

# THE NIGERIAN NAVY BAND ON THE WORLD STAGE: FUSING INDIGENOUS SOUND WITH GLOBAL APPEAL

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**Abstract:** The impact of globalization in every activity of human endeavour Indigenisation, is quite overwhelming and cannot be overemphasized. The world has become Global identity, a global village where the barrier of distance to access the activities of one creativity, band. country or the other has been eradicated and the quest for new identity is in the rise. The military is not left out in the process considering the contemporary challenges they are facing. The Nigerian Navy band can also explore this window to break away from its conventional rigidity and create a global identity for itself. The focus of this paper is to examine the activities of the Nigerian Navy band and identify elements that improve on its activities for global recognition. This paper relied on library study and field work through interview and observation to elicit information. Through analytical examination, the paper discovered that the Navy band was still very rigid in exploring other musical elements to enrich its musical content. The paper suggests indigenisation of musical content as the way forward. The idea of indigenous content was however traced in their works but was not strong enough to give it the desired recognition. This paper concludes that if indigenous content as suggested in this paper is treated with importance, the Nigeria Navy band will be on the road to global recognition.

**keywords:** indigenization, global identity, Nigerian navy band, cultural creativity, globalization

## Introduction

There was a time when some countries dominated the global scene and remained the only culture celebrated while others were made irrelevant. For a long time, countries like Great Britain, US, France and Russia among others enjoyed unparallel supremacy over others. They dictate and established conservative rules which others must follow and if such rules were not obeyed, such individual, institution or country were seen as uncultured and were made enemies. Africa and other continents were tagged 'second and third World countries' and their cultures were seen as primitive, satanic and barbaric (Yekini-Ajenifuja, 2012). Meanwhile, these cultures are of great value and lofty. Although, these cultures could not be appreciated and celebrated by the alien because of their negative mindset and lack of openness to them.

Today, the world has become a global village where every country, institution and individual exists on the same platform, pushing for recognition and struggling for supremacy. Through technology, the word has reached a state where hidden cultures are emerging on the frontline of discourse. Efforts are now made by small countries to register their identities and make themselves relevant on the world map while the big countries now struggle to retain their supper status. As such, conservative

ideologies are now being subjugated for the emergence of new ones. Resultantly, countries are now using this new opening to push their cultures and ideologies to the fore to create identity for themselves. It is sufficient to say that, the globalization experience in the contemporary times has galvanized the whole world into a more tolerant and accessible community.

In the world of culture, music, fine Arts and drama are the most viable elements that can elucidate the new vista. In Nigeria, the three aforementioned have greatly brought Nigeria to the front stage in the global scene and has given credence to its identity. Music as an inevitable aspect of human life remains in the fore front of world discourse. Resultantly, most of the music genres in Nigeria have received boost trying to comply with the present demand. For instance, African traditional music is on high demand and its recordings and live performances at international conferences, workshops, and festivals are creating identity and asserting her values. Nigerian hip hop music is also getting international facelift because of indigenisation of the genre which has earned it recognition with regards to nomination in the most prestigious music award in America. Music in the Nigerian Military is worth mentioning because of its stringent efforts to create identity within and outside the force and also to be one of the best celebrated in the world. It is imperative to give military music in Nigeria a facelift to allow it attain world standard and also create identity for it both locally and internationally.

### **The Nigerian Navy Band**

The Nigerian Navy band was the second military band to be established in 1963. Olatunji (2006) opined that 'the desire to establish a band came as a result of the performances of both the Police and the Army bands. The Navy authority was also tired of using the boatswain pipe alone for all occasions'. In order to bring this dream to reality, a bugler, Abiodun Oniwo was recruited from the Salvation Army. Eleven bandsmen and an officer was recruited and commissioned respectively to compliment the earlier recruitment. Olatunji, (2006) further informed that the officer, Sub-Lieutenant (later Captain) F.O Bucknor became the first Director of Music, Nigerian Navy Band. The Navy Band officers and bandsmen were given adequate training abroad. For instance, in 1965, SubLieutenant (later Captain) F.O Bucknor was sent for training at the Royal Marine School of Music, Kent England. Different sets of bandsmen were also sent to the same school at different times for different courses. For diversity sake, some officers and bandsmen were sent to the US school of music, Virginia, United State of America for training in Dance / Stage band. Resultantly, in the 1970s and 1980s, the Nigerian Navy band became very popular performing at several ceremonies at home and abroad. It became the pride of the Defence Headquarters and the Presidency (Olatunji, 2006). During this time, the band also accompanied several groups of musicians in highlife, Jazz and other performances. Today, the Nigerian Navy band has also established a school of music for training and retraining of bandsmen locally for a stable output.

In recent time, after a long silence, the band rose up to the challenge of upgrading itself by acquiring more musical instruments to enhance good performance. Officers and bandsmen were also sent abroad to acquire skills in performance and production of steel band music in Trinidad and Tobago. This is a feat for the band and the authority of the Nigerian Navy in general. Although, the Nigerian Army was the first to toll this line but they have long been forgotten in this respect. This act by the Nigerian Navy

band gives her credence by positioning her at the centre of innovation and development to solving contemporary issues. The world is moving fast in innovation and it takes efficiency, proficiency and resilience to survive in the race. The Nigerian Navy band must not rest on its oases else it becomes dormant and irrelevant in the annals of progress.

### **New Trend**

Change is the only thing that is constant in life. The level at which change occurs in this present dispensation is quite alarming. Consequently, the quest for change is enormous because man is insatiable and the ability to meet up with the challenge requires a deal of efforts.

In the music circle, the rate of development cannot be overemphasized as the world is moving at a fast track through the help of technology. Vidal, (2000) in Yekini-Ajenifuja (2016) stresses that music is 'a play with sound, a paragon of the experiences and activities of man; a reflection of those experiences and activities as well as a model activities'. Butler (2006) in Yekini-Ajenifuja (2010) also sees music as 'artful arrangement of sounds across time'. He argues that music exists only through the manipulation of sounds based on musical experience. The understanding and the manipulation of sound in the present age requires an exposed and skilled musician with creative sensitivity. Today, popular musicians are composing and performing in new style importing elements that are alien to the conventional styles. Local elements are infused into contemporary music to promote culture and create identity.

Today, Military band music in the world has also received its share of the new trend, breaking away from its conservative style. In some countries, military music has incorporated different styles, instruments, formation and compositions in their performances. This has conspicuously brought out the uniqueness and has created a strong identity for the bands. For example, military band in countries like Hong Kong, Marceau and Taiwan among others, play foreign and native marches while Peoples Republic of China and others, play indigenous and local composed marches only. The local and indigenous compositions of these bands gave them standout with distinct identity. Although, the Nigerian military band is not completely ignorant of this trend but need to put in more effort to explore more opportunities to be recognized. This trend was first introduced by the first Nigerian Army Director of Music, Col. J Olubobokun (rtd) and was anchored by some other officers. This ideology did not fly because of lack of will to pursue it. It is worthy of notes that the Nigerian Military especially the Navy band cannot continue to rely on old musical practice for life. The conventional practice belongs to certain cultures and there is need to gain freedom from such cultures and be independent to pave way for relevance. To deal with this contemporary issue, there are two main facets that can proffer solution, namely creativity and indigenization. The two facets mentioned above represent the innovative ideology that influences the world best musical practices in the contemporary times.

### **A. Creativity**

What is creativity? According to MerriamWebster's Dictionary 'creativity is the quality of being creative or the ability to create'. It involves the use of imagination or original idea to create or recreate something new. It is the ability to compose, react or perform in a more acceptable way to the people or a particular audience. Creativity is used in different ways to either change perception of things or find

solution to an identified problem. In music practice, creativity could be used in composition or performance. The uses of elements of composition such as rhythm, melody, harmony, dynamic, poetic and musical expression, among others, give credence to creativity. These elements could be used on new composition(s) or already composed piece(s) as arrangement or re-arrangement of compositions. While in performance it features in the selection of musical work, relevance of piece to occasion / audience, interpretation of written composition and medium of performance among others. The level of success recorded in composition determines how much of creativity that went into it. Although, most composers of musical works usually give performance guide in their works for interpretation and projection of their intentions, it is absolutely not compulsory that performers must stick to the guide, they are at liberty to create what could be the best for their performances. At a point it is better to perform a piece according to composer's directive and at another point the creativity of the performer is expected to give the piece creative outlook. However, what could be offensive in this process is when the original melody line or theme of the piece is tampered with; it could also be seen as creativity though. This act could take away the credibility of the composer. It is worthy of note that the beauty of any music composition lies in the creativity of its performance. The creativity of the performer also lies in the creativity of the performer's interpretation of the music. Most times composers are not to blame for poor music performance because they are expected to use their creative mechanism to turn situation around and give beautiful performance. At every performance, a performer is responsible to the audience for creative performance.

### **Elements of Creativity:**

Creativity is achieved through three elements namely:

1. Concept
2. Content
3. Context

#### **1. Concept**

Concept is one of the elements of creativity used to drive and guide the process of creativity to reality. It is also

the ideological framework that shapes the content of creativity. The ideological framework is also known as psychological intention or focus of a composer employed to build an acceptable, inspiring and sustainable performance. Every act of creativity is established on a concept to give direction. For instance, some compositions or performances are based on exploring dexterity of a particular medium or to project the identity of a particular style or culture, eulogies their love one, paint a picture, and tell a story and among others. The concept identified by the composer helps him/her to be focused and manage the other stages of creativity appropriately. But if ideological framework is not identified, most likely creativity can be jeopardized in the process. For example, Fela Anikulapo-Kuti's concept of creativity was musical 'activism' based on African style.

#### **2. Content**

Content in this regard, refers to the main element of creativity. It is leveraged on concept to actualise the reality of creativity. Content is the structural process of concept which leads to the realisation of

creativity. The elements of content in musical practice include language, scale, melody, harmony, dynamic, medium and interpretation. The manipulation of these elements appropriately deciphers the ideological framework of composers and helps them to realise their intention. For example, when a composer has developed a concept based on promoting the identity of his/her culture, he/she must first conceptualise the language of communication, the scale that will be more appropriate for the melody, structure of the melody, whether to use harmony or not, and if yes, what harmony goes with the cultural phenomenon?, what kind of dynamic expression will be appropriate? and lastly what medium can be used to express the ideal of the culture?. When the right answers are given to these questions, creativity would be realised. But when wrong answers are given, creativity will be affected. It should be noted that creativity cannot be done in abstract; it must comply with contemporary style of the period. As one creative style fades out of existence another emerges. Composers and performers need to be sensitive to contemporary changes. It should be noted that creativity is not static or confined to a particular style, its content can be fed from any style. Conceptual ideology could be imported from past generation for contemporary use; it must be treated distinctively to comply with the current form of artistic practices. Considerably, conceptual ideology could also be imported from the unknown (futuristic imagination), however, its treatment should also be made to comply with the current form of artistic practices. When creativity is completely alien to the people, such work would not be accepted and could find its way into the trash or be ignored during performance.

### **3. Context**

Context refers to the premise of artistic work. Context in creativity gives an artist focus and sense of direction to the creative quest of audience. Every creative work is designed for a particular audience; it could be small or large audience though. Consequently, the characteristics of compositional and performance ethics norms of expected audience should be given adequate consideration. Even if there are going to be creative changes to the already existing ethics, the old must not be completely abandoned. It should be noted that every music composition or performance has its audience. There is no particular music that cuts across the tastes of all the people in a particular place. Some will prefer one to another because of taste. For credence to be given to creativity, people at the receiving end must be considered. For instance, in an environment where fuji music is highly appreciated, when musician decides to use jazz or broad way style to enhance his/her creativity, the music might suffer rejection.

#### **Qualities of a Creative Personality:**

1. A creative person must be analytical.
2. A creative person must be open minded
3. A creative person must be a problem solver
4. A creative person must be an organised / focused person
5. A creative person must be artistically inclined
6. A creative person must be able to communicate
7. A creative person must understand cultural ethics

### **B. Indigenization**

The word 'indigenisation' is coined from the word indigene which means native.



Indigenisation is the adoption or adaptation of native elements in a contemporary process or procedure. The native or indigenous element which is a way of life of certain people, when used, projects the identity of the people. When a process adopts or adapts indigenous elements into its act, the identity of the culture is conspicuously noticed and credence is given to its creativity. It is no doubt that the interface with civilisation in Nigeria brought the decline of traditional music even in our community. This act has seriously damaged the popularity it enjoyed and the sustainability of the process thereby, drifting it into extinction. Today, having realised this damage and the need to fight for our identity in the globe, there is needs to take the issue of indigenisation seriously to be relevant in the committee of nations of the world.

A lot has been done in the popular music world. Hip hop is an American originated musical genre introduced to Nigeria. Today, hip hop music has experienced a new dimension through indigenisation with the emergence of a new nomenclature know as 'Afro hip hop'.

(Oikelome, 2012; Yekini-Ajenifuja, 2018). As a result, the new development has created an opportunity for the artistes to be nominated for American most prestigious music award, known as 'Grammy Award'. This is a step in the right direction.

### **How to Harness Creativity and Indigenise Musical Performance in the Nigerian Navy Band.**

The Nigerian Navy band in the current time has the capacity to compete with contemporary challenges considering its antecedent. However, to face these challenges, it must be proactive in its creativity and indigenisation of its performances to be more efficient in its prowess to earn its identity in the global musical scene. There is no doubt that Nigerian Navy stage band had lived and is still living up to expectation in its performances. But the concert band and the regimental band need to be given attention and upgraded to realise the goal of attaining global identity. Resultantly, the band can borrow a leave from People Republic of China's Military band where all the music performed in the regimental and concert band are indigenous and locally composed music. Although, the Nigerian Navy band might not compulsorily and absolutely abandon Western music but must have a great percentage of indigenous music in its repertoire for performances. It is imperative to understand the process.

To realise this task, the following points are sacrosanct:

#### **1. Composition and arrangement of indigenous songs.**

The journey to this great feast starts with composition or arrangement of indigenous songs for the band. To do this, there are steps to be taken and they are as follows: i) Collection of materials The first thing a composer or arranger should do is to search for materials that can be used for his/her work. Since the focus is to get folks or traditional materials, efforts should be made to contact various cultures that are visible to connect or who the composer has affiliation. But such exercise should be extended to a large or wide coverage in order to get large varies. Collection of materials in field should be done through recording and interview. When such materials are recorded, it affords the collector the ability to analyze the materials creditably and keep for future purpose. There is need for collectors to conduct interview on the materials collected or ask question in order to get details on the material and get clarification on hidden areas. In a situation where a collector is collecting materials outside his/her

traditional areas, there will be need for brief and question to ask. There should be no limit to what should be collected when a collector gets to the field. Any musical material collected cannot be a waste, if it is not needed now, it could be the best in the future. Nigeria has more 250 local cultures where collectors can get more than enough materials for this purpose. ii) Treatment of collected Materials The materials collected are raw and need to be treated or allowed to go through process before use. These materials are meant to be processed and converted to new compositions, arrangements or re-arrangements and orchestrations of the material for the band performance. The process is as follows:

1. Listen to the recorded song or instrumental work over and over
2. Extracts the melody of such song

(Notate on staff)

3. Harmonise the melody in four parts (original harmony of the song could be considered or a new harmonic style could be used)
4. Chose the form or style the work is best projected
5. Orchestrate or arrange the song for band instruments at your disposal (the rules of orchestration should be applied and the performance guide should be creative to bring out the beauty of the work).
6. Check out your work to ascertain its state perfection (use your device to playback the work or ask the band to test run the work for correction if the work is done manually).

## **2. Performance of indigenous Pieces**

Performance is the end product of any written music. A popular saying has it that ‘music does not live on paper’. No matter how beauty a piece of music can be it is not known or attested to until it is performed. The impact of performer in bring out the best in a song or turning a poorly composed song to a good one cannot be overemphasized. Band conductor should understand the synopsis of every piece they want to perform in order to creatively give a guide that will project the music appropriately. For instance, the performance of dirge song is completely different to how a coronation song is performed. Irrespective of what was composed, the conductor has the responsibility to guide music to fit into premise of the performance.

## **3. Adaptation of Indigenous instruments**

Indigenous instruments are viable credibility like Western instruments but have been neglected for too long to be included military band music. Although Col. J. Olubobokun (Rtd) introduced some instruments like Iya ilu and others when he was the Director of Music, Nigerian Army band but was not sustained may be because of lack of interest by his successors.

I think the time is now considering the situation on ground. There are standardised instruments that can be introduced to the band. The inclusion of these instruments will attract audience to the band and thereby create identity for it.

## **Conclusion**

This paper attempted to open the various challenges there are in the contemporary times in the music scene. It also exposed some of the practices that have been adopted to solve some of these challenges. As a way of tapping into connecting to the best practices in the world, creativity and indigenization was

suggested as solution to the Nigerian Navy band. The breakdown of the process of achieving the set goal of identity in the global musical scene was highlighted.

It can be rest assured that if the suggestions given in this paper are judiciously followed, the goal is achievable. It should be noted that those who are still strongly cliff to western culture will try to hinder this concept and those who are tribal egocentric will also be out to undermine this viable project. We all must collectively stand to protect what will give credence to our identity and existence as a people.

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