Ethnomusicological Study of Traditional Music Types and Practices among Select Oshimili Communities of Delta State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Music as an art has been a vital and functional part of the communities in Oshimili and their environs. It serves as both recreational medium and in other activities which these communities participate in. Music therefore is an integral part of culture which is seen as "the people's way of life". The paper therefore, although a preliminary study, focuses on some music practices, roles, and typologies in Oshimili communities of Delta State. Utilizing the ethnographic and observation methods and interview research tool, the paper found out that music is an indispensable art in the traditional, social and communal life of the Oshimili people. It also found out that music is highly functional, just as there are specific musical types deployed for different occasions. In the face of globalization trends and technological advancements, it is recommended that the different musical types that exist in the locale be studied and documented in order to add to the scanty literature on the traditional music of Oshimili.

Introduction

Culture, as the people's way of life includes their total shared common behavioral patterns that make up their tradition. These traditions follow set down rules that include their social, religious, and cultural practices. Culture is perpetuated through different mediums of which music is central. Hence to study the music of a particular society is to study its culture. Music occurs in almost every social, cultural and religious activities organized among societies in Nigeria. Traditional music among societies is used in various activities and for different occasions. Igbi (2018:260) rightly notes that "music is a fundamental part of culture that is present in every society. It combines other areas like dance, drama, and linguistics. All these play significant roles in impacting the social, religious, economic and martial life of the people." Traditional music was orally transmitted and owned by the communities where the music exists, not by individuals. Traditional music was therefore a communal collection of the societies; hence every member of the society participates actively in musical activities which reflect the people's cultural heritage. Hickok (1993:62)) remarks that, "nowhere in the world is music more a part of the very process of living than in Africa. Almost all communal activities are accompanied by singing, dancing and drumming. These three are rarely separated; they are interdependent." Nzewi, (2007:6)) reiterates that "in indigenous Africa, music is closely interwoven with how the society or community conducts its political, religious, health, economic, educational and social affairs." He further stresses that "everybody in an indigenous African community grows up with basic musicality acquired through obligatory participation, in any capacity, in appropriate musical arts performance sites from childhood." He concludes that "exceptional expertise is recognized even at a tender age." Traditional music is therefore a collective effort of a community and every activity that is organized in an indigenous society is heralded with music either vocal, instrumental or a combination. Traditional music performances are usually accompanied with musical instruments and clapping.

Traditional music among societies is a bonding force that serves as a medium for entertainment, social relationships and religious practices. It serves as a tool to learning their languages, proverbs, habits, histories etc, and these are learnt through their folk songs. Onyeji (2012:48) also notes that, "as an art form, indigenous music of Africa reflects the culture of Africa as well as it is a cultural form in its own right." Everything that makes up a society is therefore reflected in their traditional music which acts as one of the mediums of communication among them and the outside world. It gives a view about what that community is engaged in, what they believe in and how they portray their culture, using their indigenous music. Merriam (1964:227) notes that "music is clearly indispensable to the promulgation of activities that constitute a society…" Every cultural activity (ranging from birth to death) is portrayed with music. There is music for work, children's games, for lulling babies to sleep, for festivals burial ceremonies, marriages, celebrating childbirth, naming children, for circumcision, etc.

Music in Nigerian Traditional Society

Music is an integral part of the society's cultural heritage since they mirror the cultural beliefs and practices. Musical activities and practices are also socially controlled; hence, it is not uncommon seeing members of the community singing dirges when someone dies, and work songs while doing strenuous activities. Every society in Africa therefore have a patterned activity which is distinct and unique and almost all of these are heralded or reflected in their folk songs, and dances which are most often accompanied with traditional instruments. Udoh, (2012:119) also contends that "traditional music is a communal property with spiritual qualities that are shared and experienced by all." Traditional music is therefore a communal heritage that belongs to the people which they guide, develop, create and celebrate to portray their culture. Udoh (2012:119) notes that, "it is a product of the society and fundamentally, a collection art… an embodiment of a people's culture-their way of life." Music is therefore interwoven with the culture of societies since it gives a clear picture of the existence of a society and what constitutes that society as regards their norms and values, their dos and don'ts. Music also has a communicative potency that keeps members of the society abreast of everything that occurs within them and how to react to such occurrences, either negatively or positively. This however brings the people together as one and leads them to a state of wholeness where their norms and customs are upheld and truly maintained. Traditional African music and culture are therefore inseparable since music follows the African in the stages of life, reflecting through both the events that occur at each stage and even the differences that also occur in the life of the African. Nzewi, (2005: vii) points out that "music makes human; it supervises, explains and illuminates the human society." Nzewi here is pointing out the inseparable nature of culture and music since culture also does the same. It makes the human in a society, it molds them, hence, these are reflected in the knowledgeable practices of norms and values that govern them and when these norms and values are practiced and adhered to, that society is identified and recognized through its cultural practices. Music forms part of the cultural practices – it portrays the society's way of life in an aesthetic and artistic form.

This is reflected in their songs, dances and traditional religious worship. Music is therefore, not an isolated art, but a performing art form which a society uses as an explanatory forum of who they are, what they do, what they believe in and how they live. Music and culture therefore explain and illuminate the society. Blacking (1976:26) contends that music is not an isolated art but described it as "a humanly organized sound." Okafor, (2005) further explains that: "the implication here (i.e. on Blackings statements) is that, though there are many sounds in creation, some natured, others made by living things; only sounds which have been deliberately organized by man to specific ends – expressions of emotion, communication of ideas, touching the senses and the emotions, calming the nerves or turning the minds to certain plains of communication and worship – only these sounds deliberately organized by man qualify to be called music." Driving home his point that music is humanly organized sound, Blacking (1976:vi)), further points out that "music is too deeply concerned with human feelings and experiences in society and its patterns are too often generated by surprising outbursts of unconscious celebration for it to be subject to arbitrary rules like rules of games." This does not mean that all music types are patterned in the same form. There is religious/ritual music which is usually subjected to arbitrary rules and these rules are followed strictly and stylistically. Man, also makes use of sounds of animals and other material things of nature in their organization of musical sounds. Creating sounds from men, animals and other means are seen as humanly organized sound because they are musically finished products of the Homo sapiens. Man, therefore makes music, and music on the other hand makes man, bringing out the hidden creative nature in man, portraying the aesthetic and artistic qualities that man possesses and finally reflecting the society that man lives in as well as the norms and values of that society that shapes and forms the character of man. Agu (1990:49) summarizes this by pointing out that "music serves not only as a medium for entertainment and social relationships but as an intricate part of development of the mind, body and soul…" To further buttress the above, Onyeji, (2012:51) gives a general philosophy of indigenous music where he states that, "indigenous music in Nigeria and Africa is a human-centered art", and concludes his view where he quotes Nzewi, (1999:23) who maintained that, "indigenous music is feeling and communal therapy, a humanizing communion, a sharing in human-being-ness." Onyeji, (2012:51) concludes that, "although indigenous music is enjoyed as a creative art in its own right, the philosophy behind its creation and practice is that it is not detached from human social life or produced exclusively for contemplation, unrelated to the social and cultural needs of the people. It is an art meant to integrate more than it disintegrates people. It is conceived as art through which people's emotions, values, beliefs and world views are 'laced' together with its melodies and in its harmonic structures." Traditional music of Oshimili South communities of Delta State is a total reflection of their culture. It contains their cultural practices, just as their songs embody past historical events, folk tales, love stories etc. Music making therefore is a part and parcel of their cultural tradition. Bebey, (1975:1) opines that "authentic African music is the traditional music of the black peoples of Africa." In order to identify an authentic African music, one has to familiarize oneself with his environment and patiently study the music of that society." An in-depth study of

the traditional music of a society exposes one to various aspects of their culture, hence traditional music is said to be the product of man in his culture and environment and its artistic content includes man's common beliefs, ways, ideas, thoughts, religion etc. All these are reflected in their musical experiences and performances, thereby projecting and presenting the music of a community or society. Okafor (2005:3) points out that "in Nigeria, most of the traditional music is found in the rural areas as well as in such situations where the traditional culture operates." Culture therefore is of man and has grown with man from birth to death; hence it is in culture that man moves, operates and exists. Culture is an obligation of man's contribution to the development of his society. It is a complex and multi-dimensional reality; hence there is no one definition of culture that can be said to be all inclusive. Ruth Benedict as reported by Oludare (2005:4) describes culture as "a pattern of thinking and doing things that runs through the activities of a people and distinguishes them from all other people." Culture is also seen as the way or manner a group of people living together behave. This involves an acceptable way of living as members of a community, sharing things together, having a common interest which is guided by set down rules and regulation. Culture is therefore described as that "complex whole" involving the religious belief, way of dressing, agricultural interest, musical interest, etc. of a community. Every society has its own culture and practices it obligatorily. This therefore distinguishes them from each other. In this vein, man has therefore made systematic attempt to accommodate himself in his environment as well as master that environment in order to produce the totality of a way of life, which can generally be described as the culture of a people. Man, here means members of a community who have come together to live in the same environment, develop the environment and engage in the same occupation, developing their environment which they have inherited from their fore-fathers. Rules and regulations therefore abound among communities in order to make them identifiable and distinguishable to other communities outside theirs. These rules and regulations are adhered to as they engage in their communal activities that enhance the development of their society. Adedeji, and Omosilade (2012:69), reports Vidal (1986), who notes that, "musicians in African societies are the custodians of their culture. The history of a particular people is kept intact from generation to generation through the oral medium by professional musicians. The history of important events in the society, and the personalities involved in these events are recorded for posterity through songs." Music performances are not just for entertainment purposes but are also functional in the enactment of socio-cultural and political events that occur in the society. Music therefore functions alongside these activities in order to show its importance as an entertaining force and as culture indicator. The musicians in the society contribute to the development of the community through their songs which are meant to supply information about the community and the activities going on in the community, about the culture of the people and the behavioral attitudes of the people, about the history of the community and the political state of the community etc. singing during musical activities is therefore very vital since this medium not only helps in giving information and entertaining, it encourages social integration among members and their neighbours. Songs meant for musical

performances are composed by individuals and the texts of the songs are always entertaining, informative and sometimes historical. Every folk song consists of words that makes meaning and drive home the point of what the singers intend the audience to hear. Song texts therefore depend on the singer's intended message, which maybe direct or indirect, depending also on the activity in which the songs are performed. Songs for ritual/religious performances are however restricted to certain groups and the texts are sometimes understood by designated individuals who are the main performers. The restriction on these music genres is to prevent outside influences and to keep their historical and religious practices intact. Udoh, (2012:119) contends that "the cultural values and norms of a society are embedded in their traditional music." He stresses that "traditional music is the society's cultural matrix/culture indicator and a common identity." Traditional music explains the belief as well as the behavioral attitudes of a community in a clearly defined way that is not unfamiliar to other societies. Therefore, the traditional music of societies in Nigeria is their identity. Agu, (1989), reports that "traditional music is rooted and perpetuated by the people. It is the spontaneous music of a people, race, region, or nation. It is more directly associated with traditional, religious, and political system" Okafor et al (1998:15) points out that "the arts may be a manifestation of culture and so will traditions, beliefs, customs and practices." Bearing in mind that culture is dynamic, not static; culture is also classified into material and non-material culture. Music is thus classified under non-material culture among others.

Folk Songs in Oshimili

Folk songs are commonly seen as songs that express something about a way of life that exists now or in the past. It is a song that originated among a group of people, reflecting their cultural practices and traditions. Apart from instrumental music which forms part of traditional music, much traditional music is vocal music and hence contains meaningful lyrics which are in narrative verses that reflect on things happening in the society. The origin of a folk song is rarely known to its community. It is therefore believed that folk songs and other pieces are results of individual creation, either by a community or by a group of professional musicians, whose work is taken up in the folk culture. Folk songs are also speech utterances that have been put into music with its texts reflecting on things happening in the community and its environs. These words may be put into songs directly or indirectly. The major fact is that a folk song is musically performed to express and communicate the intentions behind the usage of the words/texts.

Folk songs are therefore said to have sprung out of man's primal need to give personal expression to his feelings, devotion to his society and country, rapture in love, sadness at parting, and awe at death. It also addresses itself straight to the heart in a language that all mankind understands. Folk songs embody all that man indulges in his society from birth to death. It manifests the physical, spiritual, musical and intellectual being of man and portrays the contextual musical activities that are organized in various societies; hence you can find occupational songs, war songs, burial songs, love songs, etc. The texts of these

songs to an extent portray the context in which the songs are rendered. These songs may be found in neighbouring communities but they also may not be used in same context. The usages of folk songs depend to a large extent on the cultural norms guiding the community. Song texts are therefore, words which are sung, recited or even chanted. There are speculations about which is first, music or words. Menon (1982:1) argues that words came first and contends that: "The human species must have spent several years trying to communicate with one another; crying, grunting, gesticulating, laughing, rearing, and out of these sounds, in slow measures, emerged sound identified with objects and animals and trees and actions of all kinds, the thoughts and deeds and feelings; and when spoken words came into being, it must have been the noblest sound, the most valuable he created."

Menon here, tries to point out the fact that words are arranged creatively to form music, hence words came into existence before music. From the above words by Menon, one can carefully accept that all of mankind seeks beauty in the arts as instinctively and persistently as if they are searching for truth, happiness, justice, love, faith etc. These qualities which have much in common and are indispensable facets of a good life are expressed through songs in music and in other arts. In song texts as a verbal means of communication, Avorgbedor (1990:210) postulates that "it does not only prescribe polite ways for saying impolite things but provides ways for expressing the inexpressible and provides license for saying the abnormal and irritant truth with fear or favour." This unreserved way of musical expression through songs is very paramount in 'slay and satirical songs which are usually sung during festival celebrations, children's game and other performances. Nzewi, (1997:79) stresses on these facts by quoting Anyahuru who declared thus: "May any person who feel personal or aggrieved about what we have sung not take offence because what we are performing is music." This points out the expressive nature of a music piece through song text; songs are not only used to entertain but also to send messages across, directly or indirectly, serving as corrective measures as well as reprimands to all concerned. Ibekwe, (2008:40), maintains that, "song texts communicate direct information to those that understand its language and idioms."

The Roles of Music in Oshimili

In bringing up children, music and group singing, play no small role. They have been used as a medium of passing on knowledge in the education of children. At infancy, songs are used to pet children when they cry; mothers sing lullabies to the crying child either to pet him/her to sleep when the baby is crying for food etc. Nzewi, (2006:20) notes that, "child-soothing songs are accompanied by regularly pulsed rocking or shuffling movements, which emphatically instills the sense of pulse and rhythm in a child." Among the Oshimili south communities, there are categories of songs for soothing a baby. The singing and movements are also meant to calm the baby to quietness or lull him/her to sleep. In some cases, also, these soothing songs and lullabies are accompanied by rocking dance motions especially when the baby is carried on the back or is cradled in front of the carrier's body with two hands. Ekwueme, (2004:5) seem to share the same view but adds that "children…

are sometimes deliberately frightened in songs" he explains that "similarly, a child can be 'coaxed' into keeping quiet by the terrifying or intimidating words of a song." Some societies have songs which are used to encourage a child trying to stand. When a crawling child is about to stand, the child is applauded with much vocal and practical musical encouragement which comes in the form of clapping and chanting in rhythm and sometimes songs to encourage the child. This type of song gives the children at that stage, confidence since they are the focus of attention in a musical performance. Because music has always been part of every activity that goes on among the Oshimili South communities, they seem to have music (songs) attached to virtually all their performances. Every growing stage of a child has music to mark it; oftentimes, this music (songs) may be performed by children only or by the adult and children. However, traditional music plays an important role in every community since it is the main source of communication among members. In religious worship/performances, serious music is performed to appease and thank the gods. Because of the strong belief that the gods/goddesses are music loving, societies communicate to their gods with music. Agu shares the same view, when he postulates that "music is unquestionably the dominant feature of Igbo traditional worship." Mbiti (in Agu, 1990:51)) in line with Agu adds that "through music, singing and dancing, people are able to participate emotionally and physically in the act of worship. The music and dancing penetrate the very being of worshipping individuals." This is a clear practice in Ulo Festival of the Oshimili South communities, where the worshippers communicate with their gods through their chants and special songs sung in prayers. Echezona (1965:46) concludes these facts by pointing out that: "Dances and songs of a religious or ceremonious nature play a large part in religion when they constitute acts of worship or accompaniments to such acts. The extemporized words of the songs, the swell of the music, rhythmic motions of the dance and the gregarious feeling that everybody is taking part in the same action, heightened the religious sentiment." On the effect of songs during worship, Agu (1990:51) points out that songs have a strong control of power during worship; he gives the different types of songs during worship, noting that "in the traditional society, there is still strong belief in the use of songs in achieving control of power; songs of supplication, invocations, magic songs, songs for curing and, in fact, songs for every aspect of life." In Ulo festival for example, it is believed that the songs (chants) which the believers use to accompany their movements to the river as they carry their logs of firewood, has a powerful effect when chanted to drive away evil spirits. This song 'Agbakuro', meaning 'get out' is chanted as a weapon of warfare against evil spirits in the land. There is also a special song of victory as the worshippers return from the river after throwing away their logs of firewood. Beside songs as a powerful means of worship, Agu (1984:45) stresses on the role of some musical instruments that are used for religious worship. These instruments include *Okpokolo* (wood block) *Ogene* (gong), *Ekpili* (rattle); these entirely he referred to as "symbolic instruments." Beside these mentioned instruments, Oshimili South communities also use the Akpele during worship especially in festival celebrations, and during the *Egwugwu* festival, the *Oja* is also used. Asaba community uses the Oja in praising the *Egwugwu* (spirit-manifest) that has come to mourn the dead. Among the

Egwugwu that will come out during that period, the one that remains in the *Okwule* (shrine) throughout the night is believed to be the spirit of the deceased. In the *Okwule* (shrine), the *Egwugwu* cries in a mournful manner, calling the names of all his children, relations, wife, praising those that have been of good character; reprimanding the bad ones. This is done in chants, recitations and songs. These songs are never sung outside their context; this is forbidden. In invoking the spirits, songs of invocations are used to invoke the spirits to appease them, and to appeal for something, depending on the needs of the people or the context of the religious worship. There are also songs which are played for an oracle in other to find out a problem and the solutions to such problems. These are called oracular songs. They are specially sung by priests/priestesses who are assigned to such shrines. They act as representatives of these deities Among the *Aguba* Dance Group interviewed by the researcher at Asaba, the instrumentalists maintained that the drums must be 'fed' with hot drink and kola nut (which shall be poured on the membrane) before they can play the instruments. This special ceremony was performed with song-like melodies and recitations. The researcher was told that if the ceremony was not performed, they cannot play. It was further learnt that no woman is allowed to touch the instruments (membrane drums, bass drum and medium sized metal gong). It is only women who have reached menopause that can even touch the instruments, but women are forbidden to play the instruments. In Oshimili South communities, songs are always associated with life events; births, mourning, games, prayers, work, wars, love etc, music is present in all key moments in a person's social life. Besides entertainment, music acts as a source of information on the nature of the gathering. When there is mourning for example, music also announces the steps to follow in all the funerary ceremony, starting with the announcement of the death, to the burial, including the other expressions that will follow through the burial and to the end of the mourning period. Although it is said that music transmitted by word of mouth through a community will in time develop many variants because this kind of transmission cannot produce word-for-word and note-for-note accuracy, some of the music for religious worship and performances seem not to be faced with these changes since they perform special functions. In festival celebrations, the ritual aspect is accompanied with special songs which are either in a narrative form or sung. The words/texts of the songs remain the same as well as its melodic line. They are also never performed outside their original context. Nzewi, (1991:26) classifies this type of music as Event – stating that they are "music types and presentations originated as well as organized for nonmusic specific event." He concludes that this type of music "could therefore be grouped as a 'closed' genius", since they are for exclusive use within their various ideational sources. Nzewi, (1991:49) explains further that under the Event-music, there are other events that demand 'Event Exclusive' which is further sub-divided into Event-Exclusive' and 'Event-Particular'. Most ritual music is classified under these Event-Music types. He concludes that "the performance of the music (Ritual) may be for occult observances, for spirit possession, for spirit invocation, for religious worship." Most festival celebrations among the Oshimili South communities are in two phases; for religious worship and for social/entertainment performances while the *Egwugwu* music,

which is performed during burial ceremonies for an initiated member is for spirit invocation and for religious worship; although it has its social implications where the *Egwugwu* "spirit manifest" will have to come out in the open to dance for the last time before it is led away by its initiates. This dance which is performed is 'symbolic'. It is believed that the deceased is giving a final performance and saying goodbye to his members who are still alive. The dance is actually the climax of the ceremony and as soon as the dance ends, the main actor (the *Egwugwu* that represents the spirit of the deceased) is led into the *Okwule* (shrine) by other *Egwugwu* that is believed to have come with him from the spirit world. Other members who are elderly also join the *Egwugwu* in the *Okwule*. There are other occasions for music making where songs are used for communication as well as for entertainment. These occasions include ceremonies, chieftaincy titles, political rallies, marriages, etc. Songs are rendered during these occasions to entertain as well as communicate important messages to the audience. Music therefore, is an important means for verbal communication. Music for political rallies in Oshimili communities has songs that are for entertainment and sometimes for protests against rival political groups. In Asaba, the *Okanga* drum which is actually meant for burial ceremonies maybe used (with permission) during political rallies and protests, to portray the seriousness of the event. The drum and its songs actually stand for solemn moments and are therefore symbolically used for such moments in the community.

Some Song Categories and Typologies in Oshimili Communities

There are different categories and song types in Oshimili communities. They range from historical, work, recreational, ceremonial and other song types. There are discussed below.

Historical Songs

Historical songs among the Oshimili South are presented in some of their performances and activities. These songs which serve as a medium for members of the community to know learn and understand their history is not only meant for entertainment but also for oral literature. The texts in some of these songs are therefore not just mere words for entertainment and amusements but for remembrance and to keep records of past events that may be of benefit to the community and for the future generations. Although songs are said to be the property of a community, gifted singers and composers are also remembered in some historical songs which are sung during festivals, initiation ceremonies and even burial ceremonies and these activities act as medium for heralding such important events and personalities. Historical songs have their texts full of proverbs, wise-sayings, folktales, love stories, past happenings and these are used by professionals and gifted singers fluently either in a solemn mood (for example, during burial ceremonies) or in a light mood, (i.e. during festivals and other entertainment ceremonies). The song-texts therefore provide a basis for members to learn the past histories of events that may have occurred. In performances for social gathering, some of the songs are historical and therefore the texts of the songs portray the message of the singer which may be in praise of a member of the household where the performances are being held. It narrates the

achievements of the dead ancestors of the hosts and further enacts the important roles played by the host/families to the achievements of the community. Hence the songs are meant to console the family of the deceased during burial ceremonies as well as give information or account on the life of the deceased e.g, the song "okolo-ocha" which the 'Okwulagwe' (youth) usually sing during the first burial ceremony in Asaba. The songs not only tell the story of a renowned dead warrior, but liken it to the person being mourned at that particular time. The deceased name may be used to replace the original name in the song. The 'itu-afa' which is recited is also used as medium to praise and recount the deeds of a deceased member during the burial ceremony and the chronology of the family. It therefore can serve as a historical song, though it is in recitation form. In other contexts, historical songs appear as a vehicle for protest against evil practices. Some of the songs may be rendered with allusions or directly as a 'slay song'. They are mostly sung during burial ceremonies and festival celebrations. Although they are meant for entertainment, they also serve as songs for criticism and condemnation, e.g. *Obi Kadi*, which is a very popular song which dance groups sing during social occasions such as *Igba-Ilo*, for burial ceremonies, festivals and other social gatherings. Historical songs are sometimes not really sung but either chanted or recited. They may be presented allusively and with proverbs in order to make the texts meaningful to certain designated audience; hence the song may be presented with a lot of proverbs and the meaning is therefore decoded by those who understand. This may be to protect certain important histories about the community and to preserve their cultural heritage. One may also feel that it is to hide a past event that occurred that if exposed will put the community to shame, hence some of the historical songs maybe sung satirically. Historical songs are not commonly sung by larger members of the community but by a few gifted singers and composers who have knowledge of the history of the community, and the cultural practices and events that occur in the community. These songs are therefore meant to educate members of the community on their histories and to keep records of facts about events. It is also important to study the music of a community in order to learn something about the social and cultural history. This does not mean that one should rely totally on the folk music of his or her community in other to get the history of the community. Beside music, patterns of sounds, artistic and creative design on instruments, even costumes can be used to trace the history of the community. An example is seen in the performance mode of the *Egwugwu* spirit manifest, the costume worn by the *Egwugwu*, its songs and mournful sounds which are understood by only the initiate members and etc, these are historical representations of the *Egwugwu* and its performance activities.

Recreational/ Social Songs/Game Songs

Generally speaking, recreational music/songs are important performance activities among societies and has created forum for music genres, both for lovers of music and professionals. Recreational music is organized for relaxation, entertainment and for leisure among communities both for the young and the old. Recreational music performances therefore occur anytime among communities either between children and adults, same sex

groups or mixed sex groups. it is a time of enjoyment; a time to ease boredom, a time of solidarity among communities, a time to portray the beliefs and practices of communal interest. There are various songs meant for recreational activities and the texts of the songs sometimes depict the kind of activity. Under recreational music performances, there are children game songs, lullaby songs, folktale songs etc. Dick – Duvwarovwo, (2011:101) affirms that "recreational music involves every member of the community", she quotes Ikorok (2002) who points out that "the word recreation is a Latin derivative from the word 'recreate', meaning to create 'anew' or to 'refresh', after toil." Music for recreation is therefore organized by communities to encourage enjoyable off-job activities which are self-motivating and will enhance self-expression among members of the community. Dick – Duvwarovwo, (2011:101) stresses that "recreational music includes folk tales and folk songs by elders to children, to educate young ones in the values and norms that govern their societies. The game songs of the children as well as the dance music of the adults are also inclusive…" he also quotes Keke (2001) and Agu (1984:101) who affirmed that "folk tales and folk songs serve for relaxation, as entertainment, as a medium through which idioms and proverbs were learnt; as a channel through which noble ideas and vices were acknowledged." Recreational music provided forum for individual members to learn the culture and norms of their community, to learn their folk songs, their language and dialect, their cultural beliefs as well as the taboos. Relaxation, not only encourages learning of customs of the people, it brings about a spirit of solidarity among members of the community where ideas are exchanged, disagreements are settled and moral values are learnt and upheld. Proverbs and wise sayings of the old are learnt during this event, thereby preparing the younger generation to take over and continue in the ways and practices of the norms and values of the community. Recreation music may sometimes be organized and upheld by the group of people (men only, or women only, or both sexes) who may either share common interests and ideas; it may be age grades that belong to the same music or dance group. In this forum or gathering, new songs/dances are learnt and even composed for future performances. Recreational music forum may not only therefore serve for entertainment but also for creative learning in songs, dances and instrumental performances. It is therefore a 'school' for both children and adults in the community.

Folk- Tale Songs

Folk tale songs are songs used in telling stories or to accompany stories. These songs which are composed by individuals are meant for entertainment and relaxation. Folk tales are part of every community's recreational activity which occurs usually in the evenings, during moonlight plays. This does not mean that there must be a moon to appear for these activities to hold. In the past, some communities actually see the telling of folk tales in the day time as a taboo. This is actually to silence children who may insist that their parents or adult relatives should tell them folk stories. This way of life is simply to give one another a feeling of one-ness and a sense of solidarity among individuals, families and groups who share same interest and culture. Although this was the scenario of the pre-colonial African community, their folk music compositions and other performances emanated from these

activities. Some of these folk tale songs are apparent in songs used as dirges in Asaba community. They are used as proverbs to portray the mood of the event and the essence of mourning the dead among them. They are also sung to encourage the community to always come together as one for the burial of their dead. Participation during burial ceremony is a compulsory thing among communities of Oshimili South. It has its implication hence anyone who absents himself during the ceremony without reason is ostracized and will be made to pay fine before he/she can be re- absorbed.

Work Songs

Work songs among the Oshimili South communities are very common media of entertainment both among individuals who indulge in domestic work at home and group of persons that share same interests in their occupational activities. Work songs can also be used as occupational songs since the songs are seen as 'music while you work'. These songs range from songs which they learnt during moonlight plays to short folk tunes which have been passed on to them from their ancestors. Work songs are actually meant to use as accompaniment as they engage in their work activities at home and in their farms or whenever they engage themselves in any occupational activity. Work songs are usually short in form and can be sung in other social ceremonies that are not ritual. They serve as medium to ease boredom and lighten the mood of the worker/ workers while they work. People can also learn new songs and even compose songs through this activity. Most of the work songs in Oshimili South communities are full of improvisations and can be sung outside its context. Most work songs are sung and accompanied with rhythmic sound that emanates from the materials which the individuals use while working. The movements give the rhythmic effect and moves in time while the song is being rendered by the soloist or group of persons engaged in the work activity. Most work songs are already existing folk songs which may be used in other recreational activities. Although an individual who is gifted in composition may compose songs while working and these songs may sometimes be used in other social ceremonies. The general use of work songs is actually to ease boredom and serve as accompaniment while work is going on.

Ceremonial Songs

These include songs used for various ceremonies such as marriages, burials, naming, title taking and etc. the Oshimili South communities engage in the aforementioned ceremonies and have various traditional songs to herald the occasion. Among the Oko community, every title taking is organized by the members who have already taken such title in the past. It is therefore the members that give the music for the occasion and hence have their repertoires which are their group's composition. Other music groups are however invited to perform but their performance is controlled by the host performers. In Ikpa- Alor ceremony in Asaba, there are special songs which are rendered by the *Nkpalor* titled members, who have already taken the *Alor* title. The songs are meant to welcome the new member. It is after this special ceremony that other invited dancing groups can showcase their performance. Ceremonial songs are therefore found to be social and ritualistic in

nature depending on the community and the ceremony that is being celebrated. Some however are combination of both and are performed or presented at the appropriate time of that ceremony and they are culturally controlled by the community. Marriage ceremonies are social celebrations of the communities under study. Although the ceremonies are part of their culture which are organized and controlled by the community, the social performances create room for the gifted to showcase their musical talents in songs, instrumental performances and in dance as well. Traditional marriages and their ceremonial performances are very important activities that bring people together to share their traditional and cultural beliefs and to also project their musical art tradition also. There are special songs used when a bride is being escorted by her age grade to her husband's house and also special songs to welcome a new bride home, when she arrives at her husband's family compound. All these activities depend on the cultural practices of the communities. These songs however, may range from love songs to songs of advice to the couple involve. There are also songs of supplication.

Conclusion

The paper focused on traditional songs from Oshimili in Delta State, and noted that the songs not only reflect the heart of their culture and tradition, they further give a true picture of their cultural practices and belief systems. The songs uphold the values and norms of the society and tell of their existence in Africa and the world, where emphasis is given to cultural values such as relationship with ancestors, rite de passage and traditional healing services. Every song performs its function where necessary and leaves its message which is decoded and sometimes acted on by those the message in the song is meant for. It also noted the that there are songs used for work, ceremonies and recreational purposes.

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