

UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

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The musical scene in Nigeria today is a study in contrast. The venue may be the concert hall or the village square. The performer may be musically illiterate, semi-illiterate or a graduate from a conservatory or university. The duration of the performance may vary from the three or five minutes "spot" on NBC or ENTV to the one-week *Igue* festival of the Benin people. Unity through diversity: This is music in Nigeria today.

Nigeria whose high-life musician, Victor Olaya, received an honorary doctorate degree in music from a University in Eastern Europe, though, as they say in a Jazz parlance, he can barely spell much less read music. Nigeria, whose composers, Fela Sowande, Ayo Bankole, Akin Euba, Lazarus Ekwueme, Samuel Akpabot and W. W. C. Echezona have written music in many of the large forms: masses, suites, symphonic poems and quartets. Nigeria, where till recently, there were less than ten graduates in music out of fifty-five million people. Nigeria, where the music syllabus in the secondary schools is practically non-existent and where the musical practice in the primary schools is more honoured by its absence than by its observance. Nigeria where, in 1955, a law was passed to establish the University of Nigeria, Nsukka; a University that was committed to a land-grant philosophy; a philosophy that provided for the broadening of higher education to include agriculture and industry, without excluding the classics, the arts and scientific studies. Nigeria, where, in 1960, a degree could be obtained in Fine Arts, Home Economics, Journalism, Secretarial Studies and Music: Courses which formerly has been relegated to other institutions for higher learning.

The inclusion of music among the degree subjects of the University of Nigeria created many problems: problems of curriculum, staffing and student's qualifications.

Since the philosophy of the University implied that all curricula should be specifically designed to meet Nigeria's needs, it was decided that the music programme should reflect the diversified musical scene in Nigeria. It should be bi-musical: An endeavour should be made to teach both African and Western music.

The courses designed for the music students ran the gamut of Western musical knowledge and included lectures in African music, African musical instruments and seminars in ethnomusicology and African music.

Our first anxiety was caused by the lack of literature and materials for our classes. Since this was the first time music was to be taught on the University level in this country, music text books, sheet music, music manuscript books and musical instruments could not easily be obtained locally. Consequently, problems of transportation and communication complicated and delayed the acquiring of materials for all of the classes.

The greatest area of difficulty however, was the paucity of material for the African Music and Humanities lectures. It was all very well to say that we were committed to a course of bi-musicality and that the students should receive as much experience with African instruments and African musical culture as they received with the Western equivalent, but where could we find the materials to use in the African Music classes? Where were we going to find trained indigenous musicians to teach the African musical instruments?

The first problem was solved by grants given to lecturers to do research in African Music; grants which resulted in the compiling of data on a number of tribes. Musical examples were collected from the Fulani, Benin, Idoma, Boki, Ekoi, Zabebmawa, Ijaw, Ibo, Yoruba, Hausa and Efik peoples. Since it was deemed essential that the students should have field experience as part of their courses in African music, they were also included in these trips and helped immensely in gathering the data.

In their third year, the students conducted research on various aspects of African music and education. Emeka Nzewi and Felix Mwuba, Ethnomusicology students, did musicological surveys among the Odual in the Rivers, and the Isoko respectively. Samuel Ojukwu, a theory and Composition student, wrote an African suite, and Michael Okoye, a Music Education student, collected notated and transcribed forty songs suitable for use in the secondary schools.

We were also faced with difficulties in staffing especially for the African music classes. The traditional instrumentalists either did not speak English or were so inarticulate in the language as to make it difficult for our students to understand them. The *gogo* players in the North spoke only Hausa which meant that we would have to hire an interpreter, since our students did not speak that language. The best talking-drummers in the Western Nigeria were Yorubas and we were again faced with the language difficulty.

Fortunately, the Timi of Ede came to our rescue by sending the 16-year-old son of one of his Royal drummers, O. A. Olaye, who had just finished modern school, to teach the second-year African Musical

Instrument classes. We were also able to secure the services of an Ibo xylophone teacher — O. Owonta from Udi in Eastern Nigeria.

Our second and greatest area of concern was the relatively poor musical qualifications of our prospective students. The vicious circle caused by the lack of trained music teachers in the schools which in itself resulted in students poorly prepared to enter the college seemed impossible to break.

It was therefore decided to give our foundation students an accelerated programme and at the same time to try to influence music education on the lower levels so that our future applicants would be better qualified musically.

The first two years of the college were particularly difficult for the students. Their "Crash" programme in applied music and theory left them with little time for recreation. Realising that they had to try to achieve in four years what Western students would do in ten, they worked very hard. By the end of this period they had caught up with their Western counterparts in the theoretical subjects even though their musical background continued to be filled with many gaps.

In an endeavour to improve the students' knowledge of music literature and also to create a musical atmosphere in the University, the college presented a number of programmes; operas, students concerts, variety and faculty concerts, and concerts featuring Nigerian artists such as the Enugu Choral Singers, the Henshaw Brothers, Naida King Okoye and Mary Umolu. Performing groups from the University also toured Enugu, Lagos and Ibadan.

In 1962, while evaluating our work up to that time, it was discovered that our preoccupation with establishing the College had caused us to neglect the secondary part of our programme, which was to try to influence Music Education in Nigeria. We therefore decided to circulate a questionnaire to the secondary schools and teacher training colleges to ascertain the training of their music teachers, if any; the instruments they had available and to get an idea of their music programme. It merely confirmed what we had already known — that for the most part music was not taught in the secondary schools and that in the few exceptions the music period was merely a period in which they practised the hymns for the Sunday service. There was some music taught in the teacher training colleges, since a number of schools were presenting candidates for the music examination for the teacher training certificate. Again and again we ran up against the name of St. Paul's and St. Mark's Training Colleges, Awka. It would seem that these schools had trained over half of the teachers who were teaching music in Eastern Nigeria at that time.

As a result of this questionnaire, we decided to try to influence music education in Nigeria by: (1) advising the Ministries of Education in all aspects of musical training; (2) advising schools on specific problems and (3) establishing a short course in music education to improve the skill of the existing music teachers.

At the request of the Ministry of Education, we formulated a syllabus for the teaching of music in the secondary modern schools in Eastern Nigeria and added a diploma course to the syllabus of the College in order to meet the need for well qualified non-graduate music teachers in the schools.

In pursuance of our second objective, two members of our faculty, Allen Geyer and W. W. C. Echezona, toured the Eastern Region giving advice, examinations and in some cases teaching in the secondary schools and teacher training colleges. We also gave advice on how to obtain materials and resource personnel to teach African Music in the schools.

The success of the short course in music which takes place annually during the Easter vacation has also affected the quality of the teaching of music in Nigeria. During this course, we have given lessons in Vocal Techniques, Rudiments of Music, Elementary Theory, Stage Techniques, African Music, School Music Methods, Choral Conducting, African Musical Instruments, Singing, and Music Education and Supervision. The interaction between participants has been very good and they seem to have benefited from their discussions and contact with other Music Teachers.

It was at the request of this group that the annual African Music Seminar was established. The theme of the first conference was "African Music in a Changing Society". Dr. T. K. E. Phillips, Dr. Echezona, Mr. Nutting, Dr. Edet, and Rev. Fr. B. Kelly gave talks on various aspects of African Music. It was also as a result of the desire of this group for greater communication between musicians in Nigeria that the Music Association of Nigeria was formed in 1964.

Looking back over the years, it is possible to see that a number of things have been done and it is also possible to see that a number of areas which we confidently expected to cover have been omitted.

We have made a start and are trying to provide some music teachers for the schools. We have dropped a proverbial "stone in the stream" to create a musical ripple by giving our short music course which affects many students and teachers of music in primary schools, since most of our short course people are themselves teaching teachers how to teach music. We have created, in part a musical environment at the University. But in other ways, we have failed.

Our programme here is by no means bi-musical. It has been found that it is impossible for the students to achieve desirable standards in Western Music in four years with their inadequate backgrounds if we are to include as much African music as a bi-musical programme would tend to indicate. We have not been able to improve the skills of the high-life musician or to promote sufficiently the practice of African music in Nigeria because of the comparative isolation of the University. We have only been able to affect the policy of the Ministries of Education insofar as it concerns their giving music scholarships and the Eastern Government has remained so far immune to our pleas. The music curri-

culum in the secondary schools has not been materially affected because there still are very few music teachers in the schools.

It may be that we are expecting to do too much in too short a period of time. I do think, however, that if you place our area of failure against those of success, you will see that we have achieved some modicum of success even though our watchword in the future still must be: there is so much to do and so few of us to do it.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

The dilemma in which the University of Nigeria at Nsukka finds itself over the encouragement and teaching of indigenous musics is typical of the whole of the continent, where the African indigenous peoples have so neglected their own culture as a subject worthy of study, that there are virtually no text books as yet which reflect either the depth of musical culture in Africa or its place in modern African society.

The lack of forethought and of original care and investigation into their musical heritage on the part of African peoples is now proving an acute embarrassment to the seats of learning throughout this continent. This is reflected clearly in the present curricula for musical education up to Degree and Diploma standards at the Nsukka College where in the *first* year Diploma courses only three credits out of 54 are directly connected with indigenous music; in the *second* year, only six out of 56; and in the *third* year only six out of 52, or a total of one-tenth only. In the Degree course there are no credits for indigenous music in the first year course; three out of 55 in the second; six out of 47 in the third year; and six out of 55 in the fourth year, which indicates that Nigerians evaluate their now national techniques as one fourteenth as important as foreign musics.

In any modern society with a pride in its own contribution to world culture this state of affairs, existing as it does in a highly musical society with a long history of musical practice, amounts to nothing less than a national scandal. In a country which can honour with doctorates the creators of commercial "pop" music, where, one may ask, are the honours for classical Nigerian musicianship and the erudition which values original creative artistry? The longer the imbalance exists between the study of the music of indigenous craftsmen on the one hand and the music of foreign or semi-foreign origin on the other, the harder it will be to salvage the distinctive musical soul of Nigeria and all that that implies to cultural maturity.

This situation calls for a crash programme, backed by government, foundations and radio stations, to discover, classify, analyse and propagate the essential elements of Nigerian music-making. The alternative is the sad possibility of a country of musical imitators and "pop" entertainers who had not the perception to nurture what was physically, spiritually and uniquely a characteristic of Nigerians alone.