

Music in Christian worship in Nigeria in light of early missionary attitude

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Dates:

Received: 23 Dec. 2022

Accepted: 23 May 2023

Published: 05 July 2023

How to cite this article:

Ademiluka, S.O., 2023, 'Music in Christian worship in Nigeria in light of early missionary attitude', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 44(1), a2796. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v44i1.2796>

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When the protestant Christian missionaries arrived in Nigeria in the 19th century, they disallowed native music as well as the use of musical instruments in the church because of the fear that these would encourage their converts to retain their heathen practices. However, today the solemn congregational hymns they introduced have been either supplemented or replaced with vibrant instrumental music in most churches. The article investigated the reasons why the missionaries banned instrumental music and assessed whether the musical innovations made by Nigerian Christians have hindered or helped the growth of Christianity. Applying the reader-oriented and phenomenological approaches, the article found that phases of musical adaptations in terms of indigenous genres, instruments and traditional and modern dance modes were introduced principally through the youth fellowship groups, indigenous choirs, the Aladura and the Neo-Pentecostal churches. While some critics have argued against these innovations, they have been found to have biblical support, particularly in the psalms. Among other advantages, the indigenous adaptations enhance interest in worship and cater for preferential musical tastes among worshippers. Most churches have come to value the new musical genres so much that they no longer can do without them during worship. Therefore, instrumental music has helped the growth and development of the church in Nigeria in several ways.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: This research involves both the Old and New Testaments as well as Christian music. It holds that rather than being a hindrance to the Christian faith in Nigeria, instrumental music has helped its growth tremendously.

Keywords: Christianity in Nigeria; music in the history of the church; music in worship; instrumental music; Aladura churches.

Introduction

One popular definition of music is 'vocal, instrumental, or mechanical sounds having rhythm, melody, or harmony' (Merriam-Webster 2022). But for the purpose of this article, music is understood as the art which 'inspires dance and guides movement to achieve harmony and synchronization' (Aluede, Aiyejina & Ekewenu 2007:80). This definition is considered more suitable for the African context where 'music, dance, drumming, and drama form a complex whole' (Aluede et al. 2007:80). By birth I belong to one of the mainline churches in Nigeria, formerly known as Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA), and currently as Evangelical Church Winning All (also ECWA). The author remembers that in his later childhood and teenage years, in the 1960s and 1970s, respectively, the two forms of music during the Sunday morning service in the village church were hymns from the church hymnal and the choir's renditions. Both forms occurred at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the service. Both forms were also very solemn! The choir's song was accompanied with tunes from a guitar and a local drum; no dancing, no clapping of hands. The author noticed the same level of solemnity on a few occasions when visiting the nearby Baptist Church. But the situation was clearly different at Christ Apostolic Church (CAC), as we often noticed their loud and frenzied singing, drumming and clapping of hands. The author later learnt that the missionaries who brought the mainline protestant churches to Africa had forbidden instrumental music and dancing such as we used to hear from CAC. However, today, even at the village level, the solemnity of worship in the mission-oriented churches has given way to the vibrant instrumental music that characterises the African Initiated Churches (AIC).

The aim of this article is to examine the apprehension of the early missionaries about music in worship in Nigeria and to assess the current state of music in the church in relation to this apprehension. In other words, the article seeks to identify the reasons why the missionaries allowed only solemn singing in the church, and assesses the developments leading to the present state of

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music in Christian worship in Nigeria. Finally, the work appraises the role of music in the church in the forms introduced by Nigerian Christians. The article employs narrative analysis and the phenomenological approach. Rather than questioning the historical truth of a text, narrative reading treats it in its story form, inviting 'the reader to explore the dimensions of the narrative in its final form' (Oosthuizen 1994:85). According to Cranford (2002:159), a corollary of narrative analysis is the 'reader response' approach, which appraises the impact of the text on the reader. Employing the narrative approach, the article traces the performance of music in the Bible through the history of the church. The phenomenological method of study involves the researcher's personal observation and/or participation in order to describe 'the natural way of appearance of a phenomenon' and to gain insights into its meaning and essence (Qutoshi 2018:215). In doing this, the researcher suspends whatever valued judgement they hold about the topic and takes a neutral stance. Greening (2019:88) opines that the critical step of any phenomenological research is the description; hence many have seen similarities between this approach and the descriptive method which, as defined by Nassaji (2015:130), simply means to 'describe a phenomenon and its characteristics'. Therefore, using the phenomenological approach, the article describes the performance of music in the church in Nigeria, the author having observed and sometimes participated in it over the years.

Music in the Bible and in the history of the church

The Old Testament (OT) copiously indicates that both vocal and instrumental music was well practised among the Hebrew people. It is filled with traditions involving music so much that it seems that the 'people used music in their daily lives' (Burgh 2006:1). Lebaka (2014:1) notes that every facet of Israelite life and history was marked by music. Music was there in their greeting (Gn 31:27), in marriage and burial (Jr 7:34; 48:36), in going to war and coming back from war (Jdg 30:34; Is 30:32). There are romantic songs, just as there are those for working and drinking (Sng 1:9–17; 2:15; Is 21:11–12; 22:13; Ezk 33:32). Several categories of people played various forms of musical instruments (1 Sm 16:18; Jb 30:31).

The OT indicates that certain situations served as specific occasions for musical expression (Bakon 1978:161). Music was employed as 'a celebrative response' to victory over enemies (King 1990:36); or, as expressed by Bakon (1978:161), 'the spontaneous outburst upon the miraculous redemption' from danger. This is best seen in the Israelites' song of victory after the Egyptian army perished in the sea Ex 15). Spontaneously, Moses and the people sang to the Lord for their triumph over 'the horse and its rider' (v. 1). Verses 20–21 depict Miriam and the women singing and dancing with timbrels in their hands. With excitement, they sang to the Lord for 'the horse and the rider he has thrown into the sea' (v. 21, RSV¹). Similar songs of victory are those of

Jephtah's daughter (Jdg 11:34), Deborah (Jdg 5), and the women who sang after David killed Goliath (1 Sm 18:6–7). Music was also used to induce prophecy. After Saul had been anointed by prophet Samuel, as already told by the prophet, Saul came upon a band of prophets prophesying and playing music, and he too began to prophesy (1 Sm 10:5–6). Also, when King Jehoshaphat consulted prophet Elisha to ask for the word of God at a time of war, Elisha demanded for a musician, and when music was played Elisha prophesied (2 Ki 3:15). Thus, music put prophets 'into the proper frame of mind, perhaps a state of trance, to be able to prophesy' (Bakon 1978:162).

The earliest formal organisation of music is found in the books of Chronicles under the leadership of King David, during which time groups of singers were first organised into the 'form of a choir' (Amponsah-Gyan 2018:76). In 1 Chronicles 13:1–8, the ark of Yahweh had been abandoned in Kiriath-Jearim in the land of Judah, and David led representatives of the Israelites to bring it from there to Jerusalem amidst singing accompanied with the playing of the instruments called harps, lyres, tambourines, cymbals and trumpets (cf. 2 Sm 6:1–5). In 1 Chronicles 15, after moving the ark from the house of Obed-Edom, the Gittite, in consultation with the leaders of the Levites, David organised that lineage into a guild of 'singers who should play loudly on musical instruments' (v. 16, RSV), appointing Chenaniah as a sort of choirmaster (vv. 16–22). In the 'handing over' narrative of David to Solomon in 1 Chronicles 23, 4000 Levitical musicians are assigned to praise the Lord with various musical instruments (v. 5), standing every morning and evening to praise God, on the Sabbaths and at the festivals (vv. 30–31). At the completion of the temple by Solomon in 2 Chronicles 5, among the dedication activities was the performance by the Levitical singers in white apparel, playing all manners of musical instruments, along with 120 priests blowing trumpeters (vv. 11, 12). That a formal organisation with the role of a skilled conductor is here represented is shown in verse 13 (Bakon 1978:163), which states that 'it was the duty of the trumpeters and singers to make themselves heard in unison in praise and thanksgiving to the LORD' (RSV). Lebaka (2014:3) is therefore correct when he states that music became formal in Israel such that 'professional guilds of musicians were employed to form choirs and orchestras', serving at the temples and shrines, and possibly in the palace. Hence, Bakon (1978:163) rightly notes that 'the Temple, serving as the religious-national shrine' was the centre where the art of music reached its height.

There is further evidence in the Book of Psalms of the formal and professional use of music in worship. This is shown in the fact that the psalms are 'set to songs and music [which] encouraged the development of guilds of musicians of a high order' (Bakon 1978:163). Amponsah-Gyan (2018:76) opines that some psalms bear marks indicating tunes (e.g. 57–59; 60; 75; 80), which shows that they 'were performed through chanting or in a recitative-style' at certain occasions of worship. It has been popularly suggested that certain psalms are songs rendered during the great festivals. The so-called

1. The Bible references quoted are abbreviated as follows: New King James Version, NKJV; Revised Standard Version, RSV.

Songs of Ascent (Ps 120–134), for instance, were probably sung by pilgrims who came to Jerusalem for the agricultural festivals (Matthews 1992:933; cf. Ex 23:17; Dt 16:16). Psalm 68:24–25 is a specific example of psalms as songs:

Thy solemn processions are seen, O God, the processions of my God, my King, into the sanctuary – the singers in front, the minstrels last, between them maidens playing timbrels (RSV).

As some scholars suggest, this psalm was sung in an autumnal festival during which a procession of people ‘marched through the streets of Jerusalem to the temple’.

However, unlike the OT, the New Testament (NT) has ‘very little reflection on music’ (Lebaka 2014:3), the little known being virtually vocal as against instrumental music. It is, in fact, interesting to note that the NT ‘does not mention instruments in the context of worship’ (Lebaka 2014:2). According to Freedman (1992:934), at the inception of the NT, church music had continued to flourish in the synagogue but then the Levitical guilds were no more, and instrumental music was not in use. Gillirgham (2008:63) also attests to the fact that the synagogue was primarily a place for the reading and recitation of scripture rather than a place of music. Some attribute the absence of instrumental music in the synagogue to the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 CE, which ‘seems to have completely wiped out temple worship’ (Amponsah-Gyan 2018:77; cf. Begbie 2000:521). That incident would have been the reason for private worship in the houses of some church members (1 Cor 16:19), a condition that was not conducive for instrumental music (Amponsah-Gyan 2018:77). Another reason is the fact that instrumental music was well-known as an aspect of ‘the pagan grandeur of Roman culture’ (Gillirgham 2008:63). The Romans had adopted the Greek forms of entertainment and made them more spectacular and for this reason music became ‘largely associated with debauchery and immorality of all kinds’ (Groves 2019:6). Amponsah-Gyan (2018:77) states that instrumental music was ‘highly patronized in paganism’, for which reason the ancients had a secular perception of it. Hence, in the NT church instrumental music would have been avoided so that it would not be ‘a snare to those who were weak in faith’ (Amponsah-Gyan 2018:77). This situation would explain why the NT talks more about lyrics than instrumental music in worship (Gillirgham 2008:63). As explained by Amponsah-Gyan (2018:77), in place of the use of instruments, the NT church relied virtually on ‘liturgy and singing’ in worship.

The writers of the NT and the founders of the church, then, must have ‘adopted what they knew of synagogue music’ (Lebaka 2014:3). As gleaned from some texts, the form of music in the NT church was congregational and personal singing (Lebaka 2014:3). An example of congregational singing is found in the hymn rendered by Jesus and his disciples at the Eucharist (Mt 26:26–9; cf. Mk 14:26). The Pauline and other epistles depict personal singing in terms of psalms, hymns, and other songs, all perceived as ‘making melody in your heart to the Lord’ (Eph 5:19, NKJV; cf. Col 3:16). Following from these references, the OT psalms were

apparently rendered as songs. For instance, James (5:13) instructs that members of the congregation should express their happiness by singing psalms (NKJV). In 1 Corinthians 14:26, Paul reveals that during congregational worship individual members might sing psalms² (NKJV). These texts, therefore, indicate that in the NT church ‘psalms [were] put to music and also understood [as] songs’ (Amponsah-Gyan 2018:77).

From the time of the early church fathers to the medieval, church music was not only virtually vocal, but instrumental music was expressly detested. For instance, for Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–215 CE) musical instruments are ‘suited for beasts and for the class of men that is least capable of reason’ (Ansell 2015:16). The only ‘instrument’ he recommended for worship is the word of God, not the ‘ancient harp or trumpet or drum or flute’ (Ansell 2015:16). Similarly, Eusebius (c. 260–340) believed that worshipping with instruments was for the people of old, as the unison voices of Christians are ‘more acceptable to God than any musical instrument’ (Ansell 2015:16). Augustine (354–430) wrote that musical instruments were not used in church worship because they ‘associated so intimately with the sensual heathen cults’ and the performances of the theatre and circus (Ansell 2015:15). Thus, for the Fathers, ‘the only fit music was that associated with devout words’, not the one produced on instruments (Groves 2019:7). Having been influenced preponderantly by the old Greek philosophers, they ‘realized that music can either ennoble or debase the moral fibre’ (Groves 2019:7).

Nonetheless, by the medieval period, the church had introduced ‘elaborate forms of worship’ including instrumental music (cf. Osei-Bonsu 2014:48). Contrary to this, the Reformers later emphasised simple form of church music, criticising the abuses of the Catholic Church, which included ‘the polyphony in worship, the lack of congregational singing, the use of instruments’, among others (Osei-Bonsu 2014:48). Erasmus (1446–1536) wrote against bringing into the churches ‘certain operatic and theatrical music’, a confused and disorderliness fit only for the Grecian or Roman theatres (Ansell 2015:16). The Swiss priest and theologian, Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531), rejected music in worship completely and destroyed musical instruments in the church with the claim that they promoted self-indulgence (Ulrich & Pisk 1963:163). Martin Luther (1483–1546) encouraged the use of congregational hymns that reflect the texts of the Bible, stressing the need for music to ‘be simple, direct, accessible, and an aid to piety’ (Osei-Bonsu 2014:41). John Calvin (1509–1564) did not only encourage congregational singing but expressed concern that instrumental music might ‘lead to sensuality and self-gratification’ (Osei-Bonsu 2014:45). Calvin wrote that the use of musical instruments was a part of the old ‘dispensation of shadows and figures ... that pointed to the first advent of Christ [but] unnecessary for worship today’ (Calvin 1949:120). For lyrics, he taught that primarily the Psalms should be used in congregational singing (Osei-

²That the psalms were sung is seen in the fact that the Greek ψαλμων (a psalm) is translated as ‘a hymn’ in some English versions (e.g. RSV).

Bonsu 2014:46). From the perspective of music, therefore, the aim of the Reformers was to restore 'simple forms of worship and music in the Church [which] was accomplished through the introduction of congregational singing' (Osei-Bonsu 2014:40).

Thus, the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 CE had put an end to the OT form of worship characterised by elaborate instrumental music, giving way to the synagogue form known basically for scripture reading. Also influenced by the perception that instrumental music resonated with paganism, the NT church adopted the synagogue solemn form of worship in which the psalms formed the primary songs sung without any instrumental accompaniments. During the medieval period, the Catholic Church introduced elaborate instrumental music in worship but the Reformation rejected it, restoring solemn worship and introducing congregational hymns in the emerging Protestant Church. Hence, rejection of instrumental music by the early Protestant missionaries in Africa was a reflection of the form of worship they had inherited from the history of the church. Nonetheless, as will be seen in the following section, other African factors enhanced the missionary negative attitude towards music in the church. In the section below, this article examines the evolution of music in Christian worship in Nigeria.

The evolution of music in Christian worship in Nigeria

In terms of music, Christianity did not meet a vacuum when it was introduced to Nigeria in the 19th century. As with the ancient Hebrews, in the traditional African society, music played a vital role in all facets of life, particularly worship. Among the Yoruba, for instance, worship occupied a significant position, with each deity having a peculiar 'type of music sacrosanct to its worship' (Olusegun & Okpeki 2019:102). The Igbo believe that 'worship finds its most satisfying mode of address in music' (Nnamani 2014:308). Through songs, priests and diviners invoke and communicate with the deities. During festivals or worship at the shrines, sacred songs are used as praises designed to adore the deities in order for them to grant the worshippers' requests (Aluede et al. 2007:81; Kanu 2019:175; Nnamani 2014:308). It is important to note that in the traditional African society, 'music and dance are inseparable' because instinctively music inspires dance; neither can dance be performed without some form of music (Aluede et al. 2007:80). Frith (1996:223) states, 'When we talk of dance we are almost always talking about movement to music'. Hence, in African traditional worship singing is usually done along with drumming, dancing and hand-clapping (Kanu 2019:175). Sometimes, worship dance involves other arts like 'foot stamping, jumping and leaping' (Aluede et al. 2007:80). Aluede et al. (2007:79) note that in Africa, there are 'dance genres' that are performed exclusively for worship.

Such was the context in which the early missionaries 'encountered indigenous African music' (Mapaya 2013:46). Therefore, the perception in the NT church that instrumental

music resonated with heathenism was palpably relevant in Nigeria, which would explain why the missionaries would not entertain it in the church. Meanwhile, the missionaries had regarded African culture in its entirety 'as pagan [and] devilish' (Ojo 1998:212), especially as most customs were invariably associated with certain religious practices (Ekwueme 1973:13). For them, therefore, these savage practices should be eradicated among their converts lest their new found faith be 'shaken by idolatrous and sensuous ceremonies' (Ekwueme 1973:13; cf. Mapaya 2013:46). In fulfilment of this ambition, there were instances in which over-zealous missionaries and their converts destroyed traditional works of art, including 'shrines and other centres of religious and social organisations' (Ekwueme 1973:13). In respect to church music, African music was regarded as pagan and 'unintelligible to the European ear' (Axelsson 1974:91). For this reason, the missionaries forbade for their converts the 'use of traditional African music in and outside the church' (Ojo 1998:212). Shaffer (1956:39) affirms that from the 1940s, the missionaries placed a 'strict ban on all forms of native music, musical instruments, and rhythmical devices' because of the fear that they would encourage the new converts' old practices or, as expressed by Axelsson (1974:91), because of the risks of leading them 'back to the heathen and sinful society'. Reporting on the Anglican mission among the Igbo, Ekwueme (1973:13) states that 'only the organ or harmonium was allowed in the church'. Similarly, the Baptist Convention in Yorubaland forbade indigenous music and dance in the church. 'The drums, dancing and hand-clapping were prohibited in worship' (Ibude 2020:74).

Nonetheless, music was part of the evangelism brought by the missionaries. In order to make worship relevant and to foster congregational singing among converts, European Christian hymns were translated into the local languages and taught in the church as well as in the mission schools (Ojo 1998:212; Omojola 1995:153). In the early years, music in worship involved 'hymn singing, chant and anthem' (Udok & Odunuga 2016:54), and, as mentioned above, the only instrument 'accompanying the hymns was the organ' (Ibude 2020:74). Illustrating with the Baptist Church, Ibude (2020:75) states that during each Sunday worship service, at least four songs were sung in line with the imported service order that 'accommodated only European hymns translated into the Yoruba language [and] set to Western tunes'. However, this adaptation began to change with 'the nationalist aspiration and cultural awakening' of the late 19th century in which the church was not spared (Ojo 1998:212). There emerged the feeling of 'the necessity to indigenize the Christianity that came to Africa in European garb' and thus make the religion more meaningful to African Christians (Orakwe 2020:249). In several denominations of the mission churches, converts began to demand for indigenisation of worship, such as would enable them to 'express themselves through indigenous music' (Ibude 2020:76). The agitation led to schisms within various denominations, the first of which took place in 1888 at the First Baptist Church, Lagos, according to Ajayi (2010:70). Subsequently, the Baptist Church went into a worship renewal that involved the

development of new forms of music characterised by the adaptation of European hymn tunes to Yoruba and of 'existing Yorùbá indigenous melodies to newly composed Christian lyrics' (Ibude 2020:76). However, it was soon realised that the translation of Western lyrics to Yoruba would not meet their needs because the 'foreign musical and poetic idioms are a strait-jacket for the Yoruba language' (Carrol 1956:46). Similarly, 'Igbo Christians felt uncomfortable' with the artificiality of European verse in Igbo churches and therefore, began to make suitable indigenous adaptations to the order of worship service (Ekwueme 1973:15). Special occasions provided an opportunity for such adaptations, one of which was the harvest thanksgiving service. During thanksgiving services, groups of worshippers, most of whom were farmers, brought their crops as offerings to God in the traditional Igbo way:

Baskets of yams, cocoyam, corn, palm produce, and assorted fruits balanced on their heads, the women singing, danced up the aisle to the altar where they deposited their offerings. The words of the songs were adaptations taken from the scriptures, but the rhythm and other properties of the songs were traditionally Igbo in form and content, directing the body to simple but dignified steps deemed appropriate for staid Christian worship. (Ekwueme 1973:16)

In most Protestant churches, the Youth Fellowship groups constituted another 'forceful instrument in the adoption of indigenous' music in Christian worship (Ekwueme 1973:18). With singing as their distinctive characteristic, the Youth Fellowships composed songs that became popular as they spread quickly from one church to another. Ekwueme (1973:18) affirms that new varieties of music, such as the call and response forms, 'natural in Igbo traditional choral music', arose among these Fellowships. According to Stone (2005:64), the call-response format is a musical situation in which one singer or group sings one part first, followed by the second part called the response sung by the rest in the group. 'This response is often performed by a chorus of singers'. Similar to the functions of the Youth Fellowships, another factor that played a crucial role in the indigenisation of church music was the emergence of 'indigenous choir masters' in many churches, particularly in Lagos (Ojo 1998:212). According to Ojo (1998:212), these 'pioneers of indigenous Christian music' were members of the clergy and church workers. Holland (2020:35) states that the purpose of indigenous choirs was 'to enhance and promote traditional folk tunes'. According to Sadoh (2008:25), the first choir was that of the Cathedral Church of Christ in Lagos, organised in 1895 by Robert Coker, 'the first indigenous organist and choirmaster in Nigeria'. With the introduction of choirs, church music was expanded beyond congregational hymns. In ECWA, for example, to date the choir renders a song at the beginning of the Sunday worship service, another during the offertory and the last as a closing song, all sung in the local languages. However, church choirs are more functional during special festivals like the harvest and thanksgiving services (Adedeji 2004:65). Today, church choirs are well known through their annual services of songs. In fact, what became gospel music in Nigeria originated from church

choirs. Ojo (1998:213) recalls that by the mid-1970s 'choirs from churches were occasionally invited to sing on the radio and television'. Around that time also, church choirs were invited to provide music at occasions such as funeral and birthday ceremonies, but later recorded music was used at such occasions (Ojo 1998:215). Nowadays, established gospel musicians are invited to play at these ceremonies. Hence, Adedeji (2004:65) sees performance by church choirs as one of 'the antecedents of gospel music in Nigeria'.

Nonetheless, the indigenisation of church music in Nigeria is reflected much more in the approach of the AIC, also commonly known as Pentecostal churches. The earliest form of the AICs was the so-called Aladura³ Churches that emerged in the course of the global 1918 pandemic of influenza (Alana 1994:18; Omotoye 1996–1999:64). These churches were quick to realise that the European mode of music could not satisfy the instinctive need of Yoruba Christians (Faseun 2008:188). The Yoruba people would prefer forms of music adaptable to the native culture, such as the ones they were familiar with in their dialects and languages (Faseun 2008:192). Akinade (1996:320) opines that this group of Africans is renowned for joyfulness, spontaneity, and excitability; hence they would want a worship form in which they 'are free to shout out their faith [and] dance vigorously' (Orakwe 2020:250). The Aladura Churches, therefore:

[O]pted for simpler forms of Christian music composed and cast in a language they understood, supported with musical instruments they appreciated, garnished with drum language they could interpret, and accompanied by ecstatic and expressive dancing ... [Thus,] Aladura worshippers prefer music [that reflects] the various changing moods of real life. (Orakwe 2020:250)

The perception earlier mentioned that music and dance are inseparable in African thought is clearly reflected in Aladura worship, wherein 'physical body motion [is] an integral part of music making' (Wilson 1983:3). As aptly captured by Ajayi (1996:198), during worship, 'Bible readings, preaching and other verbal exhortation are regularly interspersed with gusty singing, lively clapping and ecstatic dancing'.

Nonetheless, the current phase in the evolution of church music in Nigeria came in the 1980s with the emergence of the Neo-Pentecostal churches, otherwise called the New Generation Churches. These churches share certain beliefs and practices with the older Pentecostal group discussed above, particularly on miracles and tongues speaking. In addition to the renewed emphasis on these, the Neo-Pentecostals are well known for their prosperity gospel. However, their major distinguishing characteristic is depicted in the style of worship. Robbins (2004:179) explains that in the liturgy of these churches, services 'appear spontaneous, experiential and exuberant', with the praise worship leader

³Yoruba, meaning one who prays. 'Aladura Churches' refers collectively to Cherubim and Seraphim Church (C&S), the Church of the Lord (Aladura), Christ Apostolic Church (CAC), and the Celestial Church of Christ (CCC) (Adegboye 2007 2008:166; Johnson 2011:151).

directing 'exuberant and exhilarating' music (Parsitau 2007:100). The praise worship session is 'one of the significant moments [and] ... the high point of the church service' (Apata 2016:158). According to Apata (2016):

[Praise worship] is a form of thanksgiving, of praising God that consists of music, songs and dance in high tempo and feverish ecstasy that builds and builds in one seamless flow until it reaches a crescendo of collective effervescence ... The dance appears spontaneous, highly rhythmic, seamlessly willowy and effortlessly fluid, with lots of swaying and swirling and gyrating. (pp. 158, 187)

Udok and Odunuga (2016:56) add that praise worship is often done spontaneously 'with handclapping, singing, shouting, dancing, speaking in tongues and prophesying'. Ademiluka (2007:32) reports that in some churches praise worship comes immediately after the opening prayer, while in others it comes immediately before it. Sometimes it features again in preparation for the sermon. Praise worship is usually of two segments. In the first one, the congregation is in the mood of prayer, singing solemn praises of adoration to God, with one or two choir members leading. Here, if any instrument is used, it is only the keyboard playing softly, and no dancing yet. This segment lasts for some 10–15 min, after which the exuberant second segment is let loose. With music coming from the 'musical orchestra ... that motivates the entire congregation' (Udok & Odunuga 2016:56), the choruses here are faster than in the first segment.

This is where every gifted dancer has the opportunity to exhibit the talent. Sometimes the dance is not only frenzied but, in fact, competitive. In some churches it is combined with mouth-whistling and blowing of whistles, and with the type of ululation one witnesses when a famous musician is on stage ... [In one of the branches of] Winners' Chapel, the music was very loud, with some members taking up the open space in front of the altar, dancing, and jumping in a competitive manner. (Ademiluka 2007:32–33)

Although praise worship is done corporately, the 'dancing style varies from individual to individual' (Apata 2016:187). Also displayed are various 'Nigerian ethnic dance steps', such as those of the Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa, Efik, Ibibio, among others (cf. Ademiluka 2007:33; Ukpanah 2022:30).

Beyond this level, in recent years, the New Generation Churches have brought in 'new brand[s] of musical styles [and] formalized dance ministries' (Udok & Odunuga 2016:56). As viewed by Adedeji (2007:87), the Neo-Pentecostal churches have introduced into church music 'several unconventional musical genres and vocal styles ... reminiscent of night club culture', patterns that the youth watch on satellite channels and the internet. Servant (2003:55) asserts that in these churches sermons are 'accompanied by rappers or Makossa musicians'. Endong (2017:38) also states that Nigerian Christian musicians have introduced 'demonised and harmful musical cultures' into traditional Christian worship (cf. Endong 2016:123). His list of such imported musical styles includes 'rock and roll, hard rock, gangster rap, raga Murphy, Rap and Beat', among others (Endong 2017:38).

However, Udok and Odunuga (2016:56) opine that the church has rather been enriched by the introduction of these 'new brand[s] of musical styles'.

However, it is important to note that vibrant music in Christian worship in Nigeria is no longer limited to the Neo-Pentecostal churches. The move has consumed most of the churches so much that even the mainline churches 'no longer lay emphasis [on] or cherish the solemnity of church music as given by the early missionaries' (Udok & Odunuga 2016:56). For instance, in ECWA, where it was formerly forbidden to shout 'Halleluyah', the dancing can be as frenzied as in Winners' Chapel, depending particularly on the youth population in the congregation. Ademiluka (2007:33) reports that music and dancing were highly exuberant in several of the mission churches he visited, for example, in Anyigba in Kogi State, being a university town with a high presence of students. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that there are still a few churches at the opposite extreme of the exuberance in most churches, where, in fact, 'the solemnity may bore non-members' (Ademiluka 2007:34). This is the case in the gatherings of the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Apostolic Faith Church and Deeper Life Bible Church. In these churches:

[I]n place of the modern musical [gargets], most of the time you find only a piano. Hence, there is little encouragement for dancing. The usual choruses in the vibrant churches are almost absent. Instead, they still retain the traditional hymns that are fast being eliminated from the vibrant category of churches. Ululation is absolutely absent, not even 'Halleluyah'. In place of these, in some of these churches, to express appreciation for a special number the congregation simply chorus 'Amen;' no clapping. (Ademiluka 2007:34)

Commenting on music and dancing in the other churches, the General Superintendent of Deeper Life Bible Church, Pastor W.F. Kumuyi, once said that most of the time is devoted 'to dancing, drumming and other emotional hypes and theatrics [that] are not in Deeper Life' (Ankomah 2006:13).

Thus, in spite of the early missionaries' efforts at preventing the introduction of instrumental music into Christian worship in Nigeria, over the years Nigerian Christians have made both indigenous and modern forms of musical adaptations to worship. In the section below, the article appraises these innovations against the early missionaries' apprehension that instrumental music would hinder acceptance of Christianity by Nigerians. In other words, the section assesses the extent to which this fear is justified, that is, if instrumental music has actually hindered or helped the growth of the religion in Nigeria.

An appraisal in relation to early missionary attitude

The arguments that are often raised against instrumental music in Christian worship border on the manner of presentation and forms of music. Ademiluka (2007:38) admits

that the scene of praise worship in most of the New Generation Churches would necessarily give room for criticism. He reported instances where it became rowdy and noisy, especially when exuberant music and ululation went together. 'In such a situation an outsider might mistake a church gathering for a disco party'. Apata (2016:159) likens praise worship sessions in some churches to 'the ritual of drumming, singing, clapping and dancing' in the pre-Christian Nigeria, which the missionaries condemned as pagan and devilish, as earlier mentioned. Ademiluka (2007:38) observes that the atmosphere of praise worship can be dangerous for faith at times, especially when ladies are involved, some of whom are often immodestly dressed to church. Hence, because of the possibility of abuse in this way, some churches have 'refused to introduce music and dancing in their worship services' (Ademiluka 2007:38). For instance, Deeper Life Ministry (n.d.:8-14), a publication of Deeper Life Bible Church, condemns the way music is used in the church today as having long departed from its intended role in the Bible.

In the contemporary times, music has been perverted from its original spiritual, inspirational, edifying context. Wild music which in the past was exclusive to hotels and similar places has now been brought into the churches. In effect most churches have lost the solemnity, inspiration and refreshing that come with Christian music in the Bible. [Instead,] contemporary youths are besieged by wild noisy music, drumming and tunes which are very much akin to those that obtain in heathen shrines. (Deeper Life Ministry n.d.:14)

Some Christian writers believe that musical styles such as rap, rock and roll, and others mentioned above are 'extremely hostile to the Christian faith' (Endong 2016:123). This perception is based on the fact that rock musicians, for instance, often exhibit traits of drug addiction and illicit sexual behaviours (Endong 2016:123). Others perceive these secular styles as being 'primarily associated with club houses, various satanic practices and social vices' (Adedeji 2007:93). Moreover, when such styles are performed in the church, the instrumentation, rhythms and dances may occupy the mind of both the singers and the audience rather the message of the music (Adedeji 2007:93). In view of this, Deeper Life Ministry (n.d.:14) states that 'contemporary pseudo Christian music is a vice that the believer must free himself from'.

However, this conclusion does not truly represent the facts about musical exuberance when it is studied from the biblical and African perspectives. Ademiluka (2007:37) found that contrary to the accusation of secularisation, churches that engage in vibrant music and dance claim support from the Bible, particularly the Book of Psalms. Psalm 100, for example, enjoins worshippers to make a joyful noise to the Lord. As seen earlier, among the Jews this injunction found application in vibrant music and dance because a 'joyful song will obviously necessitate an exuberant dance' (Aluede et al. 2007:84). This is especially so for Africans for whom dance is both polyrhythmic and percussive, features which 'make it imperative for the singer and spectator to feel the need to sway the body' (Aluede et al. 2007:84). Psalm 150 encourages worshippers to use various kinds of musical instruments

such as were known to the psalmists. If they wrote today, the psalmists would have included the guitar, piano, set-drums, keyboards and traditional musical instruments known to the authors (Ademiluka 2007:37). Writing on the Aladura, Faseun (2008:190) affirms that the use of instruments in worship enhances culture and interest, thereby making worship 'culturally meaningful'. Ibude (2020:77) states that church music can serve its desired purpose 'efficiently when communicated in musical idioms understood by the people within a cultural context'. It is by drawing from 'the repertoire of African musical idioms' (King 1990:39) that Christianity is being made culturally relevant to Africans while holding 'fast to its ever-abiding message' (Kato 1985:31). Perhaps, for this reason, apart from the modern and traditional instruments, Nigerians have introduced musical genres that in no doubt have enhanced worship. For instance, as seen earlier, in addition to the congregational hymns, Nigerian Christians have introduced 'songs in the African call-response format' popularly known as choruses (Orakwe 2020:251). Ajibade (2007:107) observes that today choruses have 'formed part of a common Christian culture [crossing] denominational boundaries', including the mission-oriented ones. Hence, through exuberant music and dance Nigerian Christians adapt Christianity to their own cultural context. But if this approach is hindered because it is viewed as heathenish, 'then true worship for them is unattained; rather they are simply [a] captive audience' (Aluede et al. 2007:84).

The musical innovations by Nigerian Christians are important not only from the biblical and cultural perspectives but especially from the perspective of the youth population. These adaptations take cognisance of the various age groups in the congregations, that is the old and the young, and the 'need to satisfy their natural musical tastes' (Theological Advisory Group [TAG] 1996:117). While the older people are used to the western type of hymns, the youth prefer exuberant music with appropriate dance. While the older people enjoy the often slow and serious type of music introduced by the western missionaries, the typical African youth prefers music that is 'alive and active with movement' (TAG 1996:117). Perhaps, that is one reason the New Generation Churches attract more youths than the mission churches. Ademiluka (2007:38) reported that young boys played musical instruments with a high degree of dexterity in some of these he visited, which proved that they must be talented in the art. Thus, in these churches through the use of musical instruments the youth are given the opportunity 'to discover and exercise their God-given talents'. Even the mainline churches have long realised the need to cater for the needs of 'all the different groups of people' attending worship service (TAG 1996:117), particularly the youth. To achieve this, most of them now have the English section of the Sunday morning worship service where service is not only conducted in English, but the youth have the opportunity to express themselves similar to the experience in the Neo-Pentecostal churches. Adiele (1992:110) may, therefore, be correct when he attributes the numerical growth of the New Generation Churches above the older denominations to the use of indigenous music and local instruments. Such musical genres

match the emotionalism of worshippers in a way foreign tunes can hardly do.

Thus, music and dance have always helped 'to lift up or inspire ... depressed [worshippers] where other means have failed' (Adiele 1992:110).

Furthermore, the fact that worshippers have musical preferences implies the need for a change. In a research carried out among some churches in Kenya, Theological Advisory Group (1996:18) found that 'nearly 70% of the Christians enjoy' the use of musical instruments with choruses and clapping during Sunday morning service while only 4% feel otherwise. That is why change is coming into worship services. That is why although 'drums were not allowed in the past', these days drums are used in most churches (TAG 1996:119). The old hymns are still in use, yet the kind of hymns being sung today is changing all over the world. Even the westerners who brought the hymns to Africa now sing choruses and new hymns in their western context.

It is in the context of the necessity for change that the secular musical genres should be understood. Change is constant, and the church in Nigeria has reflected the fact that it is of advantage to her growth not to resist change. Hence, it has continued to adapt to change while maintaining the primary essence of Christianity. In other words, for some churches, the type of music played in the church need not affect the essence of the gospel of Christ. Perhaps, they are also conscious of the need of members who might 'find it difficult to break from their past' in terms of the type of music they enjoy and therefore desire to make them feel at home in the church (Adiele 1992:110). More importantly, while the fear of rock and roll and other styles being dangerous to faith may be real outside the church, in the context of the worship service, it is of little relevance because such genres are seldom practised inside the church. It is not impossible to witness different individual dance styles during praise worship, but apart from the generally accepted manner of dancing in the church, what is also common, particularly in the New Generation Churches, are the traditional styles, which are highly valued for the fun attached.

Conclusion

Throughout its history prior to the advent of Christianity in Africa, the church had imbibed the perception that instrumental music resonated with paganism and immorality. When the protestant missionaries arrived in Nigeria in the 19th century, they found this perception relevant, as African traditional worship was characterised principally by singing, drumming and dancing. Hence, fearing that converts would retain their heathen practices, the early missionaries placed a strict ban on all forms of native music as well as the use of musical instruments in the church. As part of Christian worship, the missionaries translated European Christian hymns into the local languages for use in the church, accompanied only with the organ. However, in no time Nigerian Christians became dissatisfied with this adaptation and demanded for

indigenisation of worship, particularly its music. To carry out this desire, Nigerian Christians began to make suitable indigenous adaptations to the order of worship service. One of the avenues for indigenisation was the Youth Fellowship groups who championed the introduction of choruses as an addition to the congregational hymns. Another factor was the emergence of indigenous choirs whose primary purpose was to promote traditional folk tunes. Perhaps, the most remarkable factor was the rise of the Aladura Churches in south-west Nigeria who introduced simpler forms of Christian music in Yoruba as well as traditional musical instruments, accompanied with ecstatic dancing. This phase was improved upon by the Neo-Pentecostal churches with their exuberant worship characterised by elaborate instrumental music with vigorous dancing. Some have argued against these adaptations. It is claimed that sometimes musical genres and performances are much the same with what obtains in heathen worship or secular settings. But churches and Christians involved have always claimed biblical support for their musical practices, particularly Psalm 100 which certainly encourages exuberant music. Psalm 150 specifically instructs worshippers to employ various kinds of musical instruments in worship. Moreover, the indigenous musical adaptations have enhanced interest in worship by making it culturally meaningful. These adaptations also cater for the musical tastes of the varying ages in the congregations, especially the youth, which is actually one factor that accounts for the numerical growth of the New Generation Churches above the older denominations. Furthermore, lively music has often served as a source of inspiration for depressed worshippers. Most importantly, instrumental music has become an inseparable part of the worship service in most churches so much that it is unimaginable conducting worship without it. If it ever happened 'people would go away and perhaps not come back' (King 1990:37). Therefore, rather than being a hindrance to Christianity in Nigeria, instrumental music has actually helped its growth and development in several ways.

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

The author declares that no financial or personal relationships inappropriately influenced the writing of this article.

Author's contributions

S.O.A., is the sole author of this research article.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or 'not-for-profit' sector.

Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the author, and the publisher.

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