

Abigbo Music of South East Nigeria and Its Socio-Cultural Implication in Educating Mbaise People

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Abstract

*To produce the baseline from which traditional music are performed and presented to showcase cultural heritage is a good organization with which all aspects of social events are processed and finally understood. The music of Abigbo contributes further understanding of the products and processes to Mbaise people and the generality of an Igbo man's life; this is because it is seen simply as an element in the complexity of an individual learned behavior. The beauty of research lies in problem solving which will be appreciated by learners and stakeholders in later future of generation yet to come. **The purpose** for this study is to create awareness on cultural heritage and knowledge information about Abigbo music. To also provide the basis for problem solving strategies for transmitting important value aspect of the culture with reference to Mbaise musical tradition. **Methodology.** There are varieties of approaches to be employed in this study to elicit data and information that will help investigate about Abigbo music and its presentation. Using descriptive method is aimed at obtaining information on the spot assessment of music tradition of the people. Using this method is based on experience acquired; this study is an empirical one where practical performance is to be determined through observation and participation which will be derived by using physical senses. **Contribution to practice and policy.** The possibilities which lies here is in the researcher's ability to ensure that all information collected will include a precise and comprehensive content of situations performed, recorded and documented for students and music lovers to use for future researches. One of the expected outcomes from this study will be only when we have agreed that investigating in peoples' culture and their music is a critical input to the history of many societies in Nigeria towards keeping our cultural heritage come alive. Music is an important component of life of a given people because it redefines their beliefs, value system, myth, character and folklore in a changing tradition. Some of the results and findings from this study will be in information gathering and knowledge driven output that will help music students to investigate into the music culture of many societies which abound in Nigeria. That the music culture of Mbaise people is celebrative tells how they had used music to promote and develop their cultural heritage which is in line toward building formidable structures using music.*

KEY WORDS: Traditional Music, Abigbo Music, Social Cultural, Education, Dance, Cultural Heritage.

Background of the Study

Music of a particular culture reveals traditional elements connected with stylistic affinity to a collective wellbeing that brings societies together having a shared common interest and code of conduct. Indigenous music is that type of music which is created entirely using traditional elements i.e. local instruments and songs verbalized through the word of mouth. (Sekinat Adebusola Lasise 2012). Abigbo music focuses on the historical, social and cultural background of musical organization practice and all the significant aspect of people's beliefs. This is so because Abigbo music is used as a mirror to x-ray the stories of past event and into the present and the future. The music of the group is an agent of social commentary and changes in the societies where their performance is presented; it equally creates philosophical impact which eulogies the wealthy and satirizes evil deeds in the society.

In Nigeria today, it has become very pertinent to put down some materials that will make people remember their past history which serves as a reminder to each society in a traditional setting and also about cultural artifacts. There are needs to investigate and document all of these as a reference points in history. A study about Abigbo music is not only creative in its own right, but it seeks to communicate emotions, feelings with knowledge driven atmosphere where people are expected to learn.

Let us for once turn to the reasons why Abigbo music is a problem of central concern to this research. To every culture in Nigeria there are some aspect of music that connects the people to their ancestral background and how they became part and parcel of where they are situated. One major issue that has dominated the traditional man is his music. Man moves with time; he has a sense of the past, the present and the future; and he is intelligently aware of himself as existing in time (Alan Merriam 1997). The traditional people in moving through time held on to their arts which include music, dance, drama and visual arts based on literature handed over to them by oral tradition. The people fellowship with each other and have communal solidarity through music. If we accept the fact that man has culture, then we should be able to account for his wellbeing and for its various parts.

Music should be seen as the product of the culture that is traceable to the past of a society; how they became indigenes or settlers of such a community should not be in question. This brings to mind the need for scholars to investigate into the cultural background of many cultures in Nigeria. In as much as many cultures abounds in Nigeria, there is need for a steady enquiry about people's musical heritage to be researched upon and documented as a rally point to protect our traditional ethos from going into extinction.

The traditional music of the Mbaise people is "Abigbo" which originates from Imo state; south east of Nigeria. Abigbo according to Okoro & Okubor (2020) is a socio-cultural group which portrays the image of the people of Mbaise to the world using music. But of what is important in these groups which abound in the 3 local government areas is their uniqueness in perpetuating the rich cultural and human resources of an Igbo people who listens and dance to their music each time there is need for such presentation. The songs are communicative with drum language depicting the dance structure and supported with body movements. With supple dance steps, the music itself is a social mobilizer and could be used to effect a change for good or bad.

Here, we have to take cognizance of the complexity of music and dance only meant for men; and which is employed to reach out to people or audience for active participation. As a social commentator, the songs are used to enhance an aura of ecstasy and attraction for creative thoughts which is a reflection of what the musicians and dancers are capable of eliciting from those who understand the footsteps and twisting of the waistline. The rhythm accentuates the body movement and the flow upon which the master drummer dictate the pace, tempo and direction the songs will go. These rhythmic patterns are not in question, because the time liner (bell or woodblock) determines the steady flow of rhythm. Sometimes the music could be out of place, it is an act of confidence on the part of the soloist who interprets the performance through his facial outlook, gesture, style, body language, drama with musical sequence which may climax with what is called “oso nkwa”. Iwuoha (2020) agrees that Abigbo promotes and educates the people using songs to connect them to the society where they belong. The Abigbo has become the traditional music of the Mbaïse people because it is used in important ceremonies like “iriji Mbaïse and “oji Mbaïse” celebrated every year by the people to keep tradition alive.

Statement of the study

Traditional music means different thing to different people when it comes to the celebration of life in many communities in Nigeria, of which Mbaïse with 3 local government councils are part which forms the collective entity of the socio-cultural background of Igbo people in Imo state. Abigbo is a functional, conscious expression and reflection of a social organization. In Mbaïse as a whole, music plays social role at every given performance as it tells stories when men gather to express themselves and gossip about the happening in the society. The problem here lies with oral tradition and how Abigbo music has been used as a functional part of the people through knowledge driven performance which had turned out to be educative to the people. At what point has their music and performance promoted cultural development.

The problem of retention, records keeping and documentation of music materials is necessary here if we must preserve the music culture of the people. Abigbo music is researchable and should be done by scholars. This study is to carry out how dissemination of knowledge and the application of creative thoughts could be garnered in the education of music to the people and for learners.

Research must be prioritized in academic institutions to meet with the demands for resource materials needs to promote educational researches that will help investigation into our cultural heritage. Uzoma (2021) agrees that researches will help students of music with the knowledge and opportunities to carry out scientific researches that will benefit students towards solving problems in music.

Purpose of the study

The socio-cultural preference of the Mbaïse people has necessitated this researcher to carry out this work from the dissemination of traditional knowledge and value system that will promote continuity in the development of music, creative expression and practical studies. This is because the study of traditional music and people’s culture has witnessed a remarkable development over the years. The Abigbo music has strong cultural influence on Mbaïse people and has equally

given an identity that distinguished them from other societies within and outside Imo state. The group has influenced the way they reason, call to duty, their response to tradition and the respect for one another. The people's belief system is not in doubt which is seen in the performance of Abigbo music with critical and reflective input as a collective understanding to local arrangement for social events. The purpose for this study will be:

- To create the awareness on cultural heritage and knowledge information about Abigbo music
- To provide the basis for problem solving strategies for transmitting important and valuable aspects of the culture with reference to Mbaise musical tradition.

Scope of the study

It will be safe to mention here that traditional music will continue to remain the mainstay of cultural activities of most societies in Nigeria today. This is because it is used in all aspects of social engagements involving man and his environment. Music in Nigeria includes many kinds of folk music and the styles employed during performance is what determines and frames a society or societies; each with their own techniques, instruments and songs.

The scope of this study is in all the three (3) local government areas which make up Mbaise culture. These are Aboh Mbaise, Ezihitte and Ahiazu. The 3 local government areas share cultural affinity almost in everything especially in music. The reason for this study is to capture the celebrative moods of Abigbo music as it is performed in many communities from each of these local government areas and essence of music creativity. How Abigbo music is used to celebrate lifelong concerns about the people and its development that connects permanent features of the society's daily experiences using music.

Literature review

Before the colonial rule in the 20th century by British government, Igbo people were subjected to a centralized traditional rule by Nri, Aro confederacy, Agbor and Onitsha. The Igbo people are one of the 3 major ethnic groups in Nigeria namely; Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo. The Igbo speaking states are Imo, Abia, Anambra, Enugu and Ebonyi, though there are pockets of communities surrounding these states that speak Igbo language, examples are people from Delta state who must have had close contact across the River Niger with the Igbos from Onitsha through commercial activities, migration and inter marriage between the people may have taken place. Also those of them from Rivers state do speak Igbo. The language is spoken by surrounding towns, villages and communities with close affinity with these 5 Igbo speaking states. The people have developed a strong sense of ethnic identity. In the words of Chinua Achebe (1959) said Igbo identity should be placed somewhere between a "tribe" and a "nation".

Tracing the history of Igbo people; the Nri people of Igbo land have a creation myth which is one of the many creations that existed in various parts of Igbo land. Archaeological evidence reveals that Nri influence in Igbo land may date as far back as 9th and 10th centuries. The god-like founder of Nri is believed to have settled the place of abode of Igbo people around 948 with other Igbo related cultures following after in the 13th century (Wikipedia).

The Igbo culture could be viewed from their historic background and the outlook of patterning in relation to their belief system, habit, practices, legendary and living side by side or in close

contact with each other showcasing brotherhood. What is seen today is a result of new concept added to Igbo culture to give it an accelerated consciousness for development. This comes in form of customs and traditions over a period of time that has evolved to meet with the people's folklores, crafts, pottery, aspirations, habits, taboo, and behavior, use of language (oral), music and dance. A fall-out from all of these is a well-articulated variety of a culture that promotes collective agreement and arrangement for responsibilities to be shared with learning experiences.

The Igbo people according to Ekwueme (1973) have musical style and tradition that has kept them together for centuries. The instruments used are locally made with tonal inflection that gives their music unique flavor and the instruments have come to represent them each time they perform traditional music at any occasion. Some of these instruments are constructed and called ogene (bell), opi (flute), igba or nkwa (drum) udu (pot drum) ichaka (rattle), ekwe (slit drum).

The Igbo religion is also about belief system of a supreme being known as "chukwu" or "chineke" while the lesser gods are Amadioha and Ala. The Ala is seen as a goddess of the earth. The people also believe in deities, spirits (mmuo) and ancestors who protect the living from time to time. These deities are sought through divinations or an oracle with a priest, priestess or a seer who stands as the custodian of the shrines or place of worship to the gods and goddess.

Origin of Abigbo music

The only way for a people to remember their history is to have the knowledge of their past as well as having an understanding of the present which will help them to probe into their future. Abigbo Mbaise is one of the most celebrated cultural music in Igbo land. It is about a historical perspective mirroring into the past and giving the people who create it a hope for the future by participating in the present. Mbaise people are lovers of music; like every cultural group in Nigeria, they regard and appreciate music as a birth right. The word Abigbo according to Iwuoha (2020) means 'abu igbo' which means Igbo song. A quick check reveals that the music type is traceable to ancient times with the gods and ancestors of Igbo extraction. The music started to checkmate the evil practices among the people then which ranges from incest, murder, stealing, adultery and other vices that may attract capital punishments like death. The music is satirical in composition and the songs are used to condemn those who are caught in abominable acts. The music also stands to correct and bring to the people and society new directions in satisfying the people's desire for entertainment. There is hardly any occasion performed in these societies where music is not used heavily to the admiration of the people. It introduces and maintains the patterns of social order, encourages the fulfillment of what is agreed upon for the betterment of the community. It is used for stocktaking, the people use music to recount so many things and music groups know this, no wonder there is near perfection when music is presented to an audience. This gives credence why every member of the public is a participant to music making events. The Abigbo music is exclusively for men membership, this does not mean that women cannot partake in the dance performance. Of what is interesting in Mbaise is the unification of two most prominent music groups during performance; while Agbacha ekuru nwa is for women, there are men who play their instruments. This is because women according to men musicians, women do not have good sense of rhythm. The Abigbo form the sole preserve for men but its dance steps and body movement could be danced by anybody. Okoro & Okubor (2020) agreed that Abigbo music is an important group in the past which speaks directly on people's daily experiences in the present and gossips on burning issues without making reference to anybody.

They use their music to satirize, eulogize, admonish, criticize and run commentary on socio-cultural happening. It reveals secrets of what is hidden from the public, which is why the people say they gossip with their music.

Ownership and origin of Abigbo has been on as to where the music became part and parcel of Mbaise culture and tradition. Of a truth, the music cannot be said to belong to individuals. It is owned by a people who create and present it to the public. One of the reasons why the musical group usually call the name of the community where the group is operating from e.g. Abigbo music from chokoneze, Abigbo uzornaorgi, Abigbo Amuzu and so forth. However, in general argument, the Mbaise and Ngwa people have been laying claim about ownership of the music.

To put the history straight, both communities were brothers from the same ancestral abode till the Imo River separated them. History has it that both went their separate ways when the flood from Imo River came and fill the empty land they earlier settled about 2 centuries ago and both brothers now live along the coastline and could see themselves from a distant. While they lived together Abigbo music was learned, played, performed together to celebrate all their social events. They perform Abigbo at different forum but differ in dialectical sound in language.

To Mbaise people of Igbo extraction of south east in Imo state; Abigbo is an outstanding music which they have accepted as their own and which binds them together as a centrality of their history and tradition; which nobody can take away from them. All the towns and villages have grown over the years to form this musical genre to which Abigbo is the most popular. The survival of Abigbo music according to Onyeji (2004) that the people are quite eclectic in musical taste. This means Abigbo helps to secure indigenes interest as it relates to norms and values within the fabric of Mbaise society. The role of Abigbo music plays in the life of the people stems from the facts that it is compatible with the people's social system, proverbs, idioms, rule of law, corporate existence and the total wellbeing of the people are all captured in the songs of Abigbo music. These are all accepted and appreciated wholly because of the usage of musical language and dance movements.

During performance the style employ to elicit people's admiration, solidarity and participation is in the dance movements, variation and steps which are usually slow, with intricate footwork of forth and back showing some kind of agility that can only be seen in Abigbo dance. And the rendition of songs goes beyond the rhythmic pattern of the drums played by the master drummer but performance sequence are centered on rhetoric and songs intended to impress the would-be dancer or dancers. Abigbo music reflects on visionary leadership, great feat, poetry, skills, satirical and praise singing for good deeds in the society.

Abigbo is also performed to x ray the image of the society to the public about notable achievement recorded within the period of the year. From some quarters, Abigbo is regarded as a "gossip" because it tell stories of abominable act done under the guise of the night, it increases the level of awareness and knowledge for joy, sadness, crisis, bravery, sorrow and strength to make a statement or solve a problem. The performance reflects on people's feelings which centers on their expectation, attitude to life, respect for one another and constituted authority, and to a larger extent their connection to ancestral beings. Their songs touch on history, cosmic beings and social system where everyone is given the opportunity to live a fulfilled life as well as the tonic to the soul.

Development of traditional music in Mbaise

The music tradition in Mbaise is a collective one which recognizes music apprenticeship, active participation, and ownership of music types by those who create and present it. Music is created at every given social events. Even if it has to do with ritual/religious activities is accepted. Traditional music and the ideals in relation to the gathering of the people and structure are evident in every community. Music structure as it concerns oral tradition, i.e. communication by words of the mouth, rhythmic usage and organization of its performance is integral parts that exist in Abigbo ensemble. Apart from the use of music in social performance in Mbaise, it also goes to create a forum for togetherness, esprit de corps, unity and peace among the people.

The songs are sometimes that of lamentation for the failure of governance, leadership, songs bothering on social commentary, and how to better the society and promote good standard of living which every member of the society will be proud of. The society must embrace human products that are functional towards development in future. Traditional music here should be seen as one with communicative role for the manifestation of cultural identity. Abigbo can equally be seen to illustrate specific projects in recounting what the society wants to achieve positively.

Organization of music group

Traditional music performance in Mbaise highlights the people's thought and aspirations. It utilizes musical structure which is equipped with the demands of a high sense of purpose and understanding exhibited in the arrangement of specific performance, compositional techniques, song text, musical instruments, body movements, time and space, social outing and presentation known. The objective values seen in Abigbo music and dance are a combination of society's knowledge and inventive abilities during dance which serves as cues to the mastery of the body movements. These are evident leading to beliefs that are of great cultural significance in the whole of Mbaise communities. It communicates religious followership, social understanding active participation, ideologies and group solidarity to people's traditional music.

The making of music involves a lot of concepts and abilities on the part of musicians, dancers, dance styles and variations in use and potentials which will represent exactly what the people want in terms of collective thoughts and vision. When music is organized in a total framework for performance, it is used to work out and express the collective values, emotion, crisis, character and behavior of the whole community. Music according to Aibuedefe & Okeke (2019) examines it as an art form which develops individuals or group of individuals in all aspects of life. It also reveals to us that music is an expression and application of human creative skills and imagination. Creativity may be due to natural talent or may come as a result of practice and education which is imbibed in Abigbo music performance. Learning takes place through nature especially when a community is musically gifted. Here, music and dance are inherited; the ability to dance and create music is not in doubt. Every member of the community is a dancer or a musician. Again, people could learn some form of traditional music through observation, active participation, rudiments of apprenticeship. To learn, assimilate and use traditional music depends wholly on the musicality of any community or society. If a community takes music making serious, it reveals how this is applied in their social events all year round, and what is expected from such group of musicians. Here also, music must be viewed from the beauty it gives during

performance. Olisaeke (2019) said music cannot only be seen but should also be felt through emotion and state of mind, aesthetics in music and appreciated through auditory perception.

Mbaise people are strong believers of Igbo cultural tradition; this is one of the reasons Abigbo music is enshrined in most of their social events. Abigbo music to the people is a process of using idioms and proverbs to interpret, explain and explore all possibilities of bringing the people together during their socio-cultural interactions. It guides and inspires the people to a position to which training for musicianship is possible. Mbaise traditional music culture is collectively owned by communities and the people considers this ownership as a 'birth right'. Laying claim to this assertion is in maintaining that traditional music has a body of musical knowledge ascribed to the people. This means when organizing music as seen in Abigbo is used to unify communities where it is performed. Abigbo is performed to stress on norms and values of the society, tolerance, corporate existence, respect for one another and a broader understanding of what happens in every day life.

Music is a social framework which portrays positive changes in many socio-cultural communities in Nigeria today. It is recognized as a veritable tool capable of serious influence on people's behavior and character. Its special values in every social system cannot be ignored in addressing the many problems encountered in every day experiences of traditional people. And in promoting the cultural identity of Mbaise; the Abigbo example is used to draw the attention of the larger society in reawakening their feelings and state of mind. Music is used to satisfy the social needs. Adeogun (2013) explained the reasons for this, that music is essential to life, its awareness constitutes a process of education, explicit purposes and various ways it could be considered as a balance to socialization. Following in the same vein, Abigbo music creates the awareness as a process for education in admitting confidence among the people and also enhances creativity. It goes ahead to navigate among other things the struggle of everyday life and experiences; mirroring on social progress as it reflect on artistic and musical preferences. In recognition of these demands, every Mbaise indigene is expected to participate in music making events either as a musician, dancer or spectator. Uzoma (2012) agrees that music making events are people's total culture calling which is subsumed with other arts that has become very important in promoting cultural heritage. Here, the Abigbo music may be used to express the communal values of a people.

In educating Mbaise people, the culture is seen as a bond of continuity with music to be used to renew and reinstate human relationship with their ancestors in promoting traditional affinity. The critical nature of Abigbo music to the people is in the presentation and evaluation of what the people expect to interpret as aesthetic considerations. This interpretation is in culture and tradition; how Abigbo music has helped in promoting cultural values and unity each time there is public outing.

Role of music in a cultural setting

Traditional music is presented with the people's dialectical language which will translate exactly the speech tones, metaphors, proverbs and idioms which invariably translate exactly the speech tones and idioms which the people will understand. This is also done using local musical instruments commonly seen around the societies or communities that create music. Folk music here is so much a part of every Igbo culture which brings the people together. Knowing what

folk music and its acceptance by the people is; this will reveal to other cultures that their music is lively and creates spontaneous atmosphere that makes it a collective responsibility to every community in Igbo land. It creates a variety of sounds that will enable the people to appreciate music the more when it involves a whole activity that unites the community (wikipedia).

Could Mbaise societies be more concerned with the education of her people in creating awareness towards traditional/historical background using Abigbo? The answer is yes. Music making event is a milestone in the whole of Mbaise having deeper and more effective levels of integrating all application of cultural understanding to their benefit. Music is essentially a society's experiences summed up in individual's personal crisis; and it is mandatory for people to share in these crises. And one of the ways of involvement is through the performance in music and dance.

Here, Abigbo is seen as abstract music with its aesthetic impulses which climaxes with dance movements and styles patterned to normal forms exhibited to showcase a transformative emotions and inner thoughts. This is a music group with appealing dance structure used over and over again. Dance movements contained in their repertoire are purely imaginative feelings created to woo dancers giving them a sense of belonging to cultural background and meaning. The dance performances depict a wide spread of cultural significance that represents in many ways how dance variations are structured into movements which tell stories of the origin of the group. The movements and styles are derived from the ensemble's music expertise as a representation of tales and gossips garnered over the years on daily experiences.

Mbaise people assess music performances in terms of cultural preference and the context upon which it is performed and also its relevance to traditional prescriptions. Whatever is presented in form of music and dance, does conform to moral standard of the people who come to watch such performance? At what point does it portray the image of the society? By and large, the audience does not only partake in music making events but are equally critical at whatever form of songs are presented in the dance. They watch keenly to see if the performance is in keeping with their belief and aspirations thereby representing the norms and value system of the land. Anything short of this will create doubts in the minds of the people. Abigbo music is a respecter of culture and tradition, as a mirror which projects the image of Mbaise to the outside world; it promotes the cultural heritage of the people. It creates an identity to others by reshaping their values so that moral standard and societal concerns take precedence in human development. Uzoma (2014) said music has won the attention of many societies and ultimately increased the quality of life of a people. It is important to note here that Abigbo music has captured the essence of life of a people who are struggling to make ends meet in their daily struggles. This is reflected in multiple roles music brings in form of unification and peace to community life.

Membership/leadership role

Abigbo is one musical group which connects the society to their historical background and also used to socialize the people. It is a symbol of unity to the communities that performs it and it shapes and strengthen a social order in maintaining peace, shared behavior, shared traditional myth and legendary. As a matter of fact, in their music what is shared is of mutual concern as this is done or accomplished during performance. However, music in every traditional setting seeks to address specific issues. It may come as a feeling of communal understanding where

people with common interest come together to organize a musical practice of immense creativity. Ukpong (2006) said music has a compelling spirit moving within the spiritual confines of a people.

Like the agbacha ekuru nwa group organized by women and equally performed in Mbaise whose ownership is the society; the membership is derived from married women. For Abigbo music group, membership is exclusively for adult men. For the ensemble to retain its artistic qualities, interested members are selected based on musical knowledge, singing ability, talent on how to manipulate instruments and good conduct of character. Since the philosophy of the group is focused on aesthetic profile, Abigbo music should be seen as a group with people of good morals. The messages contained in their songs and performance is about lifting moral standards within the communities Abigbo music is represented. It is an agent for social commentator, narrator, satirical in nature and admonishes evils deeds in the society. It talks about current issues as it concerns the society and promotes social justice, respect for human life, honesty and hard work. It is one musical group that is associated with extra musical events which is anchored on expressing communal coexistence.

There are Abigbo specialist/musicians who have out of their way form Abigbo music bringing in new ideas and innovations thereby boosting the horizon of the music they perform. They have brought in modern technology embracing western instruments with local ones giving it an outlook that is without originality. Whatever is in place now, Abigbo still remains the music of the people, owned collectively by the people and tradition. It holds central position in the lives of the people, entertaining them with tales and satiric references to irregular behavior within the communities that owns it and this cannot be claimed by individuals.

Dance movements and styles

It has been explained in this study that music making in traditional societies are linked with social events and almost every social activity has its own special music. Abigbo which is exclusive for men has shown their dance is unique. In Mbaise, Abigbo is widely recognized beyond the people who create and inspire it. There are standards of excellence and level of popularity inherent in their music that has taken the group to the forefront of social activities within and outside Mbaise. Dance ability is not enough to dancers, experiences and talents are important for one to perform with confidence and skill. Each dancer must have acquired dancing skills not only by family lineage or birth right but by active participation and observation. Each dancer gains professional status based on the ability to dance.

In general, the musicians and singers must possess the wit and wisdom, for the songs contained in their repertoire is as important as the performance itself. The mastery of voice quality and control is not enough because the sole singer must be good as well as a skillful master of flattery. He is not merely an entertainer but a custodian of history, a supporter of truth and honesty, an interpreter of events and a transmitter of the past, present and the future in the community.

The Abigbo group uses formalized dance pattern (stylized); this requires a fixed choreographic pattern and sequence which must be followed by dancers with varying degree of accuracy and uniformity during performance giving it aesthetic consideration. Though performance of a lead sole dancer is allowed, however choreographic variations and styles are followed to the letter.

Here all the structured movements should be a fall-out of long hours of rehearsals. The dancers must exhibit the same structured, sequenced and timed ability during performance. However, Abigbo presentation of music to audience should follow the time and in the sequence of their performance climax where musicians increases the rhythmic follow of the music. This is called 'oso nkwa'. Here the lead singer may reveal the sequence of the change in choreographic variations which are well rehearsed and internalized by dancers. This Nzewi (1991) acknowledges dance to qualitative features of the performance. It implies that dancers must dance within the aesthetic expressions of the performance in a stylized form.

Educating the people using Abigbo music

Research has revealed to us that educating the people using music demonstrates that music contributes in no small way towards intercultural understanding in education and stands out by fostering a sense of community life. It can help build a strong foundation of comprehension and problem solving ability while learning more effectively in a relaxed environment. Though there are strong evidence to suggest that Abigbo music to some people is about peace and unity. Its music adds more value to individual development and can encourage independent thinking, which is critical when learning about the culture.

Many who have been opportune to witness whole sequence of Abigbo music will attest to the complexity of the dance structure and its impenetrable mystery of thoughts, actions and words (songs) at certain points that projects the image of Mbaïse people to outside audience. The music serves as a cultural promise to the younger generation and as a reminder of history of the past. The Mbaïse culture is an aspect or factor that determines the extent of acceptability of music in each community. Can music promote culture and enhance societal development? The answer is yes. This can be achieved when music response to group needs and involvement in collective social responsibilities. Abigbo has been used through social interaction to give meaning and order in a moral organization to the people. These includes class status, obligations expected by tradition and belief system, knowledge and myth, qualification as a member of the society, code of conduct, law and respect for one another. Music as an art is used to shape the culture, tradition, legendary, behavior, norms and values of the society. The performance of Abigbo music in this regard therefore assumes multiple roles in relation to people who are involved in music making as a social content.

Music making events in Mbaïse has helped to define cultural heritage and provided a shared past that equally defines values e.g. Abigbo group provides a unified message that recalls common past and sense of belonging to the people. Miranda (2013) said that music mobilizes individuals for specific social cause that demands a concerted public action. This explains the reason why Abigbo music as a common language reflects on belief system that constructs on personal and social identity. During performance, the appealing songs reflect in their power in articulating shared feelings, emotion ad frustrations on evils deeds. The music is a cultural form of resistance that will protest political abuse that will also galvanize public opinions and attitudes. Abigbo music and dance are used to engage the audience to a dialogue through mutual learning. This will be a message passed by the needs and aspiration of a group seeking for social change.

Again oral evidence shows that music is created out of contemporary innovations from the music making ceremonies done centuries ago. Music has the power to communicate to people on

current happenings within the society while songs expressed in words are reflective of what tradition expects and to greater extent poetry in Abigbo. It has continued to improve with time, creating sounds out of what was seemingly erratic, noisy, confusing and discordant. Today's Abigbo is more refined and providing an opportunity for natural enjoyment and satisfactions for dancers and spectators. The structure of music and design of dance movement are good examples.

Research Methods

The details of music composition, performance practice and other musical materials used in Abigbo music ensemble are recorded. The researcher used the three (3) local government areas comprises of Aboh Mbaise, Ahiazu and Ezhitte. Since data were done through, listening, interviews and observation/participation, it gave the researcher ample opportunity to use musical materials collected for descriptive purposes. This is necessary for one to get data on musical items during performance and rehearsals which depended largely on the field trips made with research assistants to the study. All these are adopted to get facts and figures. Field assistants were used for contact and interpretation of the language used. As an empirical survey, oral interview, observation and participation helped to get information. This will be important for information gathering to transcribe and analyze all the musical elements.

Textual transcription and translation

OBI A WU OTU

ABIGBO MUSIC INSTRUMENTAL ACCOMPANIMENT

(As performed by Chokoneze Traditional Abigbo Group Ezinihitte Mbaise, Imo State, Nigeria.)

The musical score is divided into three main sections:

- Intro. (Free Time):** Measures 1-12. Features Chime Bell and Chime Bells. Includes a first ending (1.) and a second ending (2.).
- Strict Time:** Measures 11-16. Features Chime Bells, Shkks., Wd. Blk., Twon. Gng., and W. Sl. Dr. Section A is marked from measure 11 to 16.
- Section M:** Measures 17-19. Features Chime Bells, Shkks., Wd. Blk., Twon. Gng., W. Sl. Dr., and M. Drm.
- Section W:** Measures 20-22. Features Chime Bells, Shkks., Wd. Blk., Twon. Gng., W. Sl. Dr., and M. Drm. Section C is marked from measure 20 to 22.

Chime Bell

OBI A WU OTU

ABIGBO MUSIC INSTRUMENTAL ACCOMPANIMENT

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Shakers

OBI A WU OTU

ABIGBO MUSIC INSTRUMENTAL ACCOMPANIMENT

(As performed by Chokoneze Traditional Abigbo Group Ezinihitte Mbaise, Imo State, Nigeria.)

The musical score is written on a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). It begins with a 12/8 time signature. The first section is an 'Intro. (Free Time)' consisting of two measures, each marked with a '1.' and a '2.' above them. A bar line with repeat dots follows. The second section is 'Strict Time', starting at measure 7. Measure 7 is marked with a '7' above it. The score continues with measures 14, 19, and 24, each marked with a letter in a box (B, C, and D respectively) above the staff. The piece concludes with a first ending (1.) and a second ending (2.) leading to a final double bar line.

Twin Gong

OBI A WU OTU

ABIGBO MUSIC INSTRUMENTAL ACCOMPANIMENT

(As performed by Chokoneze Traditional Abigbo Group Ezinihitte Mhaise, Imo State, Nigeria.)

V

Intro. (Free Time) 7 1. 2. Strict Time

12 **A**

15

+

16 **B**

[
20

+

20 **C**

23

+

24 **D**

28 **2.**

Wooden Slit Drum

OBI A WU OTU

ABIGBO MUSIC INSTRUMENTAL ACCOMPANIMENT

(As performed by Chokoneze Traditional Abigbo Group Ezinihitte Mbaise, Imo State, Nigeria.)

1. 2. A

Intro. (Free Time) Strict Time

12/8

7

14 B

19 C

29 D

29 1. 2.

Membrane Drum

OBI A WU OTU

ABIGBO MUSIC INSTRUMENTAL ACCOMPANIMENT

(As performed by Chokoneze Traditional Abigbo Group Ezinihitte Mbaise, Imo State, Nigeria.)

Abigbo music

- Solo (1) O nwere ajuju di mkpa, anyi na-aju, Hee! Hee!
 (2) Okwu a, asara umu Igbo na-azo ochichi
 (3) Ihula otu anyi di?
 (4) Obi abughi out angwula m ike
- Chorus(1) O nwere ajuju di mkpa, anyi na-aju, umu Igbo anyi na-azo ochichi geenu nti ka onyi juo ya.
 (2) Obi abughi otu no n'im anyi aa eeh
 (3) Obi abughi otu no n'ime anyi, o sin a nne na nna mumu anyi?
 O si n'umu nwaanyi anyi Iuru alu, o si numu nwaanyi ndi Iuru alu x 2
- Umu Igbo gebenu nti ka anyi kwuo ya x 2
 Ihe na-eme ndi Igbo si anyi n'aka x 2
 Anyi achoghi otutu okwu
 Ndi mena ihe achoghi otutu okwu.
 Ya bu adighi n'otu ee

Umu nne anyi ji eme onu unu nokwa n'ulo
Ajuju di mkpa anyi na-aju, umu Igbo anyi
Gebenu nti ka anyi juo ya AA! Ee! Obi abughi no n'im anyi aa ee! x 2
O sin a nne na nna mumu anyi aa! Ee! x 2
O nwere ajuju anyi ga-aju
Onye mbaise buru govano, o garu inwu anwu?
Umu nne nabu na-eri nri, o nwere anu abuo di n'ofe, o bu onye guru, ibe ya a guru aa ee!
Ndi na-eje choochi na-ekwu eziokwu (Eziokwu bu ndu)
Solo – Oge eruola, aa chi agbaala
Onye gwara anyi si chi agbaala?
Anyi ga aga na chochi na-ekwu eziokwu.
Ufodu ndi na-aga choochi na-ekwu okwu ugha aa ee!
Agawala m choochi na-ekwu eziokwu
Eziokwu bu ndu e aa ee! x 2
Unu gabanu choochi na-ekwu eziokwu, ufodu na-eje choochi na-ekwu okwu asi
Ejewe m choochi na-ekwu ezokwu
Abigbo bu choochi na-ekwu eziokwu
Eziokwu bu ndu ee ae ee x2
A na-abara chineke mba?

Translation

Abigbo

Solo (1) We have a question to ask. Hee! Hee!
(2) This question concerns the Igbo politicians
(3) Have you seen our life?
(4) Not being in unity is a big problem to us.
Chorus (1) We have an important question to ask our Igbo politicians, Listen to the question,
(2) There is disunity among us ààh ééh
(3) This disunity amongst us, is it from our mother and father or parents?
Is the disunity from our wives? x2
Igbo people pay attention, let us ask the question x 2
We are the problem to ourselves x 2
We don't want many words
Our parents does not want too many words.
That is the disunity we are talking about. ee
My concerned brothers and sisters where are you?
The important question we pose to our Igbo brothers and sisters.
Listen as we ask the questions AA! Ee! The disunity amongst us aaa ee! x 2
The Disunity, is it from our parents? aa! Ee! x 2
We have questions to ask.
If an Mbaise man becomes the governor, will he die?
Two brothers eating in a plate with two pieces of meat, if one takes the other will take aa ee!
Those who go to church says the truth. Truth is golden.
Solo: It is time. This is the right time.

Who told us it is time?

We shall attend to that church that says the truth.
Many that goes to church does not say the truth. Ee!
I have gone to that church that says the truth. Because truth is golden. aa ee x 2
Go to that church that says the truth since some church don't say the truth.
I am going to the church that says the truth.
Abigbo is that church that says the truth.
Truth is golden ee ae ee x 2
Can one quarrel with god?

Analysis of music and dance

The solo singer captures the essence of songs from the repertoire which he had accumulated over a period of time during rehearsals and performances. The musicians are usually performance bound to create an atmosphere in fulfillment of what the people want. The solo singer narrates his song 'obi a wu out' with an introductory theme followed with a chorus of the same theme. The spoken words are usually powerful normally to attract the attention of spectators or audience. The poetry here is used to educate and inform the people. The dance movement and styles does not all for serious dance accent rather it is more of subtle and graceful exposition of adhering to drum language with other instruments accompaniment. In the Abigbo dance of Mbaise people, the function of instruments especially the drums is to imitate phrases and proverbs common to the communities. The tunes produced hypnotizes the audience listening. The solo singer/dancer calls with a chorus refrain from other singers who line-up in a circle formation with instrumentalists seated in a cluster. The dance styles and body movement has remained the same over the years with little or no innovation applied during performance. There is what is called 'oso nkwa'(an increase in rhythm and dancing steps). Here, the lead dancer blows the whistle which indicates a climax to music and dance. This may lead to the end of the song, melody or theme. The solo singer plays with words or songs to attract admiration from spectators while daners are ever ready to accentuate their body movements with recurring ideas making use of their waistlines of 2 steps back and 2 steps forth foot work.

In Igbo cultures, some instruments are tuned into metaphors for conveying their feelings and emotions and for giving special descriptions. Here, instruments in use are as an expression of beauty and clarity in Abigbo ensemble; ogene (chime bell), osha (rattle), ekwe (slit drum), alo (gong), igba or nkwa (membrane drum). The researcher was able to find in some Abigbo ensemble, drums plays leading role which gives the rhythmic flow and variations in their music. It equally dictates dance styles, changes tempo, time for relaxation and for rigorous dance leading to climax. The bell and woodblock articulates the pause structure or keeps time. The bell maintains the bell rhythm. Its rhythmic pattern is persistent (ostinato).

Finally, Abigbo is an ensemble of 3-5 drums locally constructed from wooden materials covered with animal skins e.g. antelope or goat. Other instruments play subsidiary role in building a solid foundation in enriching the texture of music. The irresistibility of rhythm and mastery of voice control has remained the popularity and fame of Abigbo music. Instruments in use in Abigbo ensemble; Ogene (chime bell), osha (rattle), ekwe (slit drum) alo (gong), ekwa (membrane

drum). The researcher was able to find in some Abigbo ensemble more than one drums which are categorized into oke nkwa (father drum), nne nkwa (mother), and nwa nkwa (for the children). During performance, these drums play different roles. However, drums play leading role in an ensemble. Generally drums are used to create variations in any musical ensemble. Drums in Abigbo music dictate variations i.e. dance styles, change in tempo, time for relaxation and time for rigorous dance leading to climax.

Conclusion

To this end, Abigbo music is used in many other social events in Mbaise, as a matter of fact, its performance provides the medium that without people thinking, acting and creating music, other elements of arts like dance, folklore, visual arts and drama cannot exist. This study is an approach to be used to understand the theoretical structure and the total organization of Mbaise music tradition and how it has affected the people in their daily experiences. The quest to know more and in recognition of the need to provide resource material through research is the brain behind this study. It is through researches of this nature that students of music and stakeholders will be able to learn about music tradition and culture of other societies in Nigeria. Idamoyibo (2007) observed that lack of music books and literature are the bane behind students not investigating in music cultures of many societies in Nigeria. This will equally provide the base for further investigation on music cultures of many societies in order to preserve our cultural heritage.

Abigbo music is seen as a performance which gives clear-cut socio-cultural preference as well as the needed sensitivity in carrying out people's interest, needs, expectations and demands as prescribed by tradition and with the motivation to move the society forward. Songs have the power to communicate current happenings within a given society. It also expresses in words of a reflection of what tradition expects and to greater extent poetry in Abigbo music. It will also show a more humanistic understanding in the promotion of the culture.

Recommendations

This study and discussions brought memories of the past, present and ideals for the future to have impacted on the opportunities that will improve on collective responsibilities existing among a people which Abigbo music is presented. The following recommendations are made from the findings.

- The Mbaise identity has been made manifest through Abigbo music irrespective of changes that had occurred over the years. The music still commands a place of authority among the people as a social commentator, custodian of tradition and protector against injustice. The music represents the wishes and aspiration of the people's ethos; it is an attempt to persuade them that their views are correct in the face of changes. While changes had occurred, there is still continuity in music making events.
- Modern traits and innovations have crept in the activities of Abigbo music. Originality in Abigbo music gives it standard organization in promoting the culture and tradition for prosperity. The change seen is in the use of modern instruments which is giving the music and dance movement false interpretation of what Abigbo music stands for. It is gradually moving away from the norms and values of people's expectations. This must be discouraged.

- Traditional music and other aspect of the culture stands to educate the people especially satiric songs which helps to fight against injustice, abominable act in the society and other vices. Music making events should be encouraged to promote positive social order, peace, unity and communal existence and for the promotion of cultural heritage.

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