

CHAPTER 2

TRAINING OF MUSICIANS IN NIGERIA: THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF PROFESSOR AGATHA IJEOMA ONWUEKWE

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Abstract

This work focuses on the training of musicians, and the contributions of Prof. Agatha Ijeoma Onwuekwe to music. As a musicologist, Prof. Agatha has so many publications that have contributed to the development of music in Nigeria. This paper employs the qualitative method of research. It focuses on the collection of data in a rational setting with a view of gaining insight into issues of interest about the method of collection. The study finds out that the training of musicians is intended to help musicians to gain more skills and knowledge under the guidance of a skilled teacher or an instructor such as Prof. Agatha Onwuekwe. In conclusion, the study recommends the need for good training and more instruction for all musicians to develop music leadership that will expand music display experiences.

Keywords: Training, Musician, Nigeria, contribution, and Prof. Agatha Onwuekwe.

Introduction

Music is the art of combining sounds in a manner agreeable to the ear. It is the combination of sounds in a pleasing sequence. The sound we talk about here is not ordinary sound or noise, it is musical or note. It is also the art and science of organized sound. Philosophers of various ages have philosophized on music and each has recorded his impressions: Aristotle, who saw music as

a diverse and complicated network, wondered why anyone would know its nature. He, however, thought that music had the power to mould human character. His pupil, Aristoxenus, maintained that music was emotional and fulfilled a functioning role for which both the hearing and the intellect of the listener were essential. Pythagoras, the first musical numerologist who laid the foundations for acoustics in which correspondence between the pitch of a note and the length of a string was established insisted that music was a department of Mathematics for philosophers. Ekwueme Lucy (2008), defines music as:

A phenomenon using the medium of sound which is organized and manipulated into socially accepted patterns that communicate intelligibly and meaningfully, verbally, or non-verbally, ideas, feelings, emotions, and events to people.

In a similar vein, Merriam (2000) notes that “music is the science or art of ordering sounds in succession, in combination and in temporal relationships to produce a composition having unity and continuity” (p. 765).

Training is the action of teaching a person a particular skill or type of behaviour. It is the process of receiving or giving systematic instruction, especially at a school or University. Amadi (2011), defines education as the act of systematic development or training of the mind, capabilities or character through instruction and study. Education varies as widely in its forms, philosophy, contents, and methods as there are different societies in the world. Education is a life-long process that has interpretation in purpose, type and level. It is a means of socializing people into the community, for upholding customs and traditions as well as for the modification or changing of same in conformity with existing ideologies, ideological expansion or reformation. Education refers to the discipline that is concerned with methods of teaching and learning in schools or school-like environments, as opposed to various non-formal and formal means of socialization. Education involves a pedagogical process which, if properly carried out, should lead to the maturing of the person who has received it, to the extent that he is in a position to think and act meaningfully, and in relevant interaction with members of society, to their mutual benefit. For Education to be meaningful, it should take account of the learner's life experiences, and this means culture. We speak of education in a manner which indicates that being trained to acquire skills and knowledge or to articulate certain values and becoming educated are more or less interchangeable.

The way we think limits and controls to a great extent the way we experience our educational situation. Education encompasses teaching and learning specific skills, and also something less tangible but more profound: the imparting of knowledge, positive judgement and well-developed wisdom (Wikipedia). The preceding definition applies to music training and may signify or imply the teaching and learning of musical skills. Music education also happens outside the school in a variety of places and situations. Children learn from their friends and family, the radio, music

groups they attend, the Brownies, music theatre groups, and churches there are so many situations in which music is present that it is difficult and unnecessary to work out where our musical learning comes from! Yet, the musical learning that goes on outside school is no substitute for a rich and inspiring music education in school. John Paynter, a pioneer of creativity and composing in schools, devised a set of guiding principles for music education in the curriculum. He states:

Music education does have a place as a timetabled classroom subject in the school curriculum, and it should be available to all pupils. It should be seen as part of a general policy for the arts in education because the arts offer unparalleled opportunities for the development of imagination, sensitivity, inventiveness and delight – essential elements in a balanced curriculum. Music in the classroom is the core of school music activity; from there we can develop extracurricular music making.

This paper is set out to examine and discuss the contributions of Prof. Agatha Ijeoma to music education in Nigeria.

Methodology

This work employs the qualitative method of research work. It focuses on the collection of data in a rational setting with a view of gaining insight into issues of interest concerning the method of collection, this work tries to explain the perceived events. It employs a tool of exposition, description, and analysis. This work focuses on the training of musicians and the contributions of Prof. Agatha Ijeoma Onwuekwe. The instrument chosen during the investigation of this study includes library materials: published books, journals, periodicals, and so on. ii) Internet sources. The method of analysis is based on the data gotten from different categories of the research study.

Discussion of the findings

Historical Background of Prof. Agatha Ijeoma.

Agatha Ijeoma Onwuekwe is a professor in the department of music, Faculty of Arts, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. She is a native of Uga in Aguata Local Government Area of Anambra State and married in Ekwulobia in the same Aguata L.G.A. She was born in the famous Saint Lukes Hospital Anua-Uyo in Akwa Ibom State on the 15th day of March 1953 when her parents Chief Eugene U. Onyemaobi and Mrs Anastasia A. Onyemaobi were living at Ifuho-Ikot Ekpene. She attended her primary school at Holy Child Convent School Ifuho and secondary school at Lorretto Girls' Grammar School Eriam, Afagha Obong Abak. During the Nigerian Civil war, they returned to Uga their homeland. After the war, she continued her education at Aguata High School in Ekwulobia in Aguata Local Government Area of Anambra State where she obtained her West African School Certificate in the year 1973. She proceeded to The Teachers' Training College

Adazi and obtained her Teachers' Grade Two Certificate in 1975. She furthered her education at Anambra State College of Education, Awka and the University of Nigeria Nsukka where she obtained her First Degree in B.A. Hons in Education/Music. She obtained her M.Ed. in Educational Administration, Planning and Supervision in 1994 at Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka and her M. A. Music Theory and Composition at UNN in 1999. In 2007 she obtained her PhD in Music Theory and Composition at Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka and in 2008, she obtained another PhD in Educational Management and Policy at Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka. She is currently teaching in the Department of Music, at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

She has many published articles in both national and international journals. As a musician/musicologist, Prof. Agatha has so many works that have made her known to society. Professor Agatha Ijeoma has contributed immensely to the training of musicians/musicologist in Nigeria and beyond.

Contributions of Agatha Ijeoma to Music in Nigeria

As a musician/musicologist, Agatha has so many publications that have contributed to the development of music in Nigeria. Agatha Ijeoma has contributed immensely to the training of musicians/musicologist in Nigeria and beyond. She started her carrier as an instructor many years ago before she got her first degree in music. She has many published articles in both national and international journals. She also has many compositions to her credit. She has composed instrumental works and has arranged many works for chamber orchestras and solo instruments. She has successfully supervised more than 20 PhD candidates, 15 Master's Degree candidates and numerous First Degree students. She has over 45 articles in both local and international Journals. In one of her works (papers) titled "The Socio-Cultural implications of African Music and Dance", she discussed the socio-implications of African music and dance, African dance and human culture, kinds of dance, dance and the human body, dance and the society, the interrelationship between African music and dance, the importance of dance to the society. She defines Dance as the transformation of ordinary functional and expressive movement into an extraordinary movement for extraordinary purposes. Each culture tends to have its distinctive styles of dance and reasons for dancing. As a result, dance can reveal much about people and their way of life. Writing on dance she quoted Okafor, who says:

Dance is a ubiquitous medium of communication or expression in African cultures. By its nature, Nigerian dance or music engages all the senses in performer and spectator/listener alike. It is the patterning of the human body in time and space to give expression to ideas and emotions.

Dance is the movement of the body rhythmically, usually to music and within a given space, to

express an idea or emotion, release energy, or simply take delight in the movement itself. Dance is part of African music. Africans use their music to communicate with people and the things around them and it is also the music that is indigenous to Africa. The music involves the language, customs and values of the society. African languages are characteristically tonal and so the music adheres to the tonal inflection of the words. Writing on the characteristics of African music, Ferris (338) observes:

While there is considerable variety in music experience among African tribal cultures, most African music is sung, by solo or chorus, alone or accompanied by musical instruments or by simple clapping and other rhythmic body gestures. Singing is usually loud and enthusiastic, often with a strident quality of voice.

The above portrays what African music is because it is the music of the indigenous people of Africa that is sung, by solo or chorus, alone or accompanied by a local musical instrument or by clapping or tapping of the body. African music is the traditional music of the black people of Africa. The non-African listener generally finds the music strange, difficult, and unattractive; therefore, he concludes that it is not of interest. The study of African music demands time and practice. Agatha has said it all that African music is the indigenous music of Africa handed down from one generation to the other, and that the composers of some of this African music are not known since there is no documentation. Music and dance permeate every facet of human endeavour in Nigeria so much so that it is difficult to witness a social gathering that is devoid of music and the accompanying dance. She has written and taught students about this both in the department of music where she lectures and also outside the four walls of the university. The programme of the Department of Music was designed to train students in both Western and African music. (Ekwueme, 1997) writes,

At the inception of the Department of Music of the University of Nigeria, a bi-musical programme was evolved where a music graduate would be able to take his place alongside music graduates from other parts of the world but also would acquire the extra ability to understand his traditional music and interpreting it to his fellow nationals and the world at large.

To reach the climax or point of the highest development of the above, Ekwueme continues by quoting the published programme of music courses at the University of Lagos under 'Practical':

All students are expected to be proficient in performance on at least one instrument or in solo singing. The ngedegwu (xylophone) and the ubo-aka (thump piano), and other African instruments suitable for performance are recognized and will be seriously studied as musical

performing instruments ... Two years of African instrumental ensemble will be compulsory for all majors, and there will be a University band of Western orchestral and band instruments (n.p).

The above quotations have given us an insight into the nature of the content of music programmes in the Department of Music in Universities. Through these insights, we have known the duality of musical training in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The above also has been the nature of musical training in Nigeria after independence. Ajewole (1996) noted that the qualities of a music director include:

1. Punctuality and attendance
2. Personal self-control, temper, limitation of relationship
3. Clarity of instruction- instruction must be clear. It must not be ambiguous instruction in the music to be performed.
4. Correct shaping of mouth; create a burst of momentary laughter.
5. Have knowledge of music, understand diction, and work around different languages like English, Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo etc.
6. Physical health education –Advise on what to eat and the types of exercises the choir members can undertake. For example, eating kola nut is not good for the choir member because it can affect their voice production.
7. Discourage shout singing
8. Interpretation of music score
9. Sight reading /singing
10. Breath control

Qualifications of a Music Teacher

1. A high level of musicianship. This is done through the performance of major instruments, the use of the piano, and leadership in the classroom and rehearsals. Any teacher of music must have a primary instrument and must be able to teach it. You do not have to be a wizard in an instrument before teaching it.
2. Effective of humble rehearsal. A music teacher should be able to tell us his ability. He should be able to identify errors, be able to conduct himself clearly and expressively and also plan the rehearsal period effectively.
3. The ability to positively influence students' behaviour by providing a good model as a musician and as a person, by showing a sincere effort to understand the interest and abilities of each student, by using behaviour modification procedures for self-evaluation and for increasing the effectiveness of interaction with students.
4. Effective instructional planning, by assessing the cognitive, effective, and structural

development of children, and developing long-range instructional strategies, by relating instructional goals and teaching procedures to important learning theories and a personal philosophy of music education, by using a logical organized method for teaching musical notation, by using a method which encourages conceptual learning.

5. Ability to teach instrumental performance skills. The teacher must be able to demonstrate the correct fundamentals of performance for each band and orchestra instrument. The teacher must be able to know an instrument and others.

Training of musicians is reserved for those that have the skill, knowledge, and what is needed to impart musical knowledge to untrained musicians. One has to know the methods of imparting this knowledge so that the student musicians would be trained well in society. This training also happens outside the school in a variety of places and situations. Children/students learn from their friends and family, the radio, music groups they attend, the brownies, music theatre groups, and churches there are so many situations in which music is present that it is difficult and unnecessary to work out where our musical learning comes from.

Conclusion

The paper looked at the training of musicians, and the contributions of Agatha Ijeoma to music. Training of musicians is intended to help musicians to gain more skills and knowledge under the guidance of a skilled teacher or an instructor. Good training provides more instruction for all musicians and develops music leadership to expand music display experiences. This paper concludes that Agatha has been of good help to the training of musicians/musicologists in Nigeria and beyond through most of her works that she has published that centre on the methodology of teaching music in Nigeria, curriculum development of music education in Nigeria, papers fashioned out on facilities and equipment for the teaching of music education in Nigeria. She has written a lot of papers and other young scholars are now borrowing all the ideas after reading her works for teaching. All the papers she has written are now exposed to the music field. Through these papers she has exposed young other scholars to the methodology of teaching music, the curriculum development in Nigerian schools, on facilities and equipment for teaching instruments and compositions, and also her several compositions have contributed immensely to the moral development in Nigerian society.

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