



Challenges Of Music Education In Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso

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ABSTRACT

Music education in theological institutions has not found its footings in Nigeria as her Western counterparts, particularly with the Nigerian Baptist Convention. Except an affiliate of the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso, which offers music at diploma level, there is no known theological Seminary that offers music as a course to terminal degree level to students who minister through music to their congregants, as well as graduates that feed the theological institutions as lecturers. Since its inception, the department of church music (now Faculty) of the Seminary has produced many church musicians who specialized in composition and performance. Unlike its secular counterparts that focus solely on music performance, music education, ethnomusicology, composition, and music technology, music education in theological institutions is faced with the challenge of identity. It operates and functions within the context of theological education, whose sole responsibility is to provide theological education for its students irrespective of the area of interest of students. Some students came in unprepared for the training being experienced at the faculty of church music which made them deficient in skills and performances. The experience of students' poor performance both in skill and ministry despite their claim of God's call into the ministry poses a challenge to music educators in theological institutions. This study therefore seeks to identify the challenges that confront music education in the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso in Nigeria.

Keywords: Challenges, Music, Music Education, Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso.

INTRODUCTION

Contrary to the view of some that music in theological training is a recent development, music has always existed side by side theological training in the modest forms through chapel devotion and the teaching of correct hymn singing to ministers in training who were expected to go to the churches and lead their congregations in good singing. Music training, however, became professional as the church saw the need for called and potentially gifted people to be trained. These people are now designated as music ministers. Music education in a theological setting is important and will continue to be given a particular emphasis because music ministers are the ones who will implement what has been built into music programme in their various local churches of assignment. According to Adeleke, "overwhelming access is being provided through music education resource centres as instructional materials for students, video segments that spotlight students and teachers in actual classroom environment and information about what standard of music education anywhere should be."ⁱ This does not leave out theological institutions though its music education is church-based which also has implications for the society at large.

Though music is one of the oldest arts, its scholarly study in Nigeria just came about with the advent of colonialists.ⁱⁱ It could be seen that many volunteer church musicians are deficient in theology, skills, musical appreciation, hymn singing, conducting, choir administration and the likes due to lack of music education. Unfortunately, when such seek for theological training in the seminary, they hope to become proficient musically, and theologically overnight. Since formal music education was introduced in

Nigeria, art music has grown in leaps and bounds.ⁱⁱⁱ Church music education has benefitted from this laudable of achievements of missionaries in the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomosho. The focus of this paper is to examine the nature of music offered by theological institutions and the challenges that accompany the exercise.

Music Education

According to Ekwueme, a music teacher is a qualified person professionally trained, certified and well prepared to teach music in the school system. He is trained to equip students with musical knowledge, skill, attitudes and values that will make the students good consumers and producers of music and even contribute to the development of the society.^{iv}

Education according to Jekayinfa and Kolawole is a life-long process, and aims at imparting skills needed to live the meaningful life and for an individual to adjust well to his immediate environment and the ultimate world or universe in which he finds himself.^v The purpose of education is functionalism, in other words, the individual is developed to be useful to self, family and society. "In an age of science and technology, such an individual, as a result of his training, would be equipped to serve the nation and use his acquired skill to develop and maintain the tools that are essential for the scientific and technological development of the nation"^{vi} To Fafunwa, education is the aggregate of all the processes by which a child or young adult develops the abilities and attitudes and other forms of behaviour which are of positive value to the society in which he lives.^{vii}

Music education is a field of study associated with the teaching and learning of music with the formality of Western European school concept. More than merely teaching notes and rhythms, music education seeks to develop the whole person. It touches on the development of the affective domain, including music appreciation and sensitivity.^{viii} The three domains of learning vis-a-viz cognitive, affective and psychomotor of learners are touched in music education. Psychomotor-wise, learners make use of their fingers in the playing of stringed instruments, hands and feet are involved by those whose interest is in drum set etc. Music interpretation is cognitively based. According to Adeleke, it (Music education) helps to develop fine motor skills in students who play instruments. It expands cognitive development through the recognition and interpretation of music symbols and notation.^{ix}

The objective of music education is to make students think and create music and perform.^x Others are:

1. To provide students with intensive training in the discipline of music
2. To acquaint students with the growing scope and substance of music thought and practice.
3. To advance the historical, theoretical, and critical study of music.
4. To equip students with technical, cognitive skills that will enable them to use musical knowledge effectively.
5. To provide an environment in which musical excellence can flourish
6. To foster students' understanding of both the creative process in music and the products of music creation.
7. To prepare students for advanced musical study beyond the college years.
8. To prepare students for a professional career in music.
9. To acquaint students with knowledge and modes of inquiry characteristic of other disciplines.
10. To cultivate in students the desire for continued musical and intellectual growth throughout their lives.
11. To encourage students' active involvement as listeners and performers of music.^{xi}

The objective of music education in The Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomosho is to "provide music education, including biblical, theological, musicological, historical, and practical studies for those whose churches have attested to their evidence of God's leading to serve in this specialized ministry; and to provide basic theological instruction for men and women preparing for other church music-related vocations and places of Christian leadership in churches, schools and the denomination."^{xii}

Just as education is a life-long process, music education should be a life-long process. Right from kindergarten to university level, students build on the foundation of the love and interest they had in music and are involved in studies that make them become professionals as they climb up the ladder of music education. "Music education encompasses the teaching of music history, music theory, skill

acquisition, and proficiency, in musical instruments, singing skills, and general music skills.^{xiii} This focus is not different from music education in Bible Colleges and Theological Seminaries except for the additional aspect of theology and related issues.

Historical Background of Music Education in Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary

Theological education had always been accompanied by a form of singing of hymns at devotions and classrooms which was a form of music education. However, formal music education began in The Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso when in 1954 Mrs Evelyn Miller was saddled with the responsibility of coordinating the music committee whose responsibility was to “organise and prepare the Singing Seminarians for functions.”^{xiv} Church music education was introduced into the curriculum of the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary where courses such as music fundamentals and hymnody were taught to all student pastors in order to keep them abreast of music thus, enhancing their supervised ministry and on the long run, the churches they were eventually called to serve after graduation.

According to Ayinla, the curriculum of the Seminary did not make provision for the inclusion of music minister besides the few music related courses which were offered before 1992. This was the prevailing trend till a department in charge of church music was formally created in 1992.^{xv} This development led to the admission of six students who were interested in majoring in church music at the diploma level. The expansion of the music curriculum in the Seminary led to a full-fledged department which metamorphosed into the faculty of church music catering for Diploma, Bachelor, M. Div, Masters and Doctoral degrees in Church music thereby meeting the felt need of the church and the society at large. “The programmes started as response to requests from the Nigerian Baptist Convention (NBC) churches for trained church musicians and worship leaders. The programmes are designed to equip the students with musical skills, and skills in worship leading worked out in the context of a theological framework that builds on the rich musical heritage of the Christian faith”^{xvi}

The Relevance of Music Education to Theological Education

Music education in theological institutions is very challenging to both students and their instructors. However, its relevance necessitated its teaching to students as a general course under the topic of music fundamentals and in particular diverse courses for music students in the school. The preservation of the denomination's heritage of hymn singing, preservation of the church's doctrinal beliefs, promoting correct singing of hymns, maintaining theological balance of songs, and promoting creativity in worship are among numerous benefits of raising competent hands to lead worship through the administration of hymns and other forms of songs in different local churches.

Preservation of Denominational Hymn Singing Heritage

Hymns are inspired words of God written in poetical forms with the authors (composers) or other persons adding the tones, meters, and other musical elements that enable people to sing. One of the traditions of the mainline denominations such as the Baptists, Anglicans, Methodists, ECWA, et cetera is hymn singing as handed over to them by the missionaries. The early converts brought up their descendants with this tradition, and each denomination flourishes through the production of hymnals for use in their local churches. In order to preserve this tradition that is, unfortunately, being eroded gradually, theological institutions prepare music students through the learning of hymns as well as equipping them to sing the hymns correctly in order to lead congregational hymn singing and also be able to teach church members.

Preservation of Church's Doctrinal Beliefs

George Janvier claims that Christianity is a singing religion and Christians are a singing people. Christianity is the most musical of all the world religions because Christians have the most to sing about.^{xvii} Of course, Christians sing about the doctrine of the word of God as handed down to the Church. “The Christian has a message that God is real; He is holy and worthy of honour, He has the power to save, can give eternal life, loves his people, gives comfort and assurance in times of trouble, and will give His people victory beyond the grave.”^{xviii} The Bible is the content of the doctrine that the church preaches either verbally or musically. Music education equips students through courses in doctrines such as Baptist doctrines and other related courses that disclose beliefs as practised by the early church and

church fathers. Turning these beliefs into music helps in transmitting the doctrines of the church as well as preserving it.

Promoting Correct Singing of Hymns

Students are taught and encouraged to teach the congregation to sing hymns and songs correctly by making use of the notes and other tools they have been exposed to in the Seminary.

Maintaining Theological Balance of Songs

In the words of George Janvier, "cults have taken advantage of the deficiency in (maintaining the theological balance of songs) by appealing to the emotional side of life at the expense of doctrinal integrity. They use music to call attention to themselves and monopolise the centre of attraction."^{xix} In the same vein John Witvliet made the following observation on the theology of songs being sung in churches:

Does this music support the actions of Christian corporate worship? In some cases, it clearly does not. In some cases, songs and hymns are sung and chosen because of their immediate appeal. They may express a vaguely religious sentiment or theological theme, but their intended effect is to lead people to say, 'I enjoyed that music' or 'that was a neat song' rather than, 'through that song I confessed my sin to God' or 'through that song I rehearsed God's mighty deeds in history as a way of rendering praise.'^{xx}

The responsibility of writing/composing theologically sound music is on the graduates of the faculty of church music of the Seminary to correct the mistakes of those who have not passed through church-based music education.

However, the Faculty of church music in fulfilling these mandates faces some challenges which are common to other theological institutions in Nigeria offering church music. Some of these challenges are discussed below:

1. Challenge of Rudimentary Knowledge of Music

Every institution has its requirements for admission into whatever programmes they aspire to study without which no admission will be granted. For instance, the general requirements for admission into the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary Ogbomosho states thus:

All applicants to the Seminary should fulfil the following requirements:

- (a) Be at least twenty-two years of age.
- (b) Furnish to the Senate satisfactory evidence of conversion experience, sound Christian character and a call of God to a religious vocation.
- (c) Be recommended by their church.
- (d) Take and pass an entrance examination and personal interview.
- (e) Meet the academic requirements for entrance as outlined below.
- (f) Show promise of continued intellectual and spiritual growth and potential for future usefulness in church and society.
- (g) Married applicants must have legal marriage, registered under the marriage ordinance, before they are eligible to enrol in the Seminary.
- (h) Since this is an international institution in which English is the only language of instruction, it is vitally important that the applicant be proficient in writing and speaking English clearly and correctly.^{xxi}

The general requirement applies to all prospective students while each Faculty and department has its requirements based on the uniqueness of the Faculty/department. The Faculty of church music of the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary admission requirements for an undergraduate programme in church music as stated in the *Catalogue* revealed that students are usually admitted based on their convictions of God's call upon their lives while knowledge of rudiments of music is not necessarily the yardstick for admission requirements. For instance, the following are the requirements for admission into the Faculty of Church Music:

Diploma in Church Music (Dip. C. M.): SSCE or GCE (O/L) awarded by WAEC or NECO with the minimum of four credit level passes and at least a pass in English Language obtained at not more than two sittings. The duration of this course is a minimum of three academic sessions.^{xxii}

Bachelor of Theology (Missiology), Bachelor of Religious Education and Bachelor of Church Music: WASC or SSCE or GCE (O/L) awarded by WAEC or NECO with a minimum of five credit level passes including English Language at one sitting or six at two sittings. Applicants using two results should note that at least four (4) of the six (6) credits must be passed at one sitting. The duration is a minimum of four academic sessions. Likewise, applicants for Bachelor of Religious Education are expected to have credit in Christian Religious Knowledge.^{xxiii}

There is no particular reference to the requirements for music other than the general requirements for admission for all students; rather, an assumption of the prospective candidate's talent and love for music is embedded in the general requirements. Many of these students are being exposed to rudiments of music for the first time in the Seminary which undoubtedly slows down the teaching-learning process. Teachers have struggled to equip students with skills which many of them were not prepared for before their admission. The implication of this is that while lessons are slow, students at times experience the frustration of coping with the learning of rudiments of music with other required courses in other Faculties.

The purposes of the programmes offered in the Faculty of church music stress skills and competence in music rudiments and church worship among others. For instance, the purposes of the diploma, degree and Master of Divinity respectively state that:

The purpose of the Diploma in Church Music programme is to give fundamentals of church music education to desiring candidates within three years. The programme is designed to equip the students with musical skills, and skills in worship leading in an African setting worked out in the context of a theological framework that builds on the rich musical heritage of the Christian faith. Candidates who complete the course would be qualified for a direct entry admission into the degree programme in church music.^{xxiv}

The purpose of B.C.M. in African/Western Church Music is to lay a solid foundation for would-be teachers and leaders in African Church music at the Baccalaureate level. At the end of the programme, the products should have got enough practical skills with sound theoretical and theological principles that underlie African church music practice. The programme also prepares candidates for Postgraduate studies.^{xxv}

The Master of Divinity in Church Music offers sound specialised Postgraduate church music education to various graduates and professionals from other disciplines. At the end of the course, candidates would have been

- well-grounded in church music theories and practices;
- able to teach, organize and administer church music programmes both in church and seminary settings;
- be qualified to pursue higher degrees in church music; and
- equipped theologically, biblically and musically to minister effectively in church music.^{xxvi}

If students are to be equipped with musical skills, it implies that the Faculty is already aware and comfortable with the lack of basic skills in its new students. Admissions are granted based on the conviction to serve as music ministers at the completion of their studies. Between resumption and graduation is always a difficult process particularly for the students and lecturers. Ikibe citing Idolor who investigated music education in Nigeria using the Delta State University Abraka as a case study found that very few music students out of a larger registered number make it up to a satisfying level in musical knowledge and skills in instrumental performance.^{xxvii} It is common find music students with no basic knowledge of music before admission into the Seminary struggling to master music rudiments while juggling with other theological courses in the school. Citing the experiences of such students, Ikibe states that experience has shown that many people who would have loved to study music to degree level on some musical instruments failed, and dropped out quickly as a result of their inability to comprehend

what is being studied and their inability to have sustained interest to continue with the studies when they get to the saturation point may get fed up, confused, and eventually refuse to continue their studies to an appreciable satisfying level.^{xxviii} The Faculty had witnessed students cross-carpeting to either Faculty of Education or Theological Studies due to their inability to cope with both the demands and rigours of the Music studies.

2. Challenge of Professionalism

Professionalism entails being proficient in skills and performance. Music education in theological institutions poses the dilemma of nomenclature of students being trained. Are they mere music ministers who conduct and administer music ministry in the local churches of assignment or are certain skills of professionalism expected of them? Personal observation reveals that there is no sufficient time and facilities to equip students to a satisfactory desire of the lecturers in the Faculty. On the other hand, the church expects a certain measure of professionalism from the music ministers and further expects them to possess the knowledge of everything regarding choral music, congregational music, instrumentals, music theory, preaching, teaching, counselling, administration, and other skills related to his work in the church. Corroborating this opinion, Lee Orr states that “no matter what size congregation a church musician serves, the work necessitates extensive preparation. Indeed, few professions require such lengthy and demanding training to equip their practitioners.”^{xxix}

The trend of events in the contemporary has put a great challenge on musicians be it secular or church-related. "Years ago, most congregations rarely heard the well-performed music of any kind. Today with the availability of recorded music, it is virtually impossible for any congregation of more than twenty people to have people to have members unaware of how choral and instrumental music should sound. This fact puts professional-quality pressure on the standard of music every Sunday.”^{xxx} Can the music graduates of the Seminary be able to cope with the challenge professional-quality in their places of assignment?

3. Challenge of Balancing Performance with Theological Studies

The curriculum is designed in such a way that students should become proficient in both skills and performance within the three or four years of their training in the Seminary given that the Faculty devotes its attention to the curriculum as mapped out for the period. However, this is unrealistic as music students have general theological and educational courses to offer in other Faculties. This is because the education provided within a theological framework is designed to train God-called men and women to fulfil their call in various local churches and para-church organisations in the society. Hence, in addition to music education, theological education seeks to provide students with the opportunity for ministerial preparation. This implies that each student irrespective of the faculty receives holistic training for ministry. This becomes a challenge where only a few students who either are fast learners or have had some knowledge of rudiments of music are able to combine academics with performance while others find it difficult to cope.

4. Challenge of Genuine Call to Ministry

Since music is more of performance, it is often difficult to detect the talents being displayed from a genuine call of salvation and particularly a call to ministry. How can the Faculty differentiate between students who are genuinely called to church music ministry and those who want the opportunity to be trained in order to be independent of the denomination and pursue the personal ambition of being self-sufficient and having a stream of fans through whom money will be raised? Using music education provided by the Seminary as an escape route to achieving personal ambition is a trend that is yet to be identified and addressed by theological institutions in Nigeria.

5. Challenge of Church Music as a Career in the Contemporary Church

Theological institutions have the responsibility of raising men and women who are spiritually, morally, and ministerially formed and conformed to the image of God as they seek to develop skilfully. However, how does the Seminary “construct a paradigm”^{xxxi} that will help students balance career in music with their call in church music? This career in music is broader in goals and more than performance but is concerned more with teaching functions.

6. Challenge of Combining Essay Writing with Performance

Music education is very challenging on its own with attendant performances, rehearsals, practices, private instructions, learning to be skilful and proficient in playing some musical instruments and other related issues in music education. Graduating students are expected to make presentation or recitals as part of the requirements for graduation. This becomes a challenge at the postgraduate level where students are expected to combine writing of dissertation with performance in their areas of specialisations such as keyboard, composition, conducting and voice. This puts high stress on the students as the majority of them struggle to cope with the requirement given the enormous amount of time and energy required for practical music.

7. Challenge of Funding

The problem of funding of church music is rife, and this affects music education in the Theological Seminary. Much as the Seminary had desired to equip the Faculty with sufficient and state-of-the-art musical instruments, there is the lack of funding to provide musical instruments for students to use, and many have to struggle with one another to use the few musical instruments that are available. Those who are hard-working among them may be in school as early as 4:00 am in order to gain access to pianos for example for rehearsal. Also, current books, journals, practice rooms, listening rooms, teachers' offices etc. are in short supply as many scramble for the books and spaces available.

8. Undervalued Music Courses

All courses are considered valuable, and the problem of which to remove or merge usually poses a challenge to lecturers in the Faculty of church music. This experience is not limited to the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary alone, as Gordon Lamb, writing from the secular university perspective identified this as a problem to his department of music. He claims that:

Because of the unusual number of courses we consider necessary to a music program, some classes were assigned fewer credit hours in order to keep the total number of hours within a respectable distance of the accepted 120 to 124 semester credit hours in an undergraduate degree. Of course, many music programs are as high as 136 hours, and even some of those programs have hidden hours; that is, hours for which often include ensemble hours, class piano, and other similar areas. This has caused us to offer a large number of courses in our program. It is also true that many music programs were developed from conservatory programs where the need for semester credit hour definition was not as great. As these conservatory programs were accepted into colleges and universities, they were often brought in intact with credit values assigned at the conservatory.^{xxxii}

Many courses that are supposed to be three credit hours have been reduced to 1 credit hour in order to give room for theological courses that are deemed important for the students thus has bringing about the clash of understanding on the music courses that the faculty feels should not be reduced or merged, but which the curriculum planners dim not necessary.

9. Challenge of inadequate staffing

A by-product of the challenge of funding is inadequate staffing. Where a lecturer is saddled with the responsibility of overseeing as many as ten students for private instruction poses a problem for the faculty. Such lecturer spends ten hours per week on private instruction because an hour is to be spent on each student apart from other teaching assignments and other administrative duties. The effectiveness of such private instruction is questionable considering the number of students to that of the available hands in the faculty.

CONCLUSION

Music education poses a major challenge not only in theological institutions, but in tertiary institutions of Nigeria. However, providing church music education in theological institutions has its unique challenges. A compromise has to be reached by all stakeholders in order to overcome some of these challenges for us to be able to have a well-grounded church music education. The challenge of music education in a theological institution can be overcome beginning with the overhauling of the music education curriculum of the Seminary such that the identified gaps are filled to ensure a balance between music proficiency and

sound theological education. Appropriate musical instruments, facilities, materials should be provided to boost the teaching-learning process. Music is an indispensable tool in promoting worship, teaching, evangelism, preaching etc. as well as preserving the faith of our fathers. Theological educators should take note of the role of music in the lives of the church and should promote its teaching so that the church can sing theologically correct songs as well as preserve her heritage.

End Notes

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