Performing Musicians and the Governing Challenges in Nigeria

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Abstract

The music of the masses is the voice of the people. It represents what the people stand for at every stage in any country. It is on record when United State of America was in troubled season, music played a major role. Likewise, in Nigeria, during the military occupation of power, the people's voice was always heard through music. Inevitably, we cannot push aside the power in music to advocate the mind of the populace. Presently in the Nigerian popular music scene, there is no trace of any form of synergy between the political, economic and security situation of the country and the urban musical mass culture. This work traces the socio-political roles of music and also explore issues bothering on security. It explores various scholarly work in books and journal articles. and also engaged through random sampling of popular songs from contemporary music artiste. The data collected were studied and analysed. The result showed that music artiste had neglected national issues bordering on security and other phase of national life, they engaged in songs that can only entertain the populace and even they tend to seek favour from the tyrants in order to gain financial power through patronage. Hence, the paper concluded by

projecting a reorientation for direction in order to explore the power available in music to echo the agitation of the masses. This in a very sure way will enable people at the affairs of governance to re-adjust and embark on people oriented programmes.

Keywords: Performance; Governor; Governed; Socio-Political; Popular music; Protest Music; National Interest

Introduction

Music is a wing on which the societal life flies. It has the capacity to exhume to the surface, the in-depth nature and stature of societal life. This is to say that music has the capacity to present the true picture of the lifestyle, standard of living, social status, civility and responses to governance in every human society. Oluniyi (2015) asserts that 'music, to Africans, is inseparable from life itself. This is to corroborate how useful music can be in any human society. Worldwide, music has occupied a prevalent space where the societies mirror. Through the music produced in every identifiable culture or identifiable geographical setting, an outsider can actually reflect on the general portrait of such society.

Many countries of the world had experienced some level of instabilities in the past. Some are still going through such impasse. It is on record when some African states were experiencing hardship and oppression from their so called leaders, the whole world could feel the heat even from performing musicians. One good example is the South African state; during the apartheid, music was directed and to connote reflections about their sufferings, oppressions, dominance and prejudice, examples include 'Biko '(2003) by Peter Gabriel, 'Beast of No Nation' (1989) by Fela Kuti, 'Sun City' (1985) by Artists United against apartheid and 'Soweto Blues' (1990) by Miriam Makeba. The spread of these reflections covered both secular and sacred. It went beyond music by surfacing in the other cognate arts such as movies (Sarafina, 1992; Zulu 2013). To this extent, music has been playing great roles in the political life of many countries of the world. Since it is a true reflection of the mind of the people, it, therefore, carries power to checkmate the 'Governors' on the imprints of its governance on the governed.

In the otherwise; government also uses music to send signals to his subject. This is done through many adverts on various media, sensitising the people on its programme within a particular timeframe and the people thus aligned themselves with such musical advert. Music, therefore, plays both roles. The government uses it to instruct, implore and align its subject to its programmes and, in the otherwise; the people also have the opportunity to send feedback signals to government through music. This creates a true check and balance system within the community.

Various research works have been carried out on the subject that relates to socio-political impact of music to our society. Some of such works include Labinjo(1982); Grass (1986); Turck (2008); Vershbow (2010); Vidal (2012); Lynskey (2013); Jolaosho (2014); Ayakoroma (2014); Onyebadi(2017); Louw (2017); and Onyebadi (2018). This research work intends to add and contribute to the existing scholarly works.

Socio-Political Roles of Music

In the traditional African setting, music plays a great role in the social and political phases of the people's life. Adedeji (2010) observes that music serves various purposes from religious to socio-political and celebration of various life events like birthdays, weddings, marriages and royal court functions. Songs accompanied with various improvised instruments are commonly used to propagate messages in the traditional society. This process is in two phases, first is when the sitting traditional ruler needs to send message to the indigenes and settlers, he sends the town-crier. The town-crier goes into the community chanting the message as accompanied with the gong in his hand. Second is when the subjects has a pressing issue which had been a stalemate for a long time, (according to the endurance capability of the indigenes) and they needed to protest such situation, the people will troop out, engage music, and improvised accompaniments, then send their warnings, interests and other agitations to the rulers.

Both actions, command immediate response from both sides. In this regard music serves as the medium of communication to compel either sides to a required action or reaction. It is thus playing a socio-political role by bridging the gap between the political class and the subjects on social ground basis. To further see how this

processes are used or administered today, this write-up will present the discourse of the socio-political roles of music under two subheadings via "music as socio-political educational tool (governor to the governed)" and music as feedback tool (governed to the governor)".

Music as Socio-Political Tool from the 'Governor' to the 'Governed'

Notably, African small communities of those days have been growing and have transformed into bigger towns and cities. Hence, the old town crier method will no longer be adequate for social communication between the 'governor' and the 'governed'. As a result, new advance methods must be embraced and employed. Such methods include schools, associations, common-ethnicity, drama, visual arts and most importantly music. Government most times pushes vital information to the populace in form of songs especially of the instruments of mass media such as radio, television, and internet. This is done in recognition of the power posses by music to capture the people's mind. There are, of course many media options, ranging from print, radio, television and internet but it is obvious that the print media cannot handle music(sound) related news else the others.

The 'governors' cannot afford to underestimate the effect of musical presentation of their intentions towards to governed, hence one will always come across information from the 'governors' to the governed on every medium that could handle music rendition. Very current examples could be seen from the anti-corruption campaign of the Buhari led federal government of Nigeria (whistle blowing), war against insecurity by the same administration is always 'live on the radio and television'. One of this is the advert by the Federal government on the rumored petroleum product scarcity on the Nigerian Television Authority. In the advert, the intent of the government was first put into songs before the commentator began to speak. Why music at the beginning? It is an instrument to capture the mind of the people first and foremost, so as to bring their attention to the message.

Music as Socio-Political Feedback Tool from the 'Governed to the 'Governor'

A balanced society is one where both the governor and the governed have a means of interactions. This is to say that, there is a meeting point to actually evaluate one another. Under this situation, both sides have a way of sending and returning

processed ideologies to and from one another. In such society, there will be sanity, development and peaceful co-existence and wherever one side is lacking; there will be anarchy, disorderliness, insecurity, underdevelopment, physical deterioration, public disobedience, intellectual disintegration, lack of values and lack of respect for ethics.

In response to the aforementioned, there is always a feedback medium or media from the governed to the governor. Here, the governed have the opportunity to respond, having weighed the governor's policies and execution of programmes, either positively or negatively.

Unfortunately, in the Nigerian situation, there is either no any formalized channel for the governed to present their feedback, even when positive or such channel is incapacitated. Hence, the populace resort to music. Why music? It is easily accessible, spread quickly and can be easily understood.

Traditionally, the musicians represent the people's voice. They breathe out the public opinions. They represent the populace loudspeakers. This could be so, because they are at the acute receiving end of any bad policy from the governor. How? When the economic policies are forthright, the populace benefit from it and Nigerians, as they were, will always throw celebrations for every joyous event. This will eventually have a print on the musicians' life. But when it goes otherwise, the opposite is the result. Hence musicians are quick to counter any unfavourable policies from the governor. In any society, therefore, music is a luxury and the economy quickly takes a bite on the music industry the moment it goes stringent.

The Nigerian Situation

In the above discourse, it has been established that both the governor and the governed employ music as a medium of coding and decoding messages and responses between one another. It is now necessary to look into the Nigerian situation. Events in the past had revealed hoe music has been useful between the governor and the governed in Nigeria. Even before the declaration of the country as a nation, there was the traditional way of employing music to address political stability. The questions are how is music used by the governor? How are the governed using this same medium to their advantage or vice versa? Are there

misconceptions from either party? Is any of the party trampling on the other through other sneaky means? Whichever the case, there is need to examine the Nigerian governor-governed relationship under music as a tool for socio-political stability. Hence this relationship will be considered under three imperatives via, first "traditional music as a form of socio-political change", "performing musicians as catalysts of socio-political change", and "present stance of popular music in resolving socio-political impasse in Nigeria".

Traditional Music as a Form of Socio-Political Change

Considering from the root, the performing musicians in the traditional pre-colonial Nigeria are involved in music peculiar to their time. They are specialists in the job. Most of them are born into the profession. They learn from childhood till they are matured. Knowledge is transferred within family cycle and to this fact no unauthorized family dares dabble into music performance because they are non-initiate to the brand of music. During this period, the traditional governor used music as a means of disseminating information to the governed. This is done by using the bull-roarer for the passage of the spirit, death of an important person or the imposition of curfew (Vidal, 2012:4), town-crier is used to send important message to the indigene about upcoming events, decisions from the palace about a subject matter or a call to a meeting either at the palace or the town square. More importantly, the governor use the drum to announce the departure or arrival of the king, a royal prestige for the traditional ruler (Oluniyi 2015), it is also used to announce the death of the king or other important persons in the community.

On the other way, the indigene of pre-colonial traditional Africans used music in terms of songs, chants accompanied by improvised instruments to express dissatisfaction on the ruling policies of the traditional governor over them. This is evident in the Edi festival of Ile-Ife and Oke-Igbo, this also showcase itself in the *Òpèpèé* night music during the *Òramfè* (popularly called *Sòrà*) festival in Ondo kingdom. The two mentioned festival have in common – protest music. *Òpèpèé* music is usually done in the night preceding *Òramfè* (*Sòrà*) festival. The indigene of Ondo will troop out in large number in the night to protest bad leadership and also to commend good ones as it appeals to them. At this time, various nefarious activities are strongly condemned through singing so aloud. The people will gather round the abode of suspected perpetrators, enlist their undutiful acts in

songs as compose extemporaneously and sends serious signal and demand for an end to such after which if it does not stop by the coming year, such abode and individual will be attacked in the night. This is like issuing a year warning warrant before public judgment day. The motivational values and results-based attached to this activities make it a continuous event till date.

Even some minute acts, which an individual perpetrator may consider as insignificant, are raised during this musical expedition. Because of these, every individual and leader in the society, especially among the traditional governors, is perched to be conscious of their activities because *Òpèpèé* cannot but come once a year when they will be thoroughly analysed, exposed and judged by their subjects.With the above, there is check and balance in the society. Music is employed to faction and checkmate the traditional governors' activities hence there is a measurable tranquil in the socio-political relationship at the traditional level.

Performing Musicians as Catalysts of Socio-Political Change

"His rise in popularity throughout the 1970s signaled a change in the relation between music as an art form and Nigerian socio-political discourse" ("Fela," 2019). Music as art is not limited to the performance and gratification purposes only. It has been established that music serves various roles in our society. One of these great roles is its ability to engage our society socially and politically.

Growing beyond traditional scenarios was the picture at the birth of a new country, Nigeria. Contact with European culture created new music media called music of the mass culture. As a result, there were new crops of performing musicians engaging the new wave of Nigerian popular music. The expedition of the British explorer and the activities of the church missionaries came with its attendant new musical instruments, scale and styles. The church musical renditions, tonality, musical instrument were introduced into the culture of the people. This contact led to new forms which gave birth to a fusion of traditional African, American and European musical characteristics. Accompanied with urban lifestyles, various musical genres were developed outside church to suite African secular life. To this end, many of the present Nigerian popular music

began to develop which include, Highlife, Jùjú, Afro beats, Fújì, Àpàlà, Wéré and so on.

This new music did not mature until the late twentieth century Nigeria (Nigeria, 2018). New music, social life, individual migration and urban-like expansion in the emerging cities demanded for a new way of socio-political communication. Thus the popular music was unconsciously adopted by the governed while the governor used the instrument of mass media.

The leadership pattern adopted by the governor led music to shoot beyond being an art form to becoming social and political platform for the governed to air their intents. Under this situation, the performing musicians became the populace mouth-piece through their rendition either at live concerts or recorded albums. Civilian politicians took over the country from the British, after a while, the military interrupted under the pretext that the politicians were not doing it right and with a promise to salvage the situation. After a while, history have it that the military was unable to satisfy the hope of the governed and because of this development, there was rise of the Nigerian protest music.

Notably, Fela Kuti was one of the foremost protesting musicians in the Nigerian popular music and socio-political scene. He was constantly engaging the governor through his music (Zombie, 1977; I.T.T. – International Thief thief and so on). Even at the face of the governors' pretences, there is always a reprisal attack on the musician. The attacks could be regarded as an underway method in an effort to silence the socio-political music from existence. Then, it is logical to conclude that the governor felt the heat from this musical-public-comments on their styles and outcomes of their governance.

Others include Evangelist Niyi Adedokun in 'Awáyémálo II' (Adedokun, 1989, track 1). *'Èsankògbóògùn'* (Nemesis has no remedy), he stylishly narrated the supposed errors of seven past governor and that of the sitting governor at the time. This is a form of bringinggovernance into check. The effect could only be narrated by the sitting leadership at the time but afterwards there was peaceful resolve to the election that was forthcoming at the time. Sunny Okosun in the album 'Which way Nigeria?' (Okosuns, 1984) questioned the slow rate of development and as

well advocated for the love our fatherland. Ebenezer OlasupoRemilekunFabiyi popularly known as Ebenezer Obey (Fabiyi, 1982, Track A1, A2, A3) where Obey commented on the austerity measure policy, agricultural neglect and petroleum product brouhaha. King Sunny Ade (1981, track A3, A4) where he narrated the ordeal and neglect of agriculture.

Recently, is the music of Eedris Abdulkareem titled 'Nigeria Jaga-jaga'. The artiste was able to report the Nigerian socio-political scene as he evaluated it. The said album was released in 2004 during the presidency of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo. The Tide (2016) observes that ...'it was unanimous opinion that the album was a satire by Abdulkareem to decry the state of disorderliness in Nigeria under the then President Olusegun Obasanjo'. As soon as the album gained public acceptance, the governor quickly replied, condemning the artiste and the song itself. The fight is still very much alive as at the time of this write-up. Evidences of repetitive references to the saga over the track are all up in the Nigerian dailies. What is the import from this? Music has a very unprecedented effect if channeled towards correcting or checkmating the governing styles of the governors. The lyric of the music was effective and capturing that the governor saw the loopholes in the governance of the time. Below are the lyrical contents of the track by Eedris Adbulkareem.

Turn up my microphone
It's time to hear some reality 2004,
Abdulkareem, whad up
Nigeria jagajaga
Everything scatter scatter
Poor man dey suffer suffer
Gbosa, gbosa, gun shotinna di air
Armed robber came to your house
Eno thief money, eno rape your wife
Went straight up to your bedside (Gbosa)
Six feet, now you are down
Which armed robber no want money
Which armed robber no want joley
Na political armed robber be that
Na wetin dey kill Nigeria o

Ifesikaiyabiyabiya
They lock am for jail for Nigeria
Kingsley Agbesefdey for here
Adebendena he dey fit all of them
Here kpa, inside prison
Everything scatter scatter
Poor man dey suffer suffer
Gbosa, gbosa, gun shotinna di air

What you are say
Africa, make you love your land
Africa is na motherland
We dey grow there is peace and wealth
We dey grow oh
There is peace and wealth
(Eedris what about ikoja now)
What he go go waja
NEPA, wosederebula
419 in Nigeria
Agege to Ikejana 100 naira
West class na popular
Come show film for Nigeria
(Where Charlse Taylor dey now?)
Hedey live big life
High estate for calabar
That na Liberia mafia for Nigeria
Everything scatter scatter
Poor man dey suffer suffer
Gbosa, gbosagun shotinna di air

What you are say
Africa, make you love your land
Africa is na motherland
Gun shotinna di air

Present Stance of Popular Music in Resolving Socio-Political Impasse in Nigeria

Since the release of Eedris album 'Jagajaga' in 2004, the attendant face off between the artist and the governor appeared to be a scare for performing musicians in Nigeria. The album was banned on the radio and television but it was being used in the club houses thus it gained more acceptance among the governed. However, the reaction of the governor sent a scary signal to other performing artist. How? There was undue silence from among them on matters that relate to national issues or governance. Noticeably, the Nigerian brand of Hip hop music is now at full blossom and for the purpose of this assertion - that they went silent, 77 tracks were listened to, analysed textually and the table below showed the result.

TRACKS	MORAL	LOVE/DATING	NATIONAL/ POLITICAL	OTHERS
77	67 79% of 77	65 84.42% of 77	2 2.6% of 77	4 5.19% of 77

Table 1

The above table indicate a total silence on national governing challenges. Imports from Eedris-Obasanjo imbroglio showed that music can actually engage the governors to shift position when it comes to national challenges. Recently, political music analysis by Edeoghon (2018) enlisted five top politically inclined music in his publication. Those mentioned are Vector, MI, Reminisce, Jesse Jagz, and Olamide. Going through the lyrics of all of them one cannot really adjudge them as actual political music. The reason is that, none of the five actually dedicated a whole track to advocate and address the governing challenges of this time or any political topic, what they did was just to mention something political in not more than five lines in a whole track.

To this end, the present generation of performing musicians are not living to the expectation of the governed. They do not realize the potency of the musical weapon to impel the governors to discharge in their duties in favour of the governed. Many challenges are currently battling the nation; from insecurity, corruption at various levels and spectre of national life, lackadaisical attitude to

work, health challenges, educational and moral decadence. Instead of engaging all of these and others unmentioned, they simply suck the populace financially, throwing gigantic concerts here and there with high gate fee, buying flashy cars and jets and polluting the minds of the younger ones with erotic music videos. Someone argued, they could have decided to remain apolitical. But the question is how would all of them be apolitical? They numbered more than hundred, they live within Nigeria and they experience what others are experiencing. To remain apolitical under such situation may mean insensitivity to issues that are germane or being unconscious of the potency of music to resolve national impasse.

However, the unguided display and attributes of these Hip Hop artistes is capable of giving the governors a wrong impression of the standard of living of their subjects. When the United State of America was passing similar developmental stage as Nigeria, the musicians were busy releasing protest songs. These examples were presented by Wright (2018) while he wrote about the best protest song of all time. Enlisted are 'Strange fruit' by Billie Holiday; 'We shall overcome' by Rev. Charles Albert Tindley; 'War' by Edwin Starr; 'Mississippi Goddam' by Nina Simeon; 'The time they are a-changin' by Bob Dylan; 'Get up, Stand up' by Bob Marley (inspired by a trip to Haiti); 'Give peace a chance' by Plastic Ono Band; 'Sunday bloody Sunday' by U2; 'Born in the U.S.A' by Bruce Springsteen and 'Fuck tha Police' by N.W.A just to mention a few. But in Nigeria the opposite is the case. Performing artistes live fake life in their videos and project wrong image of the citizens at large.

Conclusion

In the past, performing artistes (music) lived up to the expectation of national life and it was a resolve that benefitted the populace at large. Having realized the enormity of the power possessed by music to address national governing challenges, performing artiste should engage the governors constructively in the overall interest of the nation. They formed the mouth piece for the populace because any musical rendition that gained acceptance among the citizen must have actually addressed their interest somehow and in some ways. Therefore, when performing artistes release albums that discuss any area of national interest and it is being accepted by the public, then the governors will see to the matter in order to address it even when they pretend to be unaware of such release. There

is greater need, this time, to synthesize music with the economy, security and political challenges in Nigeria. To this end, music is capable of projecting the deplorable status of the common man in Nigeria of today though the performing artiste needed to be redirected consciously towards an impactful and peaceful musical campaign that will ameliorate and echo the agitations of the populace.

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