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PUBLISHING OF ORIGINAL MUSICAL AND CULTURAL WORKS: PLAGIARISM CONCERNS IN THE VISION 2030

Abstract

The paper illuminates on the importance of proper documentation and publishing of original musical works, it proposes a model for documentation and publishing of original musical works to promote Nigerian composers and their works at the global level. Data was collected through interviews, personal observation, youtube and existing literature. The main thrust is on the 'parody and plagiarism' in the Hymnbook of the God's Kingdom Society, (GKS), known as 'Theocratic Songs of Praise, (TSP)'. It highlights the benefits of using original compositions in church hymnals and the demerits of texts substitution in already existing hymn tunes. This paper concludes that the coming of standard education, and the digital revolution currently in vogue, in line with the vision 2030 movement currently gaining momentum, it is now easy to trace the origin of particular Music, culture, songs and practices. Given the vision 2030, this paper therefore encourages the proper documentation and publishing of original musical and cultural works, and the total annihilation of plagiarism.

Keywords: Publishing, original works or culture, plagiarism concern.

Introduction

The Church is a major avenue for worshippers where varied types of songs are rendered and listened to for various reasons such as healing, deliverance, divine visitation, praise worship and thanksgiving among other reasons. However, one of the worrisome issues is that a lot of music directors in Nigeria are not really well grounded in the craft of church music or music in the church. A recent survey shows that lyrics to popular tunes are changed or altered without recourse to the composer's intentions. By so doing the true meaning of what the original music portrays, as well as the true intent of the composer are altered. This situation is rampant because, 'all kinds of musicians with varying musical abilities carry on the business of directing choirs in churches today. According to Ekwueme (1993), with the dearth of truly qualified personnel for this service in Africa, it is to be expected that amateurs and ill prepared 'professionals' have to do the job

In the light of the foregoing, major decision makers on church music are not well grounded in musical norms, choirs that did not performed well are usually praised while in actual fact there

are noticeable absurdities in the choir setting. It is pertinent to note that 'originality is usually the missing link in these choir settings, until choirs resort to originality, such choirs will continue to fail in their quests, 'originality is the answer to this problem'. Music directors are urged to compose their tunes and create lyrics according to the church's beliefs but not alter what is already stereotyped and rubber stamped with Religious sentiments and beliefs. The Maxim 'res clamant ad dominion' meaning that music will always clamor or go back to its original owner.

Melodies of the original works are often by some choirs sung shabbily, or badly altered by adding parts that do not make sense, and thus creating an un-pleasant mood for worshippers who already know these songs. In such an instance, while the original composers are still alive; this has the tendency to create high blood pressure for the composer out of annoyance, when their intentions are abused by these unnecessary additions resulting in absurd representation of their works.

Commenting on his compositional techniques, Sir Sam Ojukwu (personal interview), the renowned Nigerian Composer stated that his compositions bears tonality, tendencies to move either lower or higher the original key but still within the tonality Major and Minor. He enjoys shifts to the Subdominant and to the dominant, depending on the length of the work. It is wrong to alter any original composition, whether lyrics or otherwise because, it distorts the original idea or concept are distorted.

Composition is seen as an expression of self. Copland in Ofosu (2010) states that, every artist's work is an expression of himself, but not as direct as that of a creative musician. He gives us, without relation to the exterior 'event' the quintessential part of himself... (pg 106) Composers are guided according to their temperaments; Geschichte and Genenwart in Achinivu (1979), states that the 'creative process by which a more or less clearly and permanently fixed and meaning conglomeration of sound is produced as a rule, recorded in Notation, whereby a certain degree of originality is pre-supposed in the product (p.115).

Onwuekwe (1998:84) notes that music comes from within in the attempt to express emotions, sadness, joy or reverence. It is better to compose original songs, than to plagiarize other people's work. Given the age of enlightenment, people now are looking forward to the future for impetus into general world knowledge and a secured musical future. The foregoing underpinned the need for this study on publishing of original musical and the total annihilation of plagiarism in the Hymnbook of the God's Kingdom Society,(GKS), known as 'Theocratic Songs of Praise, (TSP)'.

Statement of the Problem

The issue of parody, plagiarism, and non use of original compositions in the Hymnbook of the God's Kingdom Society (GKS), known as 'Theocratic Songs of Praise, (TSP)' in church services has become a 'thorn in the flesh' in the church's global outreach, especially now that we are in a dispensation where digital technology trends in all facets of life. Despite the global 'blacklisting' of its hymnal as 'parody' in its online service, existing hymnbook 'Theocratic Songs of Praise, (TSP)' still show many negative or grey areas in this direction, indicating a lack of interest in the incorporation of original compositions thus changing the narrative of plagiarized hymns in its service or worship. Because of this prevailing situation, this study addresses the issue of text

duplication or parody, plagiarism, and non use of ‘Original compositions in the church, using the views of music director, congregation and choristers of the church in Warri.

Aim and Objectives

The main aim of this study is on the X-ray of the text duplication of the Hymnbook of the God’s Kingdom Society (GKS), The Theocratic songs of praise. The objectives are to:

- (i) assess the level of parody the church’ hymnal
- (ii) examine reason for non use of original compositions in the church hymnals
- (iii) point out implications of plagiarism and parody to the church’s management

Research Questions

1. What is the level of parody in the church’s hymnals
2. What are reasons for the rejection of original compositions written by the music directors?
3. What are the implications of plagiarism and parody on the church’s outreach efforts?

Research Methods

This study is a descriptive study conducted on God’s Kingdom Society,(GKS) Warri. The focus is on the hymnals or the Hymnbook known as ‘Theocratic Songs of Praise, (TSP)’. It employs interviews, participant observation and existing literature on hymns. The target population was the director of music, choristers and church members selected from the church’s headquarters in Warri. Selected number of hymns were x-rayed and were proven to be have been plagiarized.

God’s Kingdom Society (GKS)

God’s Kingdom Society (GKS) was founded in 1934 by Jehovah God through Saint Gideon Meriodere Urhobo of the blessed and eternal Memory, in Warri. Daniel Ilega (personal interview 2003), pointed out that the church has a hymnbook known as the ‘Theocratic songs of Praise’, made up of 192 songs and 8 chants. One germane observation to this study is that the tunes, except very few, are drawn from the popular Mission Church tunes, but worded according to the beliefs of the Society. A few of the original hymn texts were retained where they were in harmony with the G.K.S (Gideon M. Urhobo). The hymnbook has very limited Original tunes. This text substitution has generated a lot of controversies as regards the necessity or authenticity of such actions since most of the tunes used have original lyrics, which goes contrary to the beliefs of the G.K.S.

It is pertinent to note that, the popular Mission tunes adopted by the G.K.S. are performed similarly with the same lyrics and tunes exactly in other hymnbooks of churches with similar beliefs. For example the popular tune ‘Holy Holy Holy’, is the same in Sacred Songs and Solos, Methodist Hymnbook and Baptist hymnbook among other hymnals. Also, ‘the precious name of Jesus’ talks about going to Heaven; The G.K.S. doctrine goes contrary to this belief. This particular Tune is Tsp 67 in the Theocratic Songs of Praise. The G.K.S. does not believe in the Doctrine of Trinity and does not also believe in the reward of Salvation in Heaven. For instance;

Tsp 99 is properly ‘Sweet hour of Prayer, Tsp 30 is actually ‘what a friend we have in Jesus’ to mention few.

Since the GKS does not believe in those doctrines, the church should compose original tunes and put a stop to the practice of changing lyrics of popular Mission Tunes it becomes ‘distortion’ when lyrics are altered. There is no alternative to originality therefore all religious organizations who believe in same doctrines should use popular Tunes written according to their beliefs by the various composers. For instance, during one of the major festivals of the God’s Kingdom Society in December, 2023, known as ‘The Christian Feast of Tabernacles’, the Choir on the band stand rendered the popular tune ‘It is Well with My Soul’ as TSP 51 with a different lyrics ‘Unto Thee we give thanks in Thy Kingdom O God’. Immediately, it was flagged on Youtube, as copyright content infringement since it was a live broadcast Video. There are so many diverse beliefs that now generates the notion that, those lyrics should not be tempered with that they should be performed as written.

The implication is that the Maxim ‘res clamat ad dominion’ becomes applicable (Ejizu, 2013). The Tune with the lyrics ‘Let there be light’ was used for Tsp 139 in the GKS hymnbook with the lyrics-‘a song of love we sing’. The stanza 4 of ‘let there be light’ read thus ‘Blessed and Holy Three Glorious Trinity’. It is overt that there is ‘a contradiction’ in the lyrics of the verse. In the same vein, contradiction exists in the hymn ‘Holy, Holy, Holy’ is known as a Trinity tune, the church does not believe in the Trinity doctrine, it is better for the church to compose its own tunes and lyrics to avoid these contradictions known as, ‘physical and Spiritual Plagiarism’.

The church claimed that the Biblical support for ‘physical and Spiritual Plagiarism’ is seen in Roman 2:1 which states: ‘Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest; for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest, doest the same thing’. Implicitly, it is deduced from the forgoing arguments that, ‘certain actions can elicit reactions both positive and negative’.

Publishing

The Oxford dictionary defined Publishing or Publication as the preparation and issuing of a book, journal, or piece of Music for public sale. A publication is a written document made to communicate with the public. They are usually printed on paper like magazines, books, and online publications which are usually delivered via the Internet. Scholarly journals, popular magazines, Newspapers, Trade journals/Magazines are some of the various samples. Publications, engage topics broadly with detailed narratives and insight into various topics. Implicitly, the term Publishing is ‘the conscious effort in providing Information, Music, literature, and software, to mention few, to the public for free or for sale.

Original Compositions

The Oxford dictionary defined ‘Original’ simply as the ‘First or Earliest’ form of something from which copies can be made. Thus, works created have the marks or traits of the originator. This makes the samples to be unique and generates immediate aesthetic response when played or performed for the first time. It is imperative to have an idea of what the term Music Composition is. Composition is the art of putting down or creating something new on a music manuscript, a computer, etc. The composer’s art consist of putting down transient sounds of different shapes

and lengths, which if not well documented for record purpose, development and uniformed performance considerations, can disappear immediately. Summarily, Composers are guided by their temperament. This is why it is imperative for Music directors or Choirmasters, to deeply study the script they are performing in order to un-earth the intentions of the composer as faithfully as possible, carefully high-lighting the various themes, stressing points of excitement, as well as points of repose.

Plagiarism Concern

Plagiarism has a Latin root ‘Plagiarius’ which simply connotes a thief. Ejizu, (2013) postulated that, ‘The time- honoured wisdom of the ancient Romans was that, someone’s property or thing always clamors for its owner. It was generally believed that if one takes someone’s property without his/her permission, until it is returned, the thing continues to cry for its owner.

Parody

The word Parody is derived from the Greek word Parodia, -a song sung alongside another. One of the earliest examples of Parody comes from ancient Greece ‘Batrachomyomachia’ (The Battle of the Frogs and Mice), in which an anonymous poet imitated the epic style of Homer. The first recorded example of Parody in profane history was recorded in the 5th century in Aristotle’s poetics, where Hegemon the Thasian, is referred to as the ‘ inventor of Parodies’ from which it has been inferred that the term was first used for a moderate length, in epic metre, using epic vocabulary’.

Tony Baker, a famous Guitarist, stated categorically that the copyright to a melody belongs to the melody’s composer and cannot be illegally ‘published’ by non composer. It goes further to say the complication in the process is that the original composer and copyright holder would need to approve the new lyrics. In the same vein Bobby Griffiths-a lecturer with the North Texas University, states that if someone else owns the copyright to the melody, it would not be possible to use it in a song without permission. He further states that if the melody exists in public domain and a copyright cannot be gotten, but by putting new words or lyrics to it is referred to as ‘Contrafactum’.

Demerits of Text Duplication in God’s Kingdom Society (GKS)

The younger generation has imbibed wrong notions and concepts such that, they are growing up with very wrong ideas and when they innocently lay claims to the title of already popular hymn tunes with a wrong title, they are embarrassed that they have a wrong knowledge, and this often leads to unnecessary scuffle and embitterment among their peers from another church. As mentioned earlier almost all the hymns have one form of plagiarism or ‘distortions’ in the hymnals, for instance the Tsp 99 with the lyrics ‘Sweet hour of Prayer, Tsp 30 is actually ‘what a friend we have in Jesus’ to mention few.

Recommendations

Original tunes and lyrics must be composed. Lyrics of a popular tune already in public domain should not be altered as it will draw the attention of the original owner. It is important to collect appropriate and detailed data on the origin of a particular music or culture from its original

source. Plagiarism and false claims on someone's original work has negative repercussions therefore it is better not be involved in plagiarism.

Conclusion

This article discussed the importance of original publications and Plagiarism concern stating that, it is more beneficial to create original works well published, instead of altering the text of an original melody. The paper further stated that, original tunes are composed according to specifics and as such, all those who believe in that particular doctrine or practice, carry both melody and lyrics in their own hymnbooks like the Baptist hymnbook, the Sacred songs and solos, the Methodist hymnbook to mention few. The article x-rayed the practice of the GKS Theocratic songs of Praise where new lyrics are created and used to substitute popular mission tunes and suggests that, since the original lyrics of the mission tunes goes contrary to the belief of the organization, she should avoid altering the lyrics so that those in the opposite camp, will have nothing to say against them. Titus 2:1,7 & 8. On a final note, whatsoever things are honest, just, true, if there be any virtue, let us think of such things that make for peace (Phillipians 4:8).

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