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Temporal Issues in the Inherent Rhythmic Expressions of African Indigenous Music Performance Practices

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Abstract

This study focused on the reception and interpretation of African rhythmic expression and the management of independent roles in ensemble performance practices. Two points of view were explicitly discussed in this work to reveal the significance of cultural background in the reception and interpretation of a musical culture. African scholar's perception and representation of independent rhythmic roles and instrumental blend in an ensemble forms the first view, while the second view is the perception of non-African scholar; their interpretation and representation of individual roles and rhythmic expression of indigenous African musical performance practices. These were examined using indigenous music practices of Igbo ethnicity in Nigeria as sample material. Data collected was through review of related literature, participant observation and personal interview. Finding revealed that the determinant factors for African compositional techniques, temporal application and implication in their performance practices are mere expression of cultural heritage or inherent life style playing out in musical expressions. Thus, the recommendation emphasized that for any scholar to rightly interpret and denote the cultural signifiers in the temporal involvement in African music culture his/her understanding of the people's cultural principles, myths, connotations, tonal syntax, semantics, semiotics denotations and inter-semiotics is german.

Introduction

The notion and impression of tempo in African rhythms have received a height of conflicting perception and interpretation. Different scholars of the world, both Africans and non-Africans have perceived African rhythm in diverse ways. While some scholars have perceived it to be very complex, multidimensional and complicated in nature, others view it as a rhythm of life, depiction of cultural heritage or simple reflection of traditions and humanity. African scholars perceive it as reproducing philosophy of life in structured sound blends and movements. These diverse lines of thought have lingered for so long in the study of tempo and instrumental blend in the rhythmic principles of African music.

The first view is the receptions and interpretations of African music scholars who aside having formal training in western music principles, theories and practices were also born of African parents, grew up in African society, participated in African community music practices and have formal or informal training in African musical practices. The second view consists of western scholars who lived and studied music outside African culture but, as a matter of scholarship deemed it necessary to research on the musical practices of African people. Although, some of them may have lived or interacted with Africans while carrying out their study on African rhythmic expressions yet, their frustrations in understanding the implied temporal blend and rhythmic expression reflects in their representation of African music as underdeveloped musical practices.

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate these divers view in reception and interpretation of African rhythmic expressions. This is done with the intention to probe into the basic factors that are vital in the discourse, evaluation and analysis of African music performance practices and compositional techniques.

Rhythm in Musical Works

Rhythm as the hearth beat and focus of every musical work is well thought-out in the discus of any musical work. It has been considered central to the flow and movement of music in time. This is accepted in every musical culture although, diverse principles may apply in temporal application (making time in music) in different cultural background but, the fact remains that no rhythm exists in isolate from making time in sound production. This implies that without timing there would be no such thing as rhythm, and where there is no rhythm, music ceases to exist. Rhythm is the central element of every musical work and has been defined by various scholars as thus, Ayodele (1997, p. 66) perceived rhythm as ‘the movement, life or time pattern of a piece of music’. Ipere (2010, p.18) described it as ‘the flow or movement of music’. He further noted that some movements are slow, some are fast, and some are moderate while some are very fast. In the same manner, Nwafor (2010, p.109) simply referred to rhythm as ‘the movement of a piece of music’.

Considering the above submissions, there is no doubt that rhythm is the general term for describing the movement of music in time or tempo of a particular musical work. It is the principle controller and designer that regulates the duration of tones in musical work. The progression of movement in time and pattern is central to rhythm, and that forms the primary component of music making. Without rhythm music cannot exist. Rhythm is what sets sounds, texts, lyrics or poems into song or music. In fact, rhythm defines music. It gives a meaningful characterization to creative musical work, as well as, possesses the power for classifying a piece of musical performance or composition as different from others. This line of thought supports Adeyea & Keunde’s (2004) earlier expression;

There is no way we can talk about the issues of music and dance without mentioning the rhythm. The term rhythm in its broadest sense refers to the movement of the music or dance. It is the arrangement of duration whether long or short notes in particular melody

or other musical passage. Rhythm can be called a life wire of music and dance. The rhythm is the area where music and dance join together. It can be called the heartbeat or the throbbing of musical sound. Rhythm is often called the manager of music dance movement because it takes over the shaping and the force in dance movement” (Pg, 25)

When sounds are produced without considering definite movement in time and pattern, such sounds automatically become noise and distorting to the ear thus, it makes no musical sense. But when such sounds are produced in time, rhythm emerges and when articulated, brings about musical sense.

Music as an expressive art aids in expressions of idea, moods and emotions, the emotion of a composer and those of the performers are often built or reflect in their rhythmic expressions. In the case of composers, their heart beats or temperaments are often expressed by the pattern of movement in their compositions. This pattern of movement is what creates peculiarity in the perception of rhythm in individual or group musical work. Therefore, it is arguable to state that rhythmic expression in a particular music depends greatly on the inherent life style, cultural background and life experience of the composer or performer of such music. The behavioural expression of a people in their music tradition reflects the totality of their rhythmic exposition. This embodies the essential attributes of a people’s culture and belief which replicates in their rhythmic expressions. Nzewi and Nzewi (2007) illustrates this in African music as thus,

Gender attributes define the family / community rationalization of a musical ensemble. The coordinating / marshaling instrument / person is termed the “mother” the symbol of order; the foundation or tempo keeper (pulse) is the “father”, the focusing of pulse symbol. Sometimes the female (larger in spirit force) and male (smaller) species of an instrument type / role in an ensemble combine to produce complete primary lines of ensemble theme (11)

He further argues that the ideal interdependence between a leader and a follower is sensitized in the structuring of ensemble relationships. The leadership role of the mother musician or instrument is complemented by the collective sound by other distinctive ensemble roles which constitute followers in the staging of egalitarian principle that mark indigenous community and human group in Africa (12). Consequently, the issue of rhythm and timing in indigenous Igbo musical ensemble replicates and draws from the cultural ordering of the Igbo society. The above expressed the interdependence that exists between community leader and the members of the community. In essence, the language, traditions and life experiences of Igbo communities guide their rhythmic structures and general music appreciation.

Rhythm in African Musical structure

Rhythm in African music context consists of unique structures peculiar to language and cultural patterns. This is because it consists of large and small intervallic tonal shift as its basic characteristics. Notes of short durational values are predominantly used as foundation of rhythmic progressions, whereas the long durational value beats are used to mark the pulsation points in a rhythmic progression. The pulse primarily serves as a division of the rhythmic movements into the smaller bar section. The long durational value beats are not only used as pulse marker, they are as well used at cadencial points and overlapping sections (Agu 1999).

African rhythmic structure makes essential use of space otherwise known as rest. Nzewi and Nzewi (2009) argues that space allow individuals expression / contribution to the performance; not as a dependent role but as an independent role which functions as an individual and as well as, part of a whole but, been guided by the established pulse / principles in the ensemble’s thematic structure. Spaces are often created to allow members of the ensemble to express their uniqueness in the

performance. They assert that ‘rest is an illusion of silence at the superficial level of perception and contemplation. Implying that the term rest does not connote absence of sound or action in African musical thought and formulation rather, it is an interactive space intended to include audience or co-performer in a creative or productive process. (34)

However, the above description of space or rest is applicable in Igbo indigenous musical expression and the entire community life style. The interactive space or structured silence forms part and parcel of tradition that opens a window for participant audience and other individual in the community to contribute their unique personality in the communal affair. This cultural pattern plays out in the musical composition and performance styles of the Igbo ethnicity of Nigeria.

This can be seen below in traditional folk tune of the Igbo people where a folksong is structured in a way that resting points are devoted to the contribution of another in the performance practices. Therefore, rest is simply a space or room created for other members / voice(s) to contribute constructively to the song.

ONYE GA-APUTA EGWU OWA

**AWKUZU COMMUNITY
FOLK TUNE**

Example $\text{♩} = 120$

Voice 1

O nye ga pu t'e - gwu owa ka' nyi no-lia

Voice 2

pu-t'e gwu'o - nwa eh.

5

nye ga - pu-t'e - gwu'o - wa k'a - nyi no-lia N -

pu-t'e gwu'o - nwa-eh

9

go-zi - pu-t'e gwu'o wa k'a nyi no-lia - - - - Nne -

pu-t'e - gwu'o - nwa-eh

13

ka pu-t'e gwu'o wa k'a nyi no-lia E -

pu-t'e - gwu'o - nwa eh

17
me - ka pu - t'e gwu'o wa k'a nyi no - lia
pu - t'e -

20
o - nye ga pu - t'e gwu'o wa k'a - nyi
gwu'o - nwa - eh

23
no - lia.
pu - t'e - gwu'o - nwa - eh.

Most Igbo folk songs are found to be antiphonal in nature, involving two parts singing that is often perceived as call and response, call and refrain and solo chorused refrain. However, the rhythmic techniques of African people are not free as always insinuated. They are always restricted by certain factors, such as, language structure; tonal inflation, speech pattern, cultural values and taboos, social factors such as, social event, occasion and season, and then religious factors which includes initiations and worships. These factors often restrict the kind of instruments used, the rhythmic styles to apply, individual or instrumental roles and the cultural measures for recruitment of participants.

Rhythm in the context of African music composition and performance practices is believed to be product of human nature, cultural activities, individual or communal experiences, ethos, values, emotions and thoughts. Consequently, the rhythmic reception, interpretations, connotations and denotations of African music possess contradicting view amongst African and non-African music scholars in the discourse of rhythm in African music. Since, African music scholars who in most cases belongs to the culture of which its rhythmic expressions are in discourse, being familiar with the cultural nuances and implications end up interprets the rhythmic expression through the eyes of culture whereas non-African scholar judges African rhythmic expression based on what they know music to be or what they believe rhythmic structure to be in an ensemble. Hence, these contradicting views continue to linger while creating a huge gap in articulation of Africa music and its rhythmic expressions around the world.

Perception of African Rhythm by non-African Music Scholars and their African Counterparts

Non-African music scholars have overtime present contradicting conclusions as outcomes in their researches on African rhythmic expressions. This happens often time because most non-African researches are guided by their western concept of music harmonic and intervallic principles. On the contrary, western harmonic principle and their restrictions are not in any way conversant with indigenous African patterns of temporal and rhythmic progressions. For instance, most of restrictions in western harmonic principles like, parallel fifth, unison, parallel octaves and thirds form the beauty in the composition and performance of Igbo cultural rhythmic expressions. Secondly, the harmonic principles of Igbo musical practices are not dependent on any leading part as seen in western classical music part singing consisting of leading part (often attached to soprano part) and subordinate parts which includes alto, tenor and bass. In typical African rendition, every part is independent yet, when played together, they complement each other and blend together to produce well-articulated musical sense. No single part is entirely dependent of the other to exist or for performance beauty as seen in western harmonic principles where a leading part (Soprano in most cases) has the real melody and other three parts are dependent on it to make musical sense. An issue with this western harmonic principle is that when once the leading part is out, the other parts automatically become incoherent. Whereas in Igbo performance practices, every individual voice or instrument plays an independent role which can function alone and still make musical sense. Yet, its blend with other instruments in an ensemble only makes the ensemble production richer.

In most African cultural framework (particularly, Sub-Saharan Africa) an individual exists within the permissive cultural formwork yet, he/she makes distinctive and noticeable personal contribution to complement the roles of others for a better community life. This philosophy is expressed in the rhythmic principles and musical practices of Igbo community. Hence, systematic application of regular and irregular beats combination (syncopated beats) in a particular repertoire appears to create a temporal cloudiness in the perception of non-Africans spectators because, they have no cultural tendencies to determine how irregular and regular beat can come together and unite in a given pulse. Therefore, articulation of rhythms in the musical expressions of Africans seems very difficult for non-Africans to comprehend. Consequently, in an attempt to align with what they are used to in their own culture, they term African rhythms as not fully formed rhythmic practices, complex rhythm, multidimensional or multifaceted. But to a typical African man, there is nothing complex about African rhythmic techniques. They are inherent and simple expression of life and cultural experiences. These rhythmic expressions are mostly triggered and guided by cultural events, occasions and seasons thus, they are not aesthetic oriented although, elements of African aesthetic may be perceived when studied but it goes beyond mere expression and exhibition of rhythmic skills or talents. Its priority is to satisfy cultural quest and demands of cultural events and occasions.

However, it is the neglect of the life style and traditions of the people when studying their musical cultures that made some non-African music scholars to irrationally deduce and interpret African rhythm as complex or underdeveloped. Nzewi (2008), observed thus,

The earlier European's explore to African could not accommodate the celebratory sound of African drumming and music making as tolerable music. Some went as far as describing them as barrages of noise-making suitable for frightening animals. They could not imagine how the Africans manage to relate soulfully to such sonic timber and intensities. Even more recently at the turn of the century, British colonial officers in part of Nigeria would discourage music making within earshot of their residencies on the ground that such music constituted more irritation than tolerable musical sound to them.

It is incredible that even in this Twenty-First Century; some non-African music scholars still believe that all drum music is noise. Chernoff (1979) perceived African drum music as 'monotonously repetitive that dulls the sense'. He emphasized that the patterns are so complicated and rhythmically confused. This concept shows the level of misconception and misinterpretations that exists in the reception of African rhythm by western audience.

The true reflection is that African rhythm in its nature is not monotonously repetitive. Most rhythmic rotation and repetition in African ensemble happens with some slight alterations in their cyclic motions while maintaining their main structural framework. Aside the musical instrument that plays the role of time liner or time keeping which in most cases remains constant in its role as time keeper to guide and remind all other instrument roles of the established metre while in their variations and or extemporizations. Nzewi (2012) maintained that the cyclic repetition in African rhythm is likened to human nature. In human daily life activities, there are repetitions with various or slight alteration in styles and mode yet, this same task is performed. Thus, he believed that life itself is repetitive with some sight of examples, we eat every day yet, we do not eat the same thing every time we eat, we have our bath every day yet, each bathing presents a new experience a bit different from the previous one, we breathe every time yet we are not static to one posture or position to achieve that. Hence, in cyclic repetition that is prevalent in African music expressions, slight variations apply but within the established pulse in the ensemble. Nketia (1997) argued that western scholar upholds their misrepresentation of repetition in African music because they do not know the internal relationship of instrument and performance practices which allow for repetition in sustenance of performance. Perhaps, they as well do not understand the internal connections that permits different rhythms to run simultaneously and why displaced accents should be heard in a particular repertoire. Yet, Africans perceives it as reflection of communal living in their society where every individual's operations function as a part of a whole. Hence, the inability for any researcher to relate African rhythm or musical expression to its original culture would definitely result to misconception. Because he / she has not gotten clear understanding of the rhythmic connotations and denotation as it applies to the culture under study. Therefore, such a person will certainly be unable to decode the applications and implications of rhythmic styles and techniques functioning in the music making of African people. These challenges are what usually incite these complex and confused perception of African rhythm by non-Africans scholars as seen in Towa, Marcien's (1971) submissions,

The rhythm that scans the existence of the African is one of the multitudes and the proliferation of life in the tropics. It is a rhythm by participation in life. In principle, the submission to this rhythm ought to guide man in the discipline of the body and mind which determines a self-mastery. That would be indeed a degree of freedom the African would gain in that. But we know very well the rhythmic existence of the African does not provide him a more self-mastery than to the other. On the contrary he has the reputation for being impulsive, hot blooded, and nervous and is ready react extremely. The existence of art in the form rhythm and dance in the daily life of the African has not therefore hitherto contributed in making out of him a freer being than others. Rhythm and dance appears to be natural, whereas they should be cultural.

The above thought is clearly conceived from shadows of African music and culture, not the reality. Anybody who ethnographically studied African music would first observe that African music and rhythm runs from cradle to grave, especially the music traditions of Sub-Saharan Africans culture. As soon as a child is born, the welcoming chants of women serves as the beginning of the child's journey into the exposition to African rhythms, pitch variations, tone qualities, vocal and instrumental techniques. Music accompanies child developments till adulthood. Every transition in a child developmental stage has special song that complements the new stage of life. For instance, when a

crawling baby starts working, the family and neighbours have songs to encourage such progressive development in a child. When a child starts growing teeth, when milk tooth starts falling off and when new ones are growing back, there are songs used to announce these little developments and changes in a child's life. At every stage of the child's life music plays a role. At home, children observe domestic work being accompanied with songs. When they assist their parents at work, they watch their parent accompanying their activities with songs too. In the same manner, children's play and folk tales are all musical in nature thus, every event, occasion and seasons in community life is music related directly or indirectly. Consequently, rhythmic expressions that go on in a child's life overtime get internalized naturally as he / she would internalize their names and their mother tongue. African rhythm is one of the distinctive characteristics that cannot be wiped from an African child. It may be influenced as done by colonial activities, media influence and urbanization yet, the foundation of African music expression still reflects because, it is consciously and unconsciously rooted in the life of a typical African. Yet, all cultural event music and its rhythmic expressions are patterned to its cultural essence not mere natural impulse as Towa, Marcien's (1971) insinuated; although, he argued that "if it is nature that manifests itself in the behaviour of the Africans, then, freedom is not to be sought on that side." Since freedom is opposed to nature more than it is allied to it". But, what manifests in the expressions of rhythm in African music and particularly Igbo ensemble is not nature but cultural values. The shared communal life experiences of the community people manifest in the instrumental relationships and then play out in their ensemble performances. Every instrument plays a unique role and has the opportunity of expressing individuality in the ensemble without disrupting the rhythmic flow in the ensemble. This is just as every individual contributes their unique attribute in the communal activities without violating the norms and values of the community. Seeger (1966) understood this and affirmed that the most significant aspect of "multirhythm" perception in drumming is that the various composite patterns are heard in integration and not as isolated units. He further stated that, 'we have become accustomed to the tune concept (melody, voice leading) as distinct from harmonic and other accompanying elements'. This reveals that the concept of master-subject relationship or superior-subordinate have submerged the mind and musical concept of western scholars, that is why leading parts are allocated to certain instruments or voices in an ensemble performance, making one leading part (master part) while other parts become subordinate parts. In this sense, much importance is accredited to the leading part while making other parts dependent parts or less valued parts.

In African ensemble practices, every instrument or voice expresses the same degree of importance while complementing each other for richer harmonic expressions. Every instrument or vocal role can stand on its own with or without others. Thus, the situation of master – subject relationship in African ensemble does not arise. Nzewi (2007) argued that harmony in African music is linear not vertical. The western music harmony is vertical which implies note by note harmonization of parts while, African harmony is linear which requires matching melodies; each of which is independent while complementing the others. Hence, the phrases/theme in linear harmonization could have different lengths but, all players are intuitively conscious of the culture's concordance idiom so that there is no discord in vertical dimension of the complementary harmonic statements.

The expression of worries by some western music scholars who thought that Africans have refused to succumb fully to western rhythmic principles, styles and techniques is revealed in the submission of Towa, (1971) as thus,

Is there consequently any need to say once more that, the underdevelopment of Africa, precisely Sub-Saharan Africa, is not solely an economic underdevelopment but also a cultural underdevelopment? The culture we are talking about here is not one that we willingly recognize in all peoples of the world: culture understood as a complete system

and specifically relation to the world: diverse institutions, customs, cosmogonies, exploitation of nature, socio-political organization, etc.

However, the concept of tempo in the rhythmic expression of Igbo ethnicity and sub-Saharan Africans reflects itself in the culture pattern of the people. Consequently, it could be considered narrow minded to use the scale of one musical culture (particularly western harmonic principles) as a measure to evaluate other musical cultures and their development level.

Every culture is distinct as people in such societies are distinct. What unites in one culture may result to conflict in another culture. So, whenever cultural development is in discoursed, it ought to be measured with the values of the people and true-life information, not based on biased mind or sense of superiority as in colonial era. This is the more reason Stone (1998:7) attests that, honest observers are hard pressed to find single indigenous group in Africa that has a term congruent to the usual western notion of "music." There are terms for more specific acts like singing, playing instruments, and more broadly performing (dance, games, music); but the isolation of musical sound from other arts proves a western abstraction, of which we should be aware when we approach the study of performance in Africa. In conformity, Kamien (2000) expressed the non-isolation of music from other arts in African music performance practices as thus,

Rhythm and percussive sound are highly emphasized in African music. This emphasis reflects the close link between music and dance in African culture. African music tends to feature complex polyrhythm. Usually, several different rhythmic patterns are played simultaneously and repeated over and over. Each instrument goes its own rhythmic way, producing accents that appear to be out of phase with those of other parts. Dancers may choose any of several rhythmic patterns to dance to. For example, while one dancer follows a pattern played with bell, another may dance to the rattle while yet another follows the drum.

Having acknowledged non-isolation of musical sound from other art forms in African, his misconception of syncopation (displacement of accent) in the rhythmic expressions is obvious. However, in African music performances, various rhythms are simultaneously played but they are guided and unite in an established pulsation beat in the ensemble. Therefore, the established pulse guides the dancer within varieties of dancing steps in a particular repertoire. The onus is then on the dancer to make choice of the rhythm he/she wants to dance to at a particular point for better expression of intended meaning. It is on this note that some scholars concluded that rhythm in African music has been a subject of much interest to ethnomusicologists. While it would be generally agreed that much has been accomplished in the common effort to explain "exactly what is the Africa treatment of rhythm"(Jones 1959), some believes that there is at present no consensus on how this should be done. Each individual has tried to interpret African rhythm from his or her background knowledge of western music and theory, either as a performer or an ethnographer (Kauffman 1980).

Nonetheless, criticism and appreciation of rhythm in African music are better achieved having African culture and distinctive life style in mind during analysis of findings. This is pertinent because, there is always a strong link between a man, his cultural background and his expression of rhythms in music making and performances.

Rhythmic Expression in Igbo Music Ensemble as an Inherent Cultural Manifestation

Igbo ethnicity is one of the largest ethnic groups in Nigeria. They are located in the eastern region of the country. The life of every Igbo community is bounded with festivals, ceremonies and rituals which guides and reflects in their music composition and performances. Music performances in this region are very functional and greatly link to old traditions and myths. That is why their ensemble music

reflects the philosophy and life style of the people. Therefore, their rhythmic expression is a representation of family or community life structure. The unity of Igbo community is strongly tied to their communal musical experiences, and since musical practices are synchronized into communal activities, the concept of such cultural activity/event guides the performance and describes the rhythmic expressions. Thus, their rhythmic structures are culturally patterned.

Igbo ensemble structure reflect family or community structure where individual participation is appreciated. A harmonious blend is produced while maintaining the individual role in the ensemble. This is what Nzewi (2007) encapsulated in his theory on Ensemble Thematic Cycle (ETC) where he likened structural roles of African ensemble to typical family modules. He expressed that mother role is the principal which is in charge of the ensemble, the father role is the heartbeat of the ensemble and plays pulse role. The baby role is the phrasing reference which plays a consistently repeated statement role throughout the ensemble performance with the primary aim to focus the attention of other instrument roles; the action motivation role represents siblings in the family who may combine to play structural line that energizes actions in the audience. The obligator which comes in at certain intervals represents the role of extended family in an ensemble which without, the ensemble (family) is actually complete yet, its presence makes the ensemble performance richer.

On the side of composition, composing for musical ensemble in Igbo community, indigenous musicians are more concerned with cultural occasions/events and seasons they are composing for. The taboos and values of the occasion and traditions form their primary considerations guide. Another important consideration is the pulsation. Once a pulse is established, members of the ensemble are at liberty to introduce independent rhythms that falls within the established pulse, having the language pattern in mind before the choice of pitches and melodic contour. Hence, all extemporizations and variations are well integrated and united into a definite pulse. Thus, without a pulse marker, the unity of these separate rhythms and the beauty of the rhythmic blend may not be realistic. Agu (1999) stressed that,

As performance goes on, the presence of a basic regulative beat is usually felt, because it is normally articulated in the foot tapping, hand clapping or beating of instruments. No matter his involvement in improvisation and extemporization, the soloist is restricted within the limits of the established rhythmic pattern. In the first place, he must introduce all songs strictly on the established rhythmic pulse, and not outside it. The chorus must also come in on the correct rhythm too (pp. 51- 52).

Indigenous Igbo musicians are very original and flexible with their rhythms. In making music, they express themselves to the fullest, not minding whatever restrictions or laws exist in music creation, rather, they are mindful of the values and taboos in their culture and the consequences of violating any of them. Thus, their compositions end up mirroring cultural dispositions which enable making of musical sense to the people or culture the music is composed for.

Conversely, the use of successive third, fifth, fourth, octave and unison which are unacceptable in western harmonic principles are very prominent in African harmonic progression. They are highly permissive because, they express better the African natural way of speech pattern and group singing. This implies that the rhythmic progression of African music is more often than not determined by the syllabic effect of the indigenous languages. Thus, while pulsation is central guide for temporal marking, tonal inflection dictates the melodic contour and harmonic movement of the entire musical phrases and sentences therein. In a language like Igbo language where pitches and tonal effect gives meaning to a word, rhythm cannot exist in isolation from such language pattern to derive the meaning of the music home. Agu (1999) opined that “the correlation between speech-tone and melodic contour helps to convey intelligible message of African music”. Therefore, temporal expression in the musical

art of indigenous Igbo communities and sub-Saharan Africa as a whole is beyond mere aesthetic values. It ensures the connotations and depictions of familiar signifiers from the cultural point of view.

Conclusion

The question of who determines the validity of rhythmic expression in African music performance practices, and by whose standard is it measured remains pertinent in the discourse of rhythmic structure in African music composition and performance practices. Since Davis (1996, p.2) stated that, 'the beauty is perceived in the context of a particular society, and in the case of ethnic music, as it pertains to a specific cultural group within that society'. It is therefore, inappropriate to evaluate African rhythmic styles and techniques with western rhythmic theories and principles. Since it is obvious that rhythms deposition that is accepted and applauded in one culture group may not make any musical sense in another culture, the rhythmic expression of one society/culture ought not to be a standard for measuring temporal application and implication in the rhythmic progressions of another society.

This paper therefore concluded that for proper analysis of temporal issues in Igbo community or any sub-Saharan African musical culture, the fairest thing to do is to acquire proper understanding of the cultural values and traditions of the community whose rhythmic expression is under study, relate the temporal application to the cultural event, the nature of the occasions that the music is performed for and the inherent communal cultural experiences to enable sustainable result.

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