



## The Development of Dance Art within the Nation's Pop Culture: A study of Selected Trending Dance moves in Nigeria

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### Abstract

The meaning and context of dance is relative, especially, to the culture that owns it. In Nigeria, dance is life; it captures the general world view of the people. Dance starts at birth and ends in death as every activity is marked by a particular form of dance or the other. Apart from the indigenous/traditional dances, other forms of dances have emerged and are trending in Nigeria today initiated by the pop musicians and propagated by the youths. This emerging dance trends have come to stay and have also contributed immensely to the development of dance in Nigeria. This paper will examine the growth and development of dance art within Nigeria's Pop Culture using participant observation method and will also draw from *extant literature such as books, journals, periodicals and internet sources to substantiate the discourse. The dearth of scholarly documentations, professional negligence and perception challenges on these forms of dance, have necessitated this study. Hence, there is need for proper archiving to avoid what have somewhat bedeviled our indigenous dances whose practice, sustainability, preservation and promotion have remained quiescent.* Using diffusionism and hybridism as its theoretical frameworks, this study captures the antecedents of these dance forms and x-rays the paradigm shift in dance making in Nigeria. The paper recommends that efforts should be directed towards the study and documentation of such dances in order to relieve them of parochial orature. Furthermore, efforts should be made to appreciate their practice and practitioners.

**Key Words:** Traditional dance, diffusionism, hybridism, mass and pop culture

## **Introduction**

Archeological evidences and anthropological findings have shown that dance has been a part of human necessity since the birth of human civilization. Dance was and is still a medium of expression devised by man to release emotion and tension, recreate as well as paying obeisance and worship to God, gods, deities, and ancestors to mention a few. As an intangible cultural heritage, dance transcends the overall aesthetics of the human body to the cultural essence of a people which has existed from Paleolithic times till date. In traditional African societies (Nigeria inclusive), dance as an art form is deeply rooted in human activities, it occurs in various activities such as birth, death, rites of passage through numerous initiation ceremonies such as puberty rites, initiation into manhood, coronation or exaltation into an office and so on. Layiwola is in agreement with the above position when he states:

Primitive or ancient communities have always adopted dance as a structural anchor for liminal and ritual purposes. It is used to commemorate birth, circumcision, age-grade initiation, marriage, death, cultivation and harvest, chieftaincy rites, hunting, war, feasts and lunar movements etc (1).

The above assertion captures the true essence of indigenous dance practice and or performance in Nigeria. This is because; every activity is marked by one type of dance or the other hence, Dance therefore starts at birth and ends in death. "To dance therefore in the Nigerian traditional society is to encode significant meanings that border directly on the totality of aspects of life of the people, that is, their cultural identity" (Ugolo, 46). Indigenous dance in Nigeria can be classified into two major categories; the ritual or religious and the social or ceremonial dances. While the former is associated with dances performed by initiates of a particular god or gods in reverence and worship to this said god, the later is ceremonial in nature and content. They are "less serious in content and form... and basically captures those aspects of culture that had happiness and joy as inspirational feelings" (Yerima, 19). These dances include those performed during naming ceremonies, welcoming of important dignitaries and marriages to name a few. Ritual dances are serious and are exclusive preserve of a particular cult group that share a common ideology. The dance is sacred and is performed during a particular period of time. In all the African societies, "dance is an

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expression of social organization in that it differentiates and defines the roles of individuals, the sexes, and groups within the society” (Harper, 280). Supporting Harper’s views on dance in Nigeria, Chris Ugolo opines that;

The content of most Nigerian traditional dance performance ... deals with themes and subject matter that centre around the events of life. This may be the birth of a child, naming ceremonies, age group initiation, house warming, kingship/chieftaincy installation, planting or harvest ceremonies, rituals connected with death and the like. Thus, work, play and socio-religious activities constitute the major stories and intents of Nigerian traditional dance performances. These are encapsulated in the rituals and other ceremonies that are enacted using myths, legends and other folkloric materials (75).

This perhaps, is why Warren Lee describes African dances as “a text in motion”.

### **Dance Composition in Nigeria: A Historical Survey**

The nature of dance creation in contemporary Nigeria is that human activities and or phenomena are abstracted into movement and gestures to achieve a desired dance piece. Before now, the traditional/indigenous dances were created by multitalented folk artistes who were singers, instrumentalists, dancers and even designers roll into one. They were not compartmentalized as we have them today – dance music and drama as separate genre. These folk artistes created by taking motifs and ideas from the realities of their existence. They explore their environment, sociology, religion, economic and political nuances to mention a few. They were not professionals but they served the society and the society in turn appreciated them. Despite their efforts, they do not lay claim as the originators and/or owners of these dances. That is why indigenous dances in Africa generally and Nigeria in particular is communally owned and remains a cultural bond that holds communities and societies together.

The coming of the colonialists through their agencies – missionaries and traders saw that the people’s traditional ethos where distorted. This contact

with the whites meant that our dances were subdued and “kill” and the “white dance” took over. New ideas were introduced and the people struggle with an alien culture to the detriment of what they hitherto held tenaciously; that which spoke to their heart and soul, when meaning was attached to dance and any other, less than this was regarded as misnomer. The struggle for independence and the post independence brought a cultural renaissance. The interest to reposition our culture made music, dance and theatre to become subjects of study in Nigerian universities. Thus, expatriates like Peggy Harper, Orville Johnson, Georginia Gore and others came to train Nigerian university students in dance and these led to the rise of modern dance and dance theatre. This was reinforced later with proliferation of Arts Councils after the civil war. During the period under review, Nigerian musicians were creating their dances to sell their music and this did not clash with the productions of the professional modern dance choreographers. This trend continued until the arrival of modern hip-hop music which has strengthened the pop culture in Nigeria through their dance creations. The emergence of these new dances created by some pop musicians like Daddy Shokey, Olu Maintain, Wizkid, Davido, Inyanya, Olamide among others became a big influence in the Nigerian dance scene, hence, a new dance culture was born in Nigeria.

The effects of this development and the reactions of the society as well as the professional choreography is the focus of this study. .

### **Dance Development in Nigeria**

The advancement and epochs of civilizations have tended to strip the dance of its ritual purposes and showing greater proclivity, as a pastime, towards entertainment, games and as an art often cultivated in choreographs (Layiwola, 2010:1-2). As societies develop and or advance, dance started to take a new turn perpetuated by government agencies such as the Arts Councils and other dance troupes that have upgraded their dances following the emergence of the Arts Councils. Before the establishment of the Arts Councils in Nigeria, some notable Nigerian musicians had contributed to the overall development and outlook of dances. Yerima informs us that:

Nigerian musicians such as Bala Miller, Roy Chicago, Bobby Benson, Victor Olaiya, to mention a few, were beginning to include western instruments in their ensembles. And since they performed also in new settings like clubs, hotels and

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government gala nights, they used dancers to spice up their performance. In practice, this also meant a distortion of most of the original dance steps by the dancers, in order to interpret the new music which was different in content – sometimes Nigerian in language, and lyrics – and which needed different steps and dance patterns from the ones danced in the villages (31).

It is evident that the above musicians mentioned by Yerima were highlife musicians that introduced this western instruments and blended them with the local ones. This was inspired by the earlier tour of Ghana's E.T. Mensah in Nigeria. This trend later followed the introduction of different kinds of music styles in the country. By the 1960s, industrialization and urbanization had cut up with Nigeria and foreign contents were introduced more into the country such as soul rock, calypso, funk and others including twist as one of the major dance moves. The twist arose from Sam Cooke's 1962 hit record 'Twist in the night away' that was popular in Nigeria in 1963 (Ogisi Arugha Aboyowa, 2015:223). This trend of western influence continued in 1970s and 1980s as new music and dance styles continued to make wave orchestrated by pop culture. This gave birth to different names; such as, hall, gig, disco, club, jump to mention but a few where some of the 'new Nigerian musicians' played to the delight of their followers either in the afternoons or nights where new dance moves are also learnt. This phenomenon has continued till date as dancers and choreographers now find new approaches and methods of expressing themselves in movements and gestures all over Africa and beyond. In most cases, movements of traditional/indigenous dances were hybridized and meant to communicate differently. In this stead, dance moved from communal art to personalized endeavour. .inferring on this, Layiwola, opines that;

In this regard the collective signatures of nations and ethnic groups were lost and individuals began, like authors, to put their signatures on dance patterns and choreographic innovations. Thus emerged the idea of notations *as is applicable in the 'West'* and personalized concepts. Beyond collective signatures, indigenous or

stereotypical authenticity, in some cases, were lost and modern audiences began to savour new twists and ingenious interpretation to what was originally localized patterns of expression (Layiwola, 2010: 100)

This change has swept through Africa generally and Nigeria in particular as recorded in [answersafrica](http://answersafrica.com) online blog.

“The traditional African dances are generally making way for more modern dance moves. Dance in general is the art of expression with coordinated body movement which aims to serve the art purpose of communication. In various parts of the globe, such transformation seem to be the order of the day with some simple and funny dance moves sweeping across the globe like wildfire ...” (<http://answersafrica.com>...).

Apart from making use of movements drawn from the traditional dances, dancers and choreographers also borrow from across cultures. The fusion of diverse cultures to this effect has resulted to cultural diffusion that has also shaped the outlook of recent dance productions and performances in contemporary Nigeria. Diffusion as a theory originated in the middle of nineteenth century and its concern was how culture traits spread from one society to the other (Onwumah, 2009:40). Titiev (1959) in Onwumah defined diffusion as the spread of culture items from its place of origin to other. (40). It therefore follows that the introduction of western instruments, the type of music played and the dance movements which were not Nigerian in content became integrated into the fabrics of the peoples culture and became not only a popular culture but that which is accepted by the elite class, hence, mass culture is born; a situation that has continued till date. Suffice to say that this trend is not only peculiar to Nigeria and Africa in general; the advanced nations of the ‘west’ (America and Europe) are also cut up in this ‘bug’ of diffusionism. A true example of this can be seen in Makosa, Azonto and many others. Emmy Idegu sums this up when he asserts that dance as an intangible cultural heritage and/or culture generally;

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... is in a constant state of flux, influencing and being influenced by other cultures either through voluntary exchange and extension or through conflict, force and oppression. A country's culture therefore reflects its history, mores, institutions and attitude, its social movements, conflict and struggles, and the configurations of political power, internally and in the world at large. Culture is dynamic and continually evolving (316-317).

### **Paradigm Shift in Dance Creation in the Post-modernist Nigeria**

We have introduced this paper with pertinent issues in the area of contextualizing dance in Africa and its development in Nigeria from pre to post-independence and further to the 1970s to 1990s. This is to enable us elucidate the subject matter which is The Development of Dance Art within the Nation's Pop Culture. It is obvious from our earlier discourse that musicians locally (Nigeria) or foreign have always contributed to the development of dance especially in the area of movement aesthetics. In most cases, each style of music introduces its own style of dance. In any case, each (dance and music), rely on each other so much so that they are inseparable. Our effort in this paper is not geared towards the inseparability of music and dance for we know that it is a glaring fact (see Ogisi 2015: 203). We shall focus on the pop musicians in Nigeria since the late 1990s, who with their music, have contributed to the development of dance in Nigeria by introducing one style of dance or the other and whose styles (dance moves) are trending in Nigeria today. We shall also analyze these dance moves and draw inference from its origin and/or originators to ascertain its effects on the country's cultural and entertainment landscape.

The late 20<sup>th</sup> to the current 21<sup>st</sup> century Nigeria has witnessed a tremendous growth in the area of dance and music art orchestrated by pop culture. Awilo Logomba and later Kofi Olomide brought Makosa style rocking the air waves, television screens via the home videos and the television stations. It is quite obvious that both Awilo and Kofi are not Nigerians but their music and dance steps were highly appreciated within the pop culture community made up of the youths. Makosa became popular to the point that even teens became addicted to the point that many of them, in executing makosa movement, raised up their cloths, whether wearing under wears or not .

Makosa was not popular among the elites who quarreled with its sexual and or erotic content both in movement and costume. Makosa dance which is actually based on the Congolese 'Soukous' relies on the wriggling of the waste region and less foot work and hand gestures apart from the continuous undulation and shuffling of the leg in a stationary or backward manner on a bent knee with a kick of legs, one after the other that take one (dancer) forward. The hand placement is usually curved inwards on the opposite direction and the shoulder raised in a cocky shape. The neck is bent towards one side of the already raised shoulder. The dance (Makosa) is associated with most Francophone countries in Africa especially Congo Brazzaville, Benin Republic, Togo, Gabon and Cameroun. Other dance moves that emerged during this period and which we shall discuss later include (in the other of emergence):

- Galala Popularized by Dady Shokey
- Yahoozee Created by Olu Maintain
- Azonto Thought of Ghana origin but popularized in Nigeria by Wizkid
- Suo Replaced Makosa and associated with Danfo Drivers and Marvelous Benji
- Alanta Released by Art Quake
- Skelewu Associated with Davido
- Shakiti Bobo Linked to Djemimoney and Olamide
- Etigi Ascribed to Inyanaya
- Sekem Credited to MC Galaxy
- Shoki Lil Kesh and Orezi battle for the real creator

[www.nairaland.com/2453579/top-ten-most-popular-nigeria](http://www.nairaland.com/2453579/top-ten-most-popular-nigeria).



**Galala:** is a type of contemporary Nigerian dance that rocked the Nigerian dance scene in the 1990s. The dance is credited to Daddy Showkey as the originator or inventor. Although there have been confusion, argument and counter argument to this claim. For instance, Veteran **Nigerian musician, Innocent Michael Onyemuwa, popularly referred to as Daddy Fresh, has opened up on the controversial topic of who invented the famous Galala dance that Nigerians rocked in the mid 90's.** Daddy Fresh claimed

“Galala dance was actually invented by our friend called Echo who is now late. In the early 90s, we used to attend a club called Raja Dub Chapel. It was there many artists came to showcase their talents. Then we also used Sunrise Hotel which we used to call Second Dancehall. That was where we discovered Echo, who later became a dancer for Showkey. So Echo invented the Galala dance.”  
<http://www.naijaloaded.com.ng/2016/05/29/daddy-showkey-never-invented-galala-dance-daddy-fresh/>.

The controversy is not the crux of this study. Galala dance captures the general scenario of the ghetto life in Ajegule, a town or sub urban city in Lagos State of Nigeria. The movements and gestures of galala dance cut across fighting, pick pocketing, poverty, malnutrition, scavenging and other of such mannerisms that can be seen in the ghettos. The different movements and gestures also contribute to the various styles that can be identified in galala dance. The most popular of them all is associated with bent knees while the buttocks thrusts backward; The fists held in a boxing position while the face looks directly at the audience as if inviting them for a fight; the legs are in constant back and front shuffle to the beat of the music. Galala did not stay too long before it was replaced by another dance. Some have attributed this to the decline of the Ajegunle brand of music associated with the likes of African China, Baba Fryo and a few others that were prominent during this period under review.

**Yahoozee:** As one of the trending Nigerian contemporary dance moves, the dance has continued to get the nod of the youths that make up the pop culture in Nigeria and other African countries even though the lyrics has remained unacceptable to a wide spectrum of the educated elites. Yahoozee

as a song and dance style in contemporary Nigerian is derived from the word 'Yahoo' one of the popular search engines of the internet. The music talks about the exploits of the internet scammers and/ or fraudsters popularly known as 'yahoo boys', their method or mode of enjoyment after successfully defrauding a victim. The dance is attributed to Olu Maintain as the originator in the early 2000.

Yahoozee dance does not require much energy. The dance move requires a lot of hand movement which is very well stylized, pointing to the sky and different directions. It is an abstraction from the natural movement of the hands and fingers when counting 'spraying' money. The feet are rarely moved as they remain glued to the floor or a mere tapping of one foot on the floor. There are more recent dance moves today performed in Nigeria that have eclipsed the popularity of yahoozee, although it still falls within the ambiance of pop dance in Nigeria.

**Suo:** The reign of Makosa was brought to a halt in Nigeria by the Suo dance introduced in the contemporary Nigerian dance scene by the Danfo Drivers (Mad Melon and Mountain Black) and Marvelous Benji. Again, Suo came at a time when galala was already struggling for prominence. As part of Ghetto revolution in the music and dance scene, suo replaced galala because of its soft and somewhat erotic nature. Suo like galala reflects ghetto hood life as the originators are also from Ajegunle; a society that has produced most of the dance and music trends in Nigeria today. The dance emphasizes the use of hands and leg movements. The hands roll in a continuous grinding position while the legs are in continuous open and close position. At some point the hands draw to stretch like in a tying gesture making the hands to remain at a shooting (gun) position. Suo like galala does not utilize loco motor hence the execution of movements (dance moves) is done in place.

**Alanta:** Also popular among the youths can be safely classified as a comic dance. Alanta became a house hold name in the dance moves trend in Nigeria around 2007/8. Credited to ArtQuake, the dance arouses laughter whenever it is performed because of its movements, body positioning and gestures. Like Galala, the dance fits into any kind of music. The dancers contour their faces in a comic manner; crying, squeezing, winking and any such funny facial look. The legs are raised interchangeably while the hands (fingers) tap the stomach standing, lying, bending or anyway the dancer chooses to execute the movement. In a nutshell, the dance movement is more of a caricature of an imbecile. This has resulted to opinions suggesting that the dance must have originated as an imitation of imbeciles while they

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are dancing. The dance is stationary apart from the body which navigates in space. This makes the execution of the movements easier.

**Skelewu:** In Davido's hit single 'Skelewu', the dance took the youths in Nigeria by storm following the release of his musical video. Till date, the dance movement is ascribed to him as the originator. The dance performance follows the following sequence; the dance performer stretches his/her right hand out, allowing the palm to turn outwardly as if telling someone to stop. The left hand holds his/her waist while the body swings from left to right in a continuous manner. This movement can be alternated depending on who is carrying out the dance movement. The movement technique can be likened to the makosa dance and few other contemporary Nigerian dances trending today in the country. It does not require much locomotors, as the movement is designed to show off the body's kinetic capabilities.

**Etigi:** As one of the latest in the trending dance moves in Nigeria, Inyanya cut the attention of Nigerians in his hit song 'kukere' which went viral because of its unique style. It is a blend of tradition and hip culture. Here Inyanya maneuver's a movement that can be identified with his native Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. The dance movement involves the locking of the knees and raising of the hip bones region in alternate manner so much so that the sides of the hips help the buttocks to jerk as one leg is raised after another. The legs are also in continuous one/two movement as each is raised after the other to propel the hip movement. The hand placement help the side by side body positioning; the left move to the front while the right is balanced at the side of or beside the right leg. The legs while tapping/matching the floor can be locomotive or stationary. In the locomotor movement, the legs move forward while in the stationary, the legs tap side by side. The dance movement is capable of fitting into any kind of music. As recorded in <http://buzznigeria.com/top-10-popular-dancestyles-in-nigeria-and-their-source-tutorials/>, Etigi can be performed or mixed with Azonto as the hands and legs/hips perform suspended movement. While Etigi concentrates on the hip, the hands are busy with Azonto which is characterized with hand movements/gestures.

**Azonto:** Originated in Ghana by Fuse ODG with his song Azonto featuring Tiffany and made popular in Nigeria by Wizkid. Azonto became so popular that some companies like GoTV Africa, Ekiti State Television and CHISCO Transport to name a few used it as advert materials for their products and services. The movement involves leg and hand movements. One leg steps out

either side or front and the other meets it in a 4/2 beat while the hands move in diverse direction depending on who is involved in the execution of the movement and the person's (dancer's) creative sense and /or ingenuity. At times, one of the legs shuffles, pointing/steadying the toes to the ground while the raised heel moves in a tick tack motion continually until the dancer changes onto another move. Till date, Azonto has remained popular across West Africa.

**Shoki:** Since 2014, this new dance style has been part of the Nigerian pop culture. It is synonymous with parties because of its popularity, unique, and somewhat simple movement execution. It remains one of the latest modern Nigeria's dance moves and loved by all even the elderly. Although its source has continued to draw controversies within the pop community, "Shoki will be remembered as one of Nigeria's most controversial dance steps because about three musical bands claimed to be its originator; Dre, Lil Kesh and Orezi". (<http://www.naij.com/719108-galala-shoki-10-popular-dance-moves-nigerians-rock-parties.html>). Shoki like most dance techniques in Africa employs bent knees. The movement and techniques are similar to that of Makosa as introduced by the influx of Francophone music stars as mentioned earlier in our discussion on Makosa. The shuffling of the legs and the movement of the hip region in Makosa is applied in shoki. The slight difference between the two are the continuous undulation of the upper body and none presence of wriggling of the west in an erotic manner which is common to the former and less visible in the later. The uniqueness of shoki lies in its style of execution. The dancer (s) drop low and uses one hand or at times both hands to fetch or pack imaginary thing (s) from the ground. The dance movement in most cases is performed with the full body frame facing the side. The neck is dropped on one of the shoulders (either left or right) and facing the direction of the hand. While the body goes down, it rises at the same pace to enable the hand drop or throw the picked imaginary object. With the palms open while coming up, it (they) end up either covering the eye, holding the waist, throwing an imaginary basket ball, showing off, winkings or any act that fits into the movement as devised by the dancer (s). Shoki allows for individual creativity just like other modern Nigerian dance moves.

**Sekem:** Created by MC Galaxy in one his hit albums, "Sekem" became viral in the pop/hip dance culture all over the nation and added to the number of the many other contemporary Nigerian dances. As recorded in [www.naij.com](http://www.naij.com), "Sekem dancers are lovely to watch. The jolly sideways, back and forth moves is the beauty of the dance step created by MC Galaxy". The

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execution of Sekem dance is not different from other trending dance moves in Nigeria as it also follows a sequence of movement application. The dancer holds one hand on the chest and the other one on the waist and drives and / or shuffles sideways in a locomotor manner. The dance performer(s) follow MC Galaxy's instruction in his lyrics; 'one hand on your chest, one hand on your waist, oya Sekem'. At this time, the dancer stretches his left leg sideways while his/her weight rests on the right leg which is standing flat on the floor. He drags the left leg which is seating on the toes to the flat footed leg that shuffles to the right side in a continuous locomotor as the whole body tilt to the right. This can also be alternated as continuous usage of one side alone will result to monotony.

**Shakiti Bobo:** As Olamide's Shakiti Bobo music raved all over the country and was followed with the now famous dance move 'Shakiti Bobo', it was received in Nigeria with open arms among the youths and has become a part of mass culture today because of its unique medium of execution. It has even penetrated the church as it has become one of the popular dance moves among the worshippers. Shakiti Bobo involves a simultaneous jerking and / or twitching of the shoulder. This shuddering combines intermittently with the raising of legs (that is), when the left shoulder jerks, the left leg is raised and then the reverse. The hand does not have any particular placement as it is busy with different postures and gesticulations. The tilting of the body from one side to the other is also a part of its aesthetics.

### **The Effect of the New Trend on Dance Development in Nigeria**

From the above synopsis and analysis, it is evident that a new form of dance has emerged in Africa generally and Nigeria in particular. For Nigeria, this could be classified as modern Nigerian dance form because it has come to stay and will continue to feed from the pop music even for generations to come. This is not the first time that dance has depended on music to grow in Nigeria. As mentioned earlier, music and dance largely depend on each other and different generations have devised their own unique ways of introducing one form of art or the other. These can be called epochs or what Ogisi (216) called 'vogue'. These epochs or vogues usually come from within the youth's popular culture of any society. This group is energetic and vibrant. Hence they contribute in no small measure to the social life of the society in question. Even when they are seen as deviants, they have their way of making the pop culture a mass movement. This is usually observable in dance and music. Ogisi, while writing on *The Youth Factor in Sono-Kinetic Interface of Popular Dance in Nigeria 1945 - 2015* opines that "the emergence of youth

based popular music and dance gave rise to the phenomenon of music and dance vogues, a new phenomenon in Nigeria” (216). According to him (Ogisi 216), a dance vogue is a mass kinetic response to mass musical stimuli. This statement by Ogisi is apt as it will be difficult to create most of these dances without these pop musicians and their music. This is because; popular music and dance are fuelled and sustained by the phenomenon of vogue among others (Ogisi 216).

In Nigeria today, the dance moves are not usually named after the music genres as was the case in the pre independent Nigeria to the 1980s, but they come from the titles of the song. How these dances are created, and the compositional skills of the musician/dance creator are not clear to us and should be the focus of further researches. Suffice to state that what these pop musicians create are usually for mere entertainment. They are not bothered about the message which is the main business of dance and that dance movements are mostly not interpretative of the lyrics of the song. They (pop musicians) in most cases explore movements that satisfy the sexual inclinations of the youths for whom these music and dances are meant or borrow from their immediate environment; some traditional dance features that provoke ‘eroticness’ and fun.

This paper argues that this genre of dance is validated and has come to stay in Nigeria. Understanding its essence and contribution to the society will help a great deal to the advancement, sustainability and propagation of our dance genres generally. This study believes that no matter the nature of a particular art genre, society always finds those who will patronize it. Dance and music as performative arts are not left out of this. This is because, “Different types of arts have different characteristics, in terms of how they are perceived, what their subject matter is, and whether or not they are directly functional” (Kraus Richard et al 1991:15). In Nigeria, dance and music are part of a whole. It is part of life of the people as activities are followed up with different dance moves. This could be traditional or contemporary (modern) and are seen in parties of any sort, clubs, burial ceremonies to name a few. No matter the situation, Nigerians love to dance and this has endeared every prospective pop musician/ artist to creating new dance move for their teaming followers/fans to astound to the beats, lyrics and movements while they (Music artistes) remain in the market through their live performances and videos. It is arguably right to state also that these dance moves also contribute to the popularity of these musicians and therefore bring fame to them. This has become a ‘signature tune’ that identifies each of the musicians in the country (Nigeria). These dances and music have today

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become a “cultural product which has a place in our cultural tradition” (Helen Thomas 1993:3).

However, this positive fad should not be made to replace the creation of serious dances. Usually there are motivations for dance. The motivation conveys the theme and it is the theme that informs the movement compositions. The production of clearly identifiable theme-based dance movements has been on the low in Nigeria in the last one decade since the professionally trained dance composers have abandoned their responsibility to music artistes who in turn are filling the vacuum with low content hip up moves that are mostly sex-themed. The attitude of the professional dance creators towards dance development is a major concern as they have deviated from the tenets of dance composition, performance and practice.

There have been diverse opinions among scholars on the issue of ‘art for art sake’ which has also contributed to series of debate on the nature and meaning of dance. In this stead, while some scholars are of the opinion that meaning should be added to dance, others argue that dance must not convey any message especially in the area of movement vocabulary. It is the view of this paper that for dance to take its rightful place in Nigeria, it must have meaning. It must be able to address any subject matter. It must be relevant to the challenges that confront Nigeria today and their solutions. Creating dances that are serious both in content and in message is therefore indispensable. This is because it will create opportunity for its acceptance especially within the elite culture that controls the political and economic machineries of the nation.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

Professional dance creators (modern choreographers) in Nigeria should return to large scale production. They should work hard in movement creation and composition by carrying out adequate researches within and outside their environment. They should strive to add meaning to dance in order to take dance to an enviable height. This echoes Bakare’s earlier call that:

African choreographer must rise beyond a perpetual regurgitation of old dances by creating his own dances, which are relevant to his time and society. However, for reasons of relevance and effective communication, the paralinguistic

properties of old dances should be used as vocabularies (30).

If this does not happen, dance will continue to be seen as an irrelevant art in Nigeria. When an art is not relevant to the socio-economic realities of the society, when it doesn't influence its development, it loses respect. It does not enjoy government support; it is not supported by the business community. This is what is happening in Nigeria today. The creating of dances with serious content and message should continue in *pari-pasu* with what the music artistes are doing within the pop culture space. By so doing, we will be creating opportunities where dance can address salient issues of the day, thereby using art generally and dance in particular to change the society. The Pop groups are the inventors of the products of the mass culture, therefore, there is need to critically study what they bring into the society and offer corrections where necessary. This is expedient because culture generally and dance in particular is in a state of flux and ever evolving. 'Over the course of time, the structure and style of dance have evolved as the result of the perception of supernatural revelation, mythical precedence, individual or special group initiative, and (especially) contacts with other peoples (Hanna 167).

This paper cannot exhaust all areas of this subject matter because of its scope. It is therefore the opinion of the researchers that more studies are carried out on pop culture and its effect in Nigeria. Furthermore, the practitioners of these Contemporary Nigerian dances should not be discriminated against, instead the society should appreciate the efforts of those that practice this form of dance and not treat them with disdain. This is because; these new trends have become part of our heritage and so should be accepted by all the demographics in the Nigerian society including the professional choreographers. The professional choreographer on the other hand should work with them, while researchers should also study this genre more for the purpose of an inclusive development of dance in Nigeria. This is necessary for healthy and sustainable development in the culture sector and for sustainable dance development in Nigeria.

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