

**SOCIAL THEORIES THAT HELP TO EXPLAIN THE AFRICAN MUSIC
EDUCATION.**

By

**UDOH, Stephen Alexander Ph.D.
Department of Music
University of Uyo, Uyo Nigeria**

ABSTRACT

It is a fact that most music teachers and particularly those of African of African Music, Theory do find it difficult to explain certain concept in African Music. This is due to the nature of African Music. In Theory, African Music is seen to be complex, repetitive, short and sometimes un-documented. This paper, therefore attempts to explore certain social theories that can help to explain the structure of African music. These theories are drafted from existing educational theories in order to aid in the teaching and learning of African Music. It is therefore recommended that these theories be studied well and used by music teachers in the explanation of the structure of African Music

KEYWORDS: Social Theories, African, Music and Education,

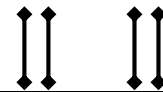
INTRODUCTION

Structure is the way in which something is organized, built or put together; the structure of a sentence, or play, or music, etc. It also means a particular system, pattern; procedure; or a thing made of several parts put together in a particular way. For example, music or musical form is built up of many well-ordered patterns, and so, has often been compared to architecture. In music, we have, melody pattern, rhythmical patterns, harmony pattern. (Bandel 1999).

Musical Structure could be said to be a concept as well as a phenomenon. According to Joseph Madilis et al (2003), “our Lives are composed of sameness and difference, certain details occur again and again, others are new music, regardless of its cultural origin mirrors this dualism. Its basic structural elements are “repetitive” and “contrast” – unity and variety. Repetitive fixes the materials in our minds and satisfies our need for the familiar. Contrast stimulates our interest and feeds our love for change”. From the interaction, between the familiar and the new- the repeated elements and the contrasting ones-results the contours of musical form. Every kind of musical work, from the nursery rhyme to the symphony has a conscious structure.

According to Zabana and Robinson (2003), one principle of form that falls between repetition and contrast is variation, where some aspects of the music are altered but the original is still recognizable. We hear this formal technique when we listen to a new arrangement of a well-known popular song; the tune is recognizable, but many features of the version we know may be changed. The variety of musical structures reflects procedures worked out by generations of composers. No matter how diverse the structures, they are based in one way or another on repetition and contrast. The forms however, are but fixed molds into which composers pour their material. What makes a piece of music unique is the way it adapts a general plan to its own requirements.

In the case of African Music, certain social theories could be used to explain the “Sameness” and “Difference” in its structure. These are:



REALISM AND IDEALISM

Realism, principally, means that there is a “real world of thing behind and corresponding the objects of our perception”. Realism believes that reality exists independently of the mind and is continued to what we know with our sensations. On the other hand, Idealism refers to “any view which emphasizes the central role of the ideal or the spiritual in man’s interpretation of his experience”. This means that whatever exists is known to man through mind or ideas. While idealism suggests that reality is the thing pictured by the mind before it is seen manifesting in real life situation; Realism, states that one must see a thing first in life situation, before it can effectively appear in the mind.

The structure of most of our African traditional songs, according to Idamoyibo (2006),” are derived from the sense of realism than idealism”. In his study of the themes of Igoru music, he posits, that “the songs being quite topical had to be realistic than idealistic in tendency. They are normally composed more or less, as reactions or responses to the realities that unfold in the society from time to time”. In other words, the music in traditional African societies follow and reflect the things that had occurred previously and seen or heard by the musician before such images and impressions reflect in their minds and then stimulate reactions that may lead to compositions. Again, the example of Ibibio folk songs like “*Atuak Ukot*: (Palm wine tapper) and “*otob eyop*” (Palm fruit harvester) were all stories we were told in our childhood days, and from what we heard, we now picture it in our minds and then came the compositions of these songs. (Kelinde & Abegunde, 2003)

FUNDAMENTALISM (ESSENTIALISM)

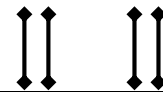
This theory has it that the values that the adult society holds should be transformed to the young ones (Learners). It is necessary to see in African traditional societies that basic values that keep a community healthy and happy as well as keep the individual and the Society living together in unity, harmony and without fear of any evil become very essential subjects or themes that musicians focus upon, in order to educate members, especially the young ones, musical instruction in this case does not refer to “musical training” but education and indoctrination of the members on societal norms and values through musical performances and compositions.

EXPRESSIONISM

The music of Africa is very Humanistic in expression-joyous, evokes sympathy, war, etc. In Africa, just as in many other cultures of the world, music is regarded as a medium of artistic expression. It provides an avenue for individual and corporate expression, an avenue for expression of personal thoughts and feelings as well as community sentiments. The general pattern of African music emphasizes the association of music with other activities such as social and political and with the activities which a community can express their personal relationship with others, their beliefs and attitudes to live. (Agawu, 2009)

FUNCTIONALISM

It is believed that when music is played in African society, it is for social or political, religious or ritual, ceremonial or recreational purpose. Hence, music is performed to depict the mood of event with appropriate musical instruments. Also, in African societies, individuals make music for their own enjoyment or relieve of burden or while on an occupational activity. That is why one may come across a musician with a flute to provide musical enjoyment or hunters with whistle or rattle for signaling. In some places like the Hausa and Nupe ethnic groups in Nigeria,



the market day is social occasion and one may come across bands of musicians performing for their own enjoyment, amusement of other people, or for money. Similarly, when communal labour is organized for clearing the bush, sowing, and harvest or for building, one may find musicians in attendance or the workers themselves may sing and make music while they work. Songs for various domestic actions varies such as grinding, pounding, etc. have been noted in various traditional societies. Events in the personal life of the individual in particular, the crises of life, birth, puberty, marriage and death are also musical events in many African societies.

IMPROVISATIONALISM

Improvisation is a skill that benefits from craftsmanship and participant observation. It has to do with creative music in the course of performance as it manifests in the sub-saharan Africa. Throughout Africa, the improvisation of variations on a thematic line requiring five to ten seconds is a mainstay of performance. Percussion ensembles similarly perform far-flung improvisations on the basis of simple's memorized rhythmic formulas. According to Akpabot (1989) mention here must be made of incidents of involuntary counter point which is a feature of the harmonic structure of Nigerian music. In two- part singing the accompanying singer may either anticipate the entry of the soloist by few bars or improvise a fill-in for certain portions of the music, where the soloist has nothing to sing. At other times, other members of the chorus may decide to hum an improvisatory portion as the soloist sings; and since they are not actually singing the words of a song they are not in danger of distorting its meaning (104). Improvisation is more of an African musical phenomenon. While in performance, one person may inspirationally and creatively improvise or make up a special version of the melody resulting in musical variations that excite not the hearers but even the performers. This, the African musician does freely on his instrument and vocals as well. On this Emielu, affirms:

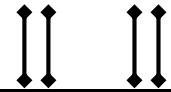
The performer is now free to improvise on a melody or add a new one as well as making up new songs when they had exhausted their repertory or as the occasion demands. He may also create a new solo over the basic tune each time he plays...

NATURALISM

This theory is of the opinion that things work though natural causes than spiritual or supernatural. Naturalism is a style of art or writing that shows people, things and experience as they really are. According to Sharma and Hyland (1991), Naturalism is a term which is loosely applied to systems of training which are not dependent upon schools and books. Naturalistic educators prefers to start from the actual life of pupils and to utilize this in bringing pupils back to nature. All training and education must be in keeping with the natural development of the child. This is typical on the African musician who believe in the training of musicians by imitating the ideas, skills and techniques of aspects of music practice without reading it from books or being part of the formal school system.

EXISTENTIALISM

According to A.P Sharma and Hyland (1991), Existentialism can be regarded as a trend or theme in Philosophy rather than a particular Dogma or System. Existentialism became influential in the 20th century Musical Compositions, where most composers used African tones and rhythmic patterns in their compositions. This could be traced to the works of Akin Euba, Joshua Uzolgwé, Samuel Akpabot etc. Existentialists endorse a more subjective vision of reality; primacy is



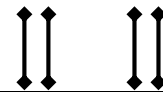
accorded to the existence of the individual and his presence and participation in a constantly changing world. African musicians believe that music exists in every aspect of the African life.

PRAGMATISM

In African Music, the Musician thinks of solving a musical problem, whether in composition or in performance, in a practical and sensible way rather than by having fixed ideas or theories. The impact of pragmatism in African Music can be realized when musicians work on subject such as political, societal ills, individual progress and integration of knowledge gathered from wider society. Pragmatist musicians always use skills and also disseminate same to their learners.

CONCLUSION

African Music in the past used to be transmitted and passed on from generation to generation, orally. In schools, it used traditional dances and folk song performances with traditional musical instrument. The schools syllabus now incorporates instrument. African music teaching both in theory and practicals. This paper has highlighted some social theories that can help to some extent and ease to explain, African music structure for better understanding. Such theories as Realism Idealism, Pragmatism etc. are of immense usefulness.



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