

CHAPTER 52

THE EFFICACY OF MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT IN THEATRICAL PRODUCTION: AN EXAMPLE OF SELECTED MUSIC DYNAMICS

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Abstract

The impact of music in theatrical production cannot be undermined as it constitutes an integral part. The intrinsic value of its mystic capacity to complement other areas of production such as media, props and costume, technical and so on cannot be overemphasized. The impact of music in total theatre becomes more realistic as musical concepts are well presented with the application of musical dynamics in gushing out the desired idea or concept of the writer. The relationship between music dynamics and drama has called for a need for this study. This paper focuses on the application of musical dynamics in a theatrical production. It elucidates aptly on the meaning of dynamics in music and discusses selected dynamics such as *forte*, *fortissimo*, *mezzo forte*, *piano*, *pianissimo*, *mezzo piano*, *crescendo* and *diminuendo* relating to intensity. Some selected indigenous music was analyzed. This paper concludes that the intrinsic value of dynamics in music is a viable tool for the efficient expression of feelings in drama. It recommends that the responsibility of directing the music of a total theatre should be saddled with a music specialist who understands the application of dynamics and the storyline. More time should be devoted to effectively mastering the application of musical dynamics for each scene.

Keywords: Musical Dynamics, Accompaniment, Total Theatre

Introduction

Dynamics in music tends to explain the use of musical terms, signs and abbreviations to add aesthetics (beauty) to music. In music, the **dynamics** of a musical clip or piece be it songs or instrumental composition is the variation in speed, volume and timbre. Dynamics are indicated by the specific musical notation of signs, terms and abbreviations. However, dynamics markings still

require interpretation by the performer depending on the musical context; for instance, *forte* which signifies loud marking in one part of a piece might have quite different objective *piano* soft in another piece, or even a different section of the same piece. Dynamics are one of the expressive elements of music. Used effectively, dynamics help musicians sustain variety and interest in a musical performance, and communicate a particular emotional state or feeling. The beauty adds to music becomes very useful and relevant in accompanying a piece of drama or theatrical production. This is in line with the view of Cochrane (2010) who argued that the power of music to arouse strong emotions in listeners is rooted in its essentially temporal nature. This quality enables music to capture the nuance and flux of emotional experience in a way that listeners can empathically track from moment to moment.

Over the years, music has been part of theatre production. However, it is expedient to investigate if musical dynamics are well applied in accompanying a theatre production. Besides adding dynamics to music is also an enquiry, if the composer's intention aligns with the writer's intention of the play and does the outcome have an emotional response in the audience. What are those relevant dynamics as used in music with notations and interpretations to the context of a theatre piece?

Theoretical Framework

This study was premised on Artaud's theory of cruelty theatre where all elements of theatre are of utmost importance. The intention was to liberate the human subconscious and reveal man to himself. Artaud's perception of theatre is that everything should be present in the staging of production so that the intention of the writer of the drama piece can be understood as a codified stage language, with minimal emphasis on spoken language. The theory sees theatre as a practice, which wakes the mind and feelings of people through experienced elements of theatre in a production. The experience immediately inspires the audience with the fiery magnetism of its images and acts like a spiritual therapeutics whose touch can never be forgotten. It is imperative to note that, cruelty does not refer to an act of emotional or physical violence. The Theatre of Cruelty gives expression to everything that is 'crime, love, war, or madness' to unforgettably root within us a consciousness.

For Artaud, Jamieson (2007) says cruelty is not exclusively sadism or causing pain, but just as often a violent, physical determination to shatter a false reality. He believed that text had been a tyrant over meaning, and advocated, instead, for a theatre made up of a unique language, halfway between thought and gesture. Artaud described the spiritual in physical terms and believed that all theatre is a physical expression in space. The Theatre of Cruelty has been created to restore to the theatre a passionate and convulsive conception of life, and it is in this sense of violent rigour and extreme condensation of scenic elements that the cruelty on which it is based must be understood. The application of musical dynamics in theatre falls in line with the submission of Arthur as it contributes to the actualization of a total theatre

Music in Theatre

Over the years, Music has been prominent in theatre as far back as the inception of tragedies and comedies of Ancient Greece and also in the history of African theatre. The mystic ability of Music in revealing the inner emotional life of a character, foreshadowing a vicious attack or budding love, or comment on the action on stage cannot be overemphasized. The use of music can either be in form of songs or musical instruments. Music is often used as a prelude before the commencement of the play to create a desired atmosphere and thus clearly place the audience in a specific place. This is different from the music played or sung during a play to suggest the inner emotional state of a character. Besides the creation of mood is also the ability to gush out more specific information to the audience. Sometimes a character will have a theme or musical themes that the audience hears every time the character appears onstage.

Once such a theme has been established, it can be used to foreshadow the character. Or if, for instance, the theme appears in a minor key, the sound could suggest to the audience that the character is now sad, ill, or even dead. After the play is also a created mood often known as the departure mood or postlude expressed through musical accompaniment. Watson (2005) supports this claim that musical theatre is the music one hears in accompaniment to a piece of theatre. Music in theatre has been more relevant as a result of the six elements of drama such as plot, character, thought, diction, music and spectacle.

Coker (2006) believes that music in theatre has greater scope for capturing audiences' attention as little is being felt in imagination, making it easier to watch and comprehend, everything is spelt out in a clear way that is interesting and accessible. The role of music in theatre, therefore, emphasizes the relationship between the actor and the musician. This corroborates the view of Once (2011) where he completely removes the separation between the actor and musician.

The scope of music in theatrical production is very clear as the songs or musical instrumentation relates in text and musical features specifically to the specific drama piece and does not strive to show itself superior or above the drama but represents a unit. The accompaniment is to further the storyline or to show the development of a character's personae. According to Taylor (2000), A clear framework tends to lean on the subject and quotidian characters. As also observed by Akin Euba :

Much of the pre-colonial traditional music is practised in the context of one or more of the other performing arts. There is, for example, the use of music as an integral part of dance, poetry and dramatic expression all fused in the same performance context. In addition, music and all these other performing arts are often presented in combination with the visual arts such as sculpture, design, painting and costuming. Music is viewed in terms of its relationship to the total art complex and not as an isolated phenomenon.

This reveals that music has an intrinsic role it plays in the total theatre and therefore has to be well-

engaged to interpret ideas or corroborate a scene when employed in a production. The use of music could be vocal, instrumental or a combination of vocal and instrumental music. The blend with dramatic expression is hung on the mastery of the music director who first understands the concept of dramatic expression and then applies suitable musical dynamics, capable of gushing out the intended message. "Every composer decides a scene's musical needs based on his dramatic sensitivity and musical taste" (Davis, 1999).

According to Nzewi :

The Igbo systems and ideological formulations were established on and buttressed by communally binding and viable mythological concepts and covenants. These were periodically validated or regenerated or commemorated to ensure a continuing binding compact. Such periodic communions required highly stylised media that would give a super-ordinary atmosphere, impact and candour to the event. These media (which constituted traditional theatre in all its scope and ramifications) incorporate the performing arts areas of music, dance, drama and mime.

According to classical, Broadway and Hollywood composer Aaron Copland in Tony Thomas' *Film Score, the Art and Craft of Movie Music*, there are several ways in which music serves A drama, outlined below:

- (i) Creates a more convincing atmosphere of time and place – The music gives the audience a hint of the period in which the action is set.
- (ii) It can underline psychological refinements – Refers to the unspoken thoughts of a character or the unseen implications of a situation. Or it may run counterpoint to what is happening on screen, such as a well-placed dissonant chord can alert the audience of some imminent danger in an otherwise sentimental scene.
- (iii) Serves as neutral background filler – Care must be taken with this kind to keep it under the dialogue so as not to cancel someone's voice. One is not supposed to “hear” this kind of music; it is the sort to fill up spaces in conversation.
- (iv) Builds a sense of continuity – Music is a kind of binding veneer that holds a film together. Music can be used to unify otherwise unconnected scenes. In its most basic form, it is used in newsreels or montages.
- (v) Underpins the theatrical build-up of a scene, and rounds it off with a sense of finality –For example in the fight finale in the 1976 movie, *Rocky*.
- (vi) Expresses the inner feelings of the characters – As opposed to the character's reactions to the external aspects of the ongoing action. The focus is on the character and personality of the actors rather than the situation.

(vii) Creates a mood

(viii) Wallpaper – Music can be used to cover up the deficiencies of the script or film.

Music should be synchronized more with the dramatic content than with the actual pictures, movement, and irregular happenings. This is a very crucial issue which differentiates a good musical accompaniment or music in a dramatic production from a bad one, and also defines the calibre of the music director who interprets and applies the right dynamics to the music used in each scene or the background music.

Application of Musical Dynamics

There are music dynamics that deal with Intensity, Timbre and some deals with Speed. This study focuses on the application of dynamics that deals with Intensity. The intensity in music refers to the degree of loudness or softness of a musical sound. Each of them has the mystic power capable of creating emotional feelings during a drama production. This does not only affect songs but also musical instruments. Although musical instruments such as the drum are mostly used to express timing (speed) but have a strong tendency for depicting dynamics. Other views on this are that in studies of affective drum performance, dynamics have received less attention than timing, although they are equally important (Repp, 1996; Gabrielsson, 2003). The reason is that unlike timing which can be easily measured by a metronome and hence has been systematically examined scientifically for over a decade (Repp, 1992a, 1994a,b, 1995, among others).

Therefore in this study, I have considered the following dynamics in this category:

Piano, Mezzo Piano and Pianissimo

The *piano* is usually indicated with a sign (p) meaning soft and the *mezzo piano* is indicated by (mp) meaning half-soft or moderately soft. Also, the sign (pp) is used to represent *Pianissimo* meaning, very soft. The dynamics in this category can be used in a song or instrumental composition to express a sad, quiet, and solemn mood. According to (Juslin and Sloboda, 2013) music performance is generally associated with soft playing similar to sadness. The degree of the level of the expression of the intended mood will depend on the choice of the musical terms in this category. The tone colour or the intensity of the speech of the character and the scene at the moment suggests the dynamics be applied. According to (Juslin and Laukka, 2003) music performance and speech are two important platforms for humans to communicate emotion. The Conductor of the chorus and orchestra directs them with a hand gesture that suggests the required dynamics be expressed.

If it is in the already recorded video clip these dynamics are used in everything from stage performances to movie soundtracks. Reflect on how the music in a movie enhances the feeling of a scene. For example, you probably would not use a quiet dynamic for a battle scene. It would be proper or ideal to use a quiet dynamic for a character that is sneaking out or even an intimate moment between characters.

Forte, Mezzo Forte and Fortissimo

The term *forte* is usually indicated with a sign (f) meaning loud and the *mezzo forte* is indicated by (mf) meaning half loud or moderately loud. Also, the sign (ff) is used to represent *fortissimo* which means very loud. The dynamics in this category can be used in a song or instrumental composition to express. Some songs or notes for musical instruments are meant to be played strongly to produce a loud sound. When applied properly, they help to drive the emotional content of music through volume and intensity. It's as if you could adjust both the volume of your radio set. We can also think of the intensity side of dynamics as the strength of a note. Ideally, louder dynamics should be used for scenes involving bravery or freedom.

Score

Aye Le

Olufemi Akande

♩ = 70

f Aye le *p* o..... *pp*

pp 0 aye le aye le baye pani won le ji aye 'ka eh eh

f *ff* *mf* *p*

eh aye o aye re ogun laye ogun *mp* *pp*

These two symbols draw out emotion by making a gradual change in volume. The crescendo looks like this (<) and means gradually getting louder. The diminuendo symbol looks like this (>) and means gradually getting soft. These musical signs can be used to express a sad mood. The gradual change in volume creates a special feeling that appeals to the emotion of the audience or viewers. Attention should be drawn also the volume of the voice of an actor as the volume reduces and increases. This can also suggest the appropriate dynamics as Voice and music dynamics can produce desirable feelings. This is in line with the assertion of (Buck, 1984; Wilson, 1994; Juslin and Laukka, 2003) that an increasing amount of attention has been given to using perceptual tests for acoustic comparisons between affective music and speech, as they are two important means of emotion communication. However, it is imperative that a music director read and understand the drama text and also be physically present at rehearsals to be able to do a good job in synchronizing the exact musical dynamics with each scene.

Score

Oran Re

Olufemi Akande

Score for "Oran Re" by Olufemi Akande. The score is written in 4/4 time with a tempo marking of quarter note = 70. It consists of four staves of music with lyrics underneath. The lyrics are: "eh ah eh", "eh eh ah", "re", and "oran re".

Conclusion

This paper concludes that the intrinsic value of dynamics in music is a viable tool for the efficient expression of feelings in drama. It recommends that the responsibility of directing the music of a total theatre should be saddled with a music specialist who understands the application of dynamics and the storyline. More time should be devoted to effectively mastering the application of musical dynamics for each scene. It is important to stress that music is no music until when it is not performed. At this juncture, it emphasizes its relevance and ability to give a desired expression during a theatrical production. The relevance calls for professionalism in the application and dutifulness of a music director in a production. It is crucial to note that knowledge of the musical instruments and voices of singers is required in musicality. Most times in a theatrical production music is performed live as an accompaniment and a part of a total theatre. The influence of music in theatre production becomes relevant when musical dynamics are injected into the music. Music should not be seen as a passage but efficacious as an entity in contributing to a total theatre.

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