

**MUSIC AS NON-VISUAL MEDIUM FOR ENTERTAINMENT, PEACE BUILDING,  
AND NATIONAL SECURITY: A STUDY OF SELECTED NIGERIAN ARTISTES**

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**ABSTRACT:** *This paper is a study of the contributions of the medium of music as a tool for entertainment, in peace building and engendering national security which, sometimes, spreads to other climes. It focuses on the musical genre, examining the roles of three popular Nigerian musicians, two living and one dead, towards the peace process. Sonny Okosun, of blessed memory, and his kinsman, Sir Victor Uwaifo, were more of pan-African campaigners who, through the lyrics and messages of their songs which cut across tribes, cultures and climes, spread their tentacles even beyond the shores of Nigeria, preaching the gospel of peace, freedom and unity. Onyeka Onwenu, on her part, has also preached love, reconciliation and peace, with her musical renditions done in English and the different Nigerian dialects. The central thrust of the paper is the analysis of some lyrics of the selected songs of the musicians under study. The Critical Theory and Cultural Studies will suffice as the theoretical basis for the discussion of the role of music as a medium for entertainment, peace building and national security from the perspective of the lyrics of the musicians under review. It recommends governmental, individual and collective efforts at giving a breath of life into the music industry.*

**KEYWORDS:** Entertainment, peace building, national security, Sonny Okosun, Victor Uwaifo, Onyeka Onwenu

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Olise (2009) opines that man ceases to exist without communication and without human existence, the society is non-existent. And without the society, nothing is alive, (p. 45). And man's attitude is permanently revolving around his exposure to supersonic experiences from technological appliances opened to our daily consumptions. Such innovations have remarkable impact on our pleasurable moments, especially, when, and where we listen to music. From the moment we are awakened, our days unfold against a musical background. We hear music while on the move. We can hardly avoid it. We hear it on television, at the movies, radio, on the internet. Music Television (MTV) has forever changed the way we 'listen' to popular music; it is now a visual experience as well as an aural one. This increased dependency on our eyes makes our ears work less actively. Music media too are rapidly changing, (Machlis & Forney, 2003, p. 4).

In traditional African society, as in other societies the world over, music has always played a significant role in the dissemination of messages. The drums, gongs, flutes and other instruments, as well as the lyrics of the musical rendition, serve as a channel of communication. Music served and still serves a dual purpose of entertaining listeners who often danced to the tune, and driving home the message embedded in the wordings of the songs. Through music, inter-communal relations were also forged and strengthened as communities interacted and shared values with their neighbours. That, to a large extent, fostered peace and ensured good neighbourliness devoid of rancour. On the intangibility but salient note of music, Bordwell and Thompson (2001) opine that absence of music or sound gives room for social disharmony. A quiet passage in a film can create almost unbearable tension, forcing the viewer to concentrate on the screen and to wait in anticipation for whatever music/sound will emerge. Just as colour film makes black and white into grades of colour, so the use of music/sound in film will include all the possibilities of silence. Coherently, they further agreed that the filmmaker can mix any sonic phenomena into a whole. With the introduction of sound cinema, the infinity of visual possibilities was joined by the infinity of acoustic events, (p. 292).

Historically, in the 1970s, for instance, the legendary reggae crooners, Bob Marley, Jimmy Cliff, Peter Tosh and Bunny Livingstone, churned out musical renditions that were relevant to issues of the day. Under the auspices of their peculiar genre of music, they became ambassadors of the black race as they sang against the prevailing situations of oppression, colonialism and other ills prevalent in society then, especially as directed towards the blacks everywhere in the world. They did not limit their ideas and messages to their native Jamaica (Okuseinde & Olubomehin, 2011).

In the West African coast, musicians like Sonny Okosun of the Ozzidi fame, legendary Afrobeat maestro, Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, Miriam 'Mama Africa' Makeba, Onyeka 'Elegant Stallion' Onwenu and a host of others were not left out in the message of emancipation and fostering of peace for national security and development. The wordings of their songs were messages to the people, government and society as a whole on the need for unity occasioned by equality. This facilitated a mental and physical reconnect and reawakening which led to the attainment of independence for most African countries as we would see in the course of this work. The works of these artistes also paved the way for the emancipation of some African countries. A typical example would be the case of South Africa where apartheid reigned supreme, for which the lyrics and message of Sonny Okosun's 'Apartheid' must have contributed to its dismantling.

The story is the same when apartheid is mentioned in South Africa, at the level of Nigeria's music industry, Ofose and Ofose (2009, p. 67) assess the quest for popularity, power, and control of the music industry as leading to gossips, character assassination, violent clashes, and fetish rituals, among other things. Adegbite, (2003) in Ofose and Ofose (2009, p. 67) buttress the above statement with the view that, "most popular musicians discard principles in favour of expediency to bring about unhealthy rivalry, petty jealousy, and misunderstanding and in most cases character assassination." This is where; this study will tend to differ, rather than being acrimonious, justifiable focus will be placed on the efficacies of music in Nigeria in terms of entertainment, peace-building and national security.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Hinged on the pedestal of Critical Theory, which is viewed as a cultural heritage through the lens of Cultural Studies, this paper will examine the extent to which music has served and is still serving as a non-visual medium to reflect the pure ideals of entertainment, peace and security. Critical Theory, a derivation from Kant's 18<sup>th</sup> century 'Critique of Pure Reason' and Marx's 19<sup>th</sup> century "Das Kapital" respectively, in their use of the term "critique" as a criticism of political economy, describes the neo-Marxist philosophy of the Frankfurt School which was developed in Germany in the 1930s. According to a Frankfurt theorist, Max Horkheimer, a theory is critical to the extent that it seeks "to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslaves them" (Horkheimer, 1982 p. 244).

In its modernist view, critical theory sees ideology as the principal obstacle to human liberation, and as aspects of control and unfairness observed during evolution of capitalized system of government. However, the modernist and post-modernist views agree in the context of their focus on language, symbolism and communication. They also show interest in activities that concerns man's involvements in-which ethno-cultural awareness is achieved.

On the other hand, Cultural Studies scholar, Toby Miller, notes that "cultural studies have tendency across disciplines, rather than a discipline itself." Also, in his 'Why Cultural Studies' Gilbert Rodman argues that it must be understood to include some non-academic and cultural analysts and practitioners, as well as academic ones (Rodman in Cultural Studies, 2016). Cultural Studies concentrate on the dynamics of politics as regards contemporary culture, historical foundations, defining traits and culture. It examines cultural practices and their relation to power, attempts to understand culture in all its complex forms with a view to analysing the social and political context in which it manifests, and explores the social and political ramifications of how divisions of knowledge are culturally constructed and naturalized, (Cultural Studies, 2016).

With the Critical Theory and Cultural Studies as a framework, we will build on the works of Okosun, Onwenu and Uwaifo to determine their contributions to entertainment, peace and national security, using music as a medium of mass communication.

## **METHODOLOGY**

For a work of this nature, the researchers sourced materials from a wide range of relevant literature, including but not limited to books, newspapers, magazines, and the new media, the Internet. Music, being a universal language of communication, and the artistes whose works under review became known to the researchers through their contents, a review of their lyrics, where applicable, also came in handy as a resource base for this work. This was with a view to determining the relevance of their contents to entertainment, peace and national development and security.

In this work, the purposive sampling method was employed. It involves a determination of the value impacted on the music industry by several musicians and arriving at the three whose works have prevailed in the Nigerian music scene over time. Among several in their genre for whom

peace and national integration are longstanding themes, the works of Uwaifo, Onwenu and Okosun attracted the attention of the researchers in an unbiased sampling. It was also adopted because of its ease in interpretation of data as well as being devoid, to a large extent, of classification errors.

### **Music as Entertainment: Onyeka Onwenu's Contents**

Psychologically, Ekpang (2015) sees the entertainment function of music as being widespread in many human activities, individually and collectively. The sound of music brings into the world its magic power to activate the mind when it is dormant, to soothe the soul when it is turmoil and to heal the body when it is hurt. In literal terms, Ifionu (1989) in Ofosu and Ofosu (2009) indicated that, "as music is used to serve the expression of a country's struggle for freedom from political bondage, it also serves as an index for the political and emotional agony of the oppressed in a multi-ethnic society. The Nigerian musician as an artiste has an important role to use entertainment to resolve the conflict, (p. 78). Widely referred to as the 'Elegant Stallion,' a tag made popular by the media, this Arondizuogu-born Nigerian singer, actress, songwriter, journalist and politician was born on May 17, 1952 in Imo State. Onwenu's music career started in 1981 while with the Nigerian Television Authority, where she served for the mandatory one year National Youth Service Corps scheme. In 1982, while still in NTA as a reporter, she released her first album, 'For the Love of You,' and in 1984, an epic documentary for NTA/BBC titled 'Nigeria: A Squandering of Riches'. Both music and documentary received positive reviews in Nigeria and the international community, (Robosky02 in Nairaland Forum, 2016).

In 1988, in a duet with King Sunny Ade, another popular Nigerian singer of the Fuji genre, Onwenu sang a track titled 'Ma da'won lohun (Let Them Say)'. Receiving wide acclaim, and in response to fans' demand, the duo did two more songs – 'Wait for Me', and 'Choices', both directed at the youths, with the message of abstinence and family planning, respectively. 'Wait for Me' says in pidgin English: "*Fine young girl, life e dey for your front, take your time o make you no spoil am, if you make children are you ready to care o-o-o-o, if you love life you go plan am well, if you love me, you go wait for me...*," while 'Choices' says "*This is the time when we have to make a choice, take a stand on the kind of world we want, is it love and peace of mind, or children we are not prepared for? Let us make a choice.*"

The lyrics of her 'One Love' album were as entertaining as they come with a message of hope: "*Don't be sad; understand everybody has a day when the sun stays away Take heart in a new tomorrow Living one love between; Looks for a brighter day You never need worry; Let one love set you free, One love keep us together Living in a world it's a struggle to staying alive,*" (Robosky02 in Nairaland Forum, 2016). Other albums released by Onwenu include 'Iyogogo', 'Bia Nulu' and 'Alleluya.'

### **Music as Apostle of Peace**

Though she started off as a secular artiste, Onwenu veered into the gospel genre over time. However, she never wavered from her original theme – love, peace and nation building for development and security. She writes and sings about issues bordering on health, especially HIV/AIDS, peace and mutual relationships and coexistence, women and children's rights. She

preaches, through her media, attitudinal change in individuals for the good of Nigeria, (Robosky02 in Nairaland Forum, 2016).

Onwenu's 'Nigeria: A Squandering of Riches' became a benchmark when the topic under discussion was corruption in Nigeria. It also became the defining point for the restive, oil-rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria where the agitation for resource control, where the campaign against environmental degradation as a result of activities of oil explorers, were topical issues as at the time the documentary made its debut. She has served on the board of the NTA, and has featured in numerous Nigerian movies in the industry fondly referred to as Nollywood. In 2006, Onwenu won the African Movie Academy Award for Best Actress in a Supporting Role, (Robosky02 in Nairaland Forum, 2016).

### **Music for National Development/Security**

Success in her numerous fields of endeavour obviously spurred the Elegant Stallion into the realm of politics where, pitching her tent with the Peoples Democratic Party, she contested for the chairmanship of Idea to North Local Government Council but failed. However, the government of Imo, her home State, appointed her Chairperson of Imo State Council for Arts and Culture, (Robosky02 in Nairaland Forum, 2016).

On September 16, 2013, Onwenu was appointed Executive Director/Chief Executive Officer of the National Centre for Women Development. In this position, her "creativity, leadership, initiative, extraordinary service and passion for gender related issues" paved the way for her recognition and subsequent decoration as the ECOWAS Female Parliamentarians Association (ECOFEPA) Ambassador. ECOFEPA is a Network of Female Parliamentarians in the ECOWAS sub-region. Dallas-based *Amoize Magazine*, an African lifestyle and cultural magazine, in the realisation that "Lady Onwenu's music has enthused unparalleled patriotism, preached love, peace and tolerance," honoured her with an Award which it said was in recognition of the inspiring role Onwenu has played through her music, acting and advocacy for women and children's issues, (*Vanguard*, 2015).

From every indication, Onwenu has used her medium – music and the arts – to rise to the challenge of entertaining, building and fostering peace, and engendering development and national security. As an accomplished ambassador of Nigeria, she has proved a shining light in a setting where the international community had, hitherto, portrayed the nation in bad light.

### **Music as Entertainment: Sir Victor Uwaifo's Contents**

Sir Victor Efosa Uwaifo is a Nigerian multi-talented artiste. He was born on March 1, 1941 in Benin City, in present day Edo State. A musician, writer, sculptor, musical instrument inventor, and lecturer, Uwaifo's popular albums 'Guitar Boy' and 'Mami Water' which held sway in the mid-1960s and still have their appeal today, launched him into the limelight. Uwaifo maintains that inspiration for 'Mami Water' came from a real life encounter he had with a mermaid as he lounged at the popular Bar Beach in Lagos. "If you see mami water o, never never you run away,

*e-e-e, never run away o, Victor Uwaifo,*” an admonition, he said, the mermaid offered him, became a signature tune among his fans. He calls his brand of music ‘Joromi.’

The musician began playing the guitar at the age of 12 when his love for Spanish and Latin American music developed. Though he sang in English and his native Bini language, his audience cut across tribes. Language was not a barrier to listenership. Also, he exhibited creative talent which added value to Nigeria’s entertainment value his audience looked forward to, (World Beat Radio, 2016).

### **Peace Ambassador: Sir Victor Uwaifo’s Approach**

Uwaifo, obviously in recognition of his music, is a Justice of Peace (JP), a Notary Public and Lay Magistrate, and has been honoured by four Nigerian Presidents. In 1983, recognizing these outstanding achievements, the Federal Government of Nigeria awarded Sir Victor Uwaifo a national honour. The first professional musician to be so honoured (World Beat Radio, 2016). In part, the wording on the insignia of his award read: “...whereas you have been nominated and appointed as Member of the Order of the Niger to have and hold and enjoy the privileges of the Federal Republic of Nigeria of the said Order, MON” (Naija, 2016).

### **A Legacy of Nation Building: Sir Victor Uwaifo’s Approach**

On the service radar, Uwaifo served as Commissioner for Arts and Culture in Edo State between 2001 and 2003, and lectured at the Fine and Applied Arts Department of the University of Benin (World Beat Radio, 2016). His musical exposure positioned him properly for his role as cultural ambassador and he has not let go. In a recent interview with *The Nation*, a Nigerian tabloid of April 3, 2016, Uwaifo intimated that “in-between, I have been performing as a musician. I performed at one of the awards ceremonies of the *Nigerian Pilot* newspaper, *Nigerian News world* magazine in Abuja. Last December, I performed for the Lagos Motor Club” (*The Nation*, 2016).

He made history in Nigeria when he won the first Golden Record in Nigeria, West Africa and Africa (presented by Philips, West Africa) for his song ‘Joromi’ in 1996. The record was presented by Philips, West Africa. Privileged by being invited to the State House by four Presidents and Heads of State of Nigeria in recognition of his talents, he was also honoured by a 1995 invitation by the United Nations Staff Day International Committee to perform during the UN Golden Jubilee celebration. His name proudly graces the 1983 edition of the Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, and occupies space in the “Who’s Who in Nigeria”, “Who’s Who in Africa”, “Who’s Who in the Commonwealth”, as well as the “Men and Women of Distinction in the Commonwealth” (World Beat Radio 2016).

Taking off from a musical background, with great hits such as ‘Joromi’, ‘Siwo Siwo’, ‘Sirri Sirri’, ‘Sweet Banana’, ‘Awete’, ‘Dreaming of You’, ‘Do Amen Do’, ‘Take this Message to My Darling’, ‘Mutaba’, his ever-popular ‘Guitar Boy’ and ‘Mami Water’, not to mention His Highness Akenzua II in honour of the then Oba of Benin, Uwaifo has contributed immensely to nation building through his lyrics and melodious renditions, imprinting his name on the global map for the good of the Nigerian nation. Unwittingly, he has left a mark, a legacy of peace and development.

### **Music as Entertainment: Sonny Okosun's Contents**

Born on January 1<sup>st</sup> of 1947 in Enugu, Nigeria, "African Soldier" Sonny Okosun was an entertainer par excellence. Born to musician parents, he embraced music at a relatively young age and stuck to it till the end in Washington DC on May 24<sup>th</sup> 2008 due to colon cancer, (Ankeny, 2016). His "High Life: *Neighbour, you are so fine, I love the way you smile... neighbour, you are so good, I love the way you talk...you must have some money tonight...*" Up-to-date, this song still impacts the entertainment world with its classic lyrics.

Okosun taught himself to play the guitar and used his music to not only entertain, but as a vehicle for the promotion of African unity. In her newspaper article, "Last bow for 'peace fighter' Okosun," Ojeme quoted the freedom fighter as saying, "All my mates were singing love songs ... I was trying to talk about what was happening to black people," (Ojeme, 2008).

In furtherance of the musical trait in his genes, Okosun formed the Postmen, his first musical group, in 1964. He was later to join Sir Victor Uwaifo's Melody Maestros in 1969, perhaps in a bid to hone his skills. According to Uwaifo in a recent interview with *The Nation* newspaper of April 3, 2016 titled "None of my children is big enough for my shoes," "The late Sonny Okosun was a member of my band and when he was pulling out, he asked for my blessing and I gave him" (Ankeny, 2016).

Done with his apprenticeship, and armed with his master's blessings, Okosun formed another group, Ozziddi, which means message, and injected an infusion of rock, funk and reggae into his rendition for a unique flavour that his audience loved, (Ankeny, 2016).

### **Propagating the Message of Peace: Sonny Okosun's Approach**

Peace cannot thrive in a setting where equity and justice are in scarce supply. Okosun armed himself with the tools of his lyrics and instrumentals to shoo out injustice in the African continent. His 1976 album, 'Help', launched him into the limelight. Thereafter, there was no stopping him as one album after the other sought to quench the raging fire of injustice, oppression and apartheid rule, especially in South Africa (Ankeny, 2016). Also, in one of Sonny Okosun's most popular musical works 'Which Way Nigeria,' he patriotically called on all Nigerians to work for the survival of their country. Sonny Okosun accurately diagnosed Nigeria's problems, when he lamented that our ambition to become millionaires is running Nigeria down. Sonny Okosun sang that inefficiency and indiscipline were ruining Nigeria. The musical sage also referred to the mistakes made in Nigeria during the oil boom years. He truthfully contributed to the conversation about very few Nigerians who have everything while the masses have nothing. The legendary musical maestro asked rhetorically "Which Way Nigeria: *So Nigeria wouldn't fall, I want to know? I love my fatherland, let's save Nigeria... let's start now to build Nigeria, so Nigeria wouldn't die...*" (Okosun, 2016).

In 'Papa's Land', Okosun asked: *We want to know, we want to know, we want to know who owns the land. Who owns Papa's land*, in obvious reference to the African continent. And when he followed it up with 'Fire in Soweto', the apartheid government in place then in South Africa must have quaked. "*Africa it's now or never, we must win it or lose it forever,*" the lyrics of his 'Now

or Never' did nothing to assuage the fears of the apartheid government that a revolutionary was on the prowl. So did his declaration of 'Holy War' hammer in on his mission (Ankeny, 2016).

Out to correct societal ills for equality, equity and justice to thrive, Okosun wielded his music like a big stick, and even when in 1994 he resurfaced under the garb of gospel songs with his 'Songs of Praise', his ultimate was to entrench peace in the polity.

### **Music for Development/Change Agent**

Okosun put Nigerian music in the forefront of world discourse is not in doubt. And that his efforts were recognised, applauded and rewarded would also be a statement of fact. In 1985, for instance, he was the lone African artiste to participate in and contribute to the all-star anti-apartheid album, 'Sun City'. And a year later, in 1986, his 'Highlife' featured in a foreign feature film, 'Something Wild', directed by Jonathan Demme, (Ankeny, 2016).

In Nigeria, he performed at several government functions and was recognised by both the states and the federal government. When he died in 2008 of colon cancer in the United States of America, the world acknowledged that a freedom fighter, a peace lover who detested oppression, a national and international hero had moved on.

Onyeka Onwenu, a protégé of Okosun, said "I am happy that he made peace with his God before he passed on," while another singer he discovered and groomed, Stella Monye, declared that "He put Nigerian music on the world map." Prince Wadada, another singer, said "He was a complete musician to the core, a man of peace" (Ojeme, 2008).

### **CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE**

For a research work of this nature, one must be conscious of what contributions it must be able to make to the body of knowledge. Being universal in nature, the musical content, lyrics and composition of the three artistes under review make it imperative that this research opens up the terrain for further research. In an era where violence reigns supreme, a genre of music that encourages peace and harmonious co-existence can be a vehicle for conflict resolution. The contributions of Sonny Okosun, for instance, to the attainment of independence in some African countries, especially South Africa, can become a subject matter for further research.

Also, as a literary work, it provides reference materials for researchers into the works of the three artistes. The younger generation of researchers on the theme would find in this work relevant data that would serve as a starting point for understanding music as it was at a particular time in the musical dispensation of the nation.

### **CONCLUSION**

Having examined the diverse roles music can play in the life of a nation from different perspectives, it is imperative to look at it not as just a vehicle for entertainment. If musicians like Sonny Okosun of blessed memory could look beyond the shores of his country, if he could veer from the norm and earn international acclaim, then it implies that there is more to music than its entertainment value.

Also, Sir Victor Uwaifo and Onyeka Onwenu, beyond their academic qualifications, used music to reach out to Nigerians and the world in such a way that it became not just music, but a tool for development. Recognised by their state and the federal governments, their services were called for and judiciously put to use for the development of the nation. They served in areas relevant to their trade and calling and gave their best to the nation.

The implication of this is that there is no profession that cannot become a tool for societal development, no trade that can be ignored or sidelined as not being important enough. Coming from an African background where entertainers were viewed as hungry, jobless layabouts to an era where musicians earn national and international recognition, things can only get better.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

From the knowledge gleaned of how music can be not only a tool for entertainment but an avenue for the entrenchment of peace and fostering of national development and security, the following recommendations are necessary:

1. That government encourages the older and more experienced artistes to set up training academies where younger musicians can be groomed for better input.
2. Like Victor Uwaifo, musicians can either individually or jointly mentor the younger generation of artistes to fine-tune their talents.
3. Musicians should identify areas where they have comparative advantage and make themselves masters of whatever genre they adopt.
4. In singing, musicians should look beyond the entertainment value, putting national interest at heart too. Their content must therefore be enriched to touch more lives.

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### Special Dedication

This article is dedicated to **Dr. Oyo Ekpo Oyo**, (26<sup>th</sup> Nov., 1965 – 21<sup>st</sup> Dec., 2016) an uncommon critic, marvellous friend, dependable brother. He was a quintessential academician. We will always miss you, rest peacefully in the bosom of the Lord.