

MUSIC CONCERT AS MEANS FOR SOCIAL INTEGRATION IN SCHOOLS

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Abstract

The instrumentality of music concerts in fostering social integration in schools was explored in this paper. The emergence of private schools over the past two decades across Nigeria has, to some extent, addressed the poor performance of public schools witnessed over the years. However, this development has also brought about competition among schools, creating divisions among both schools and students and thereby threatening the very essence of formal education, which is the nurturing of individuals into holistic beings. Twenty schools across Anambra State were studied over a period of fifteen years, during which the researcher was actively involved as a music teacher, music director, music consultant, observer, concert organizer, concert director, concert manager, or music festival/concert adjudicator in some of the schools. It was discovered that engaging students within and across schools in music concerts helped bridge existing socio-cultural and religious divides among them and fostered social integration. The financial demands associated with organizing regular music concerts in schools were identified as a major hindrance to this laudable initiative. However, exploiting opportunities provided by popular school programmes such as graduation ceremonies and cultural festivals was found to be a viable solution to this challenge. The study therefore recommends that educators and policymakers in Nigeria should embrace the idea of music concerts as instruments of social integration in schools.

Keywords: instrumentality, music concert, fostering, social integration

Introduction

The turn of the twenty first century witnessed an unprecedented surge in the emergence of private schools across Nigeria. Unfortunately, this development also came with competitiveness and strife amongst schools as every school struggled for supremacy as observed in competitive school uniforms, display of school banners and signage, school bus charade, exorbitant graduation ceremonies, entrance examinations, inter-house sports competitions, etc. The power play has degenerated into serious propaganda, mudslinging, smear campaigns, and all kinds of disturbing innuendos amongst schools geared towards the quest for supremacy.

Explanation of Relevant Concepts

- **Music Concert**

Music concert is a public performance in which a number of singers or instrumentalists, or both, participate (Dictionary.com). Music concert, concisely, is the organization of human and musical resources for the purpose of entertainment and the promotion of a given brand. 'Human resources' here refers to the body of musicians, performers, and sound engineers charged with delivering thrilling performances. 'Music resources' refers to songs, musical works, repertoires, musical instruments, sound and musical instruments suitable for the given event. Music concerts are usually contrived to serve two basic purposes: to entertain people and then to promote a select brand such as company products, government policies, creating awareness, or to promote music as a brand in itself. Music concert as conceived in this paper favors the promotion of music in schools as its focal point.

- **Music Adjudication**

Sometimes music concerts are taken seriously and adjudicated so that a winner or winners might emerge amongst the contestants. The idea is to sensitize the participants into serious preparations for an excellent output although the objectivity in the adjudication of such events has always been a problem. It is very difficult to extricate bias from the pool of judges in a panel of adjudicators.

This paper favors music concerts in schools without adjudication, rather, the chosen resource person takes time to appraise every performing group, affirming their areas of competence and encouraging them on areas requiring improvement. This way, each school goes home with appreciation, motivation, and salient ideas for improvement.

- **Social Integration**

Social integration is the process of fostering cohesion, inclusivity, and shared values among diverse individuals and groups within a society (AI overview.com). It refers to the ways that different groups come together to form a whole in society (Study.com). Social integration also refers to the natural mix of varied individuals for a goal irrespective of their socio-cultural differences. Schools serve as good social integrators as they converge young learners of various socio-cultural dispositions and engage them to socialize.

Music concert in schools therefore bolsters this existing social integration more by bringing together students of a given school and also students of other schools together for music. One interesting thing about music is that even though it is a cultural phenomenon yet it breaks cultural bounds to attract peoples of other cultures. For example, Mkpokiti dance music of Umunze appeals to many non-Umunze indigenes. Also, Nigerian Afro beats genre of music has interestingly traversed beyond intercontinental and racial boundaries to appeal to Westerners very much. Campbell and Scott-Kassner(2010) theorizing on musical play and socialization opined that:

When children play with other children and socialize with adults, they are learning as well. Contrary to the word's connotation, play can thus be serious business for children. Socialization, a type of play in which children engage in social interactions with adult guides, can be a weighty endeavour for children, with serious implications for their cognitive development. Musical play and socialization through music (and for the sake of music learning) can be bona fide means for children to gain information about the world around them (pg.21).

Parents/Guardians and Music Teachers as motivators for social integration among children through the instrumentality of music

Albert Bandura(1977), in his influential Social Learning Theory, as reiterated by Campbell, P.S & Scott-Kassner, C. (2010), drew attention to the fact of parents, guardians, and the teacher as role models in shaping the behavior of children in learning:

Bandura's social learning theory is a provocative of the power of persons within an environment to serve as models of behavior that are later replicated by the observer. Children choose to watch and listen to their parents and teachers, whose behaviors they later emulate. Their observations of these models are mentally organized, memorized, and recalled when similar situations for thinking and acting arise in their lives. The process of environmental influences and social learning are played out as the student recalls the visual or aural codes of earlier observations and practices the behaviors first demonstrated by the models. Social learning theory is prominent in musical settings, because modeling is critical to the student's watching, listening, and then performing the music in the manner and style of the teacher (pgs24-25).

The whole point of the forgoing is that socialization and social integration is a learned behavior which parents and music teachers can inculcate in children by being role models of the ideal through the instrumentality of teaching and participating in music themselves. For example, children who grew up in musical homes witnessing their parents socializing by playing music together with friends also grow up imbibing the same culture.

Music Concert in Schools

Music concert in schools is two-pronged: music concerts held within and amongst the students of a given school and that held amongst students of different schools.

(a)Music concert within a school

Organizing successful music concerts in any given school is dependent on some pertinent factors such as:

- (i) A strong music Philosophy or culture
- (ii) Competent music teacher
- (iii) Basic musical instruments to sustain training and performance
- (iv) Ample space to host the music room and concert hall
- (v) Ample time for music in the time table

(i) Formidable Music philosophy or culture

A school must first come to terms with the realities and principles of music education as a foundation before attempting school music program or even music concert. The meaning of music education must be well understood and what they want to achieve with it must be clearly stated before any adventure into music. From an established philosophy of music emerges a musical culture over time. If there is no philosophy of music as guide and fulcrum, the entire music exercise collapses.

Leonhard & House (1972) expatiate that:

When we speak of a philosophy of music education, we refer to a system of basic beliefs which underlies and provides a basis for the operation of the musical enterprise in an educational setting. A philosophy should serve as a source of insight into the total music program and should assist music teachers in determining what the musical enterprise is all about, and how it should operate. A definitive philosophy is useful, even essential, for an operation as complex and as important as music education because concepts, theory, and practice rely on one another (pg.84).

(ii) Competent music teacher

Music programs require competent music teachers for sustainability. Any form of investment in schools regarding music will only thrive in the hands of a committed, dedicated, and competent music teacher. One who is passionate about his job; one who understands the predicament music is faced with in schools: having full understanding that music is a ‘threatened species’ in schools vis a vis other subjects like mathematics, English, verbal aptitude, etc. The polemics on ‘competent music teacher’ is not the focus of this paper but it would suffice to mention that a competent music teacher is one who understands the subject matter of music properly through formal training, practice, and personal development.

(iii) Basic musical instruments to sustain training and performance

The peculiar nature of music education and practice requires some basic musical instruments such as keyboard, drums, recorder, harmonica, violin, guitar, at least for it to thrive. These should not exclude the traditional musical instruments of the people that situate the school. For instance, there will not be any valid discussion on or practice of music in Igbo land of Eastern Nigeria without recourse to these peculiar musical instruments such as the *oja*, *okpokolo*, *ichaka*, *ubo aka*, *igba*, *ogene*, *oyo* etc. This idea is rooted in the fact that music is a cultural phenomenon and you cannot extricate the cultural convictions of a people from their learning.

(iv) Ample space to host the music room and concert hall

Music as a phenomenon exists in time and space; therefore the ‘space factor’ is very crucial to its existence. The demand and requirement for space is to take care of practice rooms for personal training and general rehearsals. Schools hoping for a thriving music program or music concerts should provide enough spaces to host music rooms or practice rooms for orchestra, choir, band, dance, etc and also for concerts. Unfortunately many schools still grapple with the challenge of basic classrooms for learning.

(v) Ample time for music studies

Music requires not just space in schools but time also for its reasonable realization. The demands of raising an orchestra, a choir, a dance troupe, or a stage band are not space related only but also time bound. If there is not enough time for music in the time table of schools aspiring for a successful music program and concerts, the whole endeavor is doomed.

(b) Music concerts across schools

Music concerts can also be held amongst or across schools if the planning and execution are well thought out. The challenge is usually convincing school proprietors on the essence of the concert in the light of the inherent competitiveness amongst them. Then again comes the issue of the host school and the hosting rights of any school. I have been able to solve these pertinent problems by:

- (i) Carefully explaining the merits of music concerts across schools to the prospective school managers and proprietors particularly the merit of social integration.
- (ii) Any school desiring to participate should have an existing music program and culture so that they would not struggle with what to present when in the event of the concert.
- (iii) The criteria for hosting are clearly stated out: spacious hall to host the concert, adequate musical instruments to furnish the event, adequate sound system to power the concert, a non-hostile and clean school environment, and neat conveniences. These requirements would create a conducive and thriving environment for the participants and the concert.

The nature and scope of music concerts across schools

The concert I organized in 2008 in a school at Nkpor which was tagged ‘Private Schools Music Concert’ with Prof. Alvan-Ikoku Nwamara (A Professor of Music Theory & Composition at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka) as the resource person was successful with the echoes from the concert still on. The details of the said concert are presented below:

Title of the Music Concert: First Anambra State Private Schools’ Music Concert

Date: October 15, 2008

Host School: Supreme Knowledge Comprehensive Schools Nkpor-Agu

Background of the Host School: Founded in 1991 and situated at 45 Obeledu street, Nkpor-Agu, Idemili-North Local Government, Anambra State, Nigeria; with nursery/primary/secondary tiers of learning; with strong music philosophy and culture, competent music teacher, equipped music room with musical instruments and sound system.

School Proprietor: Lady Pat Okeke

Resource Person: Prof. Alvan-Ikoku Nwamara

Schools present at the Concert: Irene Menakaya School, Onitsha; Winners International school, Nkpor; Mount Olive School, Onitsha & Springfield Academy, Onitsha.

Nature of the Concert: Free Repertoire & Non-competitive Music Concert

Concert Repertoire: Non-restrictive; every school present was allowed to showcase various genres of music they preferred such as dance, choral, stage band, orchestral, instrumental solo works, etc.

Some pictorial excerpts of the concert are presented below:



Pic.1. ZULU DANCE TROUPE OF MOUNT OLIVE SCHOOL, ONITSHA PERFORMING AT THE 2008 PRIVATE SCHOOLS' CONCERT.



Pic.2. MISS PRINCESS AMAECHINA OF IRENE MENAKAYA SCHOOL, ONITSHA PLAYING A SONG ON THE KEYBOARD AT THE CONCERT.



Pic.3. Miss Adaeze Amanchukwu of Winners' International School, Nkpor being commended for her sonorous voice by the resource person Prof. Alvan- Ikoku Nwamara



Pic.4. Irene Menakaya School Choir performing at the concert



Pic.5. The Host School: Supreme Knowledge Comprehensive School Choir rendering their song at the concert

Competitive Music Concerts and Festivals

Music concerts have also existed historically as a competition where winners emerge with prizes, awards, tokens, or cash rewards. The major merit in this type of concert is that it motivates participants towards hard work for the prize as there is given a set piece, set time, and requirements for each repertoire. But the drawback to this system is bias which has been mentioned earlier in this paper. It is very difficult to extricate bias from the minds of the adjudicators due to the fact that people are naturally sentimental. There have been several recorded cases of fights, threatening court cases, and even attacks on individuals after competitive music concerts due to alleged lack or loss of objectivity in the final judgments of the adjudicators. Nonetheless, competitive music concerts help foster social integration, hard work, and discipline but for the problem of objectivity cited.



Pic.6. The researcher heading a team of adjudicators in the South-Eastern Nigeria Foreign Languages Schools' Music Concert held at ASUU Secretariat, UNIZUK, Awka in 2024

Music Concert as a Window for Maximizing Music in Schools

Engaging pupils and students in music concerts does not only foster social integration but can also serve as a vista of opening to maximize music in schools. This is in tune with Okeke's (2024) Maximization theory of Music which posits that: 'Every opportunity for music, in music, and that pertains to music, lends itself to the maximization of the art'.

In the context of this paper, music concert presents a wonderful opportunity for strong advocacy for music studies in schools which has become a 'threatened species' amongst other school subjects. Music teachers, music educators, and school directors can use the opportunity to advertise, publicize, and also strengthen the value of music to the entire pupils of the school, staff, parents, and even the society. It is always fulfilling to a child to be selected amongst performers in a concert even if it is to play the most 'insignificant role'.

It is also a thrilling experience for parents to watch their wards perform in a choir, orchestra, or even make solo rendition in a concert. Surely, the videos and pictures of such moments are usually captured, taken home, posted and shared to family and friends.

Various forms of 'Music Concert' in schools

Music concert in schools must not take the form of a long-term, long-planned, high budget, and a highly staged classic event. The simple and regular school graduation ceremonies in schools, for example, can be exploited to serve for music concert where pupils are prepared for various performances such as welcome song, National/state/school Anthems by the school orchestra & choir, special numbers and sing songs, ballet, piano recitals, miming, Farwell song, etc. These variegated performances also foster social integration amongst the performing pupils and also the entire school as their performances echo through the entire hall of the event, drawing the entire school and audience together. This idea is also an aspect of maximizing music in schools which is drawn from the maximization theory of music.

School cultural day celebrations and inter-house sports events can also feature various forms of musical shows that can turn into a concert and thereby fostering integration amongst the pupils.

Schools' cultural day celebrations, for instance, usually display the music and dance of diverse cultures across the world. This too can serve as music concert and means for social integration.

Findings

The concert was successful because it achieved the purpose it was meant for and that was: advocacy for music in schools and social integration amongst pupils through music. The pupils were all excited in participating in the

concert particularly in seeing other pupils from different schools also participating; interacting with one other irrespective of the apparent differences in their school uniforms and watching other musically talented pupils as they performed just like themselves were all fulfilling experiences for the children and indicators of the success of the exercise.

Recommendations

The power of music in uniting people and socialization vis- a -vis music concerts should be explored and exploited by music educators and policy makers in Nigeria particularly amongst pupils who are still in their formative years. Most times in seeking solutions to human existential problems and taking policy decisions with regards to human cooperation and coexistence, simple solutions such as music are ignored. This paper therefore highly recommends that music in schools be taken seriously because of its unifying and socially integrating powers as demonstrated in the paper.

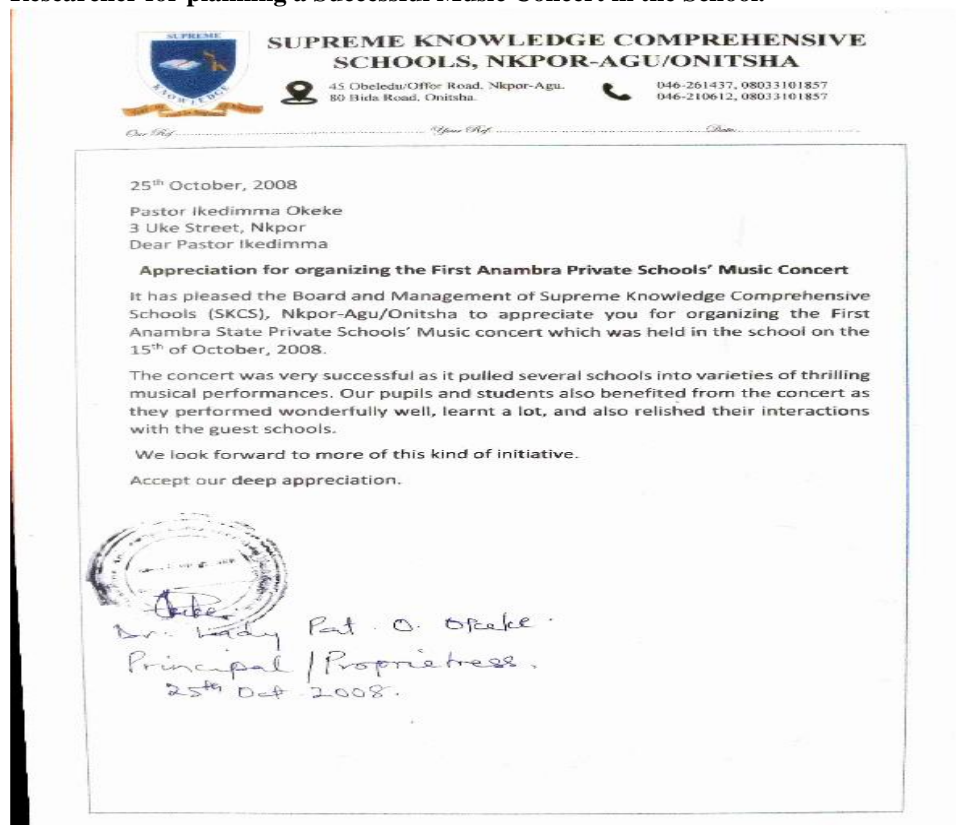
Conclusion

Music concerts within and across schools are formidable means of fostering social integration among children, particularly in a world increasingly plagued by violence, intolerance, strife, and hatred occasioned by religious fanaticism, racism, social stratification, and discrimination. It is remarkable how effectively music can bridge many of these divisions.

Although the planning and execution of music concerts are quite challenging and demanding, especially considering the current economic and human-resource challenges faced by society, the initiative remains worthwhile. Music educators and social planners should therefore explore less demanding avenues and opportunities for sustaining this laudable idea.

Appendix

Image.1. Letter of Appreciation from the Proprietress of the Host School presented to the Researcher for planning a Successful Music Concert in the School.



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