

A Case for Moral Values in Nigerian Music: a Case Study of Slyde and D'prince

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Abstract

The controversy that has been in existence is whether or not music is the first art form known to man. However, what has not existed as an argument is the place that music occupies in the life of man both in its functionality and its worth. Music has enjoyed divergent conceptions; it represents the identity symbol of each continent, each generation and each individual. Despite the fact that everyone exercises their fundamental human rights to listen to whatever kind of music they want, it has increasingly become apparent that most of the music in present-day Nigerian society has more rhythm (beat) than sense (constructive message). The media effect theory will be used in this paper since the youth uses media channels to access the music and media contents have psychological effects on youth. (Giles, 2003). This paper, through the qualitative investigation of selected songs, articles, journals and other relevant materials investigates the growing degradation in some contemporary Nigerian music and its subsequent effect on members of the society, and advocates for the subject to be treated seriously for there to be positive change in society. This study posits that there is need for relevant agencies to ensure that apart from entertaining listeners, music should convey messages that point the way forward to the citizenry, the leadership and the society.

Introduction

Any discourse on the fundamental question of what music is and its role in society cannot ignore the business of music and how technology has impacted on its (music) production and consumption around the world. The essence is to examine what makes a great piece of music and why it is fundamental to the very existence of a people. Music is one of the most primal and basic aspects of human culture, which pre-dates the emergence of language itself. This explains the aphorism that, "music is the universal language of mankind." Whenever humans congregate, music comes into play: weddings, funerals, matriculations, convocations, men marching off to war, sporting events, a night out in the town, religious prayer sessions, romantic dinners, mothers rocking babies to sleep, and studying with music at the background, among others. Thus, a world without music is unimaginable because a huge volume of the social communication mechanism would be non-existent.

There is no dearth of music in Nigeria. Every other day Nigerians are releasing new songs, topping the charts both nationally and globally. What is frightfully becoming evident is the dearth of morals in contemporary Nigerian

music. Music is probably the most powerful art form known to man, for example, people sometimes read their favorite book a number of times, while they often listen to their favorite songs hundreds of times.

What really is Music?

Just as storytelling is a natural instinct of man, music is an abounding essence that keeps the body and soul of man together. No wonder, at each moment, people engage themselves to music either by listening to it or singing it out so as to relieve tension, pleasure, joy and sometimes the frustrations of life. In clapping of hands, grinding of teeth, banging of legs or playing of musical instruments, man is able to create emotions and produce meaning that enables him to express himself. To try to understand what music really is, one will have to delve ultimately into the inner essence and definition of man. Music exist on a more metaphysical level far beyond what it is merely conceived, that is why music means different things to different people. To some, music tells a story, educates, entertains, heals and to others music is life itself and in living one must breathe and that breathing is the beginning of music. Since breathing is a regulated system that controls the life and survival of man, so is the ultimate depiction of music. That unique and special sound that silences everything about humanity and subjects the mind to thought, that thought springs forth the feeling to either laugh, cry, dance and even sleep. When a man dies, it means that his music has stopped playing. Music is both an art and a science. Therefore, it must be both emotionally appreciated and intellectually understood and as with any art or any science, there are no short cuts to its proficiency or knowledge. The music lover who enjoys listening to music but does not understand its language is like the tourist who goes abroad for his holiday, enjoys the landscape, the gesticulations of the natives, and the sound of their voices, but cannot understand a word of what they say. He feels, but cannot understand,

Music, unless otherwise stated, is built on motives, phrases, sentences and has form. It is also either vocal or instrumental or listener some necessary background to understand the content of the music. Through appreciation, one is able to identify the nationality of any kind of music and appreciate the cultural relevance of the text, instrumental resources, rhythmic patterns, costume and dance. -or example, constant listening can make a listener to identify an Ibo, Hausa, Yoruba or (Tiv) kind of music with minimum difficulty. (p 9).

Music is what it is when it is effectively and efficiently understood. People are therefore bound to subject music to a lot of meanings probably because of its plasticity. Music is also one of the most primal and basic aspects of human culture, which pre-dates the emergence of language itself. This explains the aphorism that, “music is the universal language of mankind.” Whenever human beings congregate, music comes into play: weddings, funerals, matriculations, convocations, men marching off to war, sporting events, a night out in the town, religious prayer sessions, romantic dinners, mothers rocking babies to sleep, and studying with music at the background, among others. Thus, a world without music is unimaginable because a huge volume of the social communication mechanism would be non-existent. Also according to Oshienebo and Akazue, “music is the most accessible of all performing arts, because in all our activities music is played” (p 70). Nothing could be truer since music is palatable in rendition just as it is also easy to memorize, and easily recallable anytime to fit whichever situation that is emotionally overbearing. Suffice to say that music exerts a great influence on humans as it serves as a source of motivation and propelling force in his endeavors. Amodu citing Don C. Walker captures this explicitly when he submits that:

From earliest history, man has recognized the power of music to express feelings, stir emotions and influence thoughts and actions. By means of music, primitive man communicated with others. He found delight in work and exercise, he expressed his love and fear, he grew in bodily strength, grace, and with music he went to fight battles. (p 4)

Like other genres of the performing arts, music must be functional within the context of ideological persuasions especially as its subject – matter is drawn from the socio – political circumstances resulting from human interactions within a given society. Music is constructed in the minds of artists, using different parts of the brain. While it does not exist physically, unlike a painting, sculpture or photograph, music is just air hitting the eardrum in a patterned way. Somehow, the air, which has almost no substance, whatsoever, when made to hit the eardrum by way of sound, can make people dance, cry, have sex, move across country, go to war and so on. In the real sense, music is an organized chaos, but not necessarily in a bad way.

Every era in time is accompanied by music of its time; it is almost like an imprint that reflects the cultural reality always. It is believed that without music, the life span of human beings will be shortened because without music, our ability to emotionally express will be limited and that would be directly linked to

our mental and physical health. Little wonder then that William Shakespeare said, “If music be the food of love, play on.” Music can be enjoyed, created, and played by virtually anybody. Thus, the challenge before artists is to create, sustain, and spread music that can be appreciated by the generality of the public. Imagine lullabies for babies; birthday songs; songs to learn the alphabets; songs for games; sound tracks for movies; music to listen to when one falls in love or when one’s heart is broken; dance music; wedding music; funeral music, and so on. From the aforementioned, which is by no means definitive, one can tell how much music is integrated into the daily life of a people. The emotions of joy, sadness, anger, fear and anticipation can be enhanced when paired with the “right” music, and can also manifest emotions by just listening to the music that is paired with it.

In the Nigerian music industry today, values are ascribed to human beings depending on one’s social status. To most artistes, the concern for values are what the plurality of people agreed upon and do not depend upon the judgment of any individual. This goes to explain that the source of values in the present day Nigeria is external to the artist since there are circumstances and conditions of value which the artist cannot control but are dependent on the manner in which the society evaluate one another and the kind of cultural object they hold in high or low esteem. What matters are the material gain and the social status the music accords. Udabah puts it more succinctly, ‘we could not speak of the values attached to behavior patterns were it not for the persons who perform these patterns. Values exist only because there are persons worthy of evaluation and competent to evaluate other persons and things’ (p 319).

Nigeria is currently one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world, its cultural diversity is reflected in the numerous music typologies that exist in the streams of popular music (Oikhilome 2013). As such, it can be deduced that the increasingly high level of entertainment focus and the almost disappearing edifying aspect of the music produced in the country is noticeable worldwide. From great musicians like Fela Anikulapo Kuti, the late Afro Beat king, Asa, 2face Idibia, to most of what is overrunning our music devices today: Slyde, D’Prince, Terry G, and so much more.

Music in Nigeria has significantly evolved, and while some artists sing songs just to sell albums, not considering the garbage they disperse, others sing songs that we can attribute proper meaning and depth to. Nigerians have made quite an impact in the music industry, nationally and globally. With musicians like Sunny Ade, Ebenezer Obey and the late Fela Anikulapo Kuti, as its foremost proponents, who contributed immensely to the development of the music industry in the country, at one time or the other. As it were, they looked at society and expressed their feelings through their lyrics to address such

conditions. One unique thing about them was that, their songs had meaning; they had philosophical depth; just as they had stories to tell.

Reacting to the question if songs by Nigerian artists are “Nonsense”, a foremost Nigerian entertainer, Sound Sultan opines that everything has to do with the musician and the listener; “It’s about variety and people. There must be variety. Having said that, whether negative or positive, it’s about the artiste and whoever is listening. For me, when it comes to music, I see it as a big tool that should not be misused. If music is misused it can tell on the generations to come. I want to be able to play music that will be friendly to children even my own kids, from this, it is obvious that even the artists themselves know the far-reaching impact of music on a given generation. Musicians should be able to make money and still dull out meaningful, insightful messages through their craft, but for ignorance or just plain laziness, this is often not the case.

It is not about content rather, it is all about noise.

The music in Nigeria, just like in other countries around the world, has not been static; it has been consistently undergoing a process of transformation through exposure to diverse musical styles from foreign cultures. This process of assimilation and integration has left a long trail of musical traditions, ranging from blues, highlife, pop, reggae, country music, Afro, and Hip-Hop, among others. Also Musicians in Nigeria today are more concerned with popularizing their names in their songs repeatedly from the beginning of their songs to the end without necessarily saying anything meaningful. Timaya either sings on how he has made money or how people envy his progress. This, to many people is noise because the songs do not at all affect people’s lives. That is not what people want to hear, people are concerned with what will make them and the society grow rather than praise chants from self-acclaimed artistes. The likes of D’banj, 9ice and a whole lot of Nigerian musicians are possessed by the same trend and pattern of music. The youth however like the songs due to the instrumentals that make them to dance without paying attention to the songs or observing whether it affects them or not. Innocent Idibia popularly known as “2face in his song titled Implication said at a point that he does not know what he is singing, and this justifies to a lot of other musicians. What Nigerian musical artistes are concerned with is how they can make money. They produce any kind of music and send to the market especially with the proliferation of small music studios that lie in every corner of the street.

Musicians like Femi Kuti, Tuface Idibia, P-Square, D’Banj, Davido, Timaya, Darey Art Alade, Bracket, Flavour, Ruggedman, J. Martins, Wande Coal, Tiwa Savage, Wizkid, and Duncan Mighty, are just a few of Nigeria’s global musical exports. While it is generally agreed that musicians have made quite an impact in

the national and global scene, it could be argued that, most of the songs they compose could be best termed as, “all noise and no meaning.” In other words, the songs are popular in dance halls and may be winning awards, here are there, but they hardly make any sense to listeners. The position is echoed by Onikoyi, as follows:

I love music, but unfortunately, with this generation, we have vibrant tunes and sound than local contents. The message is zero. It tells you the content in the head of the singer. Most of the songs have no message, but whenever you hear the message, your body must move. There is nothing that influences as music, but we have left it porous, as the more garbage, the higher they sell (p 18).

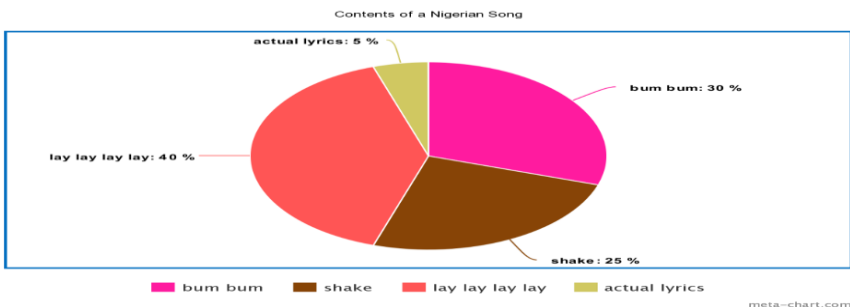
They only care about what they sound like, they do not care that their song has no intellectual knowledge to pass on, or a meaningful message at least. What makes a song truly great? Forget hype, chart success or sales. A great song must transcend time, convey strong emotions, shift culture and resonate with a large number of people, these songs should also be embedded in pop culture, influence lexicon and reflect cultural attitudes. (Tayo 2020).

Good music should pass a significant messages across, share some experience so that listeners learn something that value that impacts positively on their personalty. Music is not about dancing to the ephemeral beat which has no lasting value on the listener. The songs displayed below, looking at them you discover that they lack lyrics and they don't have any intellectual or moral message to be passed across to the audience or society rather what they offer are just beats, which the body can be moved to.

It is obvious to say that most Nigerian artists pay less to no attention to the lyrical content of their music, all they want to make is music with fast rhythm that people can move their body to which would enhance and make their songs popular (and that's it). Songs need to pass across message, even if it's a song that people dance to, there should be something that speaks to the dancer or listener. All dances with no message make the dancer feel empty, so also the people watching the performance or just listening to the music.

Banana by Slyde	Shake by Slyde
Eh eh....	Nana nananana
Ahn eh echeh...	yeah yeah
Ahaaaan.. Sa.. Sa..	slydo for my lay laylay ladies o
Oyawole, yowo le..	for my lay laylaylay
Waje banana waa je banana	this is for my lay laylaylay
Omotohshan nana banana	Shake bum bum
Omotohshan nana	sipping Hennessy only you I dey see gongon
Waa je banana	Bad girl figure eight oya shake bum bum
Omotohshan nana	baby wayanwayan make you shake bum bum
Yea na..na..na..	make you sheygongon
Omotohshan	Shake shakeshakeshakeshake
	give you on a low shake give you on a low key
	Shake x4

Shake as a song, if it were to be represented in a chart, it would probably look like this.



<p>Take Banana by D’Prince Hennnnn I didn't din dull it She gangangan she didn't din dull it She Den dendenden backed upon it Den dendennawatz upon it God damn it See as this girl dey make me commit Den denden she keeps on coming Wi wiwiwitout no forming Take banana till you go yo (16x)</p>	<p>Gucci gang by D’Prince Baby girl! you free, I swear Your body selense, (se) Baby, just shigege (shigege) This one no be smesme You know the mood I dey I give you what you want in everyday For your matter, me go kpaikpaikpai Cause your body no be mai, mai, mai Naso you make me mayanyan ooh Cause na you I want to fire re aah ah</p> <p>Girl you drive me crazy; crazy yea yeayea</p>
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The morals of both the artist and the music are seriously lacking.

The fact remains that the most common way one becomes involved with music is through listening or attending a musical show. Listening to music from a CD player at home, in the car, on the computer, or on an iPod could be a very personal and fulfilling experience. Somehow, one of the main concerns over current trends in music is the portrayal of images and influence on teenagers. Yvonne Mazzulo observes that, millions of people watch music videos that reveal certain body images and assume they should look, act, and dress, every bit of such images, adding that, the problem with this was the images such videos set for the society. In other words, the music industry has been brainwashing the values of the people, to the extent that they concentrate and value appearance instead of personality and intelligence.

In today’s society, it seems that various communities have managed effectively to create a lot of attachment to most of the wrong doings. Towards this end, the role that has been played by music is quite evident. In a more precise form, teachers and parents have through default permitted the industry of entertainment to be the one carrying the responsibility of teaching morals to the children. In the music industry, both vices and virtues are found and thus the younger generation is left on their own to choose between the good and the bad components offered by music. Given that the children are still young and they do not have the capacity to select from an informed position the good and

the bad effects of music, they usually select the bad side that is offered by the industry. The power of music is quite strong on almost everyone but it is much stronger on the younger generation who are more inclined to identifying themselves with popular musicians.

The current music industry has a lot to do with sexual relations and treats them as highly acceptable among the young people, this norm is widespread and covers various forms of music and thus feeds the minds of young people with sex ideas. In this respect, music affects the morality of the young people and since several of them have musicians as their role models then they often find themselves indulged in such behaviors. The young people spend a lot of time listening to music and they therefore have no choice but to have their morals dictated by the message they receive every now and then from music. The argument that listening to music does not in any way influence attitudes and ideas of the audience does not hold any water, since that would be similar to saying that one is not influenced by the environment he or she lives in. therefore, if the music environment of an individual is one of morality then such individuals are more likely to be influenced by music to value morals, the opposite is also true for the individuals who listen to music that is full of immorality, they are likely to be immoral too because that is what their environment offers them with.

When the music that one listens to is more oriented towards building strong morals, then such people are likely to be influenced by such music and act according to the message it conveys. Music as a tool is very powerful and it greatly affects its audience. Most people also have the popular musicians as their role models. Thus such people are more likely to value highly what such musicians also value. This is because they want to identify themselves with musicians who are not only popular but also very rich. The powers of music are great and they go much further than simple entertainment. Music can play a positive task in development of morals through the creation of sensual desires to goodness. On the contrary, music can also play a very destructive task by setting the young people on the temperamental channel thus deviating them further away from morals. Music therefore, greatly affects the moral values of people since it is a very powerful tool, in fact much stronger than all other forms of art.

Listening to a piece of music establishes a mood, creates emotions, brings about negative or positive responses and establishes a behavioral pattern in individual which becomes part and parcel of such an individual. Every human being has feelings or emotions which hearing or listening to a piece of music can make either negative or positive. To this end, it is necessary to train the emotional responsiveness of our youth through guided listening. Unrefined

music which has been the agent of behavioral problem in our society and has brought about conduct disorder, needs a total overhauling and re-ordering in order to foster emotional stability' which Rohner defines as "ability to express emotion especially positive emotions freely and openly".

A guided listening is a vital tool in the process of rightful thinking skills, stable emotion and more importantly in building a nation and solving Nigeria's multifarious social, political and economic problems. No art form exists in a vacuum, and every art form is selling something—much of the music in the Nigerian society today is selling 'shabby looks'. As a performer, whether you know it or not, you are a role model so you should be conscious of not just your actions, but also every other aspect of your image, like costume, because people often imitate what they admire. If you dress and appear like a criminal then your followers would do the same. And like it or not, we are often judged on the way we appear.

If you want to be addressed as a reasonable member of society dress like one, not like a 'Marlian'.



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Recommendation / Conclusion

Families should pay attention to the type of music as well as musical personalities their children are exposed to from an early stage and also society can influence the musical output by setting up music competitions/awards for most impactful and insightful message.

Much of today's music seems to revel in disorder while being accepted as apparently inconsequential by most people. Music and music concerts/shows

are now everywhere, pulsing into our consciousness from every venue and we should at least pause now and again to analyze what impact it might be having in our Nigerian society. Music needs to convey a message to the listener. The current craze where artists compose songs that are “all noise and no meaning” is not in the best interest of the creative enterprise. While the production of dance hall music is a major factor in the popularity rating of music artists, there is every need for such compositions to have messages that would have positive impact on the younger generation. The paper in its discussions recommends that Nigerian musical artists should improve on their kind of music and address the social, political, religious and economic realities of man and also attempt at touching the inner soul of man. This attempt will develop a sound societal mind and change the mentality of people since music is the nearest art form most people retire and relax to daily.

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