

## Traditional Music Education in Nigeria: Bata Drum In Perspective

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### I. INTRODUCTION

African music is a way of life that carries the attributes and value of the culture it identifies. It uses cannot be over emphasized. It is the major preserving agent of facts and values, which are passed from one generation to another. However, African music has been the tool for the realization of this project and consistently proved successful over the ages. Today, focus is completely shifting from the traditional system of the music education. Attention is being given to formal system of music. There is need for the music educator to look into the wealth of the traditional system of music education so as to improve its standard in today's musical practice.

Tracy (1969) sees music in Africa as "vocal participation and physical manipulation of instruments and the rhythmic or dance movement associated with music" (p.10). Although, indigenous music in Africa is expressed through vocal form, which could employ chorus and solos of different grouping for example group of boys, group of girls, group of men, group of women or combination of both groups. The instrumental form which also includes drums, flutes, xylophones and so on, and dancing, are all form of music in Africa.

However, the understanding of indigenous music is much more than that. Tunji Vidal (2002) writes "music over the ages has proved to be one of the indispensable arts cultivated by man for the growth, nurture and transfer of his institution and value of future generations" (Vidal 2000:2). Indigenous music in Nigeria and Africa at large is a complete institution, which is based on the societal phenomenon of the people it represents. Its concept is based on societal facts and values through musical arts. In Nigeria, indigenous music had its origin and identify before the pre-colonial and Islamic era (Omojola 2002). Since then, it has been consistently practiced and nurtured to sustain the values of the society it identifies. Consequently, the society places a high premium on music and by extension musicians. This is borne out of the fact that they are seen as the tools, for the preservation of their culture. This fact is also synonymous to computer and computer operator in today's world of information technology. Hence, loss of indigenous music of a society will be disastrous to cultural identity and future well-being of the society, which might lead to cultural extinction of the society (Mbaki-Katana, 2001).

Among the Yoruba people of Western Nigeria, the drum is a major instrument that is widely used. There are different drum ensembles which are used for different social events. Some of the popularly known drum ensembles include: Dundun ensemble, Bata ensemble, Gbedu ensemble, Sakara and Gelede. The Bata ensemble is the second most popular of all the drums ensembles in Yoruba land. Although, its usage is restrictive because of its ritual undertone but its musical ability goes for events. Despite its restriction, the ensemble is gradually breaking out of its restrictive usage and is finding its way into the large world. So, lots of people are now picking interest in the instrument for different social events.

### II. CONCEPT OF EDUCATION

Education in Africa is not new as it is a global phenomenon used for the development of the society. However, concept, practice and process of education are different from one culture to another. It is aimed at enabling people to acquire society-desirable knowledge, attitudes and skill, irrespective of the culture where it is practiced. (Nnamani 2006). Okafor (1988) also agree that:

Education is process of adulterating through which the individual is helped to attained the development of his potentialities and their maximum activation and when necessary according to right reason and to achieve thereby his perfect self-fulfillment.

Traditional music in Yoruba land is designed according to the beliefs and ways of life of the people. The Yoruba Bata ensemble is well established ensemble which represents the Yoruba pedagogical style of music education. The focus of this paper is to discuss, highlight the recruitment and training process in Bata ensemble practice and to also create atmosphere for the understanding of the role played by the instruments in the ensemble.

### III. THE BATA DRUM ENSEMBLE

The use of drum in Yoruba land cannot be over emphasis because of its role as the foundation of the ensemble. The role of the drum is not different from the string section of the classical western symphony orchestra. Most drums are used in groups apart from those used for rituals ceremonies.

The Bata drum ensemble, which is an affiliate of Egungun cult was for ritual and social activities of members. Its use was centered on the members of the cult for ritual and social events. But as the ensemble gained more popularity, it began to find its way into the general public.

There are four drums in the ensemble and they include:

1. Iya ilu                      Bata        -        the “mother” drum
2. Omelet abo                Bata        -        the “female” drum
3. Omele ako                 Bata        -        the “male” drum
4. Kudi                         Bata        -        the “child”

Bata drums are different sizes and tones. The names and sizes of the drum have pitch implications as well as musical roles in making music (Vidal 1995). The smallest of the drums in the ensemble is the Kudi (i.e. the “child” or “baby” drum). It has the highest tone range. It also plays simple repetitive rhythmic passages in the mid-high tone range and plays ostinato rhythmic passage accompaniment in the ensemble. The next drum in size is Omele abo (the “female” drum) which is a medium size drum in the ensemble. It has mid-low tone range and it also plays supporting role to both Iya-ilu and repetitive passages. The last drum in the ensemble which is the largest drum is Iya-ilu, it has lowest tone range, and it plays the complex part in the music of the ensemble such as improvisation.

The role of the drums are divided into two, namely: Principal and secondary. The Iya-ilu drum plays principal role in the ensemble as the leader and also controls other drums in their performances. Although, the Iya-ilu drum in some instances share its role with Omele abo drum which is the next to it however, the Iya-ilu drum remains the only principal drum. The drums in the secondary role category includes, Omele abo, Omele ako, Kudi. These drums are respondents to the principal drum and they also provide supportive musical circumstance where the Iya-ilu displays its overall musical dexterity and by extension exhibits its control of the whole ensemble. They play repetitive rhythmic passage to provide accompaniment for Iya-ilu to improvise.

The leadership of the whole ensemble is ascribed to the Iya-ilu drummer due to the complexity of its drum patterns, while the Kudi drummer is seen as the least person in the ensemble.

Local name	English name	Tone	Size	Role
Iya-ilu	Mother drum	Lowest	Largest	Complex
Omelet abo	Female	Medium	Medium	Supporting
Omelet ako	Male	Small	Small	Accomp. Rhythm
Kudi	Child	Smallest	Smallest	Simple repetitive

### IV. RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

Nketia also writes that “there are qualities or attributes that are usually expected of musicians in general or of the specialists in particular” (Nketia 1979). Orientation and reorientation is an essential tool for the development of any profession. Traditional music education as it were can not be isolated from the fact. Music education either formal or informal refers to the sum total of all skills, knowledge, principles and strategies, which a music practitioner need to acquire in order to be effective and efficient (Adeogun, 2006). However, before someone is trained, such person must first of all be recruited into the group. For instance, in formal system of education, candidate aiming at a profession must seek for admission through entrance examination before he she can become a student. Also in informal system of education or traditional system, trainees are recruited through the traditional way which does not need any written examination.

In Yoruba land, drumming is a profession attributed to certain families called ‘Ayan’. These families are solely responsible for the recruitment and training of drummers in their domain. Members of the drummer immediate and extended family are regularly recruited at their early age because it is a family tradition. Other interested members of the community are also recruited into the ensemble but, at the appropriate age where the individual can take decision, because of the initiation rites involved within the cult.

#### Training

After recruitment has been carried out, the next stage is the training exercise. Training in traditional system does not have a specific time of completion; it all depends on the trainee’s ability to learn fast and level of creativity. Trainees are expected to understudy a drummer through observation method to acquire skills. The training process in bata drum ensemble is divided into six(6) stages.

**Stage 1: (General observation)**

This is the first stage of the training where the trainee is expected to understudy the activities of the group. The trainee is also expected to carry out some duties alongside his training such as carrying drums at rehearsals and at performances, sent on errand and other assistance that might be requested by other drummers in the ensemble. The leader of the group at intervals test the trainee's aptitude before final approval is given to proceed to another stage. While the trainee moves to another stage, he continues to perform his extra duties.

**Stage 2; (agogo)**

The second stage is the introduction of the first musical instrument agogo (gong) to the trainee. Although agogo is not really part of the ensemble's instrument, but it is used at rehearsals and occasionally introduced at performances. Agogo is used as a guide and to help trainee learn rhythms. The introduction of this instrument also helps trainee to build up sense of rhythm and to understand the manipulations of the drums. After the introduction, the trainee is expected to practice privately and also with the ensemble at rehearsals. The trainee is assessed by the leader who approves his promotion to the next stage. The period of learning depend on the trainee's ability to improve and shows some level of creativity.

**Stage 3: (Kudi)**

The next stage after the mastery of *agogo* is the introduction of the first drum '*kudi* drum'. At this point the trainee is expected to have understood that the drums play different rhythms and different roles. After the introduction of *kudi* drum to the trainee, he is expected to understudy the *kudi* drummer who is who is his direct instructor. The *kudi* drummer is also expected to recommend the trainee to feature at rehearsals when he is sure that he is mature enough. After the trainee must have completed his training and has been approved by the leader, then he automatically becomes a *kudi* drummer and must also proceed to the next drum.

**Stage 4: (Omele ako)**

*Omele ako* is the drum that precede *kudi* drum in the *bata* ensemble training process. The drum is the second to be introduced because of its high level of performance to that of *kudi* drum. The trainee learns the new drum alongside the *kudi* drum which is his main drum at any performance. The trainee takes instruction from *Omele ako* drummer and also practice privately to attain an appreciable level of proficiency on the drum. He is also allowed to play the new drum at rehearsals and occasionally at performances to aid his proficiency. At the mastery of the drum he becomes master of two drums and can play anyone of them at any performance. But that is not the end of the training; the trainee is expected to go further on the next higher drum.

**Stage 5: (Omele abo)**

Before a drummer is introduced to *omelet abo*, he must have mastered the other drums (*kudi* and *omelet ako*) because it is the advanced stage of the secondary drums in the *bata* drum ensemble. The secondary role of *omelet abo* drum (rhythmic accompaniment) might be familiar to the trainee but, the second role where the *omele abo* drummer doubles the *Iya-ilu* drummer in playing certain counter rhythms or improvisation passages would be quite new to him. To understand the second role, the trainee need to know how the drum talks and how to reproduce it. The trainee takes time to understudy, practice extensively and also take instruction from the *omelet abo* drummer or the *Iya-ilu* drummer to actualize his goal.

**Stage 6 (Iya-ilu)**

This is the last stage of training in the *bata* drum ensemble of the Yoruba people. The drum is the most complex drum of all the drums in the ensemble and it plays a leadership role among other drum. The complexity of the drum made it to be the last to be introduced. Trainees carefully approved to take up the study of this drum and also guided to show sense of leadership in communalism among other drummers. Trainee is expected to take instructions from the *Iya-ilu* drummer who is also the master drummer of the ensemble. The trainee needs to show a high level of maturity and creativity on the drum before he can be approved. On the other hand, he must be able play any of the drums as a master of *Iya-ilu* drum.

## V. CONCLUSION

This paper highlighted the traditional system of music education in Nigeria using the *bata* drum ensemble of the Yoruba people as a case study. It highlighted the composition and the role of the drums in the ensemble. It also discussed the recruitment and training depicts their communal sharing and gradual developmental process in their communities. This study is necessary in order to document our culture for update so that they can also be included in today's practices. Educators should also be encouraged to use this method in their class teaching (applied music) to improve the students' creativity and encourage them for promotional mind set.

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