

Gospeltainment: Music and Profit in Nigeria

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Abstract

Nigerian gospel music is an emblematic and significantly informative entertainment industry; it is both an artistic and a contemporary religious genre that reveals social transformations nationally, regionally and globally. The historical fusion of entertainment with spirituality in Nigerian music reflects at once the influence of secular music upon the composition process and the performance context, the pressures of audience demand, the idiosyncrasies of each musician, as well as financial and commercial trends. The radical effects of change in the local labour market and in the world economy are not really new; these have been features of Nigerian gospel music since its origin. But now these factors define this music at the performance level as well.

Keywords

gospeltainment – gospel – Nigerian popular music – African Pentacostalism – Christian music and dance

Introduction

The influence of the entertainment industry has made an indelible mark upon the development of gospel music throughout Nigeria's social history. Gospel musical composition and performance have an inherent entertainment aspect as well as their obvious purpose and substance, which is to minister the Word of God. The entertainment component of this genre of Gospel teaching's composition and performance elements are both musical and extra-musical. The entertainment can be understood as latent, underlying and unintended, or as

dominant, explicit and purposeful (Adeola 2016: 247). Much is revealed about the social history of Nigeria in the study of the fusion between entertainment and religious worship, as will be revealed through an overview of the performance of the country's gospel music tradition since its earliest manifestations.

Gospel music refers to the Christian branch of religious music employed for the purpose of propagating the gospel of Christ to non-Christians, as well as edifying and inspiring believers in Christ through its performance in both strict religious contexts (in church sanctuaries and congregation halls during worship services) and in all kinds of other social contexts and entertainment spaces (outside of church buildings).

The origin of gospel music in Nigeria has been located in the 1960s by the popular music scholars Adédèjì (2004, 2005) and Collins (2014). The term 'gospel music' was first used in Nigeria by its pioneers of that period, although its antecedents actually appeared thirty years earlier in the years before World War II. At that time, various names that were attached to gospel music included:

... '*orin igbàgbó*' (*Christian Song*), '*gospel*', 'indigenous sacred songs' and 'Spiritual Songs'. Although there were contacts with American gospel music before ... there is no evidence to suggest that the origin of Nigerian gospel music had any link with American gospel music. Thus one might conclude that it originated independently but named as deemed fit by its pioneers and promoters [*sic*].

ADÉDÈJÌ 2005: 146

The specific date marking the origin of gospel music in Nigeria is not certain. Collins (2014) submits that gospel dance music appeared at roughly the same time in Ghana and Nigeria, between the 1960s and the early 1970s.¹ Adédèjì (2004) speculates more specifically that it was probably between 1964 and 1965, by reflecting upon the musical activities that predominated the practices of the Nigerian indigenous Pentecostal Churches and their influence upon evangelistic parades from the 1930s, reaching a climax in the mid-1960s. This view is shared by Emielu (2014: 114-115) who traces the origin of gospel music in the West to famous camp meetings and street festivals and revivals, as seen in the Azusa street mission revivals of the early 1900s in Los Angeles, California. Both of these scholars emphasize the intercontinental contribution

1 See John Collins (2014), where he identifies eight similarities between the Ghanaian and Nigerian gospel music portfolios' origins and features.

of Pentecostalism to the development of gospel music at vastly different geographic locations: America and Nigeria, evolving at about the same time.

Pentecostalism in North America and in West Africa thus witnessed comparable expansions that later culminated in the fully fledged development of gospel music. Collins (2004: 119) observes the same trend as occurring at the time in Ghana, within the popular rise of separatist churches. According to him:

The western Christian taboo [against] dance as a form of worship was broken by the congregations of the separatist spiritual churches that sprang up in Ghana from the 1920s. So by the 1970s dancing in churches was a regular feature of local [congregations]. Indeed, this is one of the reasons why the established orthodox churches, which forbade dancing as a form of worship, began losing congregations to the local African Churches.

Other antecedents that contributed to the origin of gospel music in Nigeria included the non-liturgical music of Nigerian indigenous churches used at key Christian social functions such as naming ceremonies for newborns and at weddings, and other festive occasions. For esteemed personalities, the music performed on these extra-liturgical occasions was provided by missionary school bands during the colonial era. Renditions of widely popular church tunes were performed by invited celebrity talents, choirs and independent church musical groups that were well known through their performances broadcast regularly from the 1950s on Radio ELWA in Igbaja. This led to the release of the first popularly known Christian religious album in 1965 by Prince S.A. Adeosun of Christ Apostolic Church in Yaba. The title of the album was 'Křístì mo fara mi fuń o' [To you O Christ I give myself]. Adédèjì (2004: 64-66) also notes that the choir of St. Peter's and Paul's Catholic Church in Ibadan, led by Rev. Fr. T.M. Ilesanmi, released an album in 1967 titled 'Mo Ti Kólé Mi Sórí Àpáta' [I Have Built My House on The Rock].

We can conclude that the antecedents of popular religious singing in Nigeria culminated in the emergence of a new form eventually classified as gospel music. Gospel music was influenced by Pentecostalism; it was a form of non-liturgical music which became a staple at social functions. The activities of talented individuals originally resident in the Church came to be required at all important Christian community events outside of Sunday services. These talented individuals later took the bold step of forming independent groups within the Church, and later as autonomous bodies functioning independently of the Church, to perform live and later to venture into recording

studios, producing their own albums. This places the origin of gospel music in Nigeria safely in 1965, because that is the year that the earliest known recorded Christian indigenous religious album in Nigeria was produced.

Intercontinental Sounds, Secular and Sacred, as Mutually Influential

The popular social influence upon gospel music has been a crucial factor right from its very origins. From the outset, Nigerian gospel music in particular was conceived and presented by some musicians as other than, and distinct from, the secular insofar as this genre focuses solely upon proclamations of the gospel of Christ. Thus in both its compositional and its lyrical form, we find musical performance playing two distinct roles; and the examination of its style, structure, content and performance will reveal this in what follows. Despite its strong secular-social influence, Nigerian gospel music cannot be correctly classified alongside secular forms as one and the same type of performance and composition, though they co-exist and interact with each other side by side. Neither is it correct to classify these gospel musicians as secular artists. Rather, one should highlight the contemporary secular influences as being among the important factors affecting the Nigerian gospel music genre, just as Christian influences can be seen impacting popular secular music genres in contemporary Nigeria. Overall, Nigerian gospel music cannot be defined properly in any absolute terms; rather its distinct character and significance can be captured only by analyzing the genre from different perspectives.

Although several scholars including Adédéjì (2004: 64) are of the view that the development of gospel music in Nigeria has remained independent of the emergence and growth of gospel music in America, special note should be taken of 'Black gospel music' which was referred to as a distinguishable genre already in 1930. This developed from the traditional Negro spirituals that have endured as the indigenous music of the United States since the period of slavery; Negro spirituals are icons of American culture and history. In this respect it is particularly noteworthy that in the 1930s, the term 'gospel music' was regularly used in Nigeria, alongside the term 'Gospel' with its broader American connotation. This coincidence in terminology suggests that some degree of American influence must have been playing a substantial role in the wave of religious awakening that swept across colonized African populations, including in Nigeria, from the 1930s.

Pentecostal Roots

It would be safe to infer that Pentecostalism was the common link between gospel music in Nigeria and in America at that time. According to Emielu (2010: 288), Pentecostalism could be seen as a global movement, with roots in 'Pentecostal Spirituality' – a term used by Land (1993: 15) to describe the new conceptualization of Christian worship which resisted the conventional theology and formal worship of the orthodox churches. The Pentecostals considered the mainline churches (the Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians and Baptists) as orthodox even though all these institutions themselves were initially Evangelical, pulling away from as they grew out of the orthodox Catholic Church. Some examples of Pentecostal churches in Nigeria include the Winners Chapel International Churches, the Redeemed Christian Church of God, the Deeper Christian Life Bible Church, the Church of God Missions; and there are many more.

However, it would be wrong to infer that the global reach of Pentecostal revisionism entailed any homogeneity in its new religious fervor of self-expression. On the contrary, Pentecostalism carried distinctive regional identities from region to region.

The link between gospel music in Nigeria and Pentecostalism is evident in the definition of Nigerian Gospel music offered by Adegbite (1994: 83) as "a new type of church music brought about by the move of religious fanaticism which has resulted in the proliferation of Christian churches in Nigerian society." Adegbite's use of 'religious fanaticism' in the context of the Pentecostal movement of the 1970s and 1980s implies that a kind of revolt against orthodoxy was taking place, which was reflected not only in liturgy but also in doctrine and in music. Emielu (2010: 292) suggests this:

Pentecostal theology reached Nigeria through a process of cultural diffusion. Its growth and spread can be viewed against a backdrop of African resistance to orthodoxy as well as the need to infuse vital African elements in Christian religious music.

Emielu (2010: 293) cites Babalola (2003: 29) in stressing that African Pentecostalism should be appreciated against this backdrop:

Many of the things European missionaries rejected and termed devilish are now being used to the glory of God in these Pentecostal churches ... Sekere, drums and local tambourine.

To a great extent, this revolt against orthodoxy took a fanatical turn; and it was out of this urgent intensity of African Christians to reclaim their spiritual integrity and legitimacy that Nigerian gospel music developed. The revolt against European Christian orthodoxy manifested in the rejection of the conventional liturgy and music which were both considered to be monotonous and devoid of vibrancy and relevance. The African Christian spirit was thus clamoring for self-expression in worship, and music reflecting the influence of very current popular culture especially American culture was the ready vehicle.

Modern converts to Pentecostalism still revolt against orthodoxy because the latter does not allow the Pentecostals' favored liberal dress code, prosperity doctrine, and the freedom of believers to engage in various pursuits and priorities that the orthodox church denigrates as 'worldly'. Unlike the orthodox churches, the African separatist churches have always included indigenous African dynamic, participatory belief frameworks and practices such as spiritual healing, exorcism, divination (i.e. prophecy) and possession (i.e. by the Holy Spirit) in their religious ceremonies. The 'spiritual' or 'apostolic' churches also incorporated drumming and dancing. The desire of the youth to be allowed to express their religious zeal vibrantly, whenever they wanted and in unscripted ways that the spirit moved them, without inhibitions, was decidedly disallowed in the orthodox churches; this was another reason for the revolt. The new wave of speaking in tongues, dancing and shouting during the worship service, and the use of popular musical styles in worship which characterize most Pentecostalist gatherings, are regarded as expressions of fanaticism by the orthodox tradition. The use of the term religious fanaticism by Adegbite (1994) is representative of this perspective of mainstream orthodox African clergy.

Fulfilling Community Needs and the Influence of the Youth

Omibiyi-Obidike (1994) and Ojo (1998) both trace the origin of gospel music in Nigeria to the Church. But both assert that gospel music developed from the adaptation of church music to meet the social needs of the church members in their wider communities. To date, this same purpose of gospel music remains obvious in the use of gospel music for social functions of every kind; at times this includes serving purely as a form of entertainment during the long duration of these social functions. According to Omibiyi-Obidike (1994: 6):

Gospel music originally was used in the church and was performed at special festivals such as harvest, thanksgiving, and so forth. However,

with the electronic technology and the need for the youth to have the type of music that caters for their social interest, gospel music was taken out of the church.

Ojo (1998: 215) expresses the same views when he states that:

... it soon became apparent that a different kind of Christian music was needed for festival occasions, for example, harvest rituals, funeral ceremonies, births, and marriages. Initially, church choirs had provided music at such occasions.

Further, Omibiyi-Obidike (1994) highlights the need for the youth to have a type of music that catered specifically for their peer groups as a central force driving gospel music out of the Church, which still prevails to this day.² The role of the youth in spearheading and popularizing anything that has come into vogue cannot be overemphasized. Much of the creativity which is found in gospel music today is a response to the desires and tastes of the youth. Their reception of what goes on in the gospel music scene defines a lot about the popularity of many gospel musicians and music styles. Emielu (2010: 293) observes that the motivation to join the Pentecostal churches are freedom of self-expression and desire to experiment in music.

This freedom of self-expression musically speaking seems to be a major attraction for Nigerian youth who make up a large proportion of these Pentecostal churches. In these churches, the youth have openly and non – apologetically displayed their preferences for Afro-American popular culture. This pull factor is a major challenge for orthodox churches who are trying desperately to retain their youth population.

Clearly the youth are a virile agency in the growth and development of gospel music in Nigeria; they should not be overlooked in the analytic discourse. One could argue that it was through the Church's response to the needs and cravings of the youth in particular that gospel music was developed in the first place. Over the years, it is the effort of the Church and of gospel musicians to satisfy and sustain the ever widening musical tastes of their youthful congregation which has had the most enduring impact on the Nigerian gospel music scene. Whether this impact has been predominantly positive or negative remains a subject of debate.

2 For the resiliency and the continuity of this trend, consider the work of the London-born Christian hip hop and rap artist Guvna B.

Nigerian Gospel Music: Ministration or Entertainment?

It would be hard to dispute that the growing popularity of gospel music and recent changes in the style of its performance are due in large measure to the electronic media and technology (Adeola 2016: 246). Because electronic media is the mode of delivery for a vast majority of those accessing contemporary Nigerian gospel music and indeed throughout the world, the internet may be responsible for the fact that entertainment has taken over its form and content.

Nzewi (2012: 1) states more generally that “in contemporary global imagination and experiencing, music has evolved from functioning as an original, utilitarian spiritual phenomenon into a materialistic entertainment preoccupation in both academic and public spaces.” Applied to Nigerian gospel music in particular, this statement is corroborated by the view of Titus (2014: 26):

The entertainment function of music is also not in doubt as people of different cultures, colours, ethnic groups, religious settings and creeds listen to different music during various ceremonies and during worship sessions. It is also noteworthy that messages are put across in the course of playing various music. Hence, music entertains as well as educates on religious doctrines for believers and followers of Christ.

There is little disagreement about the evidence of a fusion which continues to blossom between the medium of popular music as entertainment and popular music as a vehicle for evangelizing. But this evidence attracts considerable controversy. While many Nigerian gospel musicians insist that they are ministers and not entertainers, a few of them concede the fact that there are explicit entertainment elements in their performance and that their music can therefore be regarded legitimately as entertaining as much as they are ministering. In our interaction with some religious musicians including Evangelist Bola Are,³ Pastor Joseph Adelakun,⁴ Pastor Mrs Gbemi Olaleye,⁵ and Evangelist Florence Babalola,⁶ they insisted that they are purely ministers and do not consider themselves as entertainers in any way. On the other hand, the gospel

3 Evangelist Bola Are, one of the foremost and older generation of female gospel musicians in Nigeria has been performing for more than forty years. She is sixty five years (01/10/54) based in Ibadan and has released 70 albums. Interviewed in Ibadan on Friday 13th December, 2013.

4 Pastor Joseph Adelakun pastors a church as well as engages in gospel music performance. He became popular in Nigeria with his album ‘Amona tete ma bo’ released in 1984.

5 Gbemi Olaleye, a female gospel musician based in Lagos with several albums to her credit.

6 Evangelist Florence Babalola, a female gospel musician based in Ilorin. She has seven albums to her credit. Interviewed in Ilorin on Sunday 4th January, 2015.

musicians Evangelist Rachel Bukola Akinade⁷ and Evangelist Dupe Olulana⁸ recognise that their music can entertain, through their style of composition and their performance contexts; but in their view the spiritual content still remains and their intention to minister is not thereby diminished in any way.

The Seamless Connection between the Secular and the Sacred

A category of gospel musicians exists whose background was originally in popular secular music but later ventured into gospel music performance either as a result of their being 'Born Again'⁹ or due to the influences of their Christian religious upbringing, or through more recent affiliations which led them to infuse Christian religious themes into their secular performances. In this category we find the musicians Sunny Okosun, Ebenezer Obey, and Kris Okotie who went full swing into gospel music after they became born again; and others including I.K. Dairo, King Sunny Ade, and more recently Yinka Ayefele who began as Juju musicians and are now known for their renditions of Christian religious songs. Collins (2014: 125) observes:

I.K. Dairo ... began his music career in the 1950s, but being a member of Cherubim and Seraphim 'Aladura' church was, by the late 1970s, writing many religious compositions. He even built his own church in Lagos and consequently became known as 'Baba Aladura'. The other *juju* star is Ebenezer Obey who rose to fame in the 1960s and 1970s. Although he had always included some religious songs in his juju-music repertoire, from 1992 he became Evangelist Ebenezer Obey of De Cross Fellowship Centre and began focusing on 'juju gospel' in record albums.

Ojo (1998: 214) makes specific reference to Good Women Choir of the Christ Apostolic Church, Ibadan:

7 Evangelist Bukola Akinade, popularly known as Senwele Jesu is one of the leading female gospel musicians in Nigeria based in Ibadan. She is Forty Three years old (14/07/1975) with several recordings in the market. Interviewed in Ilorin on Saturday 24th May, 2014.

8 Evangelist Dupe Olulana, one of Nigeria's female gospel musicians. She is 58 years (08/01/60), and has been in the music scene for about twenty six years now. Interviewed in Ilorin on Monday, 30th September, 2013.

9 This label became popular in Nigeria in the late 1970s when Pentecostalism spread across the country to mean being born of the spirit as recorded in John 3: 3 to a new state of regeneration, leading to a deeper commitment to God through Jesus Christ.

By the early 1980s, the music of Good Women Choir was becoming entertainment, and it was not long before they were appearing at Christian social gatherings such as marriage ceremonies, funeral outings, 'house warmings', etc. Thus they provided the same social context as the popular Yoruba juju musicians.

Thus as early as the 1980s, the social function and entertainment aspects of gospel music were both apparent. As Ojo observed (1998) the Nigerian gospel musician's defense of their music and activities as purely ministration and themselves as strictly ministers was stressed in the titles that they bore: Pastors, Evangelists and Prophets. It was also reflected in their explicit announcements at their performances: "We have not come to entertain but to minister."

Notwithstanding, musicologists including Adédèjì (2014) and Samuel (2013) have identified a dichotomy between the sacred and the secular in gospel music in their discussions of sacred music and church music respectively. Both scholars identify the entertainment tendencies in the Nigerian gospel music orchestrated by the influence of the popular musical culture. Emielu (2014: 110) opined that because contemporary African Church and gospel music and musicians use a plethora of dance music styles which in many ways replicate African popular culture, there is confusion about the defining criteria of who is a music minister and who is a musician. According to him this raises the question of how to delineate the generic boundaries and definitive framework of contemporary gospel music and the social identity of its practitioners in Africa.

In recent years there has been a convergence between entertainment and the local Christian Churches, leading to what might be called the emergence of 'popular' Christianity. Collins (2004: 421) submits that:

Like popular entertainment popular Christianity is a transcultural urban phenomenon that caters for the intermediate and aspiring upwardly mobile populations, taps traditional resources, is concerned with the anxieties of modernization and utilizes the commercial music, dance and drama of the masses.

Arguably, beyond having spiritual relevance as its sole focus as the ministering musicians claim, gospel music is a social commodity that influences and is being influenced by popular culture in all the societies where it prevails. As such, the inevitability of the tendency to drift towards entertainment, from which gospel music has become inseparable because of its performance context, cannot be denied.

This inseparability has very old and deep roots; it is lodged in the inseparability between performance and meaning for all traditional African religious rituals and festivals. The sacred and the secular in the African traditional setting so much overlap and are interwoven that their separation is inconceivable. According to Bello (2016: 17):

Dance as an integral part of the indigenous African culture thrives within the context of recreation and religious festivals and ritual ceremonies of diverse kinds that are rooted in mythical beliefs. Festival and dance performances are important aspects of indigenous African socio-cultural and religious practices. Thus, the two elements are usually not separable in most cases. In other words, the existence of most indigenous African dance forms relies on the ritual context for their performance.

The association of music with social and ritual ceremony has been observed to be central to African music by Akpabot (1986: 1). The association of the music culture with religious activities and festivals within a society makes the influence of religion on music almost inevitable. Thus, the claim that gospel musicians do not entertain as they minister (perform) is as such simply a denial of existing realities. Gospel musicians do more than preach the gospel. Hence, it is proposed that we classify their art as *Gospeltainment*. Whereas some gospel music in style and performance is clearly entertaining, this is arguably an entertainment that does not diminish the spirituality nor does it downplay the gospel content of the music. On the contrary, gospel musicians have explored the window of entertainment to enhance the dissemination of the gospel message through their music, even when they do not admit to doing so.

However, we must observe that whereas in the traditional African music and dance genres which have greatly influenced the Nigerian gospel music, the sacred and the secular are not separated, the issue of finding a balance between spirituality, musicality, secularity and sacredness in gospel music performance still needs to be addressed.

The Need to Find the Right Balance

While gospel musicians claim that their art is purely gospel motivated and evangelism focused, the reality of the popular culture, especially contemporary popular music having great influence on their art, cannot be denied. Music does not exist in vacuum; rather it influences and is influenced by a variety of factors within its socio-political and geographical context. As an

element of culture, music connects people among whom it evolves. Mbiti (1980: 262) asserted that it is religion, more than anything else, which colours Africans' understanding of the universe and their empirical participation in that universe, making every aspect of life a profoundly religious phenomenon. Agbo and Keke (2013: 259) point out that to say music influences the religion of Africa and vice versa, is merely an isomorphic statement because religion and music are two indivisible superstructures that constitute an indelible universal among all the cultures of Africa.

Music derives strength from a culture that regulates its emergence, performance, patronage and continuity. According to Blacking (1973:60), this is so because music is a product of collective human behaviour. Dance being a very strong dimension of the musical culture in Africa is a feature of Christian worship as well as gospel music performance. Whereas the early Christian missionaries regarded the use of dance in Christian worship as sinful and condemned it, they did not succeed in stopping the Churches from using dance to date because dance is a natural response to music and an obvious reflexive response to the movement of the spirit.

This has a compositional element, as Adegbite (2017: 46) has observed:

one interesting thing about gospel music is the prominence of dance rhythm, which often highlights the impact of secular popular band music. The dance rhythm usually derives from highlife or juju-highlife music.

Remarking further about change in Christian worship, Adegbite (2017: 48) claimed:

... those churches have adopted new systems of singing, especially gospel songs ... many church musicians have embraced popular music idioms. When I.K. Dairo established his church in the 1960s, people used to troop there, not because they were particularly interested in listening to his sermon but because they wanted to hear and dance to his juju-like religious music ... [T]he Celestial Church of Christ has a large followership because of the danceable music for which the church is known ... [I]n the past, it was considered an abomination to play a dance rhythm in the church ... Today ... the congregation take[s] part in the dancing and singing.

The musical tastes of the society have greatly influenced the development of gospel music at different stages because of the desire to maintain appeal to the audience. This affects the styles of performance, use of costumes, dance

moves, and the increased interaction with the secular terrain. Omojola (2006: 3-4) observes that “modern social spaces like nightclubs, discos and western-type concert settings ...” has resulted in the “combining” of the full range of cultural objectives, including commercial, in Nigerian popular music generally, and the nation’s gospel music in particular. In the same vein, Omojola (2006: 24) observes the use of indigenous languages, pidgin combining English with indigenous vocabulary and grammatical structure, is as frequent as the intercultural instrumentation, and counts as the signature intersectionality of this emergent musical style.

Today gospel musicians popularize themselves through their releases of audio and video compact discs, which serve the dual purpose of generating income and documenting their intellectual and creative property. These audio and video recordings make plain the influence of popular culture on the musicians’ performance styles and their compositions, especially in the use of dance and costumes. In some cases these could easily be mistaken for secular video clips but for the texts of the music. Some notable recording studios that have promoted gospel musicians and released their albums include: Gospel Choral records, Ogo Oluwa Kiitan Records, Remdel Optimal Communication, Okiki Jesu records, Afrodisia recording studio, and Decross. These are all situated in Lagos, Nigeria. Other production bases are located in Ibadan, an hour and a half away from Lagos, include Rainbow and Iyanda recording studios.

Nigerian Gospel Music as Entertainment

The characteristic features that qualify gospel music performance as *gospel-tainment* may be subsumed under three primary intentions. These are: the desire to proclaim the gospel through musical performance, the desire to make the music appeal to the audience either in live performance or recorded music, and the desire to be financially viable.

At its very early stage gospel music concerned itself with the propagation of the gospel of Christ; then a very conscious effort was made to resist influences that were secular. Yet in the dynamic nature of society, such resistance will of necessity be temporary, as other popular elements of culture exhibited in all the arts, in music, fashion, language and so on, all impact on people’s imagination. Thus the trends that attract people’s consciousness and draw their attention together also impact Nigerian gospel music.

Further, the realities of economic and socio-political change also impact gospel musicians as breadwinners and viable members of society. The modern churches and the craze for wealth evident in the prosperity message being propagated constitute a critical factor for the use of entertainment elements in Nigerian gospel music. The desire to ‘make it big’ and to ‘be wealthy’ as

preached by the modern day churches has greatly influenced the gospel musicians in their commercialization of gospel music. Since Nigerian gospel musicians are also church members where messages of wealth and prosperity are emphasized, they are influenced by it and even reflect it at times in their songs.

The Craze for Wealth

The gospel musician's attention to profit is wrongly identified as a sign of a venal, gluttonous or greedy character. Conspicuous wealth is a sign of being blessed; it is a characteristic of the society that safety, security, calm, serenity and the good life are signified by doing capital comfort, wealth and prosperity. Thus the modern day gospel of prosperity has greatly influenced the gospel musicians' desire for financial gains as they proclaim the gospel through their musical arts.

In consequence, the gospel musicians today now charge engagement fees to perform at ceremonial social occasions. They now organize musical concerts and charge gate fees. The fee charged is determined by the type of programme and the location. For example performances outside of big towns where the gospel musician reside attract higher fees than if the engagement is located within the town of domicile. The reasons advanced for this is that many of the gospel musicians now use professional instrumentalists and bands whose services must be paid for. Also, many well known gospel musicians have made music as their full time profession and do not combine it with other jobs. Some of these include Dúpẹ Olúlànà, Bólá Àrẹ and Florence Babalolá, who all actually retired from their nursing professions before seeking to expand their ministerial relevance through the music industry.

Another element of the profit motive is evident at social functions where gospel musicians follow the performance norms of secular musicians in praising individual people. Praise-singing is no longer restricted to the praise of God, but also involves adulating men in exalted positions who enjoy social prestige; in response the gospel artists during performance get 'sprayed' with money.

In the recording studio, the use of contemporary popular styles in gospel music production is not only for the music to appeal to the listeners but also for the albums to sell well, and so in turn to bring financial gains to the musicians and to their financial backers. Onwuegbuna (2013: 178) has observed that the choices made by all manner of stakeholders in the music industry, are often blatantly driven by commercial considerations. Citing Frith (2001), he observes that popular music – and this will include gospel music – is not driven by any significant ambition except profit and commercial reward. When treated as a commercial enterprise, the profit value of popular music is

ensured at the point of production where decisions about ideology, structure, aesthetics, packaging, and presentation are guided strictly by the marketability of the finished product. Usually video recordings are embarked upon as a form of promotion for the audio recordings. Ultimately all that goes into these works of art is determined by what will sell and bring financial gains to investors, in addition to propagating the gospel of Christ.

This, together with the widening of the performance context to include secular settings outside of ecclesiastic institutional platforms, accounts for gospel musicians adapting secular songs in their repertoire, engaging in the audience call-and-response ritual of spraying with money at climactic points in a performance, and garnering performance styles that would otherwise be repressed and avoided in strictly religious settings such as revival services, open air crusades, and in church sanctuaries.

Reaching Wider Audiences

All performers will always want to get across to their audience, appeal to them and be appreciated by them. The type of audience therefore becomes a major factor in any performance. For example if an audience is comprised mainly of enlightened youths, the choice of songs, pattern of stage behaviour, dance moves, even word choices will be influenced by their norms. Clearly the conduct and expectations of an audience in a strict religious or liturgical setting will be likely to differ from that of a purely social or ceremonial gathering; as such the type of music that will appeal to the audience in these different contexts will vary. Context is dominant in this regard: the very same sanctimonious, religious audience members in church will complain at a social function if the gospel musician sings songs that they consider not lively enough for that type of social occasion.

Age and Class

The background and exposure of the performers themselves are another factor responsible for the newly dominant entertainment element in Nigerian gospel music, influencing the musicians' dress, style, mannerisms in performance and their carriage on stage. Younger gospel musicians tend to be more entertainment-inclined than the older generation. The younger musicians are usually abreast of current trends in popular music culture and employ these, appealing to the younger audiences who prefer such infusions. The musicians' sheer agility, capacity to sustain the high level of energy required for live performance sufficient to hold the audience's interest, will also determine the style of music portrayed.

The categories of selected gospel musicians that were involved in this research represent different generations of musicianship. Different ages and background of the musicians distinctly reflect different kinds of entertainment and performance delivery. The gospel musicians Evangelist Bóla Àre and Mrs Fásóyín represent the older generation. They have been in the music scene for over forty years and their background as members of the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) clearly emerges in their implicit and covert disposition to entertain in performance. On the other hand, Evangelist Tóun Sòètán, Dúpé Olúlànà, and Pastor Sunday Adélakùn represent another generation of gospel musician; while the likes of Tópé Àlàbí, Bùkólá Akinadé, Sholá Allison, Frank Edward, Kenny Kore and Adékúnlé Olóyèdé represent a much younger generation who deliberately employ an exuberant, overt and unabashed element of entertainment in their performances.

Competition, the Struggle for Relevance, and Identity

The gospel music market generates a subtle but unavoidably fierce rivalry among its performers. In Nigeria, gospel music is fast becoming a competitive industry with demands upon each musician to work hard in order to stand out with a marketable edge. Ordinarily gospel musicians will not accept or admit this reality because of the norms of humility and selflessness that are endemic to a true dedication to only proclaim the Gospel. But this entails each musician to be the best he or she can be, to retain or improve his or her audience appeal and the inevitable self-consciousness of this mandate emerges accordingly in their work.

Some of the musicians therefore employ entertainment attractions to carve for themselves unique identities, which impacts their style of performance, vocal techniques, choice of costumes, dance styles, introduction of dramatic elements and stage craft.

Creativity

The desire to emerge with cutting edge and unprecedented concepts on the part of the musicians is another element driving changes in the style predominating Nigerian gospel music. Evangelist Bùkólá Akinadé has adopted a popularly known unique image for herself in her rendition of Senwele and Waka, as a result of her own creativity. Tope Alabi, Shola Allison, and Bola Are have come to be widely recognized by their individuated styles of performance. Others include Bois Olorun, Ayan Jesu, Saint Janet, and Queen Funmi who stand out due to their unique styles emerging from relying upon their own creative visions and impulses.

The Labour Market and Emerging New Musicians

Since the 1990s, Nigeria's national economic and political realities have resulted in a teeming population of young graduates threatened by insurmountable joblessness. Many of them turn to music making as a career; and some of these venture into gospel music performance as their sole source of income. Since they move into the field with the intention of gaining financial independence, the entertainment-performance route is unavoidable for them, because without being marketable the desired income will not grow out of their ministering activities. The survival instinct in a troubled economy was a key driver for performers in blending the entertainment business with gospel music as their vehicle to preach, to greater or lesser degree. Yinka Ayefele is a good example of a gospel singer who is so commercially oriented that his music is regarded as secular; in spite of the rich religious coloration of his music, he continues to be seen as a Juju musician.

Liberal Economy

Liberalism signifies the ideological conviction that a well-run economy is one where market moves and production decisions are made by individuals and not by collective institutions or organizations. The advent of Pentecostalism in Nigeria gave rise to the formation of one-man churches as an avenue for expressing this individualistic entrepreneurial idealism. From the 1950s, individuals pulled out of the mainline protestant churches to form their individual churches where they were referred to as president and founder as well as general overseer of their new formation. Notable examples include The Redeemed Christian Church of God founded in 1952 by Rev Josiah Olufemi Akindayomi. Archbishop Benson Idahosa established The Church of God Missions in 1970. Pastor William Folorunsho Kumuyi pulled out of the Anglican Church to join the Apostolic Faith Church and later started The Deeper Christian Life Ministry also known as Deeper Life Bible Church in 1973. Bishop David Oyedepo founded Winners Chapel in Nigeria in 1983.

Simultaneously, the Nigerian economic situation came to be regarded as liberalized. General mismanagement by government appointees resulted in failures of economic policy on a large scale, leaving individuals in the country to fend for themselves by whatever means they could find. With particular reference to gospel music and its community of musicians, the law of supply and demand requires that they find innovative means of survival. One of these methods is to sell music as it is a valued commodity. Many upwardly mobile members of the growing Pentecostal and Charismatic congregations sweeping the country can afford to buy these products as CDs and DVDs; hence there is

an ever-growing market for gospel music provided it is packaged trendily and attractively enough to compete with many other similar and readily available products.

Globalization

The high level of information technology in the twenty first century and the desire to meet global expectations in order to expand one's marketability is another factor that drives the entertainment aspect of Nigerian gospel music. Brightly advertised events occurring all over the global village can be viewed almost as soon as they actually occur. According to Aina (2004: 53) globalization is not an abstraction; it is a very real, penetrating, and universal factor in determining the commoditization of faith-based creativity. Individual entrepreneurs do not have a choice but to keep abreast of global trends. Giddens (1990: 64) described globalization as the "unification of world-wide social relations which link distinct localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring miles away and vice-versa."

Nigerian gospel musicians are now exposed to what happens in the global music world; so the foreign influences upon their locally consumed musical styles of composition and performance are inevitable. For example the use of 'makossa' as a musical genre by Nigerian gospel musicians reflects the trends in neighbouring francophone countries where this style of music is prevalent. Evangelist Tope Alabi, in her song titled 'Bàbá mímó mowá ʃopé' used the makossa style fused with the tune of a song by Awilo Longomba, a Congolese secular musician.

The western influence upon Nigerian gospel music, especially from America, is also an example of globalization. Many of the Nigerian gospel musicians now have the opportunity to travel and interact with other musicians beyond the shores of Nigeria; and this influence on their creativity is evident in the use of costumes, styles of composition, dance patterns and use of language.

Conclusion

Entertainment is an inevitable feature of Nigerian gospel music performance. Music ministers and popular musicians working side by side in the same trans-cultural field are both affected and influenced by the same realities. Factors we have explored here contributing to the fusion of ministry with professional entertainment include: the impact of changing performance spaces, the pursuit of audience appeal, age sets, backgrounds, and global exposure of the musician, the impact of competition, the influence of creative responses to current

trends. We also reviewed the impact of stark financial need, the impact of commercial production, Nigeria's drastically shrinking labour market, modern Christian ideology that encourages unabashed pursuit of prosperity, liberal economic values, and globalization. And historically, the fusion of the secular with the sacred, and a resistance to the punishing rigidity of conservative Christian missionary derision of indigenous African religious ritual expression have been a feature of Nigerian gospel music's very origins and development; this resistance and joyous embrace of the popular has become a reality that defines the music of Christ's Gospel in performance.¹⁰

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