints ranging from policies and bureaucratic factors, financial or economic setbacks to name just a few instances here. Musical altruism can spur creativity for the musician. He follows a lead of ideas he believes will promote the wellbeing of the people and is continuously guided by this lead of ideas. Since he is not moved by the gains or his pleasure but for the common good, the odds are that the drive for success will prevail and can be weighed on the scale of specific theories. A good example will be the theory of performativity; a theory propounded by a philosopher of language, John L. Austin as the capacity of speech and communication to act or to consummate an action. Austin proposed a three-level performative methodology for the study of language, distinguishing between the actual words spoken, what the speaker is attempting to do in uttering the locution, and the actual effect the speaker has on the interlocutor by uttering the locution. (Martinich, 2008) This approach is employed in this paper by adopting Austin's three-level framework, which is the actual music performed, including the rationale behind repertoire choice; the execution of the music and factors that affect it, such as performance style and the performers' persona, competence, ensemble interaction, cueing techniques, entrainment, and attitudes to tempo, tone color and intonation. Kartomi, 2014, p. 189-208). Hence, the actions, behaviours and gestures of an individual present a scenario of actually doing rather than reporting about it.

The Role of Music in Nation Building

Music has always been a catalyst that propels ideas. Nations are built on the blueprints of ideas. Okafor (2019) submits that music is so readily available and associated with entertainment and relaxation that some people hardly pause to ponder its implication in the social and economic development of a country. Moreover, yet, there are countries, which earn much revenue through cultural nationalism and musical tourism.

On the notion of nation-building, it is proper to inquire into what constitutes a nation. The Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford Dictionary, 2012) defines a nation to be a distinct race or people, characterized by common descent, language, or history, usually organised as a separate territory. This definition is devoid of the semantics of politics and sociology but connotes something else in nation-building. Ekong (2016) posits that developing the Human is developing the nation. So when Etuk (2004) asks the question do we have a nation...would we say that the thought of Nigeria as a nation hold any excitement for anybody today? These questions are asked against the backdrop of the failure to build persons before structures. To this end, Etuk further opines that we do have a country, which is a land mass, inhabited by certain groups of people and demarcated in certain internationally recognized ways (Ibid, P.4). In Nigeria for instance, there are about 250 ethnic groups or nationalities (Meek C.K, 1925), but we talk of Nigeria as a political unit, a country, and that, too, has certain implications in terms of the land of person's birth, citizenship, residence and other sundry factors. To this end, Etuk (2004), queries the entire idea of nationhood in the Nigerian setting especially as it pertains to national reconstruction. He posits that the many different nationalities and kingdoms inside the "one nation" Nigeria, giving credence to the paradoxical expression "multinational States" as used by Priscilla Roosevelt. In his opinion, the idea of nationhood in Nigeria is an anomaly that needs redress before attempting a solution to attendant issues like nation building or national reconstruction. The diversity in culture, language and social values have always given that unique identity to Nigeria as a country. Amidst these differences, enviable ideologies like resilience, unity and peace, have always served as templates to foster national cohesion. Some of them captured in song texts like the national anthem, and other jingles promoting national orientation (The "Unity in diversity" phrase of the Radio Nigeria jingle in the 80s come to mind).

Nigeria can easily be seen as the melting pot of artistic representation. The hosting of the Festival of Arts and Culture in 1977 (Festac '77) was the opportunity needed to demonstrate the fostering of a collective identity. Yerima (2012) succinctly captured the views of a few leaders of that time. Prominent among them was President Olusegun Obasanjo who said; nothing is more appropriate at this time in Black and African history than a re-discovery of those cultural and spiritual ties which bind together all Black and African peoples of the

world over. Indeed the festival gave the much-needed voice to an already battered race that did not seem to have fitted into the narrative of their colonial administrators. So rather than greet the festival as an avenue to showcase just talent and pageantry, participating states came out strong, making passionate statements about their identity using songs and dance and other cultural elements. Aptly captured was the undulating comment of President Leopold Senghor of Senegal who said, we should consider this colloquium as the most important point which should define and illustrate above all, its spirit; that is its culture, which is today the most powerful force in the universal civilization. (Yerima, Ibid)

Patriotism has been musically expressed in the National Anthem. Many countries such as Nigeria used their national anthems to establish the ethos of their countries, for instance: in Nigeria, "... the labor of our heroes past shall never be in vain..." Britain, "... Grant her victorious, long life to reign over us, frustrate her enemies, and confound her politics." In France, "... shall hateful tyrants, mischief-making affright and desolate the land, while peace and liberty lie bleeding..." America, "... does the star-spangled banner still wave o'er the land of the brave and the land of the free." Music is often used to mobilize people and generate sympathy and activity in the society. (Okafor, 2013)

When it comes to creativity, one cannot put a price tag to it. That is why certain climes have christened the appreciation given to a performer of any creative work as honorarium or royalty. There is however a debasing culture of restricting creativity to a pay demanding job, leaving out some laudable attributes like altruism.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS

Every nation possesses the essential component to consolidate on achieving progress and development which is usually hinged upon some value systems enshrined in the fabric to national life. According to Adigun (2014), the absence of core national values and ideology should be a source of worry to every Nigerian. Though the constitution states our core values to be "unity in diversity enshrined in justice and fair play" is at best on paper just for the records. What is tenable in the country is the prevalence of regional and ethnic values which is the major obstacle to nation-building. It is like trying to build a house without an architectural design. We also have selfishness and unpatriotic attitudes among our leaders and the people, providing another impediment to nation-building. The prevalence of vices like corruption, nepotism, mediocrity, indiscretion, religious bigotry, impunity, and general breakdown of traditional values and morals in our national life can mar the development of any nation. On the other hand, using music to transmit the core values of love, selflessness and patriotism can significantly enhance the quest for nation building.

In Nigeria, individuals and cooperate bodies use musical items to engage in meaningful dialogue and pass clear messages of the common good. One of the most various channels is using music for advocacy. Most songwriters and artists in the country have helped to put some core national issues in the front burner of our minds and help in creating a paradigm shift in government policies. The likes of Fela Kuti did it in the not too distant past. Art music enthusiasts in Nigeria have also rendered their voice through the traditional African compositions performed at concerts to portray unity in diversity. The likes of T.K Philips (in his choral suite for the Republic of Nigeria, Fela Sowande's "African suite" which gained him a worldwide recognition was also nationalistic. The likes of Lagbaja, Asa, 2face, Femi Kuti, have attracted international attention to Nigeria through music. Groups organise concerts and performances without waiting for remuneration because of ideals of altruism. Unfortunately, the perspective of people towards selfless service is grossly misconstrued. To offer a service without asking for any reward is either greeted with suspicion or considered to be of low-quality standard. There is a need to enthrone the values and morals of goodwill in every fabric of our existence. The capacity to be good transcends the physical state of human existence. Man is by nature a caring being which is evidenced in the manner in which we treat those we love. A parent goes through stressful ordeals to ensure the wellbeing of the child. Biblical evidence attests to this when Christ says; a man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends. (John 15:13 New International Version) The onus is on every citizen of the nation to ask the question; what can I contribute to building a better Nigeria?

III. CONCLUSION

From the preceding, the paper lends a cursory appraisal on the ideals of nation-building with emphasis on musical contributions. Without any doubts, different nations have different issues peculiar to them. Collaboration has proven to be the axiom that conquers any problem, the underlining factors being selflessness, patriotism and a genuine understanding of the common values that bind a people together. For music professionals, a genuine understanding of the concept of "harmony, orchestra or choral" would not just be a pun or play of words but a definitive guide to achieving the goals of nationhood. The composition of any musical piece is by itself a task of creativity, the rigorous hours spent on rehearsing on an instrument just for a few minutes performance already tells a story of success achieved through hard work. Musicians are therefore living

in a familiar terrain of maximising true creativity and hard work to achieve greatness. He is a prototype of a nation with the capacity to achieve results.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Blacking, J. (1973). *Any Musical / . V Man?* .Seattle: University of Washington Press (2nd Ed.) London: Faber and Faber Simpson, J (Ed) (2007). *Oxford English Dictionary*. United Kingdom: Oxford University Press
- [2]. Ekong, G (2016). *Atuak Oworo Song Texts and Human Development in Ibibio Land, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria*. Uyo: *Journal of Humanities* Vol.20, No.2, 92-107
- [3]. Etuk, U. (2004). *Humanities, Humanism and this Our Nation* in Uyo *Journal of Humanities* Vol.9 Pp.1-15
- [4]. Hume, David (1751). *An Enquiry Concerning the Principle of Morals* (second Edition) Oxford: The Clarendon Press https://en.m.wikipedia.org/moral_altruism. Retrieved on 2/20/2019
- [5]. Kartomi, M (2014) *concepts, Terminology and Methodology in Music Performativity Research*.Australia: DOI: 10. 1080/08145857
- [6]. Kass, S. (2014). *The Psychology of Altruism: An Urgent Quest of Humanistic Psychology*. California: Saybrook University online publishing. (www.saybrook.edu).
- [7]. Martinich, A. (2008) *J.L Austin Performative Utterances in The Philosophy of Language*. Oxford University Press. pp. 136.
- [8]. Maslow, A. (1954). *Motivation and Personality*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.
- [9]. Meek, C. K. (1925) *The Northern Tribes of Nigeria (Vols I & 2)*. London: C. U. P. Merriam
- [10]. Okafor, R.(2014) *Music a Nation Building* www.globalacademicgroup.com online publication ISSN Google indexes
- [11]. Ozah, M. A. (2012). *Fela Kuti: Music is the Weapon*. *Yearbook for Traditional Music*. Vol.44, 226-231
- [12]. Yerima A (2012). *The Legacy of Festac '77: The Challenge of the Nigerian National Theatre at Iganmu*. Retrieved from www.researchgate.net
- [13]. Yeung, A. B. (2006) *In Search of a Good Society: Introduction to Altruism Theories and their links with civil society*. London: Centre for Civil Society, London School of Economics and Political Science.
- [14]. Zwick, M (2011). *Levels of Altruism*. Portland: Northwest Philosophical Conference Loius and Clark College Oregon

Johnson James Akpakpan. "Nigerian Perspective to Musicalaltruism and Nation Building." *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*. vol. 24 no. 06, 2019, pp. 41-45.