

# INDIGENOUS EDUCATION THROUGH COMMUNITY MUSICAL ARTS IN NIGERIA: THE BEAUTIFUL NUBIA EXPERIENCE

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## **Abstract**

This paper focused on community musical arts as a means to rebuilding moral education and values within the society especially among the Yoruba people in Nigeria. Adopting qualitative research design, it explored community music performance in the experiences of 'Beautiful Nubia', a Nigerian contemporary popular musician. Through participant observation, the paper finds performance as a way to the restoration of cultural and moral rebirth within the 21<sup>st</sup> century Nigerian society. It concludes that benefits of community musical arts includes direct mentoring, enhanced influence and collective evolution as important strategies for the development and moral education of the younger generation in Nigeria who are more vulnerable to the loss of the value.

**Key words:** Education, Musical Arts, Community Music, 21st Contemporary, Beautiful Nubia

## **Introduction**

Music as an aspect of culture is a product of the society- a phenomenon that binds people of the same community together as one. However, 21st century high technological innovations have reduced the communality within Africa as overt in the case of modern Nigerian society. This is perceived as part of the reasons for the high level of decadence being witnessed in the modern society. To a large extent, it has reduced the moral, emotional and communal value shared among the people.

## **Community Music (CM)**

In pre colonial Africa, music thrives among the people within various communities. Community musiking was a mark of communality where people within a society interact to share values, life principles, joy and experiences are shared through music and other arts such as dance, drama, poetry and other forms of entertainment. Community music is expressed by people of different ages and groups. Example is the age grade gathering where people

of same age range share moments of singing and dancing together. Among children, games and their accompanying songs are rallying points, among hunters within the Yoruba community; '*Ijala ode*' was a community event. This was a kind of social engineering system prevalent in traditional African communities (Nketia, 1974). Recently, community events have become rare and often distorted when they are enacted or staged by various technological innovations that encourage individualistic instead of communal form of living. This development has drastically promoted vices such as sexual molestation, drug abuse, kidnapping and ritual killings which thrive more in modern world.

### **21st Century and Community Music**

The 21st century is characterized by high technological invention where machines are replacing man in work places, where interaction among humans thrive through devices and many aspects of the human lives are turning virtual. Technological advancement is on an astronomical rate in all fields and profession. More importantly, "artificial intelligence" is becoming a vogue where the Internet provides answer to many questions. People in the 21st century have transformed the world's known ideals in many ramifications. However, the height is yet to come

This study is focused on Beautiful Nubia, a Nigerian popular musician. He is known to have created a community of musical arts system for the purpose of educating as well as entertaining people within the society. His musical performances epitomises an avenue and platform where core life values are shared at a communal level referred to as community music (CM). Veblen (20) affirms that CM is "through the way in which it is interpreted in different places" (p.1). The study examined Beautiful Nubia's musical performance in teaching morals, human value and philosophical ideals; he has created a community of musical arts system that is educating as well as entertaining people within the society.

### **Methodology**

This paper employs ethnographic method in its design. The design was considered appropriate because the study involves examining the artist's musical practice with its impacted influence on the people within the community. Being a qualitative research, primary data was collected through interview and participant observation from the field which is a major location for his community music performances. Segun Akinlolu (Beautiful Nubia), his manager and Jumoke Olagundoye (a former resident of Bodija) were the three persons interviewed. Beautiful Nubia was interviewed on site at the Bodija, Ibadan location of his community musiking after the performance on

8<sup>th</sup> April 2023. His manager was interviewed on two occasions; the first was telephone conversation while the second took place physically before the April performance at the Bodija location. Jumoke Olagundoye was interviewed in Ondo on May, 15<sup>th</sup> 2023. In order to observe the performance, the researchers had to follow the online advertisement to ascertain the time for the Bodija performance, purchased the ticket and met with the manager to state our intention. Two visits were made to the site. The first was to locate the venue and meet the manager, while the second visit was on the day of the performance. At the venue, as part of the audience we observed instructions given by Beautiful Nubia ranging from clapping, standing, sitting, audience chorus, and dancing to mention few. Secondary data were gotten from extant records through review of literatures and internet surfing.

### **Beautiful Nubia**

One of Nigeria's foremost contemporary folk and root musicians of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is Beautiful Nubia, his real name is Segun Akinlolu. Born on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November, 1968 in Ibadan, where he had his primary education. Afterwards, his family relocated to Abeokuta in Ogun State when his parents were transferred. He was raised within the influence of an artistic home, his mother was the first song writer he knew, he affirmed. He therefore developed his inherent talent of singing and dramatizing



**Fig. 1:** L-R Adeolu with Beautiful Nubia at No. 1 Soun Ajagungbade Avenue, Bodija, Ibadan.  
April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Picture Credit: Adeolu-Abe, P.O

He enjoyed the traditional cultural and moral upbringing from the family. Growing up in a Christian household he participated in Church activities that further established him in Godly values in addition to the moral value he imbibed from the family and the society. His contact with *Adire* in Abeokuta informed part of the reasons for his choice of clothing. In Abeokuta, he had ample time to develop and perfected his skill on the guitar. Beautiful Nubia studied Veterinary Medicine at the University of Ibadan and obtained Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) in 1992. After his tertiary education, he practiced in the same discipline for close to a decade before he fully ventured into music performance and production. He has over ten albums and over fifty songs to his credit expressing the African culture, humanity, morality, political sensitivity, societal advancement and togetherness among other themes.

### **Beautiful Nubia and Community Music**

Jourdan (2013) defined Community music (CM) workers as those who improvise and re-invent to lead others through Music. This definition aptly describe Beautiful Nubia's foray into music in recent time. He has taken his music beyond the formal gathering of high profiled concert in halls and theatres into the neighbourhood of the urban Bodija community in Ibadan Oyo State. Beautiful Nubia re-invented some of his hit tracks songs such as "owuro lojo eni ma rire o" into concepts that are hands on for the young adults who forms majority of the audience at the venue of his performance in Bodija, Ibadan (1 Soun Ajagungbade Avenue, Bodija, Ibadan) on quarterly basis. Bodija, rated as the "la cream de la cream" of Ibadan the second largest city in Africa is a quiet and serene neighbourhood where many of the children raised there are more alien to the Yoruba language and culture (Olagundoye, 2023). The idea of situating his CM shows in Bodija as an avenue is to de-Westernize the mind set and beliefs that anything African is evil and sub-standard (Beautiful Nubia, personal interview). He improvises with the inclusion of other related arts such as dance, poetic rendition and some dramatic display, which are seen as 'Musical Arts'. The neighbourhood or community "concert" takes place within the estate residential community in an open space. The natural environment with trees around the main building within the venue serves as shelter for the audience on a sunny evening. The performance takes place quarterly in a year and it is usually in the evening of either the third Saturday or Sunday. This nature filled environment also reflects the typical Nigerian traditional village scene, as only water and palm



*Fig. 2: Beautiful Nubia's live performance at Bodija Community April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Picture Credit: Adeolu-Abe, P.O*

Beautiful Nubia through story telling techniques, personally stresses the non acceptance of carbonated drinks to new participants as foreign to the African culture he is out to promote. The venue of his performances can best be described as midway between modern to traditional African concert settings. The podium mounted to serve as riser for musicians to perform. Plastic chairs provided for the audience to seat while enjoying the amusing performance from the stage. Also the use of modern sound system such as electrified speakers, microphones, cables and cameras were also available to achieve mass entertainment and communication. The performance arena arrangement is likened to 'traditional home arrangement' uncommon but noticeable during festivities in homes of very few people who treat their friends and families to afternoon or evening melodies.

### Music Methods in Beautiful Nubia' Community Music

Beautiful Nubia in promoting education through community music employed methods which Stauffer (2022) refers to as the critical skills required for exceptional accomplishment in all fields of life. The methods are identified as follows; Audience dictate (critical thinking and initiative), Improvisation (creativity), audience participation (collaboration) and learners focus (information and social skills). These methods are found to be applicable to learning in the 21st century Nigerian parlance at every level of school education.

Learning Skill	Literacy Skill	Life Skill
Critical thinking	Information	Flexibility
Creativity	Media	Leadership
Collaboration	Technology	Initiative
Communication		Productivity
		Social Skill

Figure 3: Stauffer's classification of the 21st century skills

Source: [www.aeseducation.com](http://www.aeseducation.com)

### Audience dictate (critical thinking and initiative)

The audience dictate refers to an approach of performance where the audience determine which music is presented by the artist. Beautiful Nubia at his community music performance employs audience dictate by allowing the audience to take initiative of critical thinking on his different albums and songs. The chosen songs are then woven together to form a storyline of instructions addressing current societal issues such as quick get rich syndrome (yahoo yahoo), kidnapping, and insecurity among other societal vices. Teaching and learning in the 21st century requires that learners are made to have critical reflection while teachers are expected to lead or guide learners. Many innovations are developing with the younger generation which Millennia, X, Genz aptly described are sometimes eccentric to the older generation who are the teacher. Providence of initiative through critical thinking provides the opportunity for innovative teaching and learning for both the teacher and the learner.

### Improvisation (creativity)

Improvisation is referred to as creativity is one of the 21st century skills in education. This method stresses creative ability of the teacher in building learners' confidence, responsibility, courage and cooperation needed to

build individual and guild of people. Beautiful Nubia at his community music guides the audiences (students) to incorporate improvisation into the different albums they suggested for performance. This creativity was displayed by the audience, through singing, dancing and clapping which was all initiative of improvisation as expressed in the life performance. As music educators/tutors, it has become pertinent to encourage 21<sup>st</sup> century creative skills in our students. Engaging learners through improvisation in music theory, performance, production and technology builds their creative acumen in the learning experience. This creates the needed confidence to extend their creative ability. The broadened creativity of the students is then incorporated and synergizes into global performance space.

### **Audience participation (collaboration)**

Collaboration is an essential skill for the transmission of musical arts in the 21st century. The audience at the community musiking of Beautiful Nubia serves as collaborators at some point during the performance unlike the Western form of concert where audience are meant to be quiet and enjoy the performance. The audience often engage in the show through resounding of instrumental interludes with their mouth and body parts, by singing along with the lead or chorus. This joint effort produces a situation that enables the audience to respond to Nubia's concepts, thus forming the basis for redesigning his music products. Imperatively, getting learners to be more supportive members of their community and society, teaching and learning should be tailored and made a collaborative one. At Nubia's community music performance, there were instances where members the audience are requested to feature as dancers. They are asked to dance alongside Nubia's dancers without prior information. This he did as a means of exploring creativity in partnership between his dancers and audience dancers. The collaboration learning (CL) style according to Laal, Khattami-Kermanshahi and Laal (2014) is that instruction method that allows students with different performance level to work together is the key to teamwork. In the teaching of Ensemble/performance studies, teacher should employ the CL model for improved learning outcomes.

### **Benefits of Community Music in the 21st Century**

Community music in modern time promises benefits that can restore the loss of cultural, emotional and core value that characterised Africa's past. Societal culture and ethos are mediums through which man grows and provides his life's principles. As Africa continues to lose her core value in the face of modernity, community musical arts assures a level of restoration. As a form, CM re-enacts Africa's collaboration in the building of man and the society, it has the potential of bringing back Africa's lost values with various benefits such

as; mentoring, enhanced influence, collective evolution as well as emotional and cultural renewal.

## Conclusion

The Beautiful Nubia experience of community musical arts opens up varied opportunities to education and share values that keep the people enlightened. Nubia CM as observed at Bodija in Ibadan, Nigeria is affecting the societal development in significant ways. Despite the 21st century technological development with its negative influence on the African communality and harmony, Beautiful Nubia is championing a new course worthy of emulation by music professionals for the purpose of education.

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