

Strategizing Globalisation for the Advancement of African Music Identity

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ABSTRACT Globalisation is the integration of the activities of various people irrespective of distance and national boundaries. Through new information, communication, transportation and technological applications, globalisation creates a pool of ideas and opportunities that facilitate understanding, co-operation and interdependence amongst sovereign states. As a phenomenon, globalisation is an imposing development that can hardly be resisted by any society that operates communication network. Music has conspicuously been in this phenomenon, but where a country fails to export her musical arts to the global market via the agents of globalisation, she ends up consuming others' music, later subsumed and finally suppressed. However, Africa stands to boost her musical identity, receptivity (of works and musicians) and economic base therefrom, if decisive effort is mounted to embrace this development. This understanding requires the liberalization of the creative process, the adaptation of some sonic music universals, identification and projection of some peculiar African music idioms and the reorganization of performance practice in the light of modern scenic realities and documentary alternatives.

INTRODUCTION

Globalisation is the interconnectivity of the activities of people irrespective of distance, race and regional boundaries brought about by dramatic shifts in the movement of people, culture, technology, trade in goods and services; facilitated by improved Information and Communication Technology, transportation, political and socio-cultural co-operation and applied technological developments; turning the world into a "Global Village". Although the term "Global Village" was first used by Marshall McLuhan in the 1960s (Lene Sjørup, 2004) when he predicted that electronic revolution would reduce the world in time and space, the rapid evidence of globalisation was witnessed in the 1960s.

Globalisation is applied and used extensively in all aspects of human activity such as worldwide information system, patterns of consumption, cosmopolitan lifestyle, global sports, global military systems, and global epidemics (Lene Sjørup, 2004), music inclusive.

Globalisation as a process started with European discoveries, which saw European powers, reach out to the various continents. Rogers (2000) records that the trans-Atlantic slave trade, gave birth to early globalisation process from Africa to the Americas and agricultural products from the Americas to Europe.

African music identity on the other hand, refers to peculiar patterns which realise themselves in and characterize African musical practice. These patterns, which are sensed and guarded jealously appear as sound matrixes, tonality, compositional techniques, musical instruments, costumes, performance practice, role and receptivity. They endow African music with an image and status.

TRENDS IN GLOBALISATION OF AFRICAN MUSIC

Pre-literate African musical practice was essentially oral and was limited to their cultural regions as communication and transport technologies were unsophisticated. Assimilation and dissemination of musical practices were to immediate neighbourhoods via borrowings, conquests and intra-regional slave trading.

Gary Baines records that *Globalisation is not simply a one-way process, but that Africa and the west are engaged in a "long conversation", a dialogue which has lasted for more than a century. This interaction has shaped a "global imagination" which is determined by way of the articulation of interests, languages, styles and images, an epistemological symbiosis between African and Western modernities* (Baines, 2000).

More extensive interaction occurred in the

early 16th century with the inter-continental slave trade that took Africans first to Sao Tomé, later to Brazil, West Indies and North America. This incident, by 1865, led to the development of African-American work songs, blues, gospel songs and spirituals. Negroes (African-Americans) brought into America their own flavour of rhythmic genius and harmonic love for colour peculiar to their music and contributed to the first popular form of amusement indigenous to the American scene - *The Minstrel Show*.

By the 1890s, the African-American musicians in the French quarters of the city of New Orleans have started developing the Jazz which is a kind of music that fuses elements from differing sources such as African rhythmic, Euro-African melody and European harmony into a kind of improvisations style based on a fixed rhythmic foundation.

Other strong agents of early globalisation of African music are contacts through explorations (Tourism). In Nigeria, for example, while the Fulani penetrated the north in the 13th century, the earliest Portuguese, Ruy de Sequeira, visited Lagos in 1472. Early names like Pachero Pereira, Hugh Clapperton, James Welsh, Klaus Wachsmann, Bruno Nettl, Norma McLeod and E. G. Parrinder recorded, analysed and published African music outside the shores of Africa.

The scramble for Africa by France, the United Kingdom, Portugal and Belgium in order to acquire colonies in the 17th century (particularly after the Berlin Conference from 1844 – 1845)¹, was an avenue that opened up musical interaction both in Africa and the home-base of the colonialists. Africans had the opportunity to visit and study in these countries and possibly make their music marks during their stay.

Steve Gordon also made the following observation that:

...artists naturally gravitated towards host countries with which their native lands had strong links. Not only did this offer the potential benefit of being able to converse in the host language but the manner in which third world music forms flowed North after colonies attained independence (Gordon, 2002).

Although they misunderstood some musical concepts of their subjects, the idea that an African musical theory and practice exists, was established.

With the invention of printing in 1456, steam engine 1704, telegraph 1794, Edison phonograph

1877, Emil Berliner's gramophone 1887, cinema 1895, and the aeroplane in 1903, transportation and communication became easier particularly with the dissemination of musical ideas and practices to distant places and people who now receive them to augment or spice the experiences with which they were bred.

Summarily, African culture has reached all corners of the globe. Though her "music may not have made the mainstream, it is increasingly featured on the airwaves in all corners of the world... Most regions now have African studies as part of University curricula" (Rogers, 2000).

CURRENT TRENDS IN MUSIC GLOBALISATION

The turn of the 20th century witnessed the explosion of globalisation arising from effective Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Of most attractive, convenient, effective, fast, cheap and imposing agent of globalisation is the radio and television broadcasts and the browse and search activities on the internet which is empowered by the satellite. The satellite could beam MTV to millions of homes around the world at the same time; the same with the radio and the television. Websites now host vital musical information such as research articles on-line publication, sound tracks and motion pictures, which hitherto were the responsibilities of print publication. Under two hours, information can get around the world via the Internet or cable network. The enormous benefits of the satellite in global identity and national image projection encouraged Nigeria to launch her first satellite known as Nigeria – Sat 1 in September, 2003.

The "Compact Disc Read-Only Memory" (CD-ROM) stores music data such as audio, video, audio video and literally documented issues on every aspect of music. Information contained in the CD-ROM, which could be on any culture is widely distributed for global consumption and can be decoded on the screen of the computer by even people from different cultures.

The music and movie industry with recordings in stripe, tape or compact disc has registered notable advancement in contemporary times bringing varieties of regional musical practices in quality and portable packages to the door-steps of millions of homes, distance notwithstanding. Digital recording instead of the analogue process is the vogue in the new music

industry. Highly refined output, low manpower need and less stress characterize this new process of recording. Through the radio, television, and the Internet, these products are advertised, promoted and marketed for mass orientation and global patronage. Thus "Producing, reproducing, and distributing music is rapidly becoming cheaper, making it possible for many small and independent record companies to enter the market" (Dolfsma, 2000).

Globalisation of music has also thrived through print publications in journals, books, magazines, newsletters and daily newspapers. Apart from movements of people and information through the electronic media, the literary world has learnt much about music through research reports, reviews, commentaries, documentaries and observations published in the print media.

As earlier noted by Akin Euba:

In view of the geographical dimensions of the multi-ethnic communities of modern Africa, the traditional means of acquiring musical knowledge, since they demand physical contact with the informant, are obviously no longer adequate. Musicology provides a source of knowledge, which embraces musical practice over wide areas and which can be widely diffused in a manner more effective than the means that have hitherto been used in tribal culture (in Idolor, 2002).

Many volumes of print publications have been made on music by scholars, all to disseminate new found ideas to the world at large.

Formal education has been accepted as a reliable strategy for societal advancement, which, when and where well-directed, substantially contributes to the aforementioned agents of globalisation. It may well be added that the school curriculum and all agents of the learning process, expose the student to experiences beyond his immediate culture. Thus, whenever music is taught, particularly outside its continent, globalisation is being encouraged. Research Institutes, Centres for Cultural Studies and Centres for Music and Dance Practices make their valuable contributions towards world recognition and consumption of music. These establishments embark on research projects, organize workshops, seminars, conferences, training programmes and practical performance sessions to preserve and project musical practices.

Cultural exchange programmes, International Concerts, and world music competitions feature

ambassadors/contingents internationally - opportunities which spotlight music at international scenes. Artistes' tours of foreign countries not only earn them financial gains and popularity, but also promote their music and nationality.

EFFECTS OF GLOBALISATION ON AFRICAN MUSIC

All along, it appears globalisation is all a positive factor in the advancement of African musical practice. One may ask: What is global music? What global manipulative tendencies are there for artistes and their music? What negative effects could it have on African music identity?

Globalised music is that which has reached many people in the world through the electronic, print, academic and practical performance media. A relative level of wide receptivity is expected of such music which differentiates it from localized types. According to Veit Erlmann.

The new role of music in global culture is based on the fact that music no longer signifies something outside of itself. Instead, music becomes a medium that mediates;... and by dint of a number of shifts in production, circulation and consumption of musical sounds, it functions as an interactive social context, a conduit for other forms of interaction (Erlmann, 1999).

Erlmann's observation implies that music in global culture lacks depth of the initial purpose and utility; at best, it is for entertainment, comparative study or other scholastic endeavours.

Le Huong (2004) reports that a CD with Mozart's *Requiem*, instead of the normal Chinese traditional music, for the first time, was brought on the third morning of a funeral in Xisan village. This case may be an exception now, but in the near future this may become a trend in the village. He observed that "the changes cannot only be found in the traditional music of a rural village in China" but that "the whole of Asia's traditional music is threatened by modernisation and globalisation". This is not different from the African experience.

Since the underprivileged African states lack the technology, funds and ideological will to foster their musical image globally, minority and poor countries have been coerced to the dictates of stronger powers who are the initiators, financiers and stakeholders of globalisation. It is therefore common to see much of European and

American music in the market which Africans imitate, practice and even adopt behavioural patterns associated with the music; considering them as modern at the expense of their indigenous types.

Pre-recorded materials for television and radio broadcasts available in the global market are dominated by European music types, and most times of better technological quality sold at cheaper rates than local productions. These factors of availability, quality and low cost, influence heightened patronage of foreign materials for broadcast and even for domestic home use. From these products, media operators select materials, which indoctrinate the African masses in favour of European or other cultures of the world.

The technology of satellites, computers, recording outfits, Information and Communication are the initiatives and infrastructures of globalisation actors established to rule the world and possibly repress the less privileged. With these infrastructures, they beam whatever information or data that is advantageous to them, which not only indoctrinates the masses, but suppresses their culture.

For an artiste or composer and his works to achieve global status, a study of an expansive musical taste is carried out. In consequence, some artistes abandon their African musical heritage in favour of foreign musical practice. At best, some integrate musical ideas of diverse cultures with those of Africa to create an artistic identity. This is a common phenomenon in African art music evident in choral works and African pianism which is an off-shoot of Inter-cultural musicology. In his opinion on globalisation, Meki Nzewi notes:

Globalisation is divesting contemporary practice of the musical arts in Africa of such spiritual, healing and humanizing roles. What gets re-fashioned and exhibited internationally as African musical arts are anaemic abstractions of the substantial virtues and values of heritage – bastardization of traditional genius that is intended - reflect the flippant European–American imaginations as well as proscription of African creative integrity (Nzewi, 2004).

Artistes' and musicologists' quest for global status has led to unprecedented relocation to environments where they could be widely published and patronized particularly, rich countries. Some countries intentionally buy over

acclaimed artistes and music scholars with good conditions of service to develop their system or removed to stunt the advancement of their home-country. This situation creates vacuums in their home-base while their subsequent contributions are credited to their new-found land.

Other continents award scholarships to Africans to study music in their countries where the students are exposed to a wide content of foreign music. Many Universities in Africa even adopt bi-musical curricula where European music constitutes over 50% of its content, thereby relegating African music image from a primary position to a supplementary status.

HARNESSING GLOBALISATION FOR AFRICAN MUSIC IDENTITY

Globalisation is an unnegotiated fast growing phenomenon engulfing the universe. It is highly imposing and almost irresistible so long as a country's government is into international communication and other technological net-work. Certainly, the profitable approach to this development is to harness its positive potentials for the advancement of African music identity through deliberate actions to orientate the society on the threats of globalisation and channel every effort on its gains.

Africa must painstakingly invest in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) like launching of satellites, providing internet services in schools, offices, homes and public places; developing African music CD-ROM packages, manufacturing and mass producing pre-recorded materials and making them constantly available and cheaply affordable for broadcasting, homes and schools. These infrastructures are necessary to project and sustain African musical identity on the globe and give maximum orientation and training on the values of African cultural heritage to the teaming youths.

In the pre-literate condition, much of African music was orally practised, taught (transmitted) and documented. With the advent of formal music education, scholars dared to transcribe and compose music with African idioms, an effort that advanced African music identity beyond the frontiers of African shores.

Education is an instrument of social change and progress in every society particularly in a well managed condition. Primary and secondary schools should compulsorily have music experi-

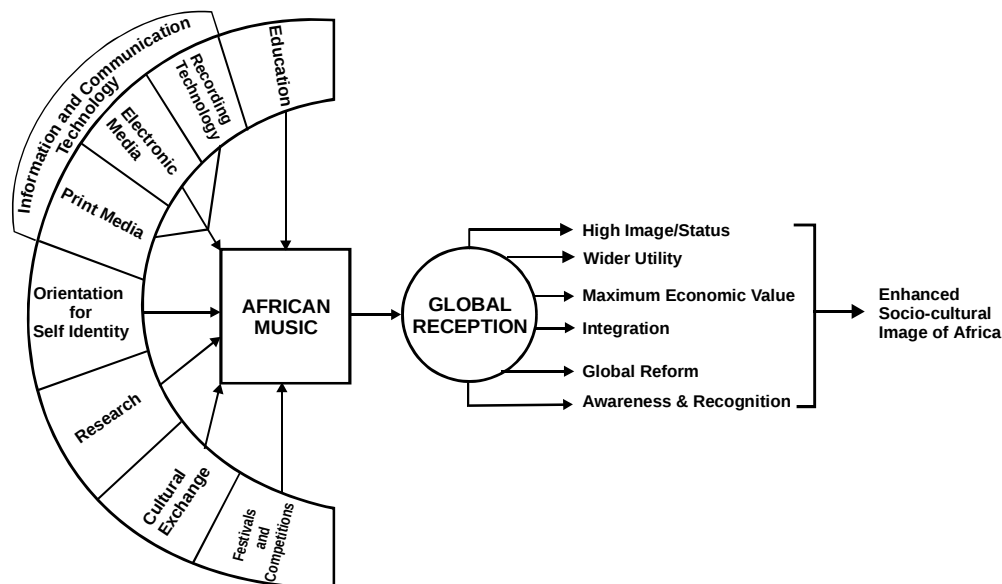


Fig. 1. Strategizing globalization for the advancement of African music identity.
Idolor 2004 Model

ence in both academic and practical, competitions in dance and choral performance, while at the tertiary level, the music curriculum should be established on African music theory and practice with brief inclusion of music contents of other cultures of the world. This position is based on the fact that “in African life and world view, the musical arts were intended to transact relationships, monitor and manage the ethos of all societal systems and institutions, inculcate humane sensibilities, and conduct spiritual disposition” (Nzewi, 2004).

More departments of music and research Institutes/centres should be established in African universities to adequately tackle musicological challenges of the continent. In Nigeria, for example, there are about 50 universities with practically only six of them that offer music. This is a country with a population of over 120 million people and 250 autonomous ethnic groups. This accounts for the relatively few music scholars and the research endeavour in this country. If a felt-impact would be registered on the globe musically, the present state of opportunity to study music is grossly inadequate; rather, at least two more departments had to be established in each of the six geo-political zones of the country universities distributed to empowering both the new and the old with substantial financial and human

resources for extensive procurement of teaching, learning and research facilities.

African music resource centres such as sound archives, libraries of African music books and compositions, museums, audio video centres and practical performance groups, should be established by government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). These will serve as pools of musical ideas from which Africans and foreign researchers can source for needed data. Such projects not only direct researchers to specific source pools, but also preserve the data from disappearing, misuse and negligence. Such centres should regularly organize workshops, seminars, conferences and holiday retreats for orientation, training and retraining of people and as meeting points for cross-fertilization of ideas and fora for dissemination of same to foreign participants. These programmes are opportunities to resist, cope and harness the advantages of globalisation in fostering African music identity.

Music festivals and competitions, which integrate people from diverse races and works of life, should regularly be organized to articulate African unity and identity. The World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC) for example, re-enacts the solidarity between Africans and their kins in the Diaspora which creates an enlarged image and world recognition;

while, the Nigeria Festival of Arts (NEFAST), carries out the same roles at the national level.

Cultural Exchange Programmes amongst nations, take musical practices from one country to another through bands and troupes. To some extent, such programmes make for external consumption of African musical arts. Lazarus Ekwueme, Meki Nzewi, Hubert Ogunde, Owin Sajere, Sunny Ade, Osibisa, Fela Anikulapo Kuti and many others, have done Africa proud in this regard.

No doubt, artistes particularly commercial types, desire to be internationally recognized. To achieve this status, they study some already globalised music types and introduce some African musical features such as musical instruments, lyrics, rhythm and melodic patterns or produce their works using modern scenery and documentary alternatives. As we have noted elsewhere:

While it is not the position of this paper to condemn everything foreign, it suggests that only those aspects, which can project African musical peculiarities, should be adapted. Composers, arrangers, researchers, broadcasters and performers, should be conscious of this identity and protect it accordingly (Idolor, 2002).

To harness the benefits of globalisation for African music identity, is neither only a governmental affair nor a single-handed endeavour. It is safe to suggest that the level of benevolence of NGOs such as UNESCO, UNICEF, Ford Foundation and Financial Houses to sports and health issues, should be extended to the projection of African music identity. Shell, MTN, Guinness, Gogo Africa, and Benson and Hedges have shown some concerns in this regard by promoting popular music artistes and choral music competitions. Much as the music industry is humanistically rooted, it is also economically derivative. Individuals and corporate bodies should invest in the music industry for both financial gains, encouragement of creativity and projection of African image on the globe.

African music researchers and artistes who practise abroad should keep flying the African flag and not to be totally swallowed up by foreign musical idioms and performance practice. Kahler (2002) records that Salif Keita who hails from Mali eventually settled in Paris and the blend of hi-tech Euro pop with African traditional lyrics, made his music an instant hit across Europe; the same

goes with Helen Folasade Adu of Nigeria and papa Wembe from Congo who currently live in London and Paris respectively.

CONCLUSION

Globalisation of African music extensively began with the export slave trade in the 16th century, and subsequently through interaction with explorers, colonial authorities and the mass media. Now that the rich foreign countries desire to rule the world economically, culturally and politically from their vintage position as stakeholders in the development and financing of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), it is just pertinent for Africa to orientate its youths on African music identity through formal and non-formal education and the development of media infrastructure both to resist the ugly repression and project African musical heritage.

NOTES

¹ The Phoenician colony of the Mediterranean coast of Africa in 1200 B.C. and later the Roman colony of North African Coast were about the earliest colonial experience in Africa.

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