Aesthetics in Biripo Musical Performance

Music is a universal language. Biripo music, even when restricted to a group of people in the Ikale/Ilaje/Apoi milieus, is an embodiment of the consciousness of the folks that combines the art of the people with entertainment as a major cultural thrust, achieving religious indoctrination, and entrenching ethical values in the environment. This paper attempts an analysis of the musical performance of Zeblon Omoranmowo entitled: word hangs loose and bursts (Oro Ma Se Dugbe Dugbe o Be o) through an examination of the subject matter, themes and analogies that may constitute veritable sources of conflicts to the larger society and internal disquietude to individuals. The paper explores the stage performance through an examination of the persona, competence, interaction, talent and reception. While relying on aesthetics as a tool of explication, the study unveils the response of the audience finding expression in dancing, clapping and offer of monetary gift to band members and concludes that the musical performance fulfils the yearning of the folks for entertainment.

Keywords: Music, Biripo, Performance, Aesthetics, Ethical Values.
their values at the moment while drawing its strength from
the past that was untainted by greed, and pettiness but that
was governed by total submission to the unwritten moral
and religious beliefs of the people subsisting in the Ifa
corpus. It embodies the social and cultural values such that
indigenous musical performances are laced with charms
that members of the audience can hardly resist but that
compel the audience to marvel at the ingenuity of the
singers as they are considered talented and elevated above
the multitude in the society.

Many notable traditional musicians adopt the
genre of Biripo. They include: Zeblon Omoranmowo, Chief
Sunday Ibayemi and his Ariwa Malokun Biripo Band, Egbe
Omoboye Biripo, Lelerekoko Band, Ojulere Band and
others. Female members of the society have their genre and
it is known as Asiko. Notable Asiko singers are Comfort
Omoge, Cecilia Akinsehinwa, Iwalapo Lalu, and Felicia
Obamuwasan. Their deployment of the Ikale/Ilaje/Apoi
dialects is superlative, and much relevance is made on the
Ifa corpus as a source of inspiration. At times, outright
renditions of the songs in the Ifa corpus are made thereby
exhibiting deep and spiritual references to issues that the
listeners can consider deep, beautiful and instructive. Folks
music is defined by Adeyeye Adesanya et al., as a kind of
music that is associated with ‘rural peasants’ and therefore
associated with ‘traditional’ people: ‘it could be sacred or
secular’ (35).

The live performance of a folk music by Zeblon
Omoranmowo invoked a feeling of awe. The enthralling
rendition of a song that encapsulated various ingredients of
conflicts in the agrarian society combined the twin-function
of entertainment and sensitisation. Apart from the
captivation of the audience by the movements of the
drummers accompanied by the poetic and sonorous
composition of the lead-singer, members of the audience
are enlightened through the isolation of relevant and related
issues in the agrarian society that could engender peaceful
co-existence and conversely ignite society in a conflagration
that may ruffle filial order, upset the honour and pride of the
individual whose indiscretion may have exposed to the jeer
and tear of even ordinary members of the society. The
performance amounted to communication through aesthetics as a philosophical model of analysis; claiming
that religious books and selfish personal pursuits are
potential sources of danger to the larger society especially
when restraints are not exercised in the application of
primordial claims to modern realities by folks whose
indiscretion could ignite inter-personal conflicts

The feeling of excitement and elevation was
matched with sadness which emanated from the disconnect
the totality of the performance, within the unirrivalled
expressions, symbols and parallels might assume and suffer
as a result of the coded language. What else is the
Ikale/Ilaje/Apoi dialect other than esoteric to the Nigerian
society and the global society? The globalised society prides
itself in the conquest of limitations, barriers or social
boundaries consequent upon the emergence of the Internet
and the ease at which ideas could become handy and
available to global citizens within minutes of their
expressions. However, certain limitations may beset the
total internalisation of a performance from the standpoint
of nuances, cultural barriers such as codes and signs,
gestures and postures that may not be easily interpreted
from other cultural divide.

The first wonder emanated from the crude-talent, a
display of raw, uncanny dexterity that typifies the artist in
the delivery of the musical performance. Even when the
lead-singer may not be the sole-purveyor of the rendition, as
other members of the team are significantly audible in their
incredible back-up, Zeblon’s exemplary display of talent,
fluidity in appropriating relevant anecdotes and capability
at controlling and directing the back-up are worthy of
examination. From a folk-singer whose dexterity may not
be rivaled, the need to define art becomes imperative as
creativity may depend largely on the psychological well-
being of the singer where talent and personal desire to make
a mark may be instrumental in the composition of songs
and annexion of images from the socio-economic realities
of the environment. From the point of view of Machlis
Joseph (1955), therefore, Zeblon could be said to have
chosen a ‘sensuous medium’ finding expression in music
and may be adjudged successful as it ‘appeals to our mind,
arouses our emotions, kindles our imagination, enchants
oursenses’ (3).

The feeling of regret equally overwhelms the
researcher. The beauty of the performance
notwithstanding, it is apparent that the performance and the
imports could elude many listeners even when they have the
privilege of internalising the dialect, and are familiar with
the genre, their inability to relate the analogies in the
performance with visible conflicts in the global society
might shut the door of semantiscity from them. Knowledge,
no doubt, comes in varied forms; the association with
leading authorities such as Joseph Campbell (1988), T. S.
Eliot (1965) and Sigmund Freud (1965) might have
made a secret master-key to unlock every door of
perception. Perhaps, this singular development might be
responsible for inspirations and the power of discernment
in gestating scoops in many fields by scholars over the years.

Zeblon seems to occupy the same position as these
leading authorities in the preceding paragraph as he exhibits
a competence that is peculiar to him in the genre and
juxtaposes this on the stage in a performativity which he
also successfully transfers to the audience. The appreciation
of the performance by members of the audience achieves
aesthetic uniformity laced with dancing, clapping and
singing in an atmosphere of conviviality. The songs bring to
the fore the need for caution and highlight other sources of
conflicts that may be anathema to the evolvement of people,
and which must be avoided in order to grow, and
unencumbered by visible flaws. Such flaws may not have
ready appeal as potential sources of conflicts even when
they may mar peaceful-co-existence of individuals and the
society at large.

Two issues readily subject the text to further
scrutiny. The emotion within the singer, which he tries to