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LITURGICAL MUSIC ABERRATIONS IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH: A POST VATICAN II ASSESSMENT OF NIGERIAN CHOIRS

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Abstract

There has always been a conflict between sacred and secular music, between liturgical and ordinarily sacred music and even within several church domains, a conflict between the worshipper and the entertainer. Not many scholars have paid attention to liturgical aberrations as a subject matter of research in sacred music. In the liturgical music history of the Roman Catholic Church, the concept of aberrations has become dialectical; from the early Church to the medieval, from the medieval to the modern Church, from the modern to the reformation era up to the post Vatican II Church. There have remained two schools of thought on liturgical musical aberrations; the liberal and the conservative. Through an observational, survey and historical approach, this research unearths the subject matter of liturgical musical aberrations, citing numerous indices of abuse of form and identity, inordinate instrumentation, undue performance theatricality, monopoly of participation by choirs and so on. Apart from looking at the subject matter of aberrations from the liturgical point of view, this paper also argues that liturgical musical art works from post Vatican II musicologists in Nigeria who fail to adapt liturgical compositions to the indigenous creative genius are also guilty of aberrations.

Keywords: Liturgical Music, Aberrations, Worship, Inculturation.

Introduction

Ancient Philosophers like Plato and Aristotle understood the powers of music in affecting human behavior. Plato said that "music and rhythm find their way into the secret places of the human soul". He says that music has both moral and immoral effects. In his 'Republic', music is described as something which sinks into the depths of the soul and remains there. Music could restore the soul's order bringing concord by its harmony and rhythm or produce the opposite effect (Goold (ed),1999). Aristotle claims that every affection of the soul involves a concomitant movement of the body. Emotions influence moral character one way or the other. Since music affects emotions it affects character (Goold (ed), 1995). Early Church fathers like St Augustine, St Jerome and St Gregory the great, knew the place of music in spiritual life. No wonder why St Augustine said that "He who sings well, prays twice"[1]. Yes, music goes beyond its sonic structures to crisscross the psycho spiritual dimensions of human life. According to Cole (1993),

> There are many dimensions to music. Its' sonic vibrations carry within its aural components messages of many kinds: the good, the bad, and the ugly...It can inspire individuals and bond whole groups together; it can predispose a

[1] Statement commonly attributed to St Augustine and included in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, www.dharmaliturgy.net> early-church…

> person to the grace of God and open the individual to a spirit of greater creativity. On the other hand, it can discourage an individual, disrupt society, and even lead to the corruption of one's personality (Pp. 13 & 14).

Music can disrupt the liturgy and distract worshippers from the true business of worship of God to the vain business of worldly reveries and/or entertainment. Music is therefore a very sensitive aspect of the liturgy. The Church as a worshipping community makes extensive use of music. According to Mcgann (2002), worship music has the following perspectives; theological (that is, experience of God), pneumatological (emphasizing the role of the Holy Spirit), sacramental (emphasizing the presence of Christ in signs and symbols), biblical (show - casing the truths of Divine revelation), ecclesiological (portraying the community identity) and eschatological (mirroring the future hope of life everlasting). But today, due to varied influences ranging from modernism, pentecostalism, neopaganism and secularism in general, worship music is gradually getting more and more shallow, superficial and even profane / secular.

The growth of popular music; Jazz, Blues, R & B, Hi -pop, Raga, etc., with their noise, has infiltrated and pervaded the peaceful serenity of many Christian Churches. The Youths are seen carrying their ear phones about while traveling and while at home, often listening to, singing and dancing to the usual hot rhythms of music from such Nigerian popular musicians like *P Square, Timaya, Flavour, 2 PAC, D Banji,* etc. One cannot underestimate the influence of this kind of music on their psyche and overall musicianship. Since these same youths sing in Church Choirs and engage in liturgical music compositions, all these have resulted in the level of aberrations witnessed in liturgical music compositions today. The Christian values of silence, sobriety, chastity and self-control are being speedily eroded by this kind of secular music that have evaded our homes and streets, making family prayer less solemn and rendering our liturgical music less meditative and solemn.

This paper investigates the various indices of musical abuse in Church worship by first taking a historical excursus down the lane of the liturgical music history of the Roman Catholic Church followed by a theological analysis of what the holy scriptures and Council fathers have recommended. It then embarks on a musicological study of what should technically constitute aberrations in compositions and performances before a practical assessment of Nigerian choir repertories, instrumental resources, textual analysis and other performance mannerisms are done. Several choir directors in various parts of Nigeria were interviewed and research findings summarized followed by evaluations, recommendations and conclusion.

Historical analysis

A brief historico - analytical survey of the role of music in the development of Christian liturgy will help us be able to quickly trace the origin of different aspects of aberrations observed today in the liturgy. In the Old Testament era, Jabal the son of Lamech was recorded as the father of all who played the pipe, Gen 4 : 27. At the theophanic experience of Mount Sinai, the people's emotions were intensified by the trumpet blasts, Ex 19 :16. Music both vocal and instrumental was used to get the attention of Yahweh and the heavenly hosts, Ex 28 :33 - 36. Music was also licentiously used in idolatrous worship, Is 23: 16, Ex 32: 17 - 18. Music was also used in times of war to surprise and terrorize the enemy, Judges 7: 18 and during the

capture of Jericho, Josh 6: 4, 1 Sam 16: 16 - 20. Music was also used to ward off evil spirits, Ex 38: 35

In the days of King David and Solomon a big orchestral music had developed in the temple worship. The exile experience exposed them to contamination with heathen musical cultures. A number of foreign instruments appeared all of a sudden, e.g. harp, zither, oboe, cymbals and sistrum. Professional choirs were being trained among the Levites who turned the liturgical ceremonies of the Jewish temples into something fantabulous, 2 Chron 5: 11 and 2 Chron 7: 6. We must take note that majority of these kind of music would be kind of loud and noisy. Later prophets, referring to the judgment of God, tried to silence all vocal and instrumental music associated with pagan rites as secular and corrupt. It became an aberration to see such music played by the Israelites, Amos 5: 22.

After the restoration of the temple in the 6th century B.C, caution began to be applied in worship against "pagan orgiastic dances" and secular music. Music was reduced in scope never to become a significant feature of synagogue worship again because of the abuses of the past. Plainchants, for example psalms of David - chant notations were added later by Masoretes to form the early Christian liturgy (Cole, 1993).

In the new testament era, the role of music was also extolled. There was great dancing at the home coming of the prodigal son, Lk 15: 28. It was more like a "symphony" - sounding together of different musical instruments. The din caused by the mourning rites for the daughter of Jairus was significant as recorded in Matthew 9 : 23. Music was played during the marriage feast at Cana, Jn 2 : 1 - 11 and at the Institution of the Eucharist during the last supper, Jesus and his disciples sang the Gradual Psalms and a hymn as recorded in Matt 26 : 30. The entire book of Revelation deals with angelic or heavenly singing accompanied by harps, Rev 4 : 8, 5 : 6. Revelation 8 : 2 speaks of the seven trumpets and the last trumpet to indicate God's judgment at the end of the world.

Paul urged the early Christian communities to sing inspired songs, Ephesians 5: 18 - 20 and James says "when they are in good spirits, they should sing Psalms", James 5: 18 - 20. Acts 16: 25 recorded harps and lyres as probably the only instruments used. The entire New Testament sees songs as a dynamic influence of the Holy Spirit, Eph 5: 18 - 19. That is to say, that one becomes filled with the Holy Spirit by singing. However, what seems to count for Paul is not just the music but rather the spirit of thankfulness behind the music, Colossians 3:16. It was therefore an aberration to think of music without the spirituality behind it.

However, the Early church fathers (around the first 400 years of Christianity) had a reservation for the use of musical instruments for the accompaniment of songs because of the exile experience already mentioned. According to Cole (1993),

> Because the playing of music was so common among the various cultures around Palestine, there was a tendency on the part of some Fathers to refer to musical instruments as metaphors for spiritual realities. For example, Clement of Alexandria calls Christ the harp, sometimes the pipe as well as the temple, the minstrel of the believer. He is in favour of training the young in certain

> instruments, since David used the harp and lyre for accompaniment. Yet in other places he attacks them and the flute, the dance and "amatory quavering".
>
> By the middle of the 2nd century, references to instrumental accompaniment appear, and continue to do so through the fifth century. The post - Apostolic references to instrumental usage run the gamut of attitudes: from cordial approval, to mere mention, to a grudging toleration, from a spiritualization to the severest condemnation. Sometimes the same Father manifests more than one attitude towards the practice. (p. 49).

This partly informs why we still have today a coterie of conflicting attitudes among theologians on the question of liturgical musical solemnity, especially with regards to the judicious use of local instruments as allowed by the Vatican II. We shall in due time examine all that.

The Medieval church (around the 8th to 14th century) favored more the use of monophonic chants. The contributions of theologians of the Middle ages like St Augustine, Boethius and St Albert the great is to keep musicians from creatively developing their own music for the liturgy. They maintained the idea of Plato that music is to be subordinated to the text while at the same time making Church authorities to concentrate upon the conservation of the Gregorian chant as the ideal form of sacred music without giving a concise theology of liturgical music (Cole, 1993: 61). St Thomas Aquinas also stressed the relationship between music and morals in his Summa Theologiae. He defined beautiful music but did not dwell much on what we can call "musical aberrations" in the liturgy. He however endorses the following critical submissions of St Jerome,

> Jerome does not condemn singing absolutely (in the body of the objection), but he corrects those who sing theatrically, or who sing not in order to arouse devotion but to show off or to provoke pleasure. Hence Augustine says, "when it happens that I am more moved by the voice than the words sung, I confess to have sinned and then I would rather not hear the singer". (Cole, 1993: 76).

This perhaps could serve as prolegomenon to the theoretical frameworks we shall set up for the practical assessment of what could be called liturgical musical aberrations as found in some of Nigerian Church choirs.

The dissatisfaction with contrapuntal writing by many composers reached a climax in the early 14th century. We find the Papal bull of John XXII, 'Extra vagantes Communes' condemning the use of traditional system of notes. According to him,

> the melodies of the Church are sung in semibreves and minims and with grace notes of repercussions. We prohibit absolutely, for the future that anyone should do such things, or others of like nature, during the Divine Office or during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass....However, we do not intend to forbid the occasional use - principally on solemn feasts at mass and at Divine Office - of certain consonant intervals superimposed upon with simple ecclesial chant,

> provided these harmonies are in the spirit and character of the melodies themselves (Cole, 1993: 86 & 87).

From about the 12th to the 15th century, musicians were inventing the "motet". These musicians created fast moving parts over a portion of the plain chant.

The Protestant reformation (around the 15th and 16th century) favoured hymns and polyphonic music which drew the attention of people away from the Catholic Church. The Council of Trent (1545 - 63) convened and attempt was made to ban all such polyphonic music from the liturgy.

The Counter reformation Church (around the 16th and 17th century) was compelled to look at polyphonic music and people like Giovanni Palestrina was commissioned to compose a kind of polyphonic music that would meet the taste of solemnity. Polyphonic music was now permitted to be used in moderation during the liturgy to avoid obscuring texts and thus disturbing devotion and the feelings of peace and calmness. The revolutionary ideas of Martin Luther (1483 - 1546) leading to the use of vernacular in liturgical music, helping to promote religious concert music, etc. were the highpoints of the Reformation period.

The baroque period (around the 18th century) was full of theatricality and so much dramatic elements in Church music. Cole concludes his historical account stating poignantly that,

> "Pure" music will begin and continue to flower during the late Baroque period when people are used to hearing changes of key, counterpoint and a whole host of other novel musical techniques including virtuoso solo singing and playing. A kind of glorious zenith will be reached in the works of the Lutheran composer Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 - 1750) and George Friedrich Handel (1685 - 1759) (Cole, 1993: 89).

In his encyclical, *Annus Qui*, written in the 18th century, Pope Benedict XIV warned against the profane, worldly or theatrical use of organ and other musical instruments. Enjoyment, for him is not the essential purpose of liturgical music (Hayburn,1979).

The Vatican I Church (around the 19th to the early 20th century) was ipso facto, conservative in posture trying to control the protestant excesses. On September 25, 1884, the Congregation of Sacred Rites issued some rules forbidding "figured" music. No polkas, waltzes, mazurkas, minuets, rondos, polonaise, national hymns, popular airs, love and comic songs or ballads were to be tolerated. 'Noisy instruments such as side and big drums, cymbals, improvisations and fantasies were forbidden if not played fittingly. Nothing must be allowed to disturb the piety and reconciliation of the faithful' (Cole, 1993:92).

The *motu proprio* of Pope Pius X 1903 had the objective of purging the Church of the increasing influence of theatrical and operatic compositions. He says that the proper end of sacred music is to add great efficacy to the liturgical text in that by means of it the faithful may be more easily moved to devotion. These qualities are possessed in the highest degree by the Gregorian chant and other forms of Classic polyphony e.g. the works of Pierluigi da Palestrina. He says that although the music proper to the Church is purely vocal music, music with the

accompaniment of the organ is also permitted. In some special cases, other instruments are allowed within due limits and proper regard. As chant is the key, organ and instruments should merely sustain and never overwhelm it. He was opposed to long preludes and intermezzos between the psalms. He forbade the use of pianos, bells, drums, cymbals, etc. Processions outside Church parishes could however have a band but it was to play only sacred songs (Cole, 1993).

One cannot but follow with relish the long narrative of how the Church came to gradually accept polyphonic music, polyphonic musical instrumental accompaniment, polyphonic languages and polyphonic musical cultures in general.

By the middle of the 20th Century, the Church was getting more and more liberal with sacred music. The *musicae sacra disciplina* of Pope Pius XII, 1955 appreciated the singing of hymns and other sacred anthems. Pius XII maintains that the Gregorian chant not only most intimately conforms to the words of the liturgy but actually "interprets" them. He however permitted the use of musical instruments provided nothing is at variance with the dignity of worship. He praised the use of stringed instruments and vernacular singing. He makes important distinction between sacred music in general consisting of musical compositions inspired by religious themes (oratorios, cantatas, sacred dramas, etc.) and liturgical music consisting of popular religious singing which may accompany the liturgy (Cole, 1993).

The Vatican II Church (around 1963 to 1969) came up with a new spirit of *aggiornamento* (opening the windows of fresh air). The *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, gave impetus for inculturation as follows:

> In certain countries, especially in mission lands, there are people who have their own musical tradition, and this plays a great part in their religious and social life. For this reason, their music should be held in proper esteem and a suitable place is to be given to it, not only in forming their religious sense but also in adapting worship to their native genius (Flannery, 1982 (ed): Art 119).

Thus, Vatican II seeks to overcome the Church's age-old tension with new music and new musical instruments by confirming the use of the organ during the liturgy and other instruments as determined by the local ordinary. The old (Gregorian chants) and the new (polyphonic music) are then balanced and the use of vernacular language and instruments are now modestly encouraged.

The *Musicam Sacram*[2] established 3 degrees of solemnity involving the musical participation of the priest and the people as follows:
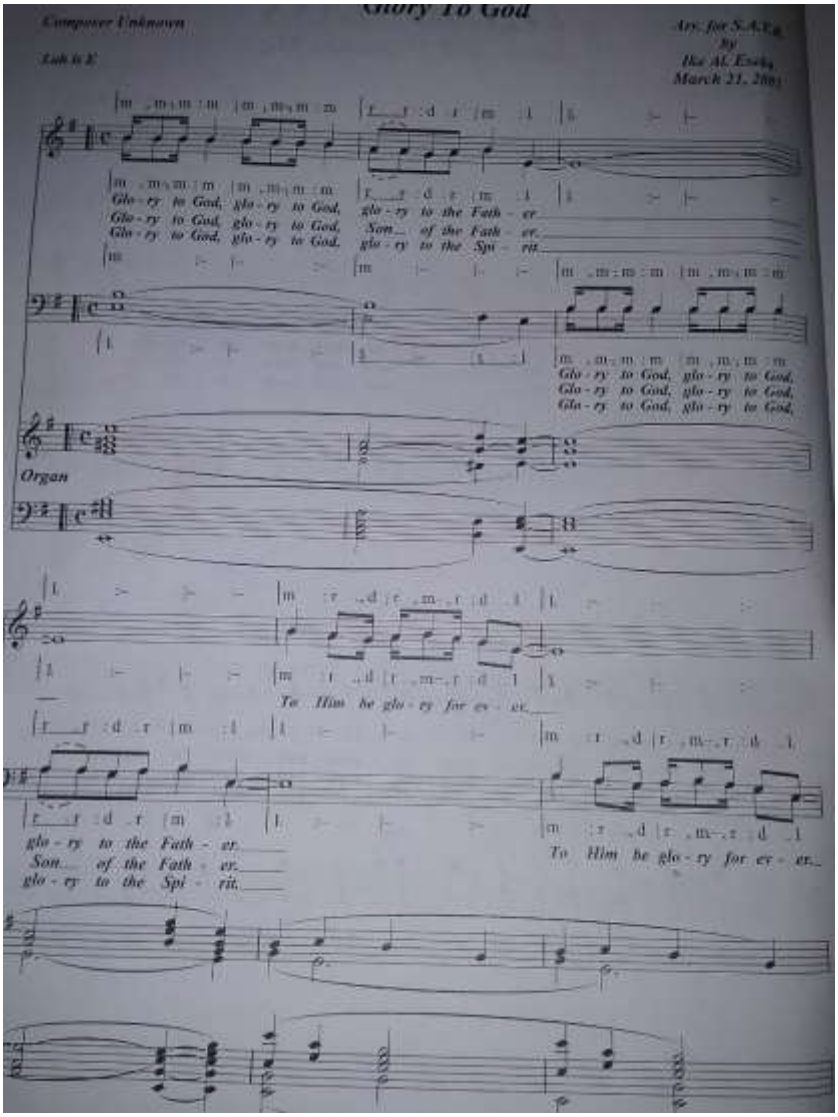
1. Chants of the priest
2. Ordinary of the Mass
3. Entrance and Communion Songs, Responsorial Psalms and Songs for the presentation of gifts.

[2]*Musicam Sacram* on Music in the Liturgy, 5 March, 1967 is the most elaborate document of the Second Vatican Council on Sacred Music.

A resume of the submissions of Vatican II *Musicam Sacram* in relation to our topic of discourse is as follows;

1. Active participation of the faithful is highly recommended, Art 2.
2. Concept of Sacred Music; By Sacred music is understood that which being created for the celebration of divine worship, is endowed with a certain 'holy sincerity of form'[3]. The following come under sacred music: Gregorian chants, Sacred polyphony in its various forms both ancient and modern (e.g. hymn and anthems), sacred music for the organ & other approved instruments and sacred popular music be it liturgical or simply religious, Art 4.
3. Sung mass is recommended but true solemnity of liturgical worship depends less on a more ornate form of singing and a more significant ceremonial than on its worthy and religious celebration. If resources are available, fine but should not lead to a part of a section being omitted, changed or improperly performed. Art 11.

* A good example of this kind of textual omission may be the shortening of the Gloria (Glory to God, glory to God glory to the Father) as arranged for S.A.T.B by Ike Eseka and being sung by many choirs all over Nigeria. See manuscript below:



[3]*Motu proprio* of Pope Pius X, 1903.

No liturgical rite anywhere has permitted the abridged form of the Gloria as found above. It is therefore considered by this researcher as a liturgical musical aberration.

4. Formation of the Choir; The choir deserves special attention. But the usage of entrusting to the choir alone the entire singing of the whole proper and ordinary of the mass to the complete exclusion of the people's participation in the singing is to be deprecated. Art 15.

5. Use of musical instruments; The ordinary of the mass should be led by the choir according to customary norms either acapella or with musical accompaniment as long as the people are not completely excluded from participation, especially Creed and Sanctus and the Lord's Prayer. Agnus Dei is repeatable as often as is necessary. Art 34. Musical instruments can be very useful in sacred celebrations as accompaniment or solo instruments, especially pipe organ in the Latin Church and other instruments. Art 62.

Musical instruments should support the voices and not overwhelm them. Art 64.
The playing of these instruments as solos is not permitted in advent, lent, during the sacred Triduum and in the Offices and Masses of the Dead, (Flannery (ed), 1988). Art 66. This researcher has noted as confirmed by many of his interviewees that most choirs in Nigeria are guilty of numbers 4 and 5 above. Many choirmasters monopolize the singing of unpopular tunes as commons all through the mass with musical instrumental accompaniments that often times overshadow the voice.

Theological framework
What constitutes the spirituality of sacred music? The Scriptures say that "God is spirit and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and truth", Jn 4: 24. Sacred Music is therefore concerned with this business of worshipping God in spirit and truth through music. It was prophesied as old as during the time of the Prophet Isaiah, 'Look I am doing something new...making a road in the desert...The people I have shaped for myself will broadcast my praises', Is 43: 19 - 21. This came to fulfillment in the New Testament Scriptures when St Paul says 'Be filled with the spirit. Sing psalms and hymns and inspired songs among yourselves... everywhere giving thanks', Eph 5: 18. Worship is not merely an expression of human sentiments towards God but a holistic result of a relationship; an effect of a meaningful God - Man encounter.

Cain and Abel are biblical examples of people who tried to worship God from different standpoints of spirituality. Abel wanted to honour God and to belong to God but Cain simply wanted to gain favour and use God to achieve his selfish motive. And even in modern day worship, one notices a conflict of value between the true worshipper and the false worshipper; between the worshipper - musician and the entertainer - musician. The worshipper is the one who sings and plays worship in praise and glory of God while the entertainer is the one who sings or plays worship music without praying to God but merely gratifying the musical pleasures of man. This is the theological argument/ standpoint for aberrations. The Prophet Isaiah lamented that 'This people honour me with words but their hearts are far from me, Is 29 : 13. Amos the Prophet also reechoed the same motif when he wrote, 'I hate and despise your feasts and take no pleasure in your solemn assemblies ...let justice and righteousness flow like a river', Amos 5 : 22.

What therefore constitutes aberrations in sacred music? Technically, we can say that liturgical musical aberration is anything that deflates the requisite mood of worship and renders worship no longer worship but noise, hypocrisy or self-entertainment. Wetmore (2001) articulates this point clearly by separating what we do in worship from what we are. God appreciates what we are (our spiritual life) more than what we do in worship (our liturgical life). While the ordinary entertainer delights himself/ herself and the congregation, the true worshipper - musician honors God. Agbo (2012) explores three dimensions in worship; the cultic sense (concerning what we do during worship, for example, the rituals and rites), the evangelical sense (concerning what we say, example, the readings, reflections, textual content of our hymns and songs) and the celebrative sense (concerning how we feel during worship, for example, in a requiem or joyful thanksgiving mood). The question of liturgical musical aberration must be foregrounded on the above parameters of consideration before we can make any meaningful sense.

Musicological considerations

Before settling down fully on what we can call liturgical musical aberrations, we need to look at the purely musical aberrations since Church Music is supposed to be truly art music. It must first be musical before it is liturgical. The following critical submissions of Gelineau (1978) stands out here;

> Liturgical music has always had ritual status. Until modern times, a distinction was made between Cantus Ecclesiasticus (rites) and Ars Musical (arts). The former was part of the ceremony. Chanting of the Psalms, the Kyrie, the Alleluia, bell - ringing were not primarily an exercise in the art of musical but ritual practices. However, modern subjectivity has laid more stress on the aesthetic aspect of music. Church music is now expected to be 'art'. It must be performed by artists, whereas formerly it was the business of the clergy. It is now judged by the aesthetic standards by which the art of music is judged in that particular culture as a whole (p.83).

This is also in agreement with the views of Fellerer (1969) that "Only a living art, contemporary or consecrated by history or tradition, can fulfil the social mission of liturgical music in the community of the faithful'' (p.106).Thus, we have the marriage between liturgical and art music. As we ensure that a music is liturgical, we ensure also that it is artistically standard. The following considerations would make a liturgical composition in the Nigerian context to be seen as substandard;

1. Weak Melodic Structure; A standard composition must have a good melodic structure. Agu (1999) is in agreement with Ekwueme (1992) about the primacy of singing in African music and the need for good melodic movements and vocal techniques to be employed in the composition of songs that will fit into the African musical taste. It is even more paradigmatic for liturgical songs whose emphasis must always be on good melody. Liturgical songs must therefore have a clear identity of form and structure, whether African or Western.

2. Poor harmonic structure; Liturgical compositions should have good harmonic structure, whether homophonic or polyphonic, parallel or contrapuntal, simple or complex. When there is a poor harmony, the music sounds bizarre or cacophonic, which is already a source of

liturgical distraction. Innocent Okechukwu[4] in agreement with some other interviewees is of the view that one of the greatest aberrations found among Nigerian choirs is the singing of poorly composed or poorly harmonized songs.

3. Textual emptiness; Some compositions present a very empty textual package. Such materials will not fit into the liturgy because they lack any evangelical message for the congregation. On the revision of texts and the practice of removal or addition of liturgical texts by some composers or liturgists, the *Liturgicam Authenticam* warns that only those changes were to be introduced which would foster their specific organic development. The same vigilance which is required for the safeguarding and authentic development of the liturgical rites, the ecclesiastical traditions, the same must be brought also to the translation of the liturgical texts into vernacular (CDWS, 2001: Art,6).

4. Weak traditional value; Modern composers even of liturgical music should be able to follow the new trend of African musicology or "theomusicology" using the phrase of Adedeji (2014: 86). Onyeji(2011) speaks of the "emergence of new compositional styles in Nigeria" characterized by the type and use of harmony, melodic structure, form, rhythm, performance dynamics, contextual nuances of performance, dance and audience roles in the performance of the chosen traditional music" (p.10). With the Vatican II challenge for inculturation, the stage is set for musicologists to experiment on how best to make the liturgical music both traditional and solemn at the same time. What we see today in our churches is what Nzewi (1999: 39) calls "the plague of popular art mentality", when people wake up and compose / perform whatever they think is trendy.

It is most unfortunate to discover that the challenge of Vatican II council on both inculturation and quality of sacred liturgical music are yet to be met. In Nigeria, some establishments like the Forum for Inculturation of Liturgical Music (FILM) have been consistent for several years now in organizing a biennial music competition for all Catholic University Chaplaincies in Nigeria. But it does seem that the quality of the songs being promoted here are not strictly speaking, following the Vatican II requirements on inculturation and congregation - friendliness. Carter -Enyi& Carter -Enyi (2019) give a mild criticism of the 2013 FILM Competition Judgment, making the following remark about one of the entries by Abel Obaji that was adjudged as best motet,

> Obaje's piece was not particularly indigenous in its harmony, but in a strong diatonic G major. This was unlike many other pieces that were modal or pentatonic. Along with the lack of indigenous instruments (the use of which is officially encouraged), the piece was among the most Westernized, and thus it was perhaps surprising that it was selected as the winner by the Judges for an inculturation festival (p.45).

It is therefore most probable that either the judges themselves were ignorant of the right standards of liturgical music inculturation or they chose to be partial in their judgment or perhaps also, no other choir came closer to the right standards.

[4] Innocent Okechukwu is one of those interviewed by this researcher, a graduate of the Department of Music, University of Nigeria Nsukka, a choir master and musicologist with many years of experience of Nigerian choirs.

Liturgical aberrations: Practical assessment of Nigerian Church Choirs

(a) Repertoire analysis

Astudy of the available hymn books and survey of the repertory of Catholic Choirs in Nigeria reveals a predominant use of hymns in Urban Cities like Logos, Port Harcourt and Abuja and the use of more of vernacular motets, hymns in native air, choruses and anthems in the hinterlands. We need to examine critically the songs we use in the liturgy to ascertain their theological content and know whether the lyrics are actually appropriate for the sections of the liturgy where they are used.

Entrance Songs

Entrance songs should be one of the most sensitive parts of the liturgy. They put the congregation in the right mood for the Liturgical celebration of the day.

Example: *Into your sanctuary by* Ifeanyi Chukwueze is one of the most common entrance songs you can hear Catholic choirs sing all over Nigeria and stands out as a sample song liturgically fit for the Entrance liturgy. It has the following beautiful lyrics;

> *Into your sanctuary we come to adore you Lord. In adoration and praise we glorify your holy name. Into your sanctuary we come to adore you Lord.*
> *We thank you Lord for the gift of life in us. We reverence your holy name O Lord, etc.*

It is an aberration for a Choir to sing anything at the entrance that will not invite the faithful into a solemn mood of reverence and worship of God.

Offertory Songs

Offertory songs convey the joyful mood of Thanksgiving. They invite the congregation to come forward and bring their offering and also render the post offertory Eucharistic theology of presentation of gifts to the lord.

Example of a post offertory song common among Nigerian choirs that has a "poor Eucharistic theology" judging from a Roman Catholic point of view is:

> *Let us break bread together at the altar*
> *Break bread together we are one*
> *For when we are together Christ is with us*
> *Break bread together we are one*

The theological fact that is hidden in the above song is the protestant notion of the Eucharist as merely communion not sacrifice. The priestly role of consecration and theology of real presence is subtly deemphasized. Eucharistic theology in the Catholic sense has two dimensions; Sacrifice and Communion. In the former strict sense, we cannot speak about Eucharistic presence without the priestly sacrifice of Christ on the Cross which is being reenacted on the altar with the priest (chief celebrant) acting *inpersonae Christi*. But in the latter sense we can speak about the presence of Christ whenever two or three gather in His name.

Communion Songs

There are two dimensions to the Communion liturgy; The invitation to come to the altar and receive Christ and the Eucharistic adoration mood of solemnity.

A theological appraisal of the lyrics of the beautiful, solemn and popular hymn *Amazing Grace* for example, may present surprising facts. Let's look at the textual content;

> *Amazing Grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me*
> *I once was lost but now am found was blind but now I see.*
> *'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear*
> *And grace my fears relieved; How precious did that grace appear, The hour I first believed*

This beautiful hymn (very constantly sung by many choirs in Nigeria and all over the world) was subjected to the critical zoom lens of a Catholic theologian, Jude Blaise[5]. He analyzed the text as subtly conveying a Lutheran view of man as a wretch and nailing salvation only to the hour of first belief - theology of sola fides (salvation through faith alone). This is why so many conservative Catholic theologians may consider singing the above song (though sacred and religious as it may appear) during the mass as an aberration as far as the Catholic liturgy is concerned.
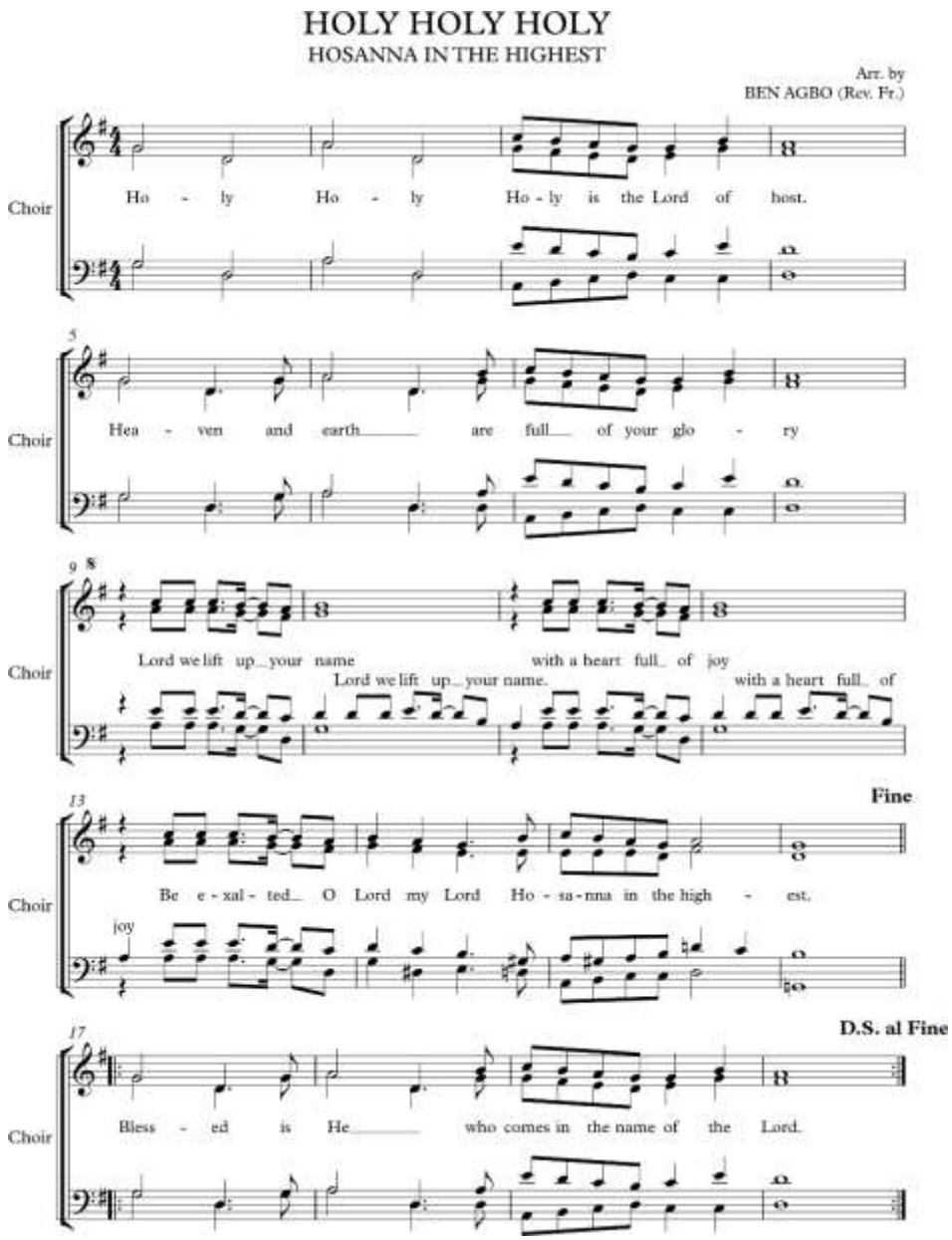
Dismissal Songs

Dismissal Songs are usually joyful and contain the evangelical message of going in peace to love and serve the Lord. It could also be called Recessional (as long as the celebrants use it to match out of the sanctuary) just like the Entrance Songs could also be Processional (as long as the celebrants use it to process into the sanctuary).

The special liturgical seasons have their specific lyrical demands; For example, the Advent Season signals the period of waiting for the birth of the Messiah. The Christmas Season signals the announcement of the joyful news of the birth of the Messiah. The Lenten Season heralds the period of fasting and atonement for sin and commemoration of our Lord's passion. Easter Season is the final period of joy and victory for the triumphal resurrection of Christ from the dead. The liturgical songs performed during these periods are all expected to reflect the theological essence and mood of the moment in question. Samuel Ezugwu[6] is of the view that textual mutilation of parts of the Order of the Mass is one of the most rampant instances of liturgical musical aberrations among Nigerian Choirs. He cited the example of so many choirs in Abuja (Federal Capital territory of Nigeria) and Lagos (Western part of Nigeria) who sing mutilated versions of the Sanctus which was borrowed from a popular gospel music air. The manuscript is presented below:

[5] Fr Jude Blaise, a musician and Catholic priest, gave this critical submission in form of a comment in an online telegram platform of Nigerian Catholic Musician's Forum.

[6] A very experienced Choir Master resident in Abuja, Nigeria and one of the interviewees for this research work.



The above arrangement has added the following lyrics to the liturgical text:
Lord we lift up your name with a heart full of joy

Be exalted O Lord my God

Basil Okeke[7], in agreement with some other theologians (liturgists) and musicologists interviewed is of the view that since no essential part of the original part was omitted nor mutilated and that since what was added was more of an emphasis of what was said already, the above arrangement would not be viewed as a liturgical musical aberration.

(b) Performance theatricality

A choir should not end up performing to be applauded but must aim at leading the people of God in worship.The conductor should never behave as if he is in a theatre but must be mindful

[7] Basil Okeke is a Catholic priest and a renowned Nigerian liturgist, composer and musicologist. He is one those interviewed by this researcher.

of being in the presence of God. The choir should not target merely at entertaining the congregation but leading them in prayer. A particular conductor by name Uche Nwafor Emmanuel[8]who conducted the piece Funinculi Funincula has been quite trendy on the Social Media. Although this performance might not have been done during the liturgy, there is palpable evidence of so many conductors in Nigeria who do more weird things during the liturgical celebrations especially weddings and sometimes funerals.

(c) Instrumental accompaniment overkill

Is the instrumental accompaniment too loud and covering the vocal message? Have musical instruments been employed which actually cause distraction in the liturgy? A look at many liturgical performances by Nigerian Catholic Choirs have shown a number of cases where the organ, keyboard, guitars, local instruments, etc. are played so loudly that they cover the voices they are meant to accompany during worship.

(d) Liturgical distractions

Is the music distracting people from praying? Is the choir causing any form of distraction or unnecessary attention to themselves? A critical look at many choirs in Nigeria shows that many of the choristers actually distract worship through a number of inimical behaviors and unnecessary showmanship during the liturgy. Some sing Responsorial Psalms with very unusual flamboyance and gaiety that tend to distract worship and shift attention unduly to themselves. Some choirs tend to stand up unnecessarily during the liturgy.

Example: I once disagreed with my Bishop's Secretary for asking the choir to stand up to sing a post offertory song during *Cathedraticum*. My argument was that there was no need drawing attention to themselves at that solemn moment of the liturgy when the attention should be on the Chief celebrant. His own argument was that he thought their voices will come out more if they stand but I drew his attention to the fact that loudness of their voices depended on the quality of microphone amplification already provided and so didn't require their standing up. Standing up may be better during Offertory or Post Communion if the choir has a special anthem to render as a choir.

(e) Monopoly of participation

Is the choir supposed to do the whole singing of all the vital parts of the mass alone? Where does the congregation come in? Are most of the Songs congregation friendly?

According to the Vatican II fathers, Active participation is encouraged in the following areas; Acclamations, responses to the greetings of the priest, prayers of litany form, antiphons and psalms, refrains or repeated responses, hymns and canticles. But the usage of entrusting to the choir alone the entire singing of the whole proper and of the whole ordinary, to the complete exclusion of the people's participation in the singing is to be deprecated (Flannery, 1987, Art. 15 &16).

It is a liturgical aberration for the choir to sing the entire mass alone without any form of congregational participation. It is recommended that choirs should do more of congregation

[8] Uche Nwafor Emmanuel is a Nigerian choirmaster
https://www.facebook.com/100002028765790/posts/1228746963869584/?d=n

- friendly songs and occasionally sing special anthems at special moments like Post Communion. Some sections of the liturgy demand that a choir should do a hymn or congregation friendly tunes, e.g. Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Responsorial Psalms, Pater noster, etc.

(f) Nonchalance of the clergy

Can the Parish priests in Nigeria be generally said to be serious with improving the role of the choir in the liturgy? Many choirmasters interviewed by this researcher have observed that a very good number of Parish Priests in Nigeria do not really care about the performance of their Parish choir and are usually not involved in their activities. Most Choirmasters lack the musical knowledge and training. Most choristers are self-sponsored. The choristers are left to pay for all the running costs like expenses for production of their music scores and other materials. The proper thing is that the Parish priests should be ready to invest in the choir as well as public address system and other important aspects of the liturgy rather than leave the whole burden on the choristers themselves majority of whom in Nigeria, are poor.

Conclusion

The challenge for promotion of active participation among the faithful demands that composers look home to the native airs and be able to make their compositions congregation – friendly and true to type with the traditional melodic and harmonic styles. It also requires better education and sponsorship of the musical training of choirmasters. Any form of incentive, financial or moral support from the Parish Priests will go a long way in encouraging the choristers. Liturgical musical aberrations will only reduce when the choir masters are knowledgeable. Catholic priests (especially those in higher leadership positions like the bishops) can therefore do better in promoting the study of sacred music in the Seminaries or in sponsoring the training of the parish choirmasters in the departments of music around their vicinity.

The Choristers and conductors should as well ensure that they maintain the solemn mood of the liturgy and not turn their liturgical performances into theatrical shows. This usually causes distraction from the mood of worship to that of entertainment. Choristers should be conscious of the spiritual meaning of whatever they are singing so as to be able to relate the mind and spirit together in the mood of worship. They should never monopolize the liturgy. Let majority of their repertory be made familiar to the entire congregation, especially responses at mass, hymns and psalm tunes. But they can take one or two special anthems towards the end of the Mass.

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