

# THE CONCEPT, TRAINING AND PRACTICE OF MUSIC THERAPY IN NIGERIA: ANTHONY MERENI'S CONTRIBUTION.

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this paper is to explore Anthony Mereni's contributions to the development of Music Therapy in Nigeria. In doing this, it discusses what music therapy is, and then proceeded to look at the concept, training and practice of music therapists in Nigeria. In the same vain, it traces the historical development of music therapy and its implication to music education and national development. In view of this paper, it advocates that the training of Nigerian music therapists should incorporate cultural realities of different ethnic groups in Nigeria, pragmatic researches in the field of music therapy, establishment of music therapy centres by universities, hospitals, churches, other institutions and embrace the potentials of the Music Therapy Association of Nigeria (MUTHAN) initiatives to synergize strategies for the practice and propagation of the use of music for healing purposes in Nigeria.

## **Background**

This input to a festschrift in honour of Anthony Mereni's contribution to the study, discourse and development of music therapy globally gives me the opportunity to reflect on the concept, competence and practice of Music Therapy in Nigerian. Mereni is a remarkable creative music scholar, and in addition driving pioneer, a renaissance man who grasped modesty and applies his vision of the empowering energy of music for the advancement of humankind. He has devoted a significant portion of his professional life creating, composing, writing, publishing, and producing materials that have become a part of the canon of music education in Nigeria. Although I had in 2010 heard and read about

Mereni and occasionally scanned through his profile on the internet during my undergraduate program in music at Obafemi Awolowo University, it was not until year 2016 that I met him personally when I visited University of Lagos to make enquiry for Masters Degree in Music Education at the department of Creative Arts. Fortunately, I was given admission in 2016 to pursue my postgraduate programme in Unilag and Mereni happened to take me on some courses for one year. Furthermore, I recalled a particular occasion with Mereni at the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Autism Program organized by Guarantee Trust Bank Plc. dated 13<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> July, 2017, which I believed helped me crystalize Mereni's Ideology about Music Therapy and its ramification. I have continued to benefit from his brilliant scholarship, his wealth of professional experience and his keen desire to encourage and promote young scholars and musicians. I wish him many more happy years of productive scholarship.

## Introduction

Nigeria is located in the western part of the African continent. It has a population of about one hundred and forty million people (National population Commission, 2007) spread over thirty six states and a federal capital city. Nigeria comprises of different ethnic groups, majority of which are the Igbo, Hausa and the Yoruba. Within these ethnic groups are several tribes numbering three hundred and seventy three.

Figure 1: Map of Nigeria indicating the region of the Researcher.



The healing power of music have become an ever-growing subject in academic discourse and have given rise to the term music therapy which has formed an alternative way of healing in orthodox medical praxis. Today, scholars have developed interest in the extra musical functions of music. Such interest has culminated in studies on music and healing. This has led to the formulation of theories on the science of sound in healing (Mamman, 1997) and that which states that music heals more efficaciously in cultural contexts (Scott, 2006), which this study relies on as its theoretical framework.

There is paucity of information in music therapy in Nigeria. The use of music for healing purposes can be attested to by many Nigerians. There is therefore, no need to be ignorant of the contributions of Nigerian scholars in this area. There appears to be a slow growing body of literature on the therapeutic potency of music today which is written by Nigerians and Nigerians in the Diaspora (Aluede, 2009, para. 1).

With the long age use of music for healing in today's world, can we justifiably argue in our present day that Music therapy is standardized, accepted for use and seen as a form of health care delivery in Nigeria? What is the concept of music therapy in Nigeria? What role does music therapy play in Education? What are the problems confronting the practice of music therapy in Nigeria? What is currently being done to promote music therapy scholarship in Nigerian educational system? There is need to provide answers to these bunch of questions.

The methods used in this research are diverse. Firstly, manual library search for relevant materials was done, chance talks with Anthony Mereni and certain individuals were held and this later led to some interviews which were held physically and through telephone. To enrich the quality of information gathered, an intense electronic search was carried out to elicit information on current works by Nigerians on music therapy. In the same vein, observation during field work by Master of Arts in Music Education students offering Music Therapy as an elective course at the University of Lagos.

## **Defining Music**

One will need to ask, what is music? There are many definitions for music by different music scholars. Blacking (1973) defined it as "an organized sound that pleases the ear". Agu (2006) described it to be "an aesthetic art of combining or putting together sounds that are pleasant to the ear". Hence music can be found everywhere, according to the people's culture, whether that culture is Western or African. Ekong (2008) described it to be a universal language of expression. It is humanly conceived and practiced and used to express human emotions, culture, feelings, ideas and events.

To drive home with the distinction of what music is, let us take for instance what happens in the African tradition. In the African tradition, it is a well-known fact that music is employed abundantly in every stage of life and for virtually every event in man's existence. The saying that music accompanies the African from the cradle to the grave is not an exaggeration. Music is played and enjoyed in the African society at various social, ritual and ceremonial occasions.

## **What is Music Therapy?**

The word therapy originated from the Greek word "Therapeia" which literally means "Healing", in other word, treatment of a disease. A curative intervention for the purpose of healing a sickness or restoring health.

Music therapy is not a new concept globally; nor is it a new practice truth be told, music therapy practice predates its science just like medical practice predates the science of medicine. There are quite a number of works which has been done on the formulation of a working definition that captures the meaning of music therapy; some of these are: Alvin (1975, p.4) who postulated that music therapy is the controlled use of music in the treatment, education and rehabilitation of children and adults suffering from physical,

mental or emotional disorders. These definitions hint on certain points in view of the interest of this paper. According to Bunt (1994), Music therapy is the use of sounds and music within an evolving relationship between child or adult and therapist to support and encourage physical, mental, social and emotional well-being. Music therapy can play an important role in special education because many students with disabilities need special instructional treatment. Wagram (2000) opined that music therapy is the use of music in clinical, social and education or psychological needs. Mereni (2004) explained music therapy as an imperial study research in systematic musicology with necessary resources and relevant ancillary disciplines particularly, social and health sciences and aim at the practical exigency of health care giver.

Based on the foregoing, the word musicology, which was employed in Mereni's definition, not in the now obsolete sense of Guido Adler, but in the contemporary sense of the science of global music. In this contemporary sense, musicology represents all that can be studied and known about music starting from its most elemental genetic materials through its manifestation in the life and culture of different peoples and race of the world, to its effects on man and nature.

### **Why Music Therapy in Nigeria?**

Within and outside Africa, traditional healing has been practised as evidenced in the works of Oduyoye (1983) and Geber (2000) to mention just a few. Regrettably, only few works discussed music as an important source of healing in Nigeria. Early records on the use of music in healing include those from Israel, India, China, Greece, North and South America, Egypt and some African countries (Aluede, 2010, p. 38).

In view of the need by man to communicate with the outside world, music was created. Imitation of sounds from inside and outside the body was discovered (e.g., animal sounds,

environmental sounds). The role of music is so vital in every aspect of our life - rites of passage, play, work and healing. Thus the underlying foundations of Music Therapy are profound because from the start of humankind, music has been utilized as a means of communication and healing.

From time immemorial, music has been known - from the antiquated literate societies to old Greece, to the early Christian period, the Renaissance, to Romantic period and beyond, and on to the twentieth Century and the introduction of Music Therapy as a professional health care discipline.

During antiquity and ancient societies (a period lasting about 500,000 years), the Shaman used music in magico-religious rituals to purge the evil spirits from the sick person's body. Through music and dance, the patient reached a state of trance and ecstasy, allowing for catharsis/purification and healing (Carroll, 2011).

The well known story in the Old Testament of youthful David, the Israelite (conceived around 1037 BC), played the lyre for King Saul, who was known to be tormented by an evil spirit must be mentioned here. Why? Since David was not worried about speaking with the divine beings, gods or spirits to cleanse King Saul of his ailment; rather David played music for King Saul in a mindful, empathic way.

There is a general understanding in the existence of a global spirit force, which is responsible for the sustenance and governance of the universe. According to Carroll

(2011) as in the ancient cultures of China, Egypt, and India, there existed in Greece a common belief that music had a fundamental power to either uplift or degrade, and thus enhance or corrupt entire civilizations. As Plato (428 BC - 348 BC), one of the world's most influential philosophers, stated in the Republic (written around 380 BC): "Music moulds character, when modes of music change, the fundamental laws of the state change with them." He also wrote that "Music is medicine to the soul" and "Justice is to the soul as health is to the body (Carroll, 2011, 173-174). Through music, the soul learns harmony and rhythm and even a disposition to justice.

The healing power of music has turned into a consistently developing subject in scholastic discourse globally. Today, researchers are building interests in the extra musical functions of music. Aluede opined that "Such interest has culminated in studies in music and healing (Omibiyi-Obidike, 1998) as well as ethnomusic therapy (Moreno, 1995). Music healing among some ethnic groups in Nigeria has been studied by Lateef (1987) Omibiyi-Obidike (1998), Nzewi (2002) and Mereni (2004). Today the whole world is living under the threat of various diseases. Several efforts are being made around the world to cure these diseases and to bring them under control (Aluede, 2010, p. 40).

### **The Concept of Music Therapy in Nigeria**

There is a general believe that all therapies follow certain well thought-out principles and approaches. Alvin, founder of the British Society for Music Therapy referred to it as "the controlled use of music in the treatment, education, training and rehabilitation of children and adults suffering from physical, mental or emotional disorders" (Alvin, 1975: p.4).

The quotation above hints on two major points regarding the concept of music therapy. The first point is that music therapy does not stop at sheer removal of an ailment; it also caters for the education, training and rehabilitation of the client. Thus, it foresees a holistic concept of health in the sense of health mind in a healthy body." This is in line with the original Greek concept of the word "Therapy".

The second vital point here is that music therapy is a controlled, controllable and repeatable process. Controllability is one of the principal marks of a scientific process. Music therapy is a scientific therapy which exploits the expertise of the artist - the musical artist. It is a scientifically found and/or scientifically found able employment of music or musical elements." (Strobel & Huppman, 1978).

In Nigeria, A whole new discourse labeled "Music therapy" is gradually evolving in the field of music. There are different kinds of therapies found within different ethnic groups in Nigeria and traditional medical practice is known to be the bulk of it all. Amazingly, music is known as one of such traditional medical practices. We often talk of music therapy in place of traditional medical practice in our recent world. From decades, music is known to be used for healing purposes. Therefore, it is appropriate to use every day common English terms like music therapy, music in therapy or music as therapy. Used in whichever way, it all denotes therapeutic potency of music.

Today, we have different ramifications within the field of music therapy and these include "traditional music therapy" and "modern music therapy," which has underpinning comparable to Music therapy in terms of how this area serves as processes or a means to an end. There have been tentative steps in the development of Music therapy study through the works and research of individuals across different tribes in Nigeria, the most prominent being Dr. Anthony E. Mereni who pinpointed five healing aspects of his version of music therapy. These are:

Anxiolytic music therapy - aims to free one from fear, fright or anxiety.  
Tensionlytic music therapy - aims to relieve one from physical and mental tension resulting from manual or spiritual labour. Algolytic music therapy - aims to relieve physical pain. Psycholytic music therapy - aims to loosen a person from the grip of evil spirits. Patholytic music therapy - aims to relieve the grief of bereavement.  
(Mereni, 1997, p. 2).

An examination of the six highlighted uses of music shows that it falls under the different shades of music therapy which Mereni has identified. In the instances mentioned above, whether music is to release tension, relieve pain, free one from the grip of fear or relieve the grief of bereavement, music is made as a collective human activity. Singing, dancing, clapping, drumming or combining any two musical activities improve the cognitive potential of the participants. These are in themselves strands of group music therapy.

### **Traditional Music Therapy**

Traditional Music therapy is a way of doing and thinking about music for healing where the larger cultural, institutional and social context is taken into consideration. The approach for healing in this context involves the awareness of the system music therapists are working within, it means that music therapy is not only directed towards the individual, but often aimed at changing the system that is sometimes part of the situation of the client. Mereni opined that it was in consideration of conditions, aims, procedures, gestation and organizational patterns of the music that we could safely recognize such practices as traditional music therapy. His research on the classifications of traditional music therapy can be found in his publication *Kinesis and Katharsis* (Mereni, 1996).

Mereni made a number of research studies into traditional music healing practices in Nigeria. For instance, one of his studies was based in the major town in Irigwe, Plateau

State of Nigeria. He found that the traditional medicine man (locally called "Nevo") prescribed the "Sa riye" ritual - a ritual characterized by music and dancing - as treatment for women suffering from a syndrome locally known as "Ci rima". The "Ci rima" syndrome manifests itself in the patient with such symptoms as protracted abnormal pains, vomiting, habitual diarrhea, hallucination, fever and protracted loss of appetite. These symptoms are collectively designated by the natives of the locality as "owie dzio" (literally "spoiled stomach"). When the "Nevo" prescribed this musico-ritual ceremony called the "Sa riye" as treatment for a person suffering from Ci rima syndrome, the aim and scope, gestation, administration and quality of the music is healing can be compared with clinical music therapy procedures (Mereri, 2007, p.3).

### **Modern Clinical Music Therapy**

Modern Clinical Music therapy is the clinical and evidence-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship. Music therapy interventions can be designed to promote wellness, manage stress, alleviate pain, express feelings, enhance memory, improve communication, and promote physical rehabilitation. For example, Anthony Mereri, in explaining Music Therapy as a diagnostic tool, cited a case study of a clinical and evidenced-based use of music for intervention which is as follows:

The case of a boy of nine years brought to our clinic can also be used to illustrate the need for precision of details in diagnosis. This child had a medical report which read as follows; Syndrome, hyperkinesis; aetiology organic psychosis. Now, we know that brain damage could be pre-natal (biochemical in original), perinatal (mechanical and/or, also biochemical) or post-natal (in which case, mechanical e.g. a head injury caused by an accident). I would require interviewing the mother of such a child or anybody who knows the earlier or earliest days of the child. In fact, the knowledge of the mother's activities and/or condition of life during the gestation period of the pregnancy is of particular

importance in view of the environmental realities which have serious implication for the child's psychic development in her mother's womb. Not until we got such information luckily from the mother of this nine year old child could we determine the type of music that brought him to calmness in order that we might carry on with other therapeutic exercise. The medical report was precise; and the medical doctor might have been acquainted with these details by the mother; but he was not at hand to inform me (Mereni, 2007, p. 36).

What is so crucial about Music therapy is that it is concerned with the total management of patients including supportive measures that will relieve pains and ease comfort for any patient with mental or physical disorder. In Therapy, music is a powerful art which facilitates not only learning but also development of the total child both within and outside the school.

### **Historical Development of Music Therapy Practice in Nigeria**

Given the circumstances of colonial history, which virtually emasculated cultural-mental originality among the society's elite, the case of Music Therapy in Nigerian scene, as an African example, was pioneered by literate, culturally secure creative craftsman. Literate creative innovators are only beginning to emancipate, and these are the composers that are confidently advancing knowledge through cognitive research, as well as cultural creative integrity in engaging with the global knowledge discourse.

The British colonial governance introduced modern music literacy in Nigeria along with the British education system. Music was not a school subject. Music literacy (solfa notation in particular) became expedient for the missionary as well as the colonial education agenda and content: transformation of the African person into an unimaginative consumer of imperialist knowledge and material inventions. Music literacy served the purpose of producing church choirs and recreational school activity that continue to consolidate

intellectual-cultural dependency. The vision and resources were, and continue to be exogenous.

Systematic literary music education started at the tertiary level in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka in 1961. Before then, however, the isolated interest or needs of British colonial officers and missionary educators dictated the teaching of European instruments and music literacy composers who emerged from this system additionally took correspondence courses from music institutions in Britain in order to gain competence in European music theory, history and the piano. They thereby were able to take the Graded Certificate course Examinations of the overseas institutions in these subject areas.

In Nigeria, Music Therapy has been practiced in one form or the other in the Medical profession. Apart from this, It is also been practices in schools, churches and homes. Spender (1980) stated as follows: Personal interviews with some relevant medical professionals have revealed that music has/been found helpful and effective in treatment of many diseases, maintaining physical fitness of pregnant mothers and giving relaxations and relief of patients. Other therapies such as physiotherapy and psychotherapy have always made use of music. Presently, there is no Department of Music Therapy in any university, hospital or church throughout the country. As it is, it is not a healthy development taking a closer look at the benefits of this field of study to the society at large. (Nnamani, 2016, para. 26)

Although, Music therapy is yet to be standardized in Nigeria but there is ongoing work and research in this direction. Olayinka (2012) posits that the journey of creating music therapy practice in Nigeria, despite its potential, is challenging. It is piloted by only a handful of people and as yet, the real lack of facilities for research, infrastructure and lack of support and assistance from organizations both in the private and public sectors has hindered the growth of this discipline.

However, there have been many efforts in the direction of promoting professionalism in Music Therapy through the works and research of individuals across different regions in Nigeria. The most prominent being Prof. Anthony E. Mereni.

Anthony E. Mereni, born in Nigeria, who left the country at a fairly early age of 15 years is known to be the first generation of pioneer Nigerian musicologist and modern clinical music therapist whose uncommon versatility in both the academic and professional spheres of his various disciplines of specialization owes no few thanks to a rich background of profound humanistic formation. His higher education in tertiary institutions gained initial boost in the Pontificia Universita Urbaniana, Rome-Italy where he studied and acquired the foundations in Philosophy and gained further training in classical letter (Greek and Latin) alongside nurturing his interest in music. He gained recognition in the European classical music tradition with African flavours, had their orchestral compositions performed abroad. Their compositions for choirs, also the piano and organ (solo or in combinations with voices) were occasionally performed for live and radio audiences in Nigeria.

In 1985, Clinical music therapy was introduced into the Nigerian educational system by Prof. Anthony Mereni who came to music therapy via musicology, music psychology and aesthetics. He then undertook his practical work under Frau Dr. Posch at the Salzburg Neurological Hospital in Austria. Prof. Mereni then worked both in clinical practice and as a music therapy lecturer in Florence (Italy) under the aegis of Ce. Tom - The central body controlling Music therapy awareness and practice in the province of Tuscany in Italy.

Mereni is a member of British Society for Music Therapy, an Honorary Fellow of Imaginative Music therapy (Trento-Italy), the co-founder of the Association of Psycho-Therapy and Holistic Science (APSI) in Vioterra, Italy and the founder of the Music Therapy association of Nigeria (MUTHAN). He owned the Gemma-Regis Center for Music Therapy and also consults for Federal Neuro-Psychiatric Hospital, Yaba. He is currently

lecturing music at the Creative Arts Department, University of Lagos, Akoka-Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria. (Olayinka, 2012, para. 5-7).

The Gemma-Regis Center for Music Therapy owned by Prof. Anthony Mereni is situated at his home town, Okigwe in Imo State of Nigeria and his clinic at the Modupe Cole School for the Handicapped at Pako, Yaba, Lagos State which is the functional branch of Gemma-Regis Centre. The school include children with the cerebral palsy, children with profound and multiple disabilities and those with other complex psychiatric diagnoses. The sessions are held in small groups but individual music therapy sessions are also offered depending on the clients' needs. In addition, He conducts music seminars, workshops and other practical duties.

### **Implication of Music Therapy in Music Education in Nigeria**

The efficacy of music in education of the *Greek* was recognized by Plato, a prominent philosopher who laid much emphasis on the inclusion of music in education. He therefore recommended music as an instrument by which early training (the reduction of the soul) is to be affected. He believed strongly that musical exercises have much influence upon the emotions and man's character.

It is so vital for each music classroom to become a special education class for the utilization of music therapy methods when the need emerges. Children's music can be a hugely vital fact in their upbringing. The quote above can be supported by Juliet Alvin (1972), a British music therapist said:

...physical, intellectual, emotional and social developments are so closely interwoven that a handicapped affecting only a specific area of the child's development is bound to hamper his harmonious growth. It is thought that the most valuable means of maturation are those which can integrate the different parts of the child's development and appeal to his whole being. This applies particularly well to music, since it can offer the handicapped child, a vast number of sensory emotional, intellectual and social experiences some of which he may not be able to get by any other means. Moreover, it is flexible enough to be adapted not only to the specific disability of the child but also to each of the stages of maturation (p. 25-27).

A Music Therapist must be possessed with more than a normal professional proficiency in practical music and musicianship (Merani, 2004). Beyond a graduate degree or chain of higher degrees in music, music therapy is seen as different field of specialty within musical studies in the Nigerian Educational System. University of Lagos is known for such training, the programme produce scholars with postgraduate diplomas in music therapy, Master's degree in music therapy and music therapy is also offered as an elective course in Music Education.

Preparing music educators to effectively teach exceptional or special learners include the development not only of teaching skill but of attitude as well. Some teachers need to come to grips with personal feelings and expectations regarding exceptional individuals. All will need to understand the implications of certain disabling condition for music learning. Music teachers who intend to achieve music therapy goals in their work with special learners must acquire special teaching techniques in music therapy and develop skill in selecting and adapting appropriate resource materials.

The importance of Music therapy practice is essential to the present and incoming generation. The process of empowerment should begin with training, which will lead to professionalism and carrier sustainability at large. Therefore, there are some certain motivational and social factors that are implicated in the continuation of activities that promotes music therapy in Nigeria, such as Music therapy in Music Education programme. An elective course of this nature should be encouraged at all tertiary institution in Nigeria.

Music is multi-sensory when experiencing it. Listening, seeing, moving and feeling are extremely imperative in the educational programs, making music a natural discipline through which perception and psychomotor skills can be developed. Music therapy notwithstanding being a significant content area of the music education curriculum in its own right can likewise be a guide in creating essential aptitudes in all children who can't or

unwilling to talk or express emotions and thoughts. Special education teacher must be prepared to be a member of a multidisciplinary team of professionals who coordinate their individual efforts with resource teachers.

**Figure 2:** A group music therapy session at Pacelli School for the Blind and Partially Sighted Children, Surulere, Lagos with a team of Music Therapy students assisted by a class teacher. December, 2017. (Otoijamun collection)



**Figure 3:** A class teacher and Students of Pacelli School for the Blind and Partially Sighted Children, Surulere, Lagos. December, 2017. (Otoijamun collection).



**Figure 4:** A team of Music Therapy students of University of Lagos at Pacelli School for the Blind and Partially Sighted Children, Surulere, Lagos. December, 2017. Photographer (Otoijamun collection).



The field work is a major part of the specialized practical training performed by the participants in the postgraduate program in Music Education offering Music Therapy as an elective course at the University of Lagos; it proposes and develops situations for applying music therapy methods in special need education. Different experiences both for the elderly and children were carried out during the researcher's postgraduate program at Unilag, coordinated by the participants as well as Music Therapy lecturers who offered necessary advice for field works. The major applied field work was carried out dated 14<sup>th</sup> December, 2017 at Pacelli School for the Blind and partially sighted Children, Mushin, Lagos. The study involves 21 children with blindness (age 8 - 17). After the Music Therapy session, all the 21 students began to listen to music as a basis for new activities (learning, focusing, playing, team work; improvement of emotional and social behavior, and self-control). This experiment research implies using music therapy as a group therapy, carried out in an ideal setting (a music room with very good musical instruments including Upright piano, drums set and other percussion instruments) participants (Unilag. Postgraduate

Students) in the field work chose the music to which the students listened i.e. Canon in D, Hymns and other selections of Nigerian popular songs on demand by students. The session was carried out in the presence of a class teacher and other academic Staffs of Pacelli School for the Blind, who, in the case of the more responsive and talented children stimulated their creativity.

## **Conclusion**

If music for therapy is to gain status as a profession, one of its greatest needs is the carrying out of significant researches (Folsom, 1968, p.36). Music therapy is a subject that has attracted the attention of scholars throughout the world. Because the unity of the arts in Africa offers an interdisciplinary approach to issues, scholars from a variety of disciplines with varying perspectives have conducted research. While it is commendable that some people are engaged in Music therapy scholarship, there are concerns. The evidence shows that the amount of material published on Music therapy since the mid - 1980s is small when compared to data captured on other geo-cultural regions. While many reasons may account for this circumstance, economics tops the list. Another contributing factor is that the number of African writers is minuscule because most, particularly those living on the continent do not have the resources or the time to engage in the luxury of conducting research (Agawu, 2013). There is pressing need for pragmatic researches in the field of music therapy in Nigeria. This need must exculpate intrigued researchers from closely related fields particularly those distinctly inspired by understanding the philosophical standards of music therapy, after which an interdisciplinary approach to African medical care delivery and modern science therapy should be embarked upon in Nigeria. Also, there is need for establishment of music therapy centres by hospitals, universities, churches and other institutions.

The work force of a nation is not contingent on the sick or the depressed but on the able bodied. It is very clear that music healing has been in use *ab initio* in Nigeria and that it has been kept alive by the carriers of the culture is indicative of its efficacy. However, the need for an enhancement in practice is imperative Aluede and Omoera (2010). Anthony Mereni has made an important contribution in establishing discursive-explorative forum: the Music Therapy Association of Nigeria (MUTHAN). The capable and committed modern Nigerian musicians must therefore embrace the potentials of the initiatives to synergize strategies for the propagation of the use of music in healing for prophylactic purposes so that a healthy nation will evolve. Success will be predicated on solid traditional and modern research industry in academic and creative scholarship as well as professional integrity. Pragmatic creative advancement must take cognizance of the virtues of cultural realities of different ethnic groups in Nigeria. Modern music therapy intellection would then capture and code indigenous knowledge philosophy, theory and therapeutic principles for it is my belief that better knowledge of traditional music therapy can enrich our way of understanding and working with modern music therapy worldwide.

I believe an anecdote is not out of place in order to capture Anthony Mereni's sense of humor. In Nigeria and other African countries, one may find a tropical lizard that is called "agama lizard" which characteristically likes falling down from very tall trees or wall fence. After immediately landing on the ground, this lizard will raise it's head and nod for a couple of times before working away. Some Nigerians metaphorically interpret this believe of the lizard as self-praise in the absence of acknowledgement from people that sees it fall. For if the lizard can fall from that tall tree or wall fence and still be physically fit. It should praise itself if nobody wants to do so.

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