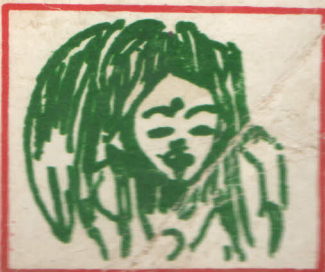
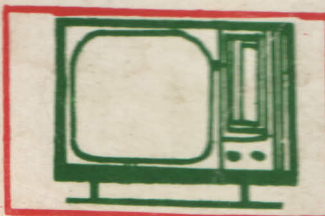


TAIYE ADEOLA

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EDITOR'S NOTE

The Nigerian Theatre Journal is an annual publication of the Society of Nigerian Theatre Artists, SONTA. Articles in this Edition, consists of spill-over articles from our last year's conference at the University of Ilorin. We want to express profound gratitude to the Federal Ministry of Culture and Tourism through the National Troupe of Nigeria whose current Artistic Director, Dr. Ahmed Yerima came to attend the opening ceremony of the convention. Dr. Yerima who is also a member of our society convinced the then Minister of Culture, Alabo Graham Douglas, on the need to publish a book for us based on papers presented at our last year's conference. The book, *Theatre and Democracy in Nigeria* we believe should be out on or before our convention this year.

However, over seventy papers were presented at the conference. The book could only take about twenty-one papers, each paper forming a chapter in the book. Assessors returned about forty papers published. This journal has therefore undertaken the publication of the remaining twenty-one papers that could not be published in the book.

The editing had to fall on the president because, our editor was in the family way for the best part of the year. She delivered in May when all works on this edition of the journal has been completed. Secondly, she is still working on the second volume of our journal, based on the articles from the convention at the University of Abuja.

We want to thank all those who contributed articles to this journal. However, we wish to stress that henceforth, publications from our stables will require a higher depth of research, a research language suitable for publication in an academic journal as well as an editing which is vigorous, free and fair.

In the meantime, we hope all readers will learn a thing or two from the articles in this edition.

Thank you and God bless.

Ayo Akinwale
Editor.

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CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN POPULAR MUSIC: A TOOL FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

TAIYE 'SHOLA ADEOLA

INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria today, popular music has been an important tool in the march towards the growth and development of the nation. As a tool, popular music has been used over the years to move the nation forward or otherwise at different stages.

This paper will therefore examine contemporary Nigerian popular music in the light of what it is and how it has been and how it could still be a tool for national development. Citing relevant music examples, the following issues among others will be discussed in this paper: Popular music and national unity, popular music and national history, popular music and job provision, popular music and moral decadence, popular music and democracy, popular music and mass mobilization.

This paper concludes by giving some suggestions on how popular music can be employed within the context of what it has been to further enhance national development

POPULAR MUSIC

Popular music is that brand of music that generally enjoys the favour of being acceptable to the people among which it is made. The acceptability can be within a given cultural or geographical location or can transcend cultural boundaries, thereby extending beyond its immediate locality.

Different genres of music have at various times been made popular in Nigeria especially since the invention of electronic media, which has made the production and the dissemination of sound possible. Gronow (1981: 252-53) observed that in West Africa, the first commercial recording of music occurred in the 1920's.

The evolution of popular music in Nigeria dates back to the 1920's. Some of the musical genres at this early stage include Sakara, Asiko, highlife and Juju, which evolved later in the 1930s as a local variation of the urban West African palm wine guitar tradition. (Waterman: 1990: 27-54).

Today some of these musical genres still remain popular and had been improved upon being made relevant to the contemporary musical scene. New genres, which were traditional at their inceptions, are also known today in the Nigerian musical scene. Examples are Waka, Dadakuada, Gelede etc.

Contemporary popular music is the modern commercially successful music available to the public through major commercial record companies. (Adegbite: 1995) Examples of such music in Nigeria today include Juju, Afro juju, Highlife, Higher life, Fuji, Reggae, Apala, Waka, and Gospel. These musical genres through the content of the music have had great impacts – positive and negative on Nigerians and a consequent effect on Nigeria as a nation. First let us consider the negative.

NEGATIVE INFLUENCE OF POPULAR MUSIC

Popular music like any other musical genres has the capacity of arresting people's attention through its power of Rhythm and melody. The effect of music upon the listener is such that becomes evident in the kinds of language, dance movements, facial expressions and gestures, and the kind of moods displayed by the lovers of such music which is often learnt by the fans as dictated by the musician.

It is common to have peculiar dance steps and gestures accompanying various styles of performance. A good example is **Syncro System** by King Sunny Ade in the eighties.

A look at the content of popular music as we have it today in Nigeria reveals a lot of vulgarity, which has a consequent effect of moral decadence especially upon the youths. Many artists more or less believe that unless they become vulgar, they will not have good audience appeal, hence many of them especially the Fuji, Juju and Dadakuada artists become so carefree in their renditions and such cultures are imbibed by the Nigerian recipients of the music, thus loose and indecent Language is a negative influence of popular music on the Nigerian society. For example, examine the text of this music by Late Alhaji Odolaye Aremu a popular Dadakuada artist.

Okò lónì é man sepe lémì
Obo lónì é ma bo nmole
Kelembe tí oje ngboro
Maa fí oju ruuku

The penis says you must not course me
The vagina says you must not cover my glory
The mucus that does not allow me to ear
I will rub the eyes to the dust.

Waa lo joko pelepele
Ki o gbohun enu mi, Adegbale dorm
Emi Aremu gbajumo oko muni...
Alhaja muni o feran mi pupo
Ti njini lonanjo pee, ni nkan bi aago meta oru
Ani Alhaji Odolaiye Aremu a faa wa
Dakun wa foko lule laarin itan o

Go and sit down quietly
And listen to my voice Adegbale the sinner
I, Aremu the popular husband of Muni
Alhaja Muni loves me so much
She wakes me up in the midnight at about 300am
She says Alhaji Odolaye Aremu our alpha
Please push down your penis between my thighs.

Examine also Sunny Ade's 'funfun niyi eyin'.

Apart from the language, the use of drugs and narcotics is another negative habit, which many of the Nigerian Youths learn from popular artists. Many of the artists believes that the use of drugs enhance their performance, they use it and many of their fans who often want to be like them do it also like them. A visit to late Fela Anikulapo Kuti's shrine presents an example of how a popular artist can negatively influence his fans. Indian hemp and other drugs are freely

used at such places.

Another common phenomenon with the Nigerian popular musicians is the use of touts, which they call "bouncers" or "parkers". These boys are used often for fighting when need arises at the performances of the artists. They stand around as defenders or protectors of the bandleader and instruments. This encourages idleness on the part of many young ones and it is not towards nation building.

Conflict and quarrels among the popular artists is another negative indicator. It is very common to have artists in conflict releasing albums to abuse themselves using uncomplimentary languages against one another. These records are released into the market and consumed by the populace; through it they learn how to abuse and how to be people's enemies. As Waterman: (1990: 3) rightly observed.

Feuds between stars are the subject of public gossip and are sometimes extended over a series recording. For example Fuji music Star Ayinla Kollington and Female Waka Star Salawa Abeni produced a notorious series of mutually abusive hit records in 1981 and 1982.

Such acts of public abuses and publicity of conflicts is not towards nation building.

Although popular music presents some negative impact upon the nation and its citizens the positive contribution towards nation building cannot be ignored. It must be observed that the Nigerian music scene as reflected in the popular music is such that cannot be separated from the history of the nation and its development. Popular music has therefore been a tool for national development in Nigeria in the following ways:

POPULAR MUSIC AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

Popular music in Nigeria carries with it a national identity, which portrays it as a music that is indigenous to Nigeria. The various musical genres through the use of language, costume, and musical instruments present the very rich Nigerian cultural and social heritage. Many popular artists today employ the use of the three major Nigerian languages in their presentations: Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba languages are used as medium of expressions in musical performances. This is an effort on the part of the musicians to carry along everybody in the country but also an identity that is peculiar to Nigeria. King Sunny Ade in one of his albums employed the various languages in the track titled "Nigeria yi ti gbogbo wa ni".

The costumes employed also reflect the Nigerian way of dressing showing the particular region from which that artist hails from.

The Musical instruments employed by many of these popular artists are both Western and African. The Nigerian popular musician is however recognised by his unique employment of the traditional instruments that he blends so well with the Western instruments or use exclusively. Fuji and Juju music employs the use of Yoruba talking drum and this gives their music a Nigerian identity. The music of Lagbaja, another popular artist in Nigeria is worthy of note here. He calls his music "Higher life". The use of Bata and dundun drums by this artist blended with the Western saxophone gives his music an identity that is peculiar. Worthy of note also is the peculiarity of his costume, which is a Nigerian culture indicator. As Akpabot: (1986: p. 91) rightly puts it. One method of finding out about the culture of a people is to examine how they conceptualize their music. Citing Wissler Akpabot further states that music is a stable cultural trait and therefore provides a useful basis for determining the diffusion of other cultural traits.

Musical style according to Waterman: (1990:8) may articulate and define communal values in heterogeneous, rapidly transforming societies. The Nigerian Society at the present democratic dispensation has set values that are evident in the music of the popular artists. A look at

the song texts reveals the clamour for better living condition and progress for the Nigerian citizens. The issue of projecting the Nigerian culture is also evident.

POPULAR MUSIC AND NATIONAL UNITY

Music is a binding force. It brings together by reason of its Rhythm and melody people of different cultures, ideologies and diverse inclinations. Popular music in Nigeria has over the years preached national unity. The text of the songs criticizes disunity division and the oppression of a segment of the nation by another. The popular artists in Nigeria have demonstrated their calls for national unity through the formation of the Performing Musicians Association. Participation by fellow musicians in each other's recording as demonstrated in King Sunny Ade's release is also a call for national unity. An examination of the text of this song by King Sunny Ade further demonstrates this:

*Nigeria yi ti gbogbo wa ni
ko ma ghodo baje
Tori kosi bo miran ti a le lo
Gbee - Kemi Gbe.*

*This Nigeria belongs to all of us
It must not spoil
Because we have no other place to go
Carry it and I will carry it.*

Another song Onyeka Owenu goes thus:

*One love, keep us together
Living together in this world
One Love keep us together*

POPULAR MUSIC AND NATIONAL HISTORY

The contents of the music performed by the popular musicians are derived mainly from the occurrences in the societies within which they live. The documentation of songs through electronic media forms history at a later date. An examination of song texts recorded in the past reveals past occurrences.

For example Sandra Barnes (1980) quotes in one of her writing a song by Juju Super Star Sunny Ade publicizing the switch from left hand to right hand driving in 1972.

Praise singing is a major feature of popular music in Nigeria. Praise singing at times, involves taking an individual through his genealogy in which a lot of historical facts could be derived. The text of the praise song could also be an eye opener into what the tradition and culture of the people are. They remind people of the past and of the values of a society.

A careful look at the costumes and instruments used at the various stages of performance and development of the various musical genres also becomes historical facts.

History is also recorded in the content of the music performed by the various artists as they comment on the prevailing situations in the country at various times. This is evident in Waterman's statement:

Current events, particularly political developments are continually encoded in popular song text. e.g. the death of Adegoke Adelabu in an automobile accident in 1958 was recorded by Haruna Ishola

and his Apala group in his album titled Late Adelabu recorded in Lagos, 1958 Decca. WA 3034 (Waterman 1990: 20).

POPULAR MUSIC AND JOB PROVISION

Unemployment is a major problem in Nigeria today because of the poor economy. Popular music has however, helped as a means of job provision for the unemployed. It must be observed that not many of the popular artists have formal musical training. Some of them are trained in other disciplines; they find the field of music to be an area where they can earn their living. Musical performance today creates room for self-employment that is why today in the music scene there is one-man show.

It is to be noted also that a band performance requires the co-operation of other musicians and professionals hence; many hands are employed to do various things in a popular musical band. Job opportunities are thus created for Songwriters, Instrumentalists, Technicians, Engineers, Producers, Managers and so on. In Nigeria today many people are employed through the industry of music in general and popular music in particular.

POPULAR MUSIC AND MASS MOBILISATION

The employment of popular music in mass mobilization, campaigns and enlightenment programmes is a common thing in Nigeria. Popular music is a public arena for the symbolic negotiation of continuity and change (Waterman 1990:16). The two million man march organised by the late Abacha regime employed popular artists to perform to mobilize people. Popular artists sing about government policies and programmes to sensitise the public and enlighten them. Producers of television and radio jingles adapt the tunes of some of the popular music in order to catch people's attention. Current affairs are subject of the music. For example one of the popular artists sang about the Federal Government's Programme on Baby Friendly thus:

E toju omo	Take care of the child
E toju omo	Take care of the child
E fomo loyan <i>mu o</i>	Breast-feed the child
E toju omo.	Take care of the child

The use of music in mass mobilization has worked because the populace gets familiar with the songs and they remember and are therefore adequately mobilized.

POPULAR MUSIC AND DEMOCRACY

The past history of democracy in Nigeria has presented the popular Musicians and their Music as sycophants, opportunists and mere beggars. It has also presented them in another vein as the peoples mouth piece and critics. These two dimensions are however presented by different musicians and what they stand for as it is reflected in the content of their songs and the message it carries.

While some Musicians are mere praise singers who sing only for the money bags who sponsor them to praise them not minding their short comings and the evil they do in the nation, others pose themselves as the heart beat of the nation commenting always on the evils discovered with the politicians.

Waterman (1990:22) observes that Mass-reproduced Music, disseminated via cassettes, radio and television is an effective medium of social commentary.

It must be noted that the roles of popular Music in democracy has always been to mobilize people, educate, criticize, give historical facts about the past, and even to perpetrate certain peo-

ple or government in power.

Democracy creates a very free atmosphere for musicians to come out and say in plain terms what they would not normally have said or may have said or may have said only directly. A careful look at the song text of the popular Music during a democratic government reflects freedom, praises, request to government and expression of peoples opinion while during a military regime musicians are less free to sing.

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing discussions attempt has been made to present contemporary popular music in the light of what it has been and its implications for the Nigerian society in terms of National development both positively and negatively. The contemporary Nigerian popular musician must be conscious of the role they play in National development. In the words of Peter Martins (1995) Music is a social product, social resource and social practice. As such it is not autonomous but is created and performed by real people in particular times and places, in doing so they reveal much about themselves and their societies. Martins states further that, the time is right to take a fresh look at music and its effects as today's music resonates with the consequences of cultural globalisation and the transformation wrought by new electronic media...

While this paper highlights some negative effects that contemporary Nigerian popular music may have on the society, the focus is essentially to concentrate on how contemporary Nigerian popular music can be deployed as a tool for national development in the specific areas of National identity, National unity, National History, Job provision, mass mobilization and Democracy. The practitioners in their song writing and performance and the analyst especially in scholarly endeavours and academic discourse must consider how to make contemporary Nigerian popular music relevant as an instrument of integration for progress and development and not a tool for disintegration and retrogression.

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