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Inaugural Lecture Series 161

THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF  
WESTERN MUSIC CULTURE IN  
NIGERIA AND THE SEARCH FOR  
NATIONAL IDENTITY

By

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*Professor of Music and Musicology.*



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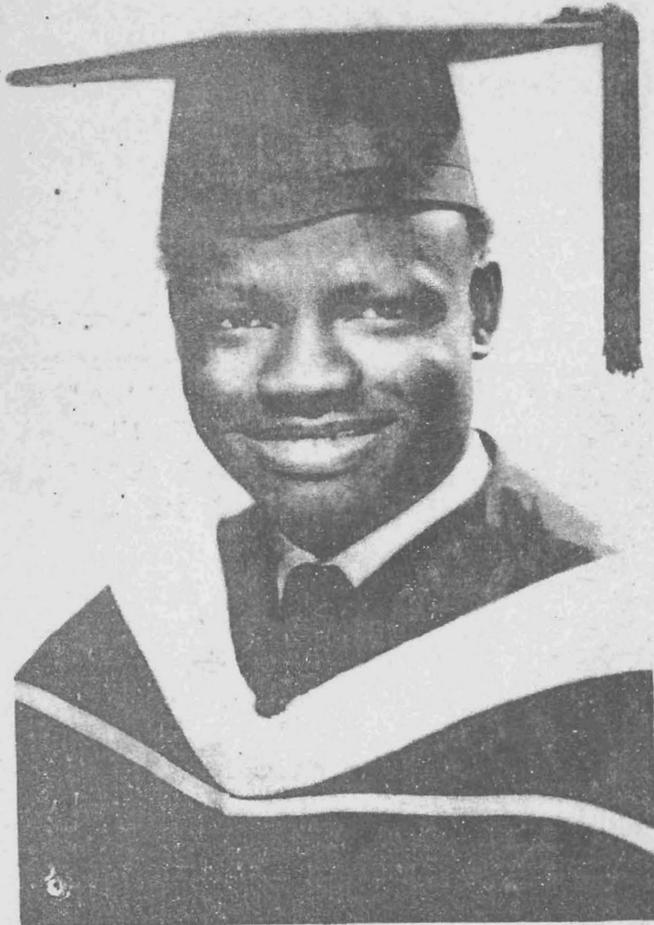
*Professor of Music and Musicology*

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## INTRODUCTION

About twenty years ago, when I was still a green horn in this great citadel of learning, an American professor in one of our departments challenged the Faculty Board of Arts considering new academic programmes under the Course Unit System as follows:

Why not a history of Nigerian music?  
You have in your syllabus, history  
Of Western Music, history of this,  
history of that, but no history  
Of Nigerian Music. Is it because  
Nigerian Music has no history?

The Board affirmed his position and posited the same questions to the Department of Music.

I felt uneasy that an American should be telling us, here in Nigeria, to include a course on the history of the music of our country in the curriculum for our degree programme. Nobody had ever ventured into this area of study because of the oral nature of our music, which makes the availability of historical data on traditions difficult but not impossible. As an ethnomusicologist, I have been trained to study the norms which govern music, which are germane to music, or are in the domains of the music of any cultural stratum of mankind on a comparative and international scale. Talking about "history" rather than the "norms" seems to me to be a new concept and orientation in the peculiar cultural milieu of Africa within which our music, dance and performing arts evolved and flourished.

The various ethnic cultures in Africa seem to emphasize the practice of performance, creativity and traditions as opposed to systematic studies, research and theoretical abstractions (VIDAL 2001:103). But, in order to understand today's musical pluralism in Nigeria, indeed in Africa, one needs to cast a retrospective look into the origins, and roots of contemporary musical forms

(VIDAL 1997:113). For, according to Woodbridge, it would seem that we can never understand anything at all until we have discovered its origin in something which preceded it (Allen 1962:183). Inspired by Woodbridge's philosophy and aided by initial bibliographic materials provided by Euba (1965), Sowande (1967) and the methodological framework established by Wachsmann (1971) and Nketia (1974), I began my research journey into the uncharted avenue of Nigerian Musical History, having accepted the challenge of including a course on Nigerian music history in the B.A. (Music) curriculum at the Obafemi Awolowo University. I ventured into developing courses for the enrichment of our music programme. This took me as a researcher to the depth of Nigeria's rich musical heritage. This resulted in my investigation of several musical forms among the over two hundred ethnic groups in Nigeria. In particular, I focused on the traditional ethnic, the folk, religious, theatrical, popular and contemporary musical forms with their corresponding historical antecedents. It was a research, the immediate end-results of which were two. First there was the inclusion of a course on Nigerian Music History and Literature in the music programme here in Ife. Second, there was the revision and expansion of the Nigerian matriculation examination syllabus following a successful defence by this lecturer before the Admission And Matriculation Board meeting at the University of Benin in 1984. It is also the result of this research that has inspired the title of today's lecture.

### **Music in Nigeria Before the Advent of the Europeans.**

Before describing the nature of music in the socio-geographic, political entity known as Nigeria prior to the coming of Europeans, it is important to first examine what music is. The question "what is music" has often been asked by laymen and intellectuals alike. *The American College Dictionary* defines music as the art of sound in time which expresses ideas and emotions in significant forms through the elements of rhythm,

melody, harmony and colour." *The Advanced Oxford Learner's Dictionary* (year 2000 edition) defines it as the arrangement of sounds in a pleasing sequence or combination to be sung or played on instruments. Over two thousand years ago, Pythagoras (550BC) described music as an expression of universal harmony which is also realized in arithmetic and astronomy. To Pythagoras and his followers, music and arithmetic were not separate as the understanding of numbers was thought to be the key to the understanding of the whole spiritual and physical universe. (Grout 1973:5). In fact, in classical Greek mythology, music was originally one of the nine arts over which the daughters of Zeus presided. Among these arts were poetry and song, drama, dancing, astronomy and history. Any of the nine sister goddesses who presided over any of these arts was called a muse. (Grout 1973).

*Musica*, the Latin word for music, occurs in the early works of music historians. Boethius had by 524 A.D. classified music into three fields which he called *Musical Cosmologie* (harmony of the universe) *Musical Humana* (harmony of the human soul and body) and *Musical instrumentalis* (harmony of instruments). Over the years, music acquired different meanings to different people. To the ancient philosophers, music was vibration both physical and metaphysical; to the acoustician, music was sound; to the psychologist, music is a sensation which must be perceived; to the Baroque Christian Religious devout, music is a gift of God as remarked by Andreas Werckmeister in 1691 (Grout 1973); to the ancient Greeks and African religionists, music is a creation of the gods. The classical musician sees music as the art of combining sounds with regards to beauty of form and the expression of emotion.

My experience as a musicologist has led me to define music as a play with sound, paradigmatic to the experiences and activities of man, in part a reflection of these experiences and activities, in part a model for both. It is in this context that I will like to discuss the whole development of music in Nigeria from

the pre-European contact era to the post independent period; carefully delineating the role played by institutionalized Western European musical culture in shaping and moulding some of the musical forms on the contemporary musical scene of Nigeria.

Musical expressions in Nigeria reflect social functions, occasions and activities connected with the day to day life of the average Nigerian. Such activities may be connected with rituals, ceremonies, occupation, recreation and entertainment. Abundant historical accounts left by early European visitors to Nigeria as well as oral history prevailing among the various ethnic communities underscored the nature and form of music in pre-European Nigeria. William Bosman in 1701 wrote about the role of music in funeral rites among the Edo of Benin thus:

The public mourning commonly  
Lasts fourteen days. Their  
Lamentations and cries are  
accommodated to the tunes  
of several musical instruments  
tho' with large intermediate  
stops, during which they drink  
very plentifully. (Bosman 1705:448)

In 1830, Richard Lander described the music used to welcome him to the palace of the Alaafin of Oyo by the *Akunyungba* (women choraliers) during his second visit to the capital of the old Oyo Kingdom thus:

Each of his half-dressed ladies  
Held a light spear in the left  
Hand, with the right leg slightly  
Bent and leaning partially on  
Their weapon..... they began their  
Song of welcome and dirge,  
For my master's death. The  
Music of their voices was  
Wild but sweet, and reverberating

From the hills, had a singularly  
Saddening, although by no means  
A disagreeable, effect and these  
Were the strains they sang. (Lander  
1830:191).

William Allen another European visitor described the music that welcomed him to the palaces of both the Obi of Aboh and the Attah of Igala in 1841 thus:

During his approach and while  
Alongside, some musicians in  
The retinue performed the royal  
Air on the Ope;  
The tone resembles more the  
Discordant air of a clarinet  
In the hands of a novice.  
A native band with wooden  
Drums and reed instruments  
Continued to perform a variety  
Of single airs or what one might  
Properly style a concord of rude  
Sound. (Allen 1841).

The German explorer, Henrich Barth also made some remark about the musical entertainment he experienced during his visit to the Emir of Kastina in 1851.

A troop of eight mounted  
Royal musicians (*masukidda-n-seriki*)  
Who had been playing the whole  
Day before the several divisions  
Of the *airi*, came likewise to my  
Tent in the course of the afternoon,  
And gratified my ears, with a  
Performance On Their Various Instruments.

Although the various accounts given above are largely impressionistic, they nevertheless give us an insight into the nature and form of music in what is now known as Nigeria in pre-colonial times. Music is life and life is music. Today, one finds the musical types characterizing particular aspects of life in the *Dabara* dance music of the *Jukun*, the *Obitun* of the Yoruba, the *Odagbara* dance music of the *Idoma*, the *Odu* songs of the *Alago*, the *Bori* ritual music of the Hausa, the *Ogboni* ritual music of the Egba and in the theatrical music associated with post-burial rites as depicted in the *akumagba* of the *Jukun*, the *adamuorisa* of the Lagos people and the *ako* of the *Owo* people. The *Oriki* of the Yoruba, the *Kirari* of the Hausa, the *Udje* song poetry of the *Urhobo* and the *Iwanlan* of the *Esan* people illustrate the existence of musical traditions with specific social function, thus making music an institution through which praise or shame is distributed. Through music, the social mores of society are regulated and transmitted orally from one generation to another as a means of ensuring the preservation and survival of society. This is another example of the role of music as the life-wire of the typical African society.

The comments of a Lagos Chief in 1903 on the part played by drumming in the day to day life of the ordinary citizen further underscores the significance of music:

Drumming makes me lively, enables  
Some people to make their living,  
Makes me feel to jump up  
And dance, heartens soldiers for  
War; brings back recollection  
Of great men; makes us  
Happy. A town without a  
Sound of the drum is like  
A city of the dead.

The above statement also points to the difference in the concept of music between the average European and the average African of the Victorian Age for the then colonial administration was planning to ban drumming in Lagos because of its "noisy characteristics" which tended to disturb the peace and tranquility of the European residents. This view of African music as rude and, noisy sounds was a pointer to an inevitable clash of cultures.

### The Years of Revolutionary, External European Influences

The wave of missionary activities which followed the "Scramble for Africa" following the 1884 – 85 Berlin Conference (Betts, 1972) brought with it the transplantation of Western European musical traditions with consequent revolutionary influences on the concept and practice of music in Nigeria. As will be shown later, the search for national identity was the logical consequence of external foreign influences, particularly of Western European cultural traditions. Four decades of British colonization (1861-1900) had brought revolutionary changes to the social and cultural life of the people of Lagos. These changes were fully documented in Michael Echeruo's *Victorian Lagos* (Echeruo, 1977). In the realm of music, Christian missionary activities and British colonial administration had introduced new forms of musical expression in both the religious and secular aspects of life. In August, 1861, 300 boys of the Mission Schools led by their missionaries sang the British national anthem during the ceremonies ceding Lagos to the British crown (Burton, 1863) This may be regarded as the formation of the first European music choir on the Nigerian soil. In the early 1860s, the European settler population in Lagos organized Western musical concerts and ballroom dancing to entertain and amuse themselves (VIDAL 1977). Beginning from the last two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century these practices were later to be imbibed by the emancipated Nigerians, the Anglo-Nigerians.

Among the Western classical concerts organised by the emancipated Nigerians were those simply known as the "Coker

concerts" which were directed by Robert Arungbamolu Coker, a Lagos Nigerian of Egba origin. These concerts created a new tradition, the European classical tradition of contemplative listening, in contrast to the indigenous African tradition of utilitarian functionalism which was then existing among the indigenous people of Lagos. In the mission churches, Gregorian chants, Anglican chants and hymns were introduced and taught to musically talented boys of the mission schools who were usually drafted as choir boys to sing during divine services on Sundays. Missionary officials trained as priests, catechists and school headmasters were also given enough Western music education to enable them to function in their multifarious roles as accompanists, conductors and choirmasters (VIDAL 1977). The result was the emergence of a new religious tradition of music, Judeo-Christian and European in form; a tradition which has continued to exist until the present day.

The experiments carried out in Lagos were gradually extended to the southern and the northern areas of what was then the embryonic Nigeria, through the gradual extension of European religious influences from the settlement of the Wesleyan (now Methodists) missionaries in Badagry and Abeokuta between 1841 and 1843, the consolidation of Christians activities on the Niger Delta and the occupation of northern Nigeria by 1900 (Ikime 1977)

### **Music Adapts to a Changing World**

The unification of the northern and southern protectorates to constitute what is now known as Nigeria effected the germination and growth of what is often referred to as "Western European Culture" in both its religious and secular forms. European religious and secular music traditions were transplanted into the cultures of the various ethnic communities that constituted the Nigerian state. Church choirs were performing theatrical music works from the repertoire of European art music composers such as Handel and Mendelssohn. In the Roman

Catholic communities throughout Nigeria, the feast of the *Corpus Christi* was being observed annually with processions, prayer and music following the celebration of the Holy Mass; so also was the Marian Congress, which had originated in Rome in 1854 following a declaration made by Pope Pius IX. The result was the ethnic variants of European musical culture emerging in the newly constituted Nigerian state. These variants were evident in the translated ethnic versions of European chants, hymns, songs and even European classical music compositions and in the adaptation of indigenous musical instruments to Western European sounds and tunings. There are reports about Adolphus William, a music teacher at Abeokuta, who in 1886 translated several popular English tunes into Yoruba. Also Rev. E.M. Lijadu translated into Yoruba, Handel's Messiah's "But thou didst not leave his soul in Hell (Omibiyi, 1979)". Several English folksongs were translated into local language and taught to children of the mission schools who used them every morning for the schools' daily assembly and marching activities accompanied by military style drum music. Every day, school opened and closed with marching. The later decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw many schools acquiring their own marching bands- Napoleon Bornparte style-Bugle, trumpet and flute bands of the Boys' Scouts, Boys' Brigade, Girls' Guide and Girls' Life Brigade accompanied school children at occasions such as the Empire Day celebration parades.

In the entertainment arena, police bands were established at some major cities in Nigeria to perform at official state parties. The bands provided worn-out European ball-room dance music as entertainment during food refreshments or at intermission during music concerts. One of such bands was established by 1880 at Lagos to play at state events of the colonial administrators and to participate at public music concerts during intermission. With the establishment of the Nigerian army towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the prosecution of the first and second World Wars, military bands

playing European military music became common occurrence on the streets of major cities in Nigeria especially during the celebration of annual Remembrance Days in memory of soldiers who lost their lives during the wars.

These developments had great impression on the psyche of young boys who soon took to band music. The radio broadcasts of live dance and recorded music from the British Broadcasting Corporation, French Radio Colonial and from the United States of America (VIDAL 2000 : 1203) completed the large-scale acculturation of Nigerian people in European cultural and musical values.

By 1938, the *Lagos Academy of Ball-room Dancing* had been established. Its object was to teach the arts of ball-room dancing to Nigerians. It was later joined by other schools such as the Colony School of Dancing, the Goodall School of Dancing and the Trinity Academy of Dancing. By 1947, an Association of Nigerian Dancing Teachers had been formed to cater for the interest of ballroom dancing in Nigeria.

The effects of European dance music broadcasts of the 1930s and the search for a new form of entertainment led to the emergence of early dance bands in Nigeria (Sowande 1967; VIDAL 2000:). Between 1927 and 1948, 23 urban popular bands were busy transforming the social urban music scene in Nigeria as resident dance bands were established at major cities. These bands were the early popular bands and they were responsible for laying the foundation of what today we know as urban popular music. Starting with the Chocolate Dandies in 1927, the list includes the Mayfair Dance Orchestra, the Mozart Swing Orchestra, the Blue Moon Orchestra, the Italian Orchestra, the Lagos City Orchestra, the Eastern Progressive Band, the Colonial Swing Rascals all in Lagos; the Victory Brass Band in Kano, the Effiom Brass Band in Calabar, the Bethel Orchestra in Onitsha, and the Broderick Orchestra in Port-Harcourt. (VIDAL, 2000).

#### *Early Attempts at Nationalism*

In Nigeria, early attempts at nationalism started within the church with the emergence of independent Native African Churches in the last decade of the nineteenth century. These churches were the result of great schisms which rocked the orthodox churches and led to the exit of nationalists who would prefer to establish churches run and controlled by Africans.

The African Churches gave church music an African idiom. African drums which had hitherto been tabooed in the orthodox churches were introduced into Christian divine worship. Traditional melodies characteristic of the ethnic communities became the new musical idiom of christian worship. These melodies which became known as "Native Airs" were to replace the "English Airs" of the orthodox churches. They were derived from three sources, namely ritual and ceremonial melodies used in traditional African festivals and folksongs and new musical compositions by an emerging group of African composers. These compositions reflected African musical characteristics with regard to tone, scale, mode and melodic contour. The texts were in the indigenous languages and reflected the African understanding of Christian religious beliefs and dogma. The native airs were performed with drumming and dancing and these generated so much interest and excitement that many people started drifting from the orthodox to the African churches. The practices were soon introduced into the orthodox Christian churches by the second and third decades of the twentieth century to stop the flow of converts to the African churches.

Outside the church, the first attempts to indigenise and localize European forms of musical entertainment in Lagos through the presentation of traditional forms on stage by the urban community met with stiff opposition from the educated elite who considered such musical entertainments to be too vulgar and profane for their liking. Such people would not mind the translation of European civilized forms into the local language forms but strongly detested the elevation of traditional heathenish forms to "civilized" European language forms.

(Echervo 1977) The *Lagos Observer* clearly mirrors the mind of the educated elite when it states in its issue of March 2, 1882 thus:

The object of every performance should be to elevate the moral and intellectual tone of the masses, rather than pander to low and vulgar tastes.

With such statements offered by the educated elite, it became clear that the Nigerian society had become polarised into communities of tastes and preferences. This has continued to exist up till today in the realm of arts and artistic endeavours. An analysis of the then society shows that there were the European community, the Anglo-Nigerians, the Brazilian and Cuban emancipados, the newly emerging educated elite, the community of christian converts, the islamic community and the largely traditional indigenous peasant community. With the co-existence of such diverse communities, it was inevitable for a clash of values arising from different aesthetic standards to occur.

However, expatriate officers made efforts to improve the standard of indigenous music productions through criticism. Indigenization was successful at Ibadan with its large indigenous population. The Ibadan choral society's first concert on December 29, 1886 was indigenized and succeeded in attracting a large number of the local people (Echeruo 1977). It was reported that many paid extra amount just to have a seat at the concert. These early attempts at nationalism illustrate the divergent views that characterized the philosophy behind the search for national identity.

### The First three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

Musical and cultural fusion did not follow the 1914 amalgamation. Communities on the ethnic, religious, class and cultural divide were left to create, practice and develop their own forms of musical expression and values. At best, what took place was the social and cultural interaction, the mutual tolerance and

respect for each others' values. In a city like Lagos for example, the "Bomba Me Boi", a Brazilian Carnival introduced by the Brazilian Roman Catholic emancipados was being observed by the Roman Catholic community during the fourteen days spanning the Christmastide to the feast of the Epiphany; so also were the annual observances of the *Igunuku* festival by the Oshodi Tapa immigrants, the *Agere* festival by the Anago, the *gelede* by the Awori and Egbado and the *Adamu-orisa* by the Lagos people. Thus we have a situation where several musical practices were developed along parallel continuum with each laying claim to nationalism and national identity. The practices of traditional music were continued with vigour and pride through such events and occasions as annual festivals, chieftaincy ceremonies, burial and funeral rites, naming and puberty rites and the investiture of paramount rulers. New festival occasions such as Christmas and Easter provided veritable opportunities for practicing and displaying the pride of traditional music in contrast to foreign European music propagated by the British colonial administrators and the missionaries. Since the practitioners were clearly non-converts, the continuity of their tradition was ensured and the traditional system of "occupation by inheritance" assured replacements. Thus the traditional ethnic communities proclaimed their own nationalism in music by re-affirming their ethnic identities.

The nationalist spirit which had led to the formation of African churches and to the development of "native airs" as an African musical idiom of worship crept into the mission churches within the first three decades. In 1923 the Rev. J.J. Ransome-Kuti published a collection of fifty-seven songs in the idiom of Yoruba musical language as appendix to the Anglican Hymn book. The collection consisted of original compositions as well as traditional melodies used at rituals and festivals of the Yoruba. The work demonstrates how the African can praise and worship God in his own musical language and idiom. Later, Ebun Ogunmefun translated the Yoruba texts into the English language

with the original music score and published it in 1929 through the London Society for promoting Christian knowledge. The aim was to demonstrate to the English man that the African could praise and worship God in his own musical language. This experiment set the stage for the pursuit of nationalist fervour in church music. The Catholics, the Methodists, Baptists and other denominations soon followed this example and by the beginning of the forties, church music had assumed a new form.

As mentioned earlier, the live broadcast of dance music had opened up the country to the influence of Western entertainment music. In the 1920s' and 1930s, several Nigerian youths formed dance bands playing at club houses for recreational purposes. Many had other means of livelihood and engaged in "clubbing" as a means of social activity. The bands assumed two or three forms. First there were the orchestral dance bands in imitation of the small-combo JAZZ band of the United States of America. These bands performed at several hotels and club houses. The second group were the local vocal bands known as Juju bands. These bands were more indigenous than the orchestral bands as they sang and played music in local idioms and dialects and appeared to be the local alternative to the European styled urban dance bands. The third group were the ethnic bands. This group consisted of performers who played strictly folk music of their individual ethnic communities for social entertainment. They also waxed records in praise of notable individual in their communities. For them, the traditional idiom of ethnic music expression was the norm, even for urban social entertainment, thus displaying the spirit of nationalism. Records were waxed in Igbo, Hausa, Ijo, Edo and Egun. Native songs and native dances were often staged at functions such as receptions and send-off parties organised by the ethnic communities for their sons and daughters on transfer to other parts of Nigeria. The Nigeria of the 1920s and 1930s was one in which there existed mutual coexistence among ethnic communities

and Nigerians working in the colonial civil service administration could live in, work in and be posted to any part of the country.

In 1938, an event occurred which was to influence the development of entertainment music in Nigeria. The Accra Quartet led by Mr. T. D. Otoo gave a concert and entertainment performance at the Lagos Glover Memorial Hall in honour of the Gold Coast (Ghana) Tennis team. Among the programme items which consisted of songs, playlets and dramatization was a song titled "Lawyer Asafu Adjaye", described in the programme as Gold Coast Highlife and rendered by one Miss Ophelia Bruce. In a music review of Friday May 6, 1938, the *West African Pilot* reported the success of the programme with the headline caption, "1000 patrons applaud 'Highlife' composer". The editorial opinion of the same day described clearly the cultural influence of the performance called "Gold Coast Highlife" by the Accra Quartet led by Mr. T.D. Otoo.

Performance:

..... There can be no doubt that MR OTOOO has proved himself to be an important composer and playwright to be reckoned with as a factor in the artistic development of contemporary African life. True, some of his compositions reflect the life of a cross section of the masses, yet it cannot be doubted that some of the world's greatest artistic compositions either in music or in dramatics are a reflection of life among the humble and lowly. The ability to compose JAZZ hits has made many composers wealthy in Europe and America. There is no reason why the "Highlife Hits" of African composers should not at least make them economically secure. Wednesday night's patronage may be an index that

Africans are beginning to appreciate African Art materially. (*WEST AFRICA PILOT*, MAY 6, 1938).

The Accra Quartet did a few other performances before returning to Ghana, leaving a cultural influence that was to diffuse into the urban areas of Nigeria and influence the course of urban dance music development for many years.

### The Development of the 1940s and 50s

The nineteen forties and fifties witnessed further developments in the search for an African idiom of musical expression in church music, school music, band music, entertainment and recreational music. The battle for Africanism in music moved into the public arena generating debates and appeals. In one of such appeals, MR. T. Akin Martins in an article in the *West African Pilot* of September 14, 1943, pleaded for public interest in "native music". He commended the works of A.K. Ajisafe, T.K.E. Phillips, Rev. A.T.O. Olude and Egunmefun. Echoing the appeal of Mr. Martins, the *West African Pilot* in an Editorial opinion on Thursday September 1, 1943, states thus:

Several eminent authorities have expressed great confidence in the possibilities of African music and we are genuinely convinced that there is much room for research and improvement in this sphere. Before our society was overrun by the wave of current music, mostly bourgeois, Africa knew and enjoyed a highly developed form of music, a form which may probably never

be completely retrieved. According to Mr Martins, our forefathers who made fine melodies were illiterate.

They were unknown to fame and they knew nothing of the theory of music, yet the melodies of their time were very inspiring, spiritual and at the same time challenging. All lovers of African music will no doubt

be touched by the appeal for union. We urge them to unite and preserve what little we have left of an art which we cannot afford to let lapse into disrepute.

Music is the mainspring of life and of culture. (*W.A.P.* Sept. 16, 1943). Following Martins' appeal, several church musicians began to look for ways and means of reflecting Africanism in their works in order to preserve their nationalities. Committees were formed to look into the envisaged problem associated with this. The result was the variety of ethnic variants that characterized Nigerian church music. In some compositions, the vernacular texts were used. In others, the texts were in the English Language. In some, the style is mainly European with some African characteristics. In some, the musical style is folkish, while in others the musical style is largely ethnic. Notable among church musicians that contributed to the development of African idioms of church music in Nigeria are T.K.E. Phillips, T.A. Bankole, A.T. Ola-olude, Egun Ogunmefun, Nelson Enuma Okoli, Hacourt Whyte, Ofili Kerry, Uzoma Asiji, Sokari George, Ayo Sandey, Olaolu Omideyi, Akin George, Egun Akinoso, Tunde Derby, O. Eberewaiyo, William Wilberforce Echezona, Udemezue Onyido, Pope Dopemu and Godson Opara. These dedicated church musicians worked very hard to give church music in Nigeria an African character by reflecting their individual national identities in their works.

The rise of nationalist movement in the political arena from the 1920s to the 40s affected the training of musicians as nationalist movements had argued for a de-emphasis on the European arts and culture since according to them, the country has its own rich heritage of arts and culture and that a greater emphasis be placed on science and technology. Early experiment by the British was centered on producing a Nigerian which will be a replica of an Englishman, the Anglo Nigerian. Between 1884 and 1891, many schools and colleges in Britain had advertised in Nigerian newspapers for students who were interested in

receiving instruction on music, dancing, painting and "sound English Education". The practice of sending Nigerian students abroad for education in the European arts and culture continued in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The nationalist efforts put an end to this. Musical training of Nigerians in European music became localized with private music schools such as the Pratt school of music and the Lagos Centre of Trinity College of Music (London) offering instruction in music. The products of localized music training were instrumental in developing syncretic forms of African and European music as seen in the highlife music, folk operatic music, native airs, and Juju music. The evolution of these musical forms was part of the efforts in the search for national identity in music within the emergent Nigerian nation state.

The outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 and the end of the war itself promoted the spirit of nationalism. Nigeria had entered the war in the defence of freedom and liberty. The war also brought an influx of people from the countryside into the major cities, especially Lagos, transforming these cities into growing cosmopolitan settlements. Nigeria became strategically important for the "Allied forces" as stopping and refueling centre. Thousands of allied troops, including Americans "stopped, by and refreshed on their way to and from the battle fronts. Numerous hotels, drinking bars and night clubs opened to cater for amusement and entertainment of non-Africans and Africans, even as the war went on. Consequently, more bands emerged to cater for the rise in the demand for dance music. More foreign influences crept in. For example, the Capital Cinema showed a film titled *Swing Time* starring Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. Another film *Dance, Girl Dance* was also shown. All these had an indirect effect on the Nigeria musical and cultural scene. Foreign musical dance forms such as Foxtrot, Blues, Tango, Waltz, Samba, Rumba, and Quicksteps soon dominated the cultural scene in Nigeria. Earlier, Jazz, swing and Jive had dominated the musical scene especially with the chocolate Dandies band.

The end of the Second World War saw the emergence of post-war bands known as "Konkoma bands". From Lagos, Calabar, Onitsha, Bakana, and Ikot Ekan, brass bands emerged using European brass instruments and Western military drums and playing "native-airs" and popular folk tunes. It will be recalled that the native-airs had earlier on been developed in the Christian churches by Nigerian composers of different ethnic nationalities as part of the answer to the search for Africanism and national identity in the European musical culture sweeping through West Africa especially Nigeria. The emerging post war dance bands took over the vocal native-airs folk tunes and gave them an instrumental character. These bands were the prototype of the later to emerge highlife bands. All over Nigeria, the bands functioned at social gatherings funfairs, public processions and bazaars.

The late forties also witnessed the return to Nigeria of Bobby Benson from abroad. Bobby, wanted to play jazz music in the style of the American big-band jazz of the 1930s, the swing bands of DUKE ELLINGTON and COUNT BASIE with its characteristic showmanship. In fact, it was Bobby who introduced showmanship into Nigerian dance band music. Bobby soon discovered that Jazz music was not popular among the average Nigerian as he faced stiff competition from other kinds of bands such as the *Konkoma*, *Juju*, ethnic and folk bands, that were already co-existing at that time. Bobby then changed his style of music, introducing pidgin-English into the lyrics of his songs. Among such songs was the popular *Taxi driver* song. This technique proved very useful for cross-language communication among the various ethnic nationalities and was also used by early highlife musicians, many of whom had their apprenticeship in urban popular band music and showmanship with Bobby.

The 1950s finally saw the emergence of highlife music in Nigeria with such bands as the Western Dance Band led by Bala Miller, Cool Cats Orchestra led by Victor Olaiya, Chris Ajilo and

his Afro-cuban Orchestra, Samuel Akpabot and his Sextet, Victor Silvester and his Orchestra, Ritz Tempo Orchestra, Empire Rhythm Orchestra, Adeolu Akinsanya and his Rio Lindo Orchestra, Roy Chicago and his Abalabi Rhythm Dandies, Chief Billy Friday and his Ambassadors and Ambrose Campbell and his West African Rhythm Brothers. These bands were later joined by the bands of other highlife musicians such as Cardinal Rex Jim Lawson, Eddie Okonta, Godwin Omabuwa, Agu Noris, Steven Osadebe, E.C. Arinze, Victor Uwaifor, Charles Uwgbue and Zeal Onyia. These Nigerian urban popular musicians made "highlife music" an almost national music in Nigeria. Wherever you were, East, West, North, or South, highlife music produced a national feeling. Musicians from different ethnic terrains played together, sang together and composed in local languages other than their own. Agu Noris an Igbo composed his famous "Nitori Kini?" in Yoruba, Victor Olaiya a Yoruba sang "Ayingana" in Igbo, "Asian Udo" in Efik and "Baakodaya" a Hausa fall-out term from the 1959 Federal election; while Bala Miller a Hausa composed "Kusimilaya" in Yoruba. With these Nigerian popular musicians, highlife music developed and became one of the most successful musical products of the search for national identity. This was the musical scene in popular music's search for national identity to the eve of independence, and the post independence years.

#### **Pre-Independence Experiment and the Emergence of Nigerian High Art Music**

The fifties and the sixties saw the emergence of a new kind of music, called Nigerian contemporary art music. This is the musical creation of Nigerian composers who have received musical training in European musical traditions. It is the work of elitist Nigerian musicians who have chosen to create music in the European idioms of musical expression and to set a high artistic standard for music in Nigeria by combining what Sowande (1944) called *the African emotional subjective side of music* with the

technical and theoretical side. The spirit of nationalism ignited by the two world wars and the agitation for political independence and freedom from colonial rule had continued to arouse interest in the arts and cultures of the people of Nigeria, including music. Appeals were made to those involved in the development of native music to transform African oral musical traditions characteristic of Nigerian ethnic music into literate ones. Tunde Oloko reflected this kind of thinking clearly in his assertion in the *Daily Times* of 28<sup>th</sup> September, 1951 when he said:

Efforts should be made by those connected with native music to bring their songs into writing for the use of posterity.

(*Daily Times* 1951).

Researches were conducted into the music of ethnic communities in Nigeria by those who had received European musical training. Others were at the same time putting down their musical creation in the literacy style characteristic of European classical traditions. They were also reflecting, consciously or unconsciously, their African or Nigerian ethnic backgrounds. Prior to this period, the cultivation of European art or serious music in Nigeria had been purely western, lacking any form of African identity. The classical concerts of the 1860s and later 1880s were totally Western in content, orientation and production, as they consisted of works of European composers performed in European styled concert halls. This soon changed when in the fifties, Nigerian composers started producing their works for performance at concert halls in place of, or as complement to, European works.

The approach to political independence from Britain intensified the search for national identity by Nigeria in the comity of world nations. Several Nigerian artists started projecting nationalism in their various works from novels, plays, carving and sculptures to music and dance. Contemporary Nigerian art

musicians who were already creating a homogenous idiom of expression had only one more hurdle to cross, to reflect nationalism in their works. The search for nationalism took several musicians to their roots, often to their ethnic backgrounds where memories of old traditional village songs and folktale songs were used to project the spirit of nationalism. Among such musical works, mention must be made of "African Folk Symphony" which was composed to mark Nigeria's attainment of independence. In his composition, Fela Sowande used an Egbado song *Eyin eda, e ma raropin*, (you earthlings do not view anyone with contempt) as the main theme. His earlier work "African Suite" combines African song themes from both Nigeria and Ghana with European harmonic techniques. Williams Wilberforce Echezona's composition, *Egwu Obi* and *Olu Ije* were based on some of the one hundred Igbo folk songs which Echezona himself had transcribed during the fifties. Samuel Akpabot's *Ofala Festival Overture* combines Western wind instruments with African instruments such as *marimba ogene*, *sekere*, tom-tom, talking drum and *obodum* wooden slit drum. The main rhythmic pattern which could be heard throughout the composition is the bell rhythmic pattern used for *Kete* and *Adoua* by the Akan people of Ghana. Ayo Bankole used a Yoruba folktale - song, *Mo ri keke kan* (I saw one spinner) as the basic theme of his sonata No. 3 for piano. Akin Euba used the piano to evoke the textures of traditional Yoruba *dundun* drumming in his "scenes from traditional life". Lazarus Ekwueme used the vocal medium to articulate African rhythmic and tonal qualities in his *Nno* (Welcome) and *Nne Neku Nwa* (O Mary dear mother) both Christmas carols written in Igbo and English Languages for the group choral singings in Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass (S.A.T.B).

Nigerian contemporary art musicians demonstrated a high level of ingenuity in bringing about a culture of nationalism in music among the literate music community as did their counterparts in Russia, Czechoslovakia, Norway, Poland and the

United State of America in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Musicians in these countries sought to free themselves from the domination of the triumvirate of Italian, French and German in European music. Musically, Nigerian art or "academic" musicians thought alike, worked alike, spoke alike and communicated alike in that they were guided by the same aesthetic theory, and exhibited the same affects of contemplative listening. They differed only in ideas, styles and personalities, and these differences cut across ethnic boundaries. But their music had one great setback. It is the music of the educated elite and has very little meaning and relevance for the ordinary man in the village. Thus, its use as a national music would mean the enthronement of musical autocracy and therefore would be musically anti-democratic. However, the contribution made by Nigerian contemporary art musicians to the development of a national idiom of musical expression in Nigeria cannot be overlooked and their creations will go down in Nigerian music history as part of the aggregate of musical expressions that characterize Nigerian music, an aggregate that reflects religious beliefs, class consciousness, language diversities and the ethos.

Military band music was not left out of the search for national identity in Nigerian music. Both the Nigerian Police, and Nigerian Army bands experimented with Nigerian folk tunes. Familiar folk tunes such as "Old Calabar" and "Nike-Nike" were adapted for marching. The spirit of nationalism also permeated the popular music domains which had earlier in the fifties evolved a national musical style in what is called highlife music. Highlife musicians in particular composed in several Nigerian languages including Pidgin English, a kind of Creole language and used folk-derived music in their composition.

On the eve of independence, it was obvious that the musical culture in Nigeria was not homogenous. The various musical expressions and traditions that had developed along

several parallel continuum before independence continued to grow and to retain their stylistic identities within the context of the search for national identity, creating a multilateral co-existence with its corresponding multifaceted depth meaning.

### **Post-Independence and the last four Decades of the twentieth Century**

The year following independence was marked by the visit to Nigeria of important international popular musicians such as Louis Armsrong, Lionel Hamston, Randy Weston and Cosy Cole. (ITA, 1984) Pop groups with funny names such as the Cyclops, Junkers, Clusters, Hykkers, Fanthom Four, Rhythm Five and the Spiders emerged on the popular music scene. With these, young 'Pop' musicians and the prevailing American and Western influences, nationalism seemed to have taken a back seat.

The Nigerian Civil War further opened up Nigeria to the external influences of world cultures, away from the British which had been the dominating external cultural influence. German, French, Russian and American cultures made their way into the Nigeria cultural scene. Of all these, the American culture was to be the most important because of its black (African) content. By the time the civil war ended in 1970, black American culture had been imbibed by the teeming Nigerian teenagers. This particular generation of youths were pre-teenaged at independence and therefore did not know much about urban highlife music and the urban youth culture which, music had helped to develop. The highlife music went into decline during the civil war, juju music was for older group and so, black American music came in to fill the cultural vacuum created in pre-teenaged and post-independence children who by the seventies had grown into teenagers. Thus in the late sixties and early seventies, it was "soul" culture, which took the form of soul hair-cut especially among girls, "soul dress", and of course "soul music". "Soul music" is the tag name given to rhythm and blues

by the black American community in the sixties. In major cities of Nigeria, teenagers moved and swung to soul music blasting out from the commercial loud speakers of several music shops which dotted the major streets. Thus, national consciousness became black consciousness in the impressionable minds of teenage Nigerian youths who developed affects for the music of Ottis Redding, Jackson Five, Diana Ross, the Temptation, the Manhattans and many others.

It was in this context that Fela Anikulapo-Kuti entered the Nigerian musical scene. When in the sixties Fela returned from Britain to form Koola-lobitoes, he was playing very finely refined highlife music, the type that could only have been played by a trained musician. Fela took his highlife band on a tour of the United States of American in 1969, playing side by side with black American soul musicians at predominantly black audience night-clubs in Los Angeles and other cities. By the time he returned to Nigeria, his sounds and style of music had changed, to a hybrid and was tag-named "Afro-beat". The Nigerian teenaged generation of the seventies who had already been imbibing soul music culture had no problem in taking to Fela's new "Afro-beat" sounds with its characteristic Afro-mannerism and dance steps which Fela himself had invented. Thus, Fela captured the minds of the teenaged youths with such numbers as "who are you?" "Jeun ko ku" "Beautiful Dancer" and many others. The clash in cultural values between the young generation and their old parents were clearly brought into focus when the young generation received instant rebuke from their parents for embracing foreign and unAfrican values. The young replied by describing their parent as being out-of-touch with modernism. And so, the clash of values caused by the generation gap continued.

The search for nationalism was further lost in the euphoria and ecstasy of the "black consciousness" philosophy that greeted Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture" ("Festac 77"). Africans at home and in the diaspora

forgot, albeit temporarily, their national problems and converged in Nigeria to preach, propound and analyse the black consciousness philosophy and to devise strategies for freeing black people both mentally and physically from the "tragic dependence" on foreign, mostly Western European, culture. For twenty-seven days, Africans at home and in the diaspora expressed, displayed and shared together their experiences through the arts, music and dance which symbolize the essence of black culture all over the world. The Nigerian presentation at the festival demonstrated the cultural pluralism that characterized post-independent Nigeria, especially in the area of musical expression, as the various musical forms which had developed along parallel continuum during the preceding seven decades, were displayed before the august multicultural and international gathering.

The 1980s saw the emergence of a new wave of Nigerian singers, male and female, looking out for cross cultural influence from the United States of America and the Caribbean, for new forms of musical expression, both religious and secular. These were the pre-teenaged children of 1960 and post-independent children who were now in their second and third decades of life. This is the generation for whom "nationalism" means "black consciousness". These groups of songsters became absorbed in overseas idioms of musical expression to the extent that they created their own Nigerian versions of popular music. Known as "Nigerian Pop", "Nigerian Reggae" and so on, these lacked any form of national identity as far as musical style is concerned.

The list of new age musicians is endless. They include Onyeka Onwenu who waxed "one love" (1987) and "Dancing in the sun" (1988), Christie Essien-Ugbokwe who waxed "Give me a Chance" and "Omo mi se rere", Oby Onioha who waxed "I wanna feel your love" (1981), Stella Monye who waxed "I hear you, Mr. Right (1989)", Felix Lebarty who waxed "Over Boy", and Dizzy K. Falola with his "Baby ki lo de?". In the reggae

group were Tera Kota (Femi Gboyega) who waxed "Lamentations for Sodom" (1984) the Mandators who waxed "Crisis" (1987), Majek Fashek with his "Prisoner of conscience album" (1988), Ras Kimono with "Under pressure" (1988) and Sonny Okosun with "Fire in Soweto".

The last decade of the twentieth century witnessed even more external influences with the emergence of "Punk music" and "rap music" among the younger generation of youths. At the same time, religious revivalism is promoting various brands of gospel music among the various groups of religious creeds and denomination. The present "state of the arts" communication gadgets has made it much easier for those who look beyond Nigerian shores for inspiration for new forms of musical expression, both secular and religious.

### **Whither Nigerian Nationalism?**

Today, at the dawn of a new millennium, we are at the cross-roads in our search for national identity in music, indeed in our performing and visual arts. In the light of our past experiences and our hope for the future, one cannot but, ask whither Nigerian Nationalism? A review of Nigerian music history shows that nationalism was a reaction to the westernization (Europeanization) of the Nigerian polity and the aggregate of culture expressions by the colonial administrators. The Europeanization and acculturation of Nigerian peoples, through the transplantation of European musical traditions and culture, were evident in the hybridized musical forms and cultures produced within the Nigerian polity. Europeanization then meant the adoption of Western musical models and values as alternatives to the then existing traditional models as well as their usage in building the Anglo version of the Western European institutions in Nigeria.

Africanism was therefore fashioned as a challenge to Europeanism, as it became the root base for nationalism. Thus, to be African was to be nationalistic. However, musicians and composers often have to fall back on their ethnic roots, their

origins, as source materials for their concept of nationalism. Thus, nationalism was defined in terms of one's own ethnic identity and experience, be it linguistic or artistic. This was done through the use of verbal, melodic, rhythmic and harmonic icons representative and characteristic of the various ethnic cultures of the Nigerian nation state. In fact this concept of nationalism is not different from that of Africanus Horton described by Nicon (1969) in his book *The Dawn of Nationalism in Modern Africa*. Horton's concept was in terms of large ethnic communities such as Fanti, Ga, Yoruba, Igbo and Sierra Leone Creole (Nicol, 1969) as against that of a modern federated nation-state such as Nigeria. The success or failure of this approach to the problem of nationalism constitutes one of the greatest challenges of our time.

Today, the cultural revolution in music beyond the village, provincial and regional levels to the continental level is still to be realized in Africa. This is particularly true of Nigeria where musical forms had been developing along parallel continuum. The signature tune of the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria and the Nigerian Television Authority used in heralding "The National News" broadcast underscores the problems of Nigerian identity in music (VIDAL, 1993). Before independence, the signature tune was a rhythmic verbal African intonation of "This is Nigeria, broadcasting service" played on the Yoruba *dundun* talking drum which lends itself well to voice modulation in any language. The entire Nigerian populace identified with it as the symbolic tone, the musical icon, for the news on the Nigerian Radio and Television media. Later the signature tune was modified to reflect the principal ethnic nationalities that constitute the Nigerian polity. First, we still hear the original verbal symbols on the talking drum. Immediately after, we hear the *kakaki*-talking trumpet playing two musical tones, a perfect fifth apart. This is followed by the *Ikoro* talking slit-gong playing fast rhythmic rolls. The sequence is repeated over and over again until a voice is heard on the air signifying an end to the musical symbiosis exhibited by this multi-cultural musical icon announcing the national news. A further,

modification results in the form the present signature tune assumes. These are indeed novel experiments in multiculturalism. Currently a new national icon is being demanded for the identification of our Radio and Television stations at both the national and international levels. This is one of the challenges of our time.

Today, ethnic nationalities in Nigeria, constantly fight to raise their individual characteristics to the level of nationhood. Whither Nigerian nationalism? Nigerian youths, influenced by the globalisation of European musical styles, thanks to the Information Communication Technology, are gradually becoming addicts and imitators of western popular musical styles such as rock, punk, funk, rap and what have you? Whither Nigerian nationalism? The current pro-western melodies used at evangelical gatherings, conventions and fellowships raise one question. Whither Nigerian Nationalism? The current signature tune and station identification of the Nigerian Television Authority at its daily nine o'clock postmeridian news especially on Saturdays and Sundays brings to mind the same question Whither Nigerian nationalism? Finally, with the pastiche of musical styles and fashions existing on the contemporary Nigerian music scene today, a neutral observer cannot but ask Whither Nigerian nationalism? The search today is not for national identity in a comity of nations but for national identity in the contexts of a sovereign state called Nigeria. The search is for national identity in the face of competing ethnic and religious interests in the context of a constantly shrinking and globalized world. The search is also for national identity in science and technology, both of which have direct and indirect effects on the arts, including music.

### Conclusion and Recommendation

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, I do not profess to have answers or solutions to the various points raised in this lecture. That is not my intention. But I think I have succeeded in arousing and stimulating thoughts and discussions on certain salient aspects of our cultural heritage which we have often taken for granted in this

country. As an academic community, we cannot but engage in such an intellectual exercise. In this context, a review of the past and an assessment of the present would seem appropriate for mapping out a strategy for the future.

The British colonial administration succeeded in institutionalizing Western European cultural music tradition and values in Nigeria, majorly through the instrument of education and the cultivation of culture. Many adherents of different religious beliefs and ethnic divide participated in the cultural transformation through going to mission schools and taking part in secular activities of sporting, clubbing, dancing and festivals. Music is a powerful medium of expression and transformation. As a man is, so is his music. As a country is, so is the music it spins out. Asian, Greek, Roman and Western philosophers have, through the ages, expressed this in the various autochthonous, autonomous and heteronomous theories of the origin of music.

In this regard, it is gratifying to note that the motto of this great University is for "FOR LEARNING AND CULTURE". Time is ripe for the emergence of a national culture not only in music but in other aspects of our "national life" if Nigeria is to continue to be relevant and identifiable not just in socio-political, socio-economic and geographical terms but also in artistic and cultural terms.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, as an ethnomusicologist and a scholar of Nigerian music history, permit me to make the following recommendations based on my research findings as well as my experiential and scholarly knowledge of music in Nigeria.

- (1) Opportunities must be made available for the artistic creativity and development of our children from the primary school to the University level through provisions for the teaching of music and dance in our school curricula irrespective of the future profession of any child. Thus unspent energy and pent-up emotions can be constructively channelled.

- (2) Music and Dance Festivals should be held annually from village through provincial, state and zonal to national levels on a net work of interconnectivity as a means of promoting inter-ethnic and cross-cultural exchange and interaction. For, without constant contacts, exchange and discussion, the evolution of a national style may continue to be a mirage.
- (3) Nigeria musicians and musicologists should develop national icons in music and musical sounds for Nigeria so that we can soon have our own "sounds of Nigeria" projected through information technology (IT) to the inhabitants of our global village.
- (4) Nigerian governments should commission our musicians to write musical compositions to celebrate and commemorate important national and international festivals. The celebration of Nigerian national day should be characterized by musical and theatrical productions which will project a well defined ideology at the national level.
- (5) The defunct *Ife Music Series*, edited by Professor Akin Euba and published by the University of Ife Press, should be resuscitated as a medium of musical communication among Nigerian composers with the ultimate goal of developing a national music culture.
- (6) Obafemi Awolowo University should set the pace by providing for a course in "History of civilization and culture in Nigeria" and making it a requirement for all intending future graduates of the University so that the graduates can have an awareness and understanding of their country's past in assessing the present and mapping out a more glorious future.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, eminent ladies and gentlemen. Thank you, and may God bless you all.

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