

A Review of the Growth of Yorùbá Church Music among the Baptist Convention Churches in South-Western Nigeria

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Abstract

Yorùbá Church music among the Nigerian Baptist Convention churches in South-western Nigeria has experienced growth in performance practices, human and material resources, and in the quality of musical works from the Yorùbá musical culture. Although there is noticeable musical growth in the area, there is yet the need to review and document the factors responsible for the growth from 1981 to 2021. This study is an attempt to bridge this gap by employing observation and personal discussion with carefully selected music leaders and Pastors, who have served for many decades in each of the Baptist conferences within the scope of the study. This study noted, among others, an increase in recruitment and training of music personnel, increased musical activities in liturgical process and pageantry, increase in documentation of Yorùbá Church as growth indices, music training, missionary activities, continuity and changes in compositional and performance practices, as some of the factors responsible for the growth. It recommends the need for a more specific policy by the church authority on the use of music in liturgy, to further enhance the growth of culturally and theologically relevant church music.

Keywords: Growth, church music, gospel music, Yorùbá, Baptist, South-west, Nigeria

Introduction

By Yorùbá Church music, we mean the music repertoire and musical idioms of Yorùbá ethnic nationality in Nigeria, including different genres with different stylistic approaches used within the context of the churches in the area. Although, there are various church organisations in Nigeria each with distinct denominational and doctrinal emphases, this current study on Yorùbá Church music is focused on the review of the growth of the music within the Baptist churches that are cooperating under the umbrella name of the Nigerian Baptist Convention within the South-west region of Nigeria. The churches under focus have people from other ethnic groups of Nigeria, yet most of the churches predominantly worship using Yorùbá songs and nuances commonly identified in Yorùbá music. It is important to note that Yorùbá Church music as a music typology is not peculiar to these churches under focus, other church denominations make use of variants of the music for various purposes.

Methodology and Scope of the Study

Music from indigenous backgrounds has continued to be adapted to suit the contemporary and religious needs of its society. The church is not in isolation from the society, therefore, the society has continued to influence its musical practices in cultural terms. Likewise, church music has much to offer to society as a medium of expression for faith and practices. Church music in Baptist Churches within the area of study has experienced growth in different ways exposing different ways through which the music traditions and philosophies of the Yorùbá have been modified in different forms to suit the needs of worshippers in the Baptist Churches in the last forty (40) years.

South-west Nigeria comprises six states namely, Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and Oyo, which are predominantly Yorùbá speaking areas, with different dialectical groupings. The churches under focus have parishioners who are Yorùbá from various dialectical extractions. Baptist Churches are grouped as Association according to their geographical location and by the reason of cooperation one with another. The Associations are grouped to form eleven (11) Conferences under the six states. Some states have one Conference with several Associations, while some have two or more Conferences depending largely on the number of Baptist Churches and Associations, their growth rate, and their economic viability.

This study was based on personal observation by the researcher, who has served for decades as clergy, music leader and facilitator in Baptist Church, Nigeria. Personal discussion with carefully selected music leaders and pastors who have served for many decades in each of the Baptist conferences within the scope of the study, was also effectual in sourcing for information for this study.

Overview of Yorùbá Church Music in South-west Nigeria

Mission churches were introduced to Nigerians through missionary exploits from Europe and America. Echeruo (1977) opined that the history of church music is dated to the earliest missionary activities in Central Africa and then Niger area which is present-day Nigeria. Also, the various contacts with the Europeans through slave trade, commerce, and colonialism, were factors that presented Christianity as impregnated in Western cultures. Before the advent of missionary activities and colonialism in the area, the people were worshipping God in their traditional ways, and musical practices embedded in the culture of the people played predominant roles.

Writing about Yorùbá liturgical church music and the Westernization of African Music, Vidal (2012) argued that Yorùbá musical heritage has continued to develop and flourish in the last one hundred years, establishing itself in the cultural soil of Nigeria, and has become the foundation for today's European musical heritage of the church. The growth of Yorùbá Church music in the Baptist Church therefore, may be traced to the historical development of the missionary activities, coupled with the various contacts with European musical heritages of the time. Vidal (2012) further traced the origin of Yorùbá Church music and stated that:

The origin of the European musical heritage in the Yorùbá -speaking area can be traced to the flurry of missionary activities in the southern part of Nigeria during the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1841, the Wesleyan missionaries visited Badagry and reached Abeokuta in 1846 (Burns, 1972). The Church Missionaries Society (CMS) landed later in Badagry in 1843 with Rev H. Townsend...Between 1841 and 1902, Euro-Christian

religious and cultural influences swept through the southern parts of Nigeria and brought with them the impartation of Christian religious music from Europe. (p. 24)

Before the missionary activities, different traditional music were part and parcel of the traditional religious system of the Yorùbá people in South-west Nigeria. But due to the Euro-Christian religious and Western cultural influences, they were either completely banned or suppressed (Euba, 1977). At the inception of missionary activities in the South-western Nigeria, parishioners were introduced to European hymns (which were later translated into the Yorùbá language) and classical music which became the only valid form of musical expression for the mission churches.

In Nigeria generally, European hymns were translated into Nigerian Languages and sung to European melodies in the mission churches. However, this practice was unsuitable as it often compromised meanings and intelligibility because of the tonality of some African languages, including Yorùbá. The imposition of an imported melody upon Yorùbá text usually resulted in a conflict with the natural melodic structure of the tonal language which often suggests its melodic structure.

The training of Yorùbá Church musicians to perform and compose music using Western techniques with African expressions, gave rise to the gradual incorporation of indigenous Yorùbá music in churches. Most of the foremost Yorùbá Church musicians were choirmasters, and organists, who made effort to incorporate Yorùbá Church music into the liturgy, especially in the mission churches. Although the use of European hymns in the Yorùbá language has continued to be relevant in the Baptist Churches under focus, their performance practice has continued to be adapted to suit the musical tastes and needs of the worshippers over the years. As a result of such growth, hymns are now freely accompanied by both Western and indigenous Yorùbá musical instruments in creative and culturally relevant ways.

While writing about the development of art music in Nigeria, Omojola (2009) noted that the introduction of Christian missionary activities and the British colonial administration of Nigeria in the middle of the nineteenth century, contributed to the emergence of new musical forms in Nigeria. These new forms include indigenous church music, urban syncretic popular idioms, modern folk opera, and modern art or classical music. The emergence of these new forms is the result of a historical process which assumed greater momentum in the nineteenth century. All these are evident in most of the churches, and have contributed to the growth of Yorùbá Church music in the area.

Discussion on the growth of church music may be incomplete without focusing on the various church growth strategies employed by the missionaries. One of such is the establishment of mission schools to win disciples for Christ among the indigents, and as well to provide personnel for the various missionary activities. The expansion of mission frontiers and the establishment of mission schools was instrumental to musical training in most of the mission schools. These missionary efforts yielded great fruits in what today has given growth identity to the church and church music by extension. This is evident in the different musical styles, forms, compositional and performance techniques that can be traced to the traditional nuances of the Yorùbá people, which are today used for Yorùbá Church music in most churches including the Baptist churches under focus.

While writing about Igbo music, Okafor (2005) noted that another positive influence on the emergence of the neo-traditional forms in contemporary church music in South-west Nigeria is the introduction of competition and music festivals among mission churches and schools owned by missions. Such musical activities according to Okafor (2005), awakened creative use in local materials. The same is observable in the development of Yorùbá Church music in the Baptist Churches, with the use of local instruments such as *Sèkèrè* (Rattles), *Iluagbamole* (Upright drums), *Gangan* (Talking drum) and other indigenous Yorùbá musical instruments, which became very popular.

Adegbite (1989: 140) opined that "It will be almost impossible to demarcate what is termed Yorùbá Christian religious music from Yorùbá socio-religious music". The social life, among the Yorùbá Christian, is inter-related with the religious life such that, during marriage and funeral ceremonies, (which are typical examples of socio-cultural and religious celebration among the Yorùbá), the traditional music plays significant roles as means of expressions for worship, in recognition of God's acts of goodness. These socio-cultural influences which are now very well-accommodated in Yorùbá gospel music, variously termed Alujo gospel uses a fusion of Juju music and Fuji music styles commonly found in churches during sessions of praise and worship.

While writing about different music traditions in church history, Ashton (1943) opined that protestant worship in the twentieth century and the music suited to it, are not identical to Roman worship of the sixteenth century. Yet, the achievements of the past have much to teach today both musically and devotionally. Ashton's argument is very relevant in our times. It implies that past worship musical traditions and their achievements have much to teach us musically and devotionally. Nothing in the world today is new. There must have been some sort of old ideology or philosophy, and art, which has been infused and adapted into the current art forms. The logic in this is that worship traditions of the past, including certain popular musical elements, can have relevance in the twenty-first century Christian worship. This philosophy has propelled the growth of Yorùbá Church music among the Baptists in South-western Nigeria in the last forty years.

Writing about Nigerian art music, Omojola (1995) discussed some of the African elements as composers understand it, use it, and which may be evident in musical compositions and performance practices of Yoruba songs commonly used in churches to include poly-rhythmic and multi-meter textures, strong percussive textures with danceable rhythm, a spontaneous composition that employs call and response pattern, tonal harmonies with varied textures and considerations for tonal inflexions of the language, and the use of relevant indigenous musical instruments, among others. These elements are traceable in the musical compositions and performance practices in the Baptist Churches under focus.

Idamoyibo (2007) in discussing the adaptation of *Ijala* music into contemporary Christian worship among the Yorùbá, opined that despite the influences from other cultures, some of the musical classics of various kinds that were once performed within the traditional contexts of Yorùbá are now being adapted into Christian worship contexts, to reabsorb the musical heritage of the people. The church is not left out of such adaptation of indigenous musical themes as has been observed within the churches in the scope of the current study. Musical themes which were once part of the cultural and traditional dynamics have now been adapted for use in some churches.

As Yorùbá music evolves in society, new popular musical art forms find expressions in the Church. Some of the common music styles predominant among the Yorùbá people in contemporary times which have continued to develop in various forms include Art Music, High Life, Juju music, Fuji music, and Apala to mention but few. These Yorùbá popular music styles are now infused in the performance practices in various forms within the Baptist Churches under focus.

The Nature of Yorùbá Church Music in Christian Worship

Though the influence of Euro-America music tradition is still strong in Christian worship among the Baptist Churches in the South-West, Nigeria, there has been a consistent preference for the use of indigenous Yorùbá music in most Baptist Churches in the area. Since music is an integral part of human life of the people, it will continue to be their most valid medium of expression and communication.

Musical presentations in Yorùbá among the Baptist Churches in South-Western Nigeria thrive on rhythmic textures and reflect the joyous mood that is usually associated with the socio-cultural norms of the people. Among the Yorùbá and in Africa generally, meaning and intelligibility are often derived from the values the people place on music from their cultural contexts. This explains why hymns translated into Yorùbá are mostly sung in a happy and danceable manner in Baptist Churches, as against what obtains in other churches with much Western cultural orientation. The marriage of Western and African indigenous musical themes resulting from the adaptation of Western hymns into indigenous contexts has contributed to the development of Yorùbá Church music, as many more Yorùbá songs now employ the use of such neo-African art forms in Yorùbá Church music.

Faseun (2008) argued that there are three basic indigenous music types in Christian worship among the Yorùbá communities. They are the Native Airs, Choruses, and Anthems. They are accompanied by a combination of Western and traditional Yorùbá musical instruments in danceable styles. Anthems are special songs arranged for choral renditions and are usually performed during the liturgical process within the churches. Atanda (personal communication, August 6, 2021) opined that choral anthem are rendered as choir specials to illustrate and reinforce a chosen theme or scriptural message for the day. Olaniyan (2001) also noted that Yorùbá contemporary art music for Christian worship, such as native air, became livelier and more inspiring as a result of the inclusion of drumming for accompanying the songs. Olatunji (2008) argued that among the Yorùbá, music is a vital tool in day-to-day living. For example, music is used to educate, especially the young ones about almost all the facets of culture and traditions. It is used to praise, entertain, and communicate, both in the physical and metaphysical realms. Music is also used extensively in worship and as therapy for the drudgery of routines during traditional and customary events in the life of a Yorùbá. Likewise, it is used to identify the members of a particular occupation or association. The contextual uses of music among the Yorùbá people and other factors such as the dialects, aesthetic factors, Western music education and inter-cultural musical tendencies account for the development of neo-African art music styles that are commonly found in the liturgy of most the Baptist Churches.

The music of the Baptist Churches under focus can be categorized as choral or Congregational, vocal and instrumental. A Baptist church is an evangelical Church that employs the use of music to propagate the gospel from within the Church. Adedeji (2005) writing about gospel music as a

musical genre noted that it is either used in the church or outside the church. The ones used in the church, called Church Music, may be classified into three main categories, namely indigenous, foreign, and popular music. These three categories may be further subdivided into twelve distinct styles, namely native, traditional, classical, spiritual, A-cappella, instrumental, Gospel-Pop, Gospel-High-Life, Gospel-Reggae, Gospel-Fuji, Gospel-Waka, Juju-Gospel and assorted. In recent years, a combination of all the various musical styles has been observed during elongated praise sessions in churches and Christian gatherings.

The non-traditional popular Yorùbá Gospel music variants are often adopted for musical presentation during the liturgical process as observed among the Baptist Churches under focus. Since dance is an integral part of musical expression among the Yorùbá, it is often common to find musical expressions in the liturgy, incorporating the *Alujo* gospel music styles. *Alujo* styles often combine variants of different popular Yorùbá social dance floor musical styles highlighted above, with such performance practices that enable worshippers to express their praise and thanks to God. Some characteristics which have become prevalent in Yorùbá music styles often depend on liturgical suggestions, based on the mood of worship, performance practices of church musicians, musical forms and textures adopted, the psychology of the worship participants, and the competence levels of the musicians at every point.

The Influence of Musical Training within the Baptist Institutions

For forty (40) years (1981 to 2021), the Nigerian Baptist Convention emphasised the need for training and retraining to gain momentum in every aspect of its mission endeavours. Musical training was not left out. It started with missionary efforts in established training institutions and has continued in the Baptist churches, Associations, Conferences and Convention levels till date. The following factors traced historically, could be attributed as growth factors for the development of Yorùbá Church music within the study area:

i. Musical Training at Baptist College, Iwo

Baptist College Iwo was a higher college awarding Teacher's Training Grade II Certificate. But in 1980, when the Grade Two Certificate was faced out, it became a secondary school. Baptist College from the beginning, attracted American tutors who were involved in training their students in both theory and practice of music. Being a mission college from its inception, there were chapel services, and some of the students were trained as accompanists. Some of the students of the college who had learned to play musical instruments in school became church organists and church music leaders in the churches within Iwo town.

ii. Alma Rohm and the Baptist Music Workshop

One great influence in the development of Church music in Nigeria and especially among the Nigerian Baptists was Alma Rohm, a Southern Baptist missionary sent to Nigeria on missionary assignment. When she arrived in Iwo, there were about two Baptist churches established. As Eniolawun (2015) noted, while Alma Rohm taught English literature, and education, she had a great influence on some students who became interested in receiving musical training in playing the piano, organ, and other musical instruments available for learning. As a missionary, she imparted and influenced the students and her immediate community musically. Alma Rohm played the piano for the Baptist churches in the community, led the choirs, directed Shakespearean plays and organised an annual nationwide Baptist music workshop, which has continued till date.

Over the years, the Baptist music workshop has been a forum for learning new skills for use in the churches of the Nigerian Baptist Convention and beyond. This has provided an opportunity for some musicians from the churches under focus and other churches all over Nigeria to come together to develop their art and incorporate new styles. Some notable composers and performers of Yorùbá Church music trained by Alma Rohm have emerged as national forbears in music, teaching as a subject in schools offering music for higher studies. Some of them have also continued as regular music instructors during the annual nationwide Baptist music workshop, and most of them have choral works which feature in the repertoire of choirs in most of the Baptist churches under focus.

iii. Music Studies at Bowen University, Iwo

The establishment of Bowen University (a Nigerian Baptist-owned private university) at Iwo, in Osun State, has continued to be a great boost to the growth of church music in South-western Nigeria. With a student population of over five thousand (5,000) from all over the world, exposure to systematised musical training in the activities of the Bowen University has had a transforming effect on the musical taste of the Baptist churches in the South-west, and Nigeria at large. Music is adequately integrated into the religious training of the students at Bowen University. The Bowen University, for example, has developed a very strong music programme with qualified music graduates to boost the religious activities within the school, enhance the ministry and relevance of the institution and to train future leaders for Nigeria. The Bowen University as part of her responsibility in raising God-fearing leaders now has a Department of Music which is currently running a Bachelor of Arts in Music programme. The mass choir of the Bowen University in addition to her role in leading music in their chapel, convocation, and during the Nigeria Baptist Convection's annual sessions, has released an album of songs in a variety of styles, some of which were in Yorùbá language. This again has contributed in many ways to the development of Yorùbá Church music within Baptist churches in the South-west.

iv. Faculty of Church Music at the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso

Baptist churches all over Nigeria and especially in the South-west have benefited tremendously from the creation of a Faculty of Church Music at the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso. The faculty started as a unit by Mrs Eveline Miller, a Southern Baptist missionary from the United States, under the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary. With the support of the late Rev. E. A. Akinleye, and Rev. E. O. Inyang, the Seminary began to train pastors that were interested in pursuing a career in music ministry. Some Baptist churches in the urban centres across Nigeria later began to demand the services of such specially trained pastors, which eventually gave rise to a full-fledged Department of Music.

The need to start a Department of Church Music by the Nigerian Baptists made the Southern Baptist's Foreign Mission Board approve the deployment of Dr P. O. Davidson as a Southern Baptist music missionary to Nigeria. Davidson's ministry at the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso aimed at teaching church music which rode on Yoruba cultural expressions (where possible) to strengthen the development of church music among others. Eniolawun (2015) traced the history of the Church Music programme at the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso, and how in 1992, students were admitted into the Diploma programmes in Church Music to cater for the need for specially trained pastors and church musicians to serve the Baptist Churches in the area. The programme which later grew progressively from awarding Diploma in

Church Music to Degrees, Masters, and Doctorate levels, has made significant contributions to the growth of Yorùbá Church music within the South-west, Nigeria. The faculty currently runs three major Departments: The Department of Western Music, the Department of African Music and the Department of Worship Studies, all of which have increased the number of music personnel for the Baptist churches in Nigeria and other denominations.

Eniolawun (2015) highlighted Paul Davidson's missionary activities among the Baptists in South-western Nigeria and argued that Davidson's interest in Yorùbá culture gave him an edge for missionary exploits. During his missionary career in Nigeria, he was always dressed in Yorùbá attire, and often spoke and wrote in the Yorùbá language. He was often invited to preach in the Yorùbá language on many occasions in some of the Baptist churches in the South-west, and this provided him with ample opportunity to promote the development of Yorùbá music in some churches. He was also able to compose Yorùbá songs, some of which he sang whenever he had the opportunity in some of the churches.

While serving as the Head of the Department of Church Music at the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary in Ogbomoso, Davidson also served as the Director of the Department of Church Music of the Nigerian Baptist Convention from 1994 to 2005. This position allowed him to positively impact the growth of the music ministries of the Convention. Under his leadership, students were sent to serve as ministers of music in churches and upon their graduation, some of them were retained as ministers of music in Baptist churches. All of these were orchestrated to change the perception of youths who came to study under him and as well to change the musical orientation of Yorùbá Christians towards celebrating and promoting Yorùbá music culture.

Some Growth Indices of Yorùbá Church Music within the Scope of the Study

Yorùbá Church music has developed peculiar characteristics which allow for freedom both on the part of the composer and the performer as well. The ability to move between Yorùbá traditional and Western music idioms, using the various music styles highlighted above makes the music of most Baptist churches among the Yorùbá to be unique. With the careful investigation of Yorùbá musical performances, it is evident that the music celebrates music-aesthetic communication, while musical performances emphasise the messages embedded in the words. This does not apply to vocal compositions alone, but includes instrumental compositions which are often conceived as abstractions of texts. In very many cases, musical performances (both instrumental and vocal) tell stories in strong poetic language, and this has enhanced the development of the music in certain regards within the study area. Whereas there may be other factors to measure the growth of church music in South-western Nigeria within the scope of this study, some growth indices resonate with the author which is here captured and highlighted to include:

i. Recruitment and Training of Music Personnel

The training process through the nationwide annual Baptist music workshop hosted in Iwo and the efforts of the few music graduates in the area have heightened the musical expectations of both the musicians and the worshippers. Music plays a prominent role in the context of the Church to recreate the Bible story and minister devotionally to parishioners. This has made many Baptist Churches in South-west Nigeria give more attention to developing and promoting the use of music.

In the light of the above, some of such efforts have been in the area of recruitment and training of local musicians in such churches. Some of the churches have either employed a full time or a part-time music staff to oversee the musical activities of their church. Others have continued to strive to improve the quality of their musical instruments, while ensuring that members of their music ministry receive in-house periodic training to enhance growth. As a result of increased musical activity in most of the churches under review, such as the training workshops organised by the Baptist Convention both at national and local church levels, and other various musical training activities necessitated by such development, more music personnel have emerged in the last twenty years.

ii. Archival and Documentation of Songs

In the past, songs were circulated through oral transmission. But as a result of more trained music personnel in the churches, more vocal and instrumental music are being documented in staff notation. Also, some church choirs have recorded songs on audio-visuals, and these are being circulated for use in other places. The training process through the Nationwide Annual Baptist Music Workshop hosted in Iwo annually, and the efforts of a few music graduates in the area have heightened the musical expectations of both the musicians as well as the worshippers in most of the churches under review. As part of such efforts, the researcher participated in some mass choir rehearsals during the fieldwork at the Ogbomoso Conference, Osun Conference, and Ibadan Baptist Conference where choristers from different churches within each of the Conferences met in one church to rehearse songs in preparation for the Nigerian Baptist Convention in session programmes. The researcher observed that most of the songs selected for rehearsal were composed by leaders and members of the group. Most songs were written in staff notation and during rehearsals, members who have recording devices on their mobile devices recorded songs for reference purposes.

The use of hymns has continued in Baptist Churches and this has promoted the compilation of words only in Yorùbá hymnals within the Baptist denomination in the South-west. Also, the Baptist Press of the Nigerian Baptist Convention has continued printing and reprinting the words-only edition of the Yorùbá Baptist Hymnal to update the current lists of Yorùbá hymns used for worship in Baptist Churches. The hymns which were not previously translated are being translated and newly composed hymns are being compiled as necessary. For example, Osun State Baptist Conference has published a compilation of Yorùbá Hymns for use in her Churches. Recently the Nigerian Baptist Convention published a Yorùbá version of the Bible/Hymnal edition which contained most of the hymns used in the Baptist Churches. According to Oyeniyi (personal communication, Ibadan, September 4, 2021), efforts are ongoing to finalize the compilation of a new hymnal which will include new indigenous hymn tunes and songs.

As a result of the training of more church musicians with skills to compose songs with the computer, the number of printed church music has been on the increase. Although some choristers and choirmasters still rely on teaching and learning songs by rote or through tonic sol-fa notations, however, the use of printed music in staff notation is no longer a strange sight in most Baptist Churches.

iii. Increased Musical Activities in the Liturgical Process and Pageantry

Most of the persons interviewed during the fieldwork agreed that there has been a tremendous increase in musical activities of most of the churches. Adelokun, (personal communication, May 7, 2021) for example, observed that music plays important roles in two ways, namely in the liturgical process and in pageantry. He believes that the liturgy of the Baptist Churches rides effectively on music and that Yorùbá Church music has continued to serve as a medium of expression during ceremonies and social gatherings of church members. During the field investigation, the researcher witnessed and participated in some such social gatherings such as naming ceremonies, services of songs, funeral ceremonies, church wedding ceremonies, and special family thanksgiving. In such instances, choristers and bands were often invited to minister to God and for the spiritual needs of the members.

iv. Continuity and Change in Church Music Programmes

Another major factor which contributed to the development of Yorùbá Church music in the Baptist Churches in South-west Nigeria is continuity and changes in the tradition of annual Choir Anniversary and Services of Songs, which are common to most of the churches. During such annual programmes, new songs are composed, printed and rendered. Such a programme affords choristers to be stewards of their musical abilities as special solos and groups feature prominently. Some musicians look forward to such occasions to demonstrate their new skills since the service is mainly musical. New songs are composed and the composers whose compositions are used during such special worship services are acknowledged during the programme. This gives them the impetus to improve their art in the following years.

v. Combination of Traditional Yorùbá and Western Musical Instruments

The use of traditional Yorùbá musical instruments effectively combined with Western musical instruments in churches has become very popular and major development. Some local traditional musicians who play outside the church now see the church as a platform to grow their art and make it relevant within church contexts.

Different stylistic principles, structure, organisation of vocal and instrumental music, and different instrumental resources and techniques are being employed towards achieving excellence in the musical performances of the churches. Some musical instruments which were earlier forbidden in churches such as Gangan, Iya Ilu, Bata, Sekere, Gangan, Iya Ilu, Bata, and Sekere are now being used in some of the Baptist Churches under review.

vi. Development in Performance Techniques

As a result of increased musical activities at church gatherings and meetings within Baptist Churches, there have been growth in terms of performance techniques of Yorùbá Church music. More musical instruments are being employed, resulting in tremendous improvements in the skills of the performers on various musical instruments. These encourage healthy competition among musicians and musical groups and promote the development of the quality of musical performances in the area. Fusion of art music and popular Yorùbá music during choir renditions and especially, during sessions of praise have all been positively impacted.

vii. Growth in Forms and Contents of Yorùbá Church Music

Yorùbá Church music has witnessed new musical elements in forms and contents as a result of other factors mentioned earlier. The use of a basic form of call and response has been consistent in Yorùbá Church music, but new forms and treatments have emerged. Western instruments are used to imitate traditional Yorùbá musical instruments and ideas from Western harmony have been incorporated with those of indigenous Yorùbá music to produce new forms and musical content that are relevant in the churches. The musical taste of most worshippers and parishioners is further developed by the kinds of music they hear and watch on the television, radio, and the internet. Thus, heightening the musical expectations and tastes of parishioners. As a result of such musical expectations, most parishioners now expect songs to be used in the liturgical process to be short, repetitive and danceable, yet, theocentric in nature, calling their attention to God.

vii. Growth in Compositional Techniques

As a result of frequent training workshops, the compositional techniques of Yorùbá Church music have continued to yield positive results in the development of Yorùbá Church music. In the past, most composers of Yorùbá anthems were satisfied with providing the melody for the text. But with exposure to more compositional techniques, new songs with varied compositional techniques emerged. Some of these techniques according to Adedeji (personal communication, November 22, 2021) include the use of rhythmic motives, melodic motives, harmonic progression, different voice textures, and repetition of thematic material in whole or in part. Shobowale (personal communication, November 20, 2021) opined that those new compositional ideas learnt through musical workshops and inspiration got from listening to music are usually infused into his compositions of Yorùbá songs and have been very helpful in his ministry as Music Director and Church Organist in many churches he had served. The use of such varied compositional techniques has contributed to the development of Yorùbá Church music over the years and is observable in his compositions.

viii. Music Business Opportunities

The growth of Yorùbá Church music within the period of study is evident in more recording and distribution of new Yorùbá songs in singles. Likewise, the distribution of LPs on CDs and publications of Yorùbá music anthems in songbooks have become part of church projects in some Baptist Churches. Some freelance Music Evangelists have emerged, evangelizing through singing and ministering to God and the people during social and religious gatherings within the area. Notable among such people are Evang. Toun Soetan, Rev. and Mrs Philip Adika, Rev. Powem Olatunji, Oluwabunmi Akinola, and a host of others who are freelance music evangelists within the study area.

ix. Development in Manpower and Physical Resources

As a result of more awareness and training of personnel, most churches now have at least two or more musical instruments for use during worship. More musical instruments and other physical resources to boost the production of quality church music have increased, and this has continued to enhance the performance practices of Yorùbá Church music in the area. As more people receive training to play musical instruments, so do musical instruments available for use in most Baptist Churches in the area increase.

x. Effective Congregational Participation and Communication

More people participate in the liturgical process when music communication is appealing and intelligible in language, style, and musical idioms. Music among the Yorùbá is a broad concept that embraces different art forms. Yorùbá music evokes meaningful responses and the participation of worshippers when music that is intelligible, and appealing to the social, cultural and spiritual well-being of the people, is used. Idamoyibo (2013), while writing about Yorùbá music argued that the security of the mind is significant in the development of a person because, innovative ideas that lead to the development of man and his environment starts from the mind.

Conclusion

This study noted that Yorùbá Church music employs the use of culturally relevant musical expressions which enhances Biblical revelation and recreates essential biblical stories in the mind of the worshippers in the Baptists churches. This has enhanced the growth of Yorùbá Church music among the Nigerian Baptist Convention Churches in the South-West in forms, compositional techniques, performance practices, human and material resources. The noticeable growth factors which were highlighted have continued to have artistic and functional impressions on the members of the Baptist Churches in South-west Nigeria. These growths which were orchestrated by different factors have continued to influence the musical tastes of the larger Christian community in the area and other parts of Nigeria. It is therefore important to continue to carry out this kind of study to propel further growth in other areas in the practice of Yorùbá Church music. This will continue to impact positively, the socio-cultural and religious wellbeings of the people of South-western Nigeria and beyond. Arising from the findings of this study, the need for more specific policy statements on the use of music in liturgical processes and church activities within the Nigerian Baptist Convention churches is observed and highly recommended.

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