



Music as a Career: The Woes of Church Musicians in Selected Communities in Ghana

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Abstract

The study sought to explore the woes or challenges that church musicians go through in discharging of their duties as church musicians; and also to investigate the perception of the church towards the church musicians. The paper targeted church musicians who were sampled using purposive sampling technique. Data was collected through interview and participant observation. The study revealed that, lack of commitment on the part of the choristers pose a challenge for the church musicians. Also, the music ministry is not well recognized as an integral part of the church, in addition, church management always see church musicians as natural gifts to the church so they should render their services without any financial reward. Besides, church management is not always ready to release money for procurement of proper musical instruments. It was however recommended that, church management should be made to understand that, music is a career for church musicians and so they must be paid for their services accordingly. Also, the church should rationalize the allowances and remunerations of the church musicians from their headquarters so that, there would not be any conflict whenever monies are to be paid to the church musicians.

Keywords: Church musicians; Church management; Career; Challenges

Background to the Study

Many careers exist for many people in society; and these careers serve as a source of livelihood for those who practice in those chosen disciplines. In Ghana, many engage in music making as a career and for that matter a source of livelihood. There are many vocations in the music industry in Ghana that anyone could choose from. These are music producers, live concert performers, sound engineers as well as choral artistes. There are also church musicians who ply their trade in the churches; either serving organists, choir directors or sound technicians.

The sole aim of every entrepreneur is to maximize profit. Therefore, many of the church musicians in Ghana who take up such roles as career equally hope to make monetary gains in that regard. But narratives seem to differ when it comes to those who choose to do their trade in churches in Ghana. This is because majority of the people seem not to recognize or acknowledge the fact that people could choose their career as musicians in churches.

There is perception out there that services of church musicians should be rendered free in the Lord's vineyard.

Since music making has become part and parcel of Ghanaian society, people equally choose careers in such disciplines. Church music is very vibrant in Ghanaian religious worship. But how does society perceive those into church music? Many at times, the church musicians are chastise as working against the church whenever they demand for remunerations for musical services rendered in the church.

However, church music making is a vocation which requires a special skills and training. So if anyone trains in that regard and want to pursue his or career, shouldn't the one be given the chance to practice?

Ndah [1] careers that relate to music in the church include: Director of music, church Organist / Pianist, Choirmaster / Choir mistress and instrumentalist. Mireku [2] also share that, there are careers in church music making. They outlined some of the disciplines as church organist, choir directors and conductors.

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The researchers therefore explained that, once they have executed such services, they must be paid accordingly.

Statement of the Problem

Church musicians are found in many communities in Ghana; perhaps as a result of proliferation of churches in recent times. According to the recent population census report in Ghana, about 71 % of the population is Christians. This and many other factors could have accounted for the reasons why musicians who perform for churches are in abundance. There have been many empirical studies in the music in the church. For example, Aniadze [3] studied on the role of music in the religious worship. Ndah as well wrote on the challenges facing church choirs in Mampong municipality in the Ashanti region of Ghana [1]. But further scientific observation showed that, a lot have not been published on the burdens of the church musicians in some selected communities in Ghana. So it has become so necessary for this study to be done to highlight the woes of the church musicians in discharging their duties in church. Also, to investigate the perception of the church and society in general towards church musicians

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to

1. Explore the woes of church musicians in selected communities in Ghana
2. Investigate the perception of churches and society towards church musicians

Research questions

1. What are the woes of church musicians in some communities in Ghana?
2. What are the perceptions of churches and society toward church musicians in some areas in Ghana?

Review of Related Literature

Church music in Ghana

Many musical genres are found among Ghanaian. One of which is sacred music also known as church music [4], church music is the type that was bestowed on the people of Ghana by foreign missionaries when they introduced Christianity in Africa and Ghana for that matter. They therefore opine that, church music is any instrumental or vocal renditions that take place during worship in honour of God. Agordoh as well shares that, church music associates with orthodox and charismatic churches in Ghana [5]. He identifies some of the orthodox churches as Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Evangelical Presbyterian church, Ghana, Methodist church Ghana. The rest he states as Seventh Day

Adventist Church, Roman Catholic and Baptist church. He lists the charismatic churches as Pentecost, Assemblies of God and Apostolic churches. He adds that, because the musical type associates with the missionaries, performance of church music was meant to be devoid of any theme or elements from within the traditional setting of the people. Aniadze sides with opines that, church music is based on biblical text and it is perform in honour of God [3-5]. He shares further that, the intention of Church music is to pray to God, give thanks and to show respect to God. He states that, the alternative name for the church music is sacred music. Observing the assertions of all the authorities above, it could therefore be concluded that church music is vocal, instrumental or dance movements that are experienced during church service in honour of God.

Role of Music in Christian Worship

Music and Dance are everyday phenomenon which has become part and parcel of Ghanaian society including church life. Musical types such as Negro Spirituals are sung during Christian worship in Ghana to bring joy to the congregants during worship [5]. Ocran music in the church provides entertainment as well as emotional fulfillment the congregants [6]. He opines that, church music helps to bring together the youth in the church and help to keep them in the church. He cites an example that music and liturgy have been translated into the local languages for the worshipers; both literate and non-literates. Because of that, it helps to arouse their understanding of the liturgy and also understand the meaning of the text that are sung during worship. Asare [7] shares that music in Christian worship helps in the healing processes of an individual. He gives examples among the Twelve Apostles church in Ghana where music during worship is used as a healing therapy as well. He posits that, music and dance are used from diagnostic stage through to the healing stage where through the music, the Holy Spirit is invited to descend and at this point, he states that, the singing, clapping and playing of instrument increase in tempo. He continues that after the sicknesses are diagnose and treatment revealed, the lyrics of the songs change to giving thanks to God for revealing the cause and treatment of the sickness. He clarifies that, without music and dance, the Holy Spirit wouldn't come down to manifest. Aniadze [3], music in Christian worship is very vital. They substantiate that, music serves as a medium through which prayers are offered to God. They also state that music serves as a bond that brings together the congregants for harmonious living socialization. They again posit that music and dance movements help in the invocation of the Holy Spirit. It could therefore be inferred from the assertions of the scholars above that, music making in the church is so pivotal as it helps society to pray to God, receive healing and also to entertain themselves. The studies of all the authorities for this review [3-7] have all confirm the same assertions of each other.

Challenges of Music making in the Church in Ghana

Music making in the church in Ghana is always confronted with certain setbacks. Kow [8], one of the challenges that hinder music making in the church is inadequate funds for music directors to motivate them and also to help manage musical groups in the church. They also state recruitment, nurturing and retention of talented singers as another challenge. They opine that, investing in skills development and training for the members in a choir are often neglected by management of the choirs. They state further that, for financial constraints that confront church music in Ghana in general, 75 % of choirs experience financial challenges. They posit that, music directors always struggle to secure funds to manage the choirs. Ndah [1], some of the challenges that confront music making in the church are: Lack of financial motivation for music directors in the church. They state that, church management is always not ready to invest money in music directors and music instruments in general in the church. They add also that, issues that church management could easily assist financially, that responsibility is rather push to the choir members; a situation they stated scare the members for freely contributing to the music making in the church. In suggesting a solution to the challenge stated above, they suggested that the highest management body should be regularize the allowances of music directors and others who render music in the church to be well resourced financially to deliver. The churches do not see music making in the church as a priority. They always put other projects ahead of music making [1]. He explains that, other issues such as building of pastors residence or buying of other assets of the church is always paramount to investing money on music directors or acquiring music instruments. Observing the assertions of all the authorities above, it could therefore be stated that music making in the church is often confronted with challenges with the biggest being supporting music activities financially.

Methodology

The study adopted the qualitative paradigm; and made use of case study and descriptive approaches to gather and present data.

Population

The study targeted church musicians from orthodox and some charismatic churches in selected communities in Eastern and Ashanti Regions of Ghana. The accessible population stood at Forty (40).

Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling technique was used to sample the respondents. This was due to the fact that there are secular musicians who perform outside the church and the church musicians perform in the church. It could be possible the responses of the secular

musician would be different from the church musicians bearing in mind the focus of the study. The researchers therefore have to sort out only the church musicians so that realistic data could be sought for the study.

Data Collection Instruments

Data was sought through interview and participant observation. Interview guide was used to direct the line of the interaction. The researchers being church musicians themselves had direct contact with the various church management hence had first-hand experience on the issues at the Centre of the study.

Data Analysis Procedure

Data was sought manually, transcribed and conclusions drawn using Thematic Content Analysis approach.

Discussion of Data

Discussion of data was centered on three thematic areas thus:

- a. Roles of church musicians
- b. Woes / challenges of church musicians
- c. Perception of church management on church musicians

The study was conducted in selected areas in Koforidua in the Eastern region of Ghana and also some communities in Ashanti region in Ghana.

Forty (40) respondents were interviewed. The outcome of the interview is as follows: Some church musicians within the Koforidua and its surrounding communities were interviewed and varied responses were given.

The responses are discussed below: On the roles of church musicians, some respondents stated that church musicians conduct the choir; they play the Keyboard during church service. On the challenges that confront the church musicians, they stated that, there is always conflict between church elders and the musicians when monies are to be paid to the musicians. They stated also that, the church management see church musicians job in the church as service to God so they should not demand any money; however, when pastors preach in the church, their services are not seen as service to God so they should be paid.

Some respondents were captured saying: Most people see the work of musicians as a work. That is done for God. So therefore, there should not be any money for that but pastors who preach for maximum of thirty minutes are paid. Another respondent said ‘‘our main challenge is that, they see music making in the church as one’s devotion but not a profession so they find it difficult to pay us ‘‘.

Some of the feedbacks from the Ashanti region are herein discussed: On the roles of the church musicians, they stated that the musicians help to recruit new members to the choir, they help to select songs for worship, they play keyboard or conduct songs



in church. For the challenges that confront them as church musicians, they identified poor remunerations, lack of funds from church management to purchase good musical instruments. They asserted that, church management think music is a gifted talent which should not attract any allowance in the church.

Some of the respondents were heard saying: We the musicians contribute to the spiritual and communal aspect of worship in the church but they think we perform music for God so we should not be paid. Yet, the pastor who is also working for God is paid. Others also shared that, the church musicians lead congregational singing, they play musical instrument; and during worship, they help in bringing life into the church but church management do not want to spend money to reward the musicians because they think music making in the church is voluntary and not a profession. Other respondents equally stated that, church musicians see to it that, music is well planned and executed in the church but the musicians are always confronted with lack of resources to train the choir and also acquire good musical instruments. They explained that, the whole congregation is happy when music is provided in the church but church is never ready to financially remunerate the musicians. The researchers being church musicians also noted their participant observation experience that, all the churches they served ; any time there is an allowance increase request, church management give many excuses.

One of them reported as: I have serve in an orthodox church in Mampong and Nsuta Asante for the past ten years as church musician. Anytime I ask for increase in allowance; management is not ready to do so

Presentation of Findings

The study sought to explore the woes of church musicians in selected communities in Ghana and also to investigate the perception of church and its management towards church musicians. The study therefore revealed that, musicians try their best to bring joy in the churches but church and management do not acquire good musical instruments for the musicians to use to execute their duties as church musicians. It was also brought out that, choristers are not committed towards rehearsals; and also church management does not prioritize the needs of the choir and the musicians as essential. Furthermore, the church feels that without the services of the church musicians, preaching could still be done. It came out that, the music ministry in the church is not recognize as an integral part of the church; so investing financial and other resources into it is not a concern for the church and its management. The study made it clear that, church and management do not want to pay the musicians for their services in contributing to the church growth. Illiteracy among the church choir pose as a challenge to the musicians as any good change they want to bring into music in the church is seen as alien by such persons who want their conservative ideas to remain with the church. The study made

it clear that, the church and management always see church musicians as natural gifts to the church so when they render professional musical services to the church, they should not be paid. It was clear that, the church and its management regard the work of the musicians as free for God's kingdom so they should not be paid any remuneration for their service; however pastors who also render preaching services should be paid.

It came out from data that, church and management do not recognize the roles of the musicians in the church and therefore do not want them be motivated financially in any way. The church musicians are looked down upon.

The findings of the study confirmed the assertion of Ndah and Kow [8,1] who shared some of the woes of church musicians as inadequate funds for music production in the church, as well as lack of financial remuneration for the church musicians.

Conclusion

The study brought to light that, church musicians' role in the church is so crucial yet, they face challenges in terms of finances to be able to train the singing groups as well as to acquire proper musical instruments for the church. Also, they face challenge of commitment from choristers. In addition, financial motivation due the church musicians are always crowded with conflicts. It was so clear that, the church and its management think that, church musicians are naturally talented and given free to the church for that matter, any service rendered to the church is service to God; and must not be paid for.

Recommendations

1. The church and their management in the study area must be made to understand that music making in the church is a career for church musicians and for that matter they must be paid just as the pastors are equally paid.
2. Church and management must educate their members that, God gave talents to everyone for edification of the church but those who are professionals in that discipline must be paid
3. Church musicians must be well respected just like the clergy because they equally help in the church growth.
4. Church and management must rationalize the allowances and remunerations of the church musicians so that there will not be conflict when monies are to be paid to the church musicians.

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