

**EXPLORING ORCHESTRA TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES IN PRIMARY
SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY OF UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS WOMEN SOCIETY
SCHOOL, LAGOS, NIGERIA**

Temitope O. POPOOLA

*Department of Music
Lagos State University of Education
Oto/Ijanikin, Lagos State*

Abstract

Music is generally acceptable among both elite and illiterate people in the world and in all aspects of human life. Music deals with sound and the sound is referred to as musical sound, which involves singing and playing musical instruments, either as a group or individual. This study aims to examine the importance of the Orchestra club on the learning behavior of the students at the University of Lagos Women Society School. Research has shown that music plays a great impact on learning development and also a vital role in the student's cognitive, skill acquisition, and self-confidence. Therefore, the main focus of this study is to explore the potential contained in music and learning of instruments and their relative importance. The paper describes with specific examples four western instruments that can be used for orchestral training in primary schools and the importance of these musical instruments on students learning behavior. It was recommended that public and private school owners should ensure to set up an Orchestra Club in their schools whereby students can acquire musical skills by learning to play different musical instruments of their choice by so doing they will be creative and be skillful in transferring the learning behavior to other subjects.

Keywords: Music, Skills, Creativity, Musical Instruments, Orchestra.

Introduction

Music is typically a sound that could be vocal or instrumental, and it is available to everyone from birth and has been interpreted by those who might have gone through training either formal or informal to acquire the skills needed. Music in most schools in Nigeria has been taught for many years as a subject majorly for the students to write the examination but few of them focus on training their students on musical instruments for them to acquire the skill. According to Faseun (2001) in Omibiyi-Obidike (2001), the teaching of music in Nigerian schools and colleges is as old as the beginning of the western system of education in the country. Since then the educational system in the country has undergone several changes with the principal aim of improving the quality of teaching provided for the learner and arousing continued interest in the school subjects.

Hallam (2010) opined that playing a musical instrument, particularly in an ensemble requires many sub-skills associated with executive functioning including sustained attention, goal-directed behavior, and cognitive flexibility. Formal music practice involves a cognitive challenge, controlled attention for long periods, keeping musical passages in working memory or encoding them into long-term memory, and decoding musical scores and translating them into motor programs. Also participating in a musical group promotes friendships with like-minded people; self-confidence; social skills; social networking; a sense of belonging; teamwork; self-discipline; a sense of accomplishment; cooperation; responsibility; commitment; mutual support; bonding to meet group goals increased concentration and provides an outlet for relaxation. It was also stated that active engagement with music and playing of musical instruments plays a major role in impacting children even beyond the development of musical skills but helps in transferring musical expertise to other disciplines. Most children enjoy playing and listening to musical instruments which have the power to affect their lives positively.

According to Idamoyinbo (2008), children who are exposed to music early can be saddled with many responsibilities, and their attention will not be diverted. They would have acquired the skills that they would need to be successful. Therefore, they will be capable of high-level artistic sensibility that is filled with an order of beauty and design that may also be useful and applicable to other arts and present their works with such alertness that is convincing and production. To support this assertion, it can be stated that in the early stages of human life, it is easier to acquire skills at a tender age when someone is less with many responsibilities. A child who is exposed to musical training early would have learned to be focused in order to achieve his or her desired goal.

According to Hyde et al. (2009) in Chau and Riforgiate (2010), children who played and practiced a musical instrument showed numerous benefits, such as greater improvements in motor-finger dexterity and auditory melody and rhythmic discrimination skills. In addition, findings from Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) show that “structural brain changes in motor and auditory areas (of critical importance for instrumental music training) were correlated with behavioral improvements on motor and auditory-musical test”. In my own words to support the assertion, a human brain is connected to every part of the body therefore any child who plays a musical instrument task his or her brain to work more and stand a chance to be skillful and creative.

History of Musical Instrument

Sacher (1963) stressed that musical instruments in use today are only a small and technically perfected remainder of an almost unsurveyable wealth of musical instruments. Originally, musical instruments were not just tools with which to produce sounds, but rather symbols designed to direct man toward the transcendental world and toward the ‘secret powers of life’ Often they were fetishes themselves, whose tones were supposed to have the power to appease the gods or to chase away demons. Attempts have frequently been made to arrange the unimaginably large number of musical instruments systematically. The most complete listing is the one made jointly by Erich M. Von Hornbostel and Curt Sachs, in 1914 where western musical instruments were majorly grouped into four classes Strings, Woodwind, Brass, and Percussion.

Western Musical Instruments

In general terms, Musical Instruments are tools or any devices made locally or internationally that are available, usable, and capable of producing musical tones or sounds that would have been tested and satisfied. According to Forney, Dell’ Antonio and Machlis (2013). The diversity of musical instruments played around the world defies description. Since every conceivable method of sound production is used, and every possible raw material, it would be impossible to list them all. However, the instrument of the Western world may be categorized into four familiar groups: string, woodwind, brass, and percussion. The sound produced by instruments can be affected by many factors, including the materials from which the instrument is made, its size and shape, and the way it is played. For example, stringed instruments may be struck, plucked, or bowed, each method producing a distinctive sound. A wooden instrument struck by a beater sounds markedly different from a metal instrument, even if the two instruments are otherwise identical they also have a unique sound. On the other hand, a flute made of metal produces a substantially different sound from one made of wood, for, in this case, the vibrations are in the column of air in the instrument.

An understanding of the definition of the word ‘Orchestra’ is necessary before we can safely talk about its classes. In music, Orchestra means a group of people who play together with four classes of western musical instruments. They are usually led by a person called a conductor, who directs and unifies the performance with movements of the hands and arms, often made easier for the musicians to see by the use of a conductor’s baton. So in an orchestra group, there are

different musical instruments of different shapes and sizes to play together as a group to produce a unique sound. Looking at four classes of western musical instruments.

Strings family: These are the type of instruments that produces sound through the vibration of the strings. The strings are the largest family of instruments in the orchestra and they come in four sizes: the violin, which is the smallest, viola, cello, and the biggest, the double bass, sometimes called the contrabass. (Bass is pronounced “base,” as in “baseball.”) The smaller instruments, the violin, and viola make higher-pitched sounds, while the larger cello and double bass produce low rich sounds. They are all similarly shaped, with curvy wooden bodies and wooden necks. The strings stretch over the body and neck and attach to small decorative heads, where they are tuned with small tuning pegs. The picture of the violin is presented below.



Figure 1: Violin with bow

Woodwind Family: The instruments in this family all used to be made of wood, which gives them their name. Today, they are made of wood, metal, plastic, or some combination. They are all narrow cylinders or pipes, with holes, an opening at the bottom end, and a mouthpiece at the top. You play them by blowing air through the mouthpiece (that’s the “wind” in “woodwind”) and opening or closing the holes with your fingers to change the pitch. Metal caps called *keys* cover the holes of most woodwind instruments. Instruments in this group include Flute, Saxophone, Clarinet, Bassoon, Oboe, Recorder, etc.



Figure 2: Saxophone

Brass Family: This family of instruments can play louder than any other in the orchestra and can also be heard from far away. Although their early ancestors are known to have been made of wood, tusks, animal horns, or shells, today's modern instruments are made entirely of brass. Brass instruments are essentially very long pipes that widen at their ends into a bell-like shape. The pipes have been curved and twisted into different shapes to make them easier to hold and play with. Instruments under this family are Trumpet, Trombone, Cornet, French horn, Tuba, etc. They produce sounds through the column of air with the tube set on vibration.



Figure 3: Trumpet

Percussion Family: The percussion family is the largest in the orchestra. Percussion instruments include any instrument that makes a sound when it is hit, shaken, or scraped. Some percussion instruments are tuned and can sound different notes, like the xylophone, timpani, or piano, and some are untuned with no definite pitch, like the bass drum and cymbals. Percussion instruments keep the rhythm, make special sounds and add excitement and color. The most common percussion instruments in the orchestra include the timpani, xylophone, cymbals, triangle, snare drum, bass drum, tambourine, maracas, gongs, chimes, celesta, and piano.



Figure 4: Drum set

Africa Musical Instruments

These are musical instruments made in Africa from material usually from nature, like wood, gourds, turtle shells, animal horns, or skin. Other materials might be recycled from man-made objects, like scrap metal. In Africa, music is a social activity in which almost everyone participates. The most frequently used form in African musical traditions consists of the use of ostinato, or repeated short musical phrases with the accompaniment of melodic-rhythmic patterns. For example, in the call and response method, a leader usually sings a phrase with a chorus singing back a response. In doing these most students are practically involved in the performance either as backup singers or involve in playing the different African musical instruments which makes it more fun and interesting and they always look forward to the next rehearsal. However, specialists have devised a method of classifying instruments based solely on the way their sound is generated.

Nwafor (2005), stated that there are many traditional musical instruments we use in our various communities. They are widely spread throughout Nigeria and Africa at large. These local or traditional instruments belong to different groups known as the Aerophones family, Chordophones family, Idiophones family, and Membranophones family. To support this assertion, it can be stated that African Musical Instruments are categorized into four major classes. The classification is based on the shape, the types of materials they are made of, and the sizes of the instruments.

Aerophones: These categories of African instruments produce sound by blowing air. Instruments in this group include (Oja), Horns, flute, etc. Oja is made from wood caved with open holes, one as a mouth and the two other by the side. They are played in vertical positions. Although most African

flutes are made with several holes (from two to six), some flutes are made with a single hole. A number of these flutes are made so that the technique of melodic playing known as hocket can be employed. Using the hocket technique melodies are formed by each African flute sounding single tones in a melodic chain. An example is presented below.



Figure 5: Oja

Chordophones: are instruments that produce sounds with vibrating strings, sometimes plucked, and sometimes struck, sometimes with a bow. One of the simplest and the most widespread of these instruments is the musical bow. It is made from strings and a pole of wood. To the end of the pole, attach a string and on the other end of the string attach a stone or a small piece of wood that is planted in the ground. An example is given below.



Figure 6: Goje

Idiophones: are instruments that produce sound from the material that they are made of, without the aid of a vibrating string, membrane, or reed. These include the maracas (Sekere), Gong (Agogo), and many kinds of shaken, struck, and scraped percussion instruments. Idiophones include both melodic and rhythm instruments and are the most abundant type of instrument found in Africa. Rattles are shaken to create sound and are principally rhythm instruments. Of the many rattles found in Africa, two categories may be observed: Those rattles that are played by the hands and those that are worn on the body and shaken by the movements of the player's body. Those rattles that are played by the hands include the gourd variety which may be either container in nature (objects such as pieces of bone, bamboo shoots, or metal placed inside a gourd) or maybe surrounded by nets of objects such as seashells or beads. An example is given below.



Figure 7: Agogo

Membraphones: are instruments that produce sound by a vibrating membrane. The most prevalent type of membranophone, drums, are utilized as both melodic and rhythmic instruments and come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Some of these drums are beaten with the hand, while others are beaten with a stick or rubbed. Some are single-headed and some double-headed and they are played in ensembles of varying sizes. These include the gangan, Bata, Omele etc. An example is given below.



Figure 8: Gangan

University of Lagos Women Society School

The University of Lagos was established in 1962. Ipaye (2017) stated that at the time of the establishment of the University of Lagos, many of the new staff were young men and women who had just started raising their own families. Some of the wives that came along with them were either working in other departments in the university or were gainfully employed outside the campus. She stated that life on the new campus would have its challenges. Members of the community had to come together to create some semblance of social lives for themselves after the day's work must have been concluded. Thus, the wife of the Vice-Chancellor at that time, Mrs. Biobaku brought together a group of women, who were later to be known as the University of Lagos Women Society (ULWS) with the following objectives; To promote goodwill and understanding amongst members of the University community; To provide social, recreational, and educational facilities for children and members of the university community; To be of assistance at University functions when required.

Later in 1967, with the formalization of the society, the Society established a nursery school named the University of Lagos Women Society Nursery School and the school expanded to include the Primary School in 2002. The school had over a thousand pupils currently in both nursery and primary sections.

Orchestra Group in ULWS.

The University of Lagos women society orchestra group was established by the music teachers who took it upon themselves to train interested pupils on different musical instruments of their choice. The society keyed into the vision of the music teachers and procured different musical instruments such as violins, clarinet, saxophone, parade drum, and drum set to start the proper orchestral. The orchestra group is in Nursery and Primary section, they held their rehearsals every Friday starting with the Nursery section one hour before the primary section. The orchestra group includes any pupil within the school who might have shown interest and registered. The school orchestra performs at every school function and they play both western and African musical instruments depending on the nature of the program.



Figure 9: Violin class during the training and rehearsal



Figure 10: Guitar class during the training and rehearsal



Figure 11: Brass and woodwind instruments class during the training and rehearsal



Figure 12: Drums class during the training and rehearsal

Importance of Orchestral Musical Instruments on Students' Learning

The importance of music cannot be overemphasized as playing orchestra musical instruments helps students' interest in learning. It creates fun for learning and energizes students with the zeal to improve their skills.

It can be stated that playing orchestra musical instruments can arouse the interest of learners to broaden their knowledge. Children's interest most time have the power to affect their behavior and inspires their zeal and focus. In learning, zeal and focus are very important as it helps students to endure, persist and have a sense of achievement which can later be transferred to other subjects.

Playing an instrument requires the brain to work at advanced speeds. Reading music is converted in the brain to the physical motion of playing the instrument. Those who play instruments have improved hand-eye coordination over those who do not. Most studies investigating connections between participation in music and general academic achievement have demonstrated that participation in music parallels increased academic achievement (Johnson & Memmott, 2006; Kinney, 2013; Perry, 1993). To support this assertion, Music has a unique effect to build confidence and give a sense of achievement, the more a child progresses in the musical training, the more knowledgeable and understandable the child gets on the musical instrument.

It also helps them to build self-confidence. As the students are learning also having it in mind that they may be called to play their part of the music alone. Consequently, each of the students would be trying to learn their musical instrument on their own for them to be better, by so doing the students develop confidence in presenting their work in a non-academic context, and thus improve their nerves when it comes to examination and assessment.

There is no doubt to say learning takes place when a child could relate to the subject and find it interesting, interactive and fun. Therefore, looking at the situation where students at the University of Lagos Women Society School were always excited once it is time for the orchestra club, this happens in most cases when there is an orchestra club, the students were always eager to attend the training. This is a result of orchestra instructors as they were been called are friendly and made the training fun for the student, so the average student comes to the orchestra club because they always have it in mind that they will have fun and play their musical instruments with their friends. With this mindset, it provides opportunities for students to receive music instructions that may develop students' perceptions, memory, teamwork, and creativity.

Conclusion

Musical instruments were not just tools that only produce musical sounds, but rather tools designed by which the physical, psychological, mental, social, and aesthetic wellbeing of an individual is enhanced. Children in an actual sense naturally responded to musical sounds. By so doing, it is important to catch them young, and introduce them to early learning and playing of orchestra musical instruments in both public and private schools. This eventually increases their level of creativity because learning and playing orchestra musical instruments involve three learning domains the cognitive

learning domain which involves student's intellect and their understanding of musical information and its application, The affective learning domain in which students is having fun learning and looking forward to more engaging classes. Also, the psychomotor learning domain is in which the students are physically engaged and participating in playing musical instruments of their choices from the basic learning of the rudiment and acquiring skills to elaborate performance. The study has stressed the importance of learning orchestra musical instruments as it's revealed that orchestra club cannot be overlooked in the school's activities as it provides entertainment and also helps students to build self-confidence, teamwork, unity, human psychometrics, and interest in learning.

Based on the above submissions, the following recommendations are made:

- a. Public and private school owners are encouraged to set up an orchestra Club in their various schools whereby students can acquire musical skills by learning to play different musical instruments of their choice by so doing it will help them to be creative and be skillful which can be transferred to another subject.
- b. Music and learning of musical instruments should be infused into the basic education system as it would help the students not only in their cognitive but affect their social life by acquiring skills. It will also make students inquisitive and provide job opportunities in the area of vocational careers.
- c. Public and private schools should ensure the use of traditional musical instruments available in the community as this will enhance the pupils' cultural knowledge and heritage.

References

- Chau, C. & Riforgiate, T. (2010). The Influence of Music on the Development of Children. *A Senior Project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Science Degree in Child Development, Psychology, and Child Development Department College of Liberal Arts, California Polytechnic State University-San Luis Obispo.*
- Christopher, M. J. & Eason, J. A. (2016). Evaluation of the Impact of the Music Program Participation on Students' Musical and Academic Success, and school Engagement in the Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools: *A Comprehensive Test of Pathways and Contextual Factors.*
- Forney, K., Dell' Antonio, A. & Machlis, J. (2013). *The Enjoyment of Music: Essential Listening Edition.* New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc.
- Hallam, S. (2010). The power of music: Its impact on the intellectual, social, and personal development of children and young people, *International Journal of Music Education* 6(1), 20-34.

- Idamoyinbpo, O. (2008). Igoru Music and Issues of Leadership in Okpe, *Ekpoma Journal of Theatre and Media Arts (EJOTMAS)*, 2(1-2),
- Ipaye, T. F. (2017). The story of the University of Lagos Women Society: The Human Angle, *The Journey So Far*, 1-13.
- Jack-Sacher, M. A. (1963). *Music A To Z*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, Inc., Publishers.
- Johnson, C. M. & Memmott, J. E. (2006). Examination of relationships between participation in school music programs of differing quality and standardized test results. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 54, 293-307
- Kinney, D. W. (2013). Longitudinal Test Score Trends of Urban Students Who Persist in School Performing Ensembles. *Paper presented at the Twentieth International Symposium for Research in Music Behavior*, Seattle, Washington
- Nicolich, J. (2008). Music's Influence on Cognitive Development, *Education Masters*, Paper 82.
- Nwafor, H. C. (2005) *Fundamentals of Music for junior secondary school*, Lagos: Elites' Commercial Agency Ltd.
- Omibiyi-Obidike, M. A. (2001). *African Art Music in Nigeria: Fela Sowande Memorial*. Ibadan: Stirling-Horden.
- Perry, R. (1993). Comparing two approaches to increasing academic achievement through providing structured parental support, one involving a beginning instrumental music program. *Doctoral Dissertation, University of Massachusetts*, DAI, 54, 06A, 2085.