

Decolonizing Church Music Education in the Nigerian Baptist Convention

Udoka Peace OSSAIGA PhD
Adjunct Lecturer, Department of Church Music,
Baptist Theological Seminary, Eku, Delta State, Nigeria.
July, 2023

Abstract:- Church music education in the Nigerian Baptist Convention is mainly provided by foreign missionaries established theological institutions that utilize foreign resources, materials, and methods to promote western cultural idioms through the medium of Christian mission; these idioms, they promote as ideals for worship, and education. Although most of the foreign Christian missionaries have long returned to their countries of origin, their legacies of foreign church music education in the Nigerian Baptist Convention's owned theological institutions have been largely sustained and improved upon by majorly indigenous church music educators who base their acts on the professed conventionality of foreign music idioms in which they were trained, even in 21st century Nigerian Baptist Convention. This paper discusses colonial footprints in the Nigerian Baptist Convention's church music education, and steps to decolonize church music education in the Convention. A decolonized church music education is capable of producing culturally compliant church music graduates and contextualized church music education in the theological institutions.

Keywords:- Church music education, decolonization, theological institutions; Nigerian Baptist Convention.

I. INTRODUCTION

Church music education in the Nigerian Baptist Convention¹ has foreign origin, history, and content. It also engages foreign materials and methods in teaching; thus, it serves more foreign music cultures and purposes than Nigeria's, even in 21st century Nigeria! As observed by Fafunwa (1985:5), in the history of music education in Nigeria, "Nigerian school children were being educated to meet the needs of a foreign culture". His observation of the objective of foreign music education in Nigeria resonates with the objectives; and contents of, methods; and materials for church music education in the Nigerian Baptist Convention. While Fafunwa (1985) was concerned with historical grooming of Nigerian school children with and for foreign music culture in late twentieth century, the practice has not abated in the twenty-first century Nigerian Baptist Convention owned theological institutions. Thus, the same foreign Christian missionaries who established foreign styled schools (Lo-Bamijoko 1990) to teach foreign music contents and cultures as conventions, rejected and condemned African

indigenous music idioms, also established foreign church music department to perpetuate, and promote foreign music cultures as conventions in church music education in the Nigerian Baptist Convention.

Thus, music education in its secular and sacred forms in Africa has foreign origins, contents, materials; and methods. It is for these reasons that in respect of secular music education in Africa, Herbst, Nzewi and Agawu (2003), Bradley (2012), Rosabal-Coto (2014); and Hess (2018) call for the decolonization of music education in Africa through their highlights of the violence of colonialism that replete curricula, pedagogy, teacher education; and music philosophies, among others. Since the culture and philosophies that informed secular music education in Africa are not far from those that informed church music education in Nigeria, church music education in the Nigerian Baptist Convention bears the burden of colonial footprints that dominate it, challenges the fusion of indigenous music knowledge; and hinders contextualized church music education in the realm. Although the foreign Christian missionaries who established the theological institutions that offer church music education in the Convention have returned to their countries of origin, foreign oriented Nigerian church music educationists and system have combined to sustain the foreign music cultures, contents, methods; and materials in Nigerian Baptist Convention owned theological institutions. This development assaults African music culture, confuses church music identity, separates church music education from music ministry contexts; and adversely impacts indigenous music idioms in the Nigerian Baptist Convention. This paper discusses colonial footprints in Nigerian Baptist Convention's church music education; and how to decolonize church music education in the Nigerian Baptist Convention.

Church music education utilizes methods that are geared towards achieving certain educational objectives. Explicating the place of natural/innate traits in propriety of music education, Estrella (2018) notes that some of the best ways to teach music are to build on learners' innate ability in a manner that they can best learn. Thus, she notes that each method of teaching has a system, a philosophy, a clearly defined objective; and set goals. To Estrella (2018), there are four (4) methods for teaching music, namely: Orff, Kodaly, Suzuki, and Dalcroze methods of music education.

¹ The Nigerian Baptist Convention is a leading Christian denomination with over ten thousand (10, 000+) local Baptist churches in Nigeria.

While the Orff music education engages the mind and body through speech, movement, singing, dancing, imitation, exploration, improvisation, and composition, Ekwueme (2010) observes that the Kodaly method uses songs to teach various music elements like metre, tempo, beat, form and style. These elements are mastered before the fusion of dance, movement, and game. It is worth noting that the Kodaly music method is named after Zoltan Kodaly, a Hungarian composer and theorist who has the honour to have his music teaching method to be adopted by the Hungarian State. Also, the Suzuki music education method was introduced in Japan shortly after the second world war (1939-1945). The method of music teaching mirrors a child's innate ability to learn his/her native language; thus, the method is also called the mother-tongue approach. Through listening, repetition, memorization, building vocabulary—like language, music becomes part of the child. To Idolor (1993), Nigeria music education needs the Suzuki method for proper understanding of music knowledge. In the Dalcroze method, Emile Jaques-Dalcroze, a Swiss educator, developed the method to teach rhythm, structure, and musical expression through music and movement.

The four music education methods have been built on by other music educators such as Madeleine (1968) who evolved the Carabo-Cone method, that is sometimes referred to as the Sensory-Motor Approach. The model uses props, costumes, and toys for children to teach concepts of staff, note duration, and the keyboard. She notes that these allow the child to learn music fundamentals by exploration through touch.

It could be deduced from the reviewed music education methods that early exposure to music materials, and methods, the exploration of a learner's innate potentials; and music materials from a learner's own culture are the highlights of the music education methods. Conversely, the church music education that was funded, founded and engineered by the foreign Christian missionaries in the Nigerian Baptist Convention, and that is presently sustained by their Nigerian trainees rejects Nigerian music idioms, disregards learners' cultural identity, and foists foreign music culture, contents; and materials in most parts.

II. FOREIGN FOOTPRINTS IN NIGERIAN BAPTIST CONVENTION'S CHURCH MUSIC EDUCATION

As noted earlier, identity, contents, materials, and methods in Nigerian Baptist Convention church music education are foreign. Thus, foreign footprints in Nigerian Baptist Convention's church music education are in courses' titles, contents, repertoire, performance documentation; promotion of foreign music idioms as conventions in the church music education.

A. Deliberate Use and Omission of Western Prefixes in Courses' Titling

Although efforts are being made to include some African oriented music courses, such as, Theory of African Music; African Music and Culture, to church music curriculum in the theological institutions, the courses are too scant to properly

equip students in African music culture for church music in Africa. While few church music courses, such as, Survey of Western Music, go by western prefixes, others do not bear western prefixes; but their contents and materials are all the same foreign. Thus, Music Theory as a course of study in the theological institutions is actually western music theory for its idioms are western, while they are presented as conventions in music theory. This footprint is also evident in the contents of Composition, Choral Techniques, Orchestration, Diction, Voice, Ensemble Studies, and others. Thus, whether the courses indicate western prefixes or not, their contents point to western prefixes.

B. Dominance of Foreign Contents in the Church Music Education

The foreign footprints in the church music education are not limited to courses' titles. They extend to materials for the church music education. Until recently, areas of specialty in the church music education were limited to Piano and Voice. To emphasize any of these courses students were to take the course(s) in four (4) semesters. In each of these semesters, each student is given Piano or Voice pieces that typify trends, developments, styles; and performance practices in foreign music history. Out of four pieces given to a student in a semester, three or the four are western compositions. While areas of specialization have been extended to Theory/Composition, Performance Studies; and Worship, it is noteworthy that this practice is evident in most church music courses that are offered in the theological institutions.

C. Proof of Proficiency in Foreign Music

To demonstrate competence in church music in the theological institutions, a student undergoing church music education undergoes proficiency examination in five church music courses, such as, Sing-Singing and Ear Training, Voice, Conducting, Guitar, and Piano. In each of these courses, a student is required to score a minimum of seventy percent (70 %) to graduate. The materials, and practices for these proficiency tests are mainly western. Thus, a church music student from the institution must demonstrate proficiency in foreign music to be deemed competent to graduate and work in a Baptist Church in Nigeria.

D. Programme Notes that Extol Foreign Music Legends

It is required of each undergraduate student of church music in the Nigerian Baptist Convention owned theological schools to produce a programme note that discusses the lives and contributions of foreign music legends to the development of church music. The students research the biographies of the composers, and connect their relevance to the music they are to perform in pre-graduation recital. Since the compositions for recital are largely foreign, the students are not required to write and document the names, profiles, and contributions of Nigerian church music legends to the development of church music in Nigeria!

E. Promotion of Foreign Idioms as Conventions in Church Music Education

The foreign contents of church music education in the Nigerian Baptist Convention are presented as conventions in music theory, composition, conducting, choral techniques,

ensemble management, orchestration, voice, and piano. While there are bodies of knowledge on foreign music idioms in these areas, Africa has conventions in music theory, composition, conducting, choral techniques, ensemble management, orchestration, and voice. Although the piano is western, its scholarly and performative developments are not without African input (Boamah 2012). The promotion of foreign music practices as conventions in Nigerian Baptist Convention church music education, and the treatment of indigenous musical practices as non-conventions correspond with offensive tales of superiority of: foreign races to Africa's, foreign music culture to Africa's; these are no longer sponsored by the foreigners; but by their African trainees.

From the foregoing, it could be noted that church music education in the Nigerian Baptist Convention is foreign in its origin, concept, materials, methods, performance practice; and philosophy. The equipping of Nigerian and/or African students with foreign music cultures and contents at the detriment of their indigenous music negates foundations in music education methods as espoused by Western music theorists, such as, Zoltan Kodaly.

III. TO DECOLONIZE CHURCH MUSIC EDUCATION IN THE NIGERIAN BAPTIST CONVENTION

To decolonize church music education in the Nigerian Baptist Convention:

- Church music courses in the Nigerian Baptist Convention owned theological institutions should be freed from visible and invisible foreign prefixes
- Concepts in church music education should be freed from foreign cultural patronages
- Courses should include a good measure of African music with global music contents
- African indigenous compositions/repertoires should dominate private instructions, juries and recitals
- The contribution of Nigerian and African composers, conductors, theorists; and scholars to church music should dominate programme notes
- African performance practices should be explored, explained; and taught in all performance courses, alongside foreign performance practices.
- Conventions in church music education should be promoted as they apply to relevant demography and geography; thus, conventions in African music should be presented as conventions in African music, while conventions in western music should be presented as conventions in western music
- Periodic music festivals and concerts should be held to promote African music in the theological institutions;
- African music should feature more in chapel services of the theological institutions as continuation of music teaching and learning.

IV. CONCLUSION

This paper discussed decolonizing church music education in the Nigerian Baptist Convention through a highlight of colonial footprints in the church music education; and provided steps for the decolonization of church music education in the realm. Decolonizing church music education in the Convention is capable of producing pedagogical reforms that can produce culturally compliant church music graduates. Since music is a cultural expression, the music cultures of Nigerians in the realms of the theological institutions should inform materials, methods, and philosophies for church music education in the Convention. To sustain the colonial legacies in the Convention's church music education in its current state is to sustain a practice that disregards one's own cultural identity and expression.

REFERENCES

- [1.] Boamah, E. (2012). The Concept of African Pianism. *Legon Journal of the Humanities*. Retrieved from <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/Ijh/article/view/87360/77074>.
- [2.] Bradley, D (2012). Good for what, good for whom? Decolonizing Music Education Philosophies. In Bowman, W. D., Fregal, A. L. (Eds.) *Oxford Handbook of Philosophy in Music Education* (pp 409-433). Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.
- [3.] Fanfunwa, B. A. (1985). Nigeria's Educational Heritage. *Daily Times* (Friday, February 1).
- [4.] Herbst, A. Nzewi, M.; and Agawu, K. (2003). *Musical Arts in Africa: Theory, Practice and Education*. Pretoria, South Africa: University of South Africa Press.
- [5.] Hess, J. (2018). Challenging the Empire in Empir(e)ical Research: The Question of Speaking in Music Education. *Music Education Research*, 20(5): 573-590.
- [6.] Lo-Bamijoko, J. N. (1990). Music Education in Nigeria: The Status of Music Learning and Teaching. *The Quarterly Vol. 1 (4)*: 38-42.
- [7.] Ekwueme, L. U. (2010). *School Music Methods: A Handbook for Teachers*. Lagos: Apex Books Limited.
- [8.] Estrella, E. (2018). Learn Some Popular Methods for Teaching Music to Children: Orff, Kodaly, Suzuki, and Dalcroze Methods. Retrieved from <https://www.liveabout.com/major-methods-of-teaching-music-to-kids-2456776> on 4th June, 2023.
- [9.] Lo-Bamijoko, J. N. (1990). Music Education in Nigeria: The Status of Music Learning and Teaching. *The Quarterly Vo. 1 (4)*: 38-42.
- [10.] Madeleine, C. (1968). A Sensory-Motor Approach to Music Learning: Book 1 - Primary. Retrieved from *ed.gov*.
- [11.] Rosabal-Coto, G. (2014). "I did it my way!" A Case Study of Resistance to Coloniality in Music Learning and Specialization. *Action, Criticism, and Theory of Music Education Vol. 13(1)*: 155-187.