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PART 1

LANGUAGES, LINGUISTICS & COMMUNICATION

GOSPELL IN NIGERIA: PERFORMANCE STYLE AS BASIS FOR ENTERTAINMENT IN NIGERIAN GOSPEL MUSIC

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ABSTRACT

The Nigerian gospel music haven developed as a sub-genre of Christian music over the years in Nigeria has become popular and identified with unique performance styles employed by the musicians. Such performance styles apart from enhancing the performance also generate entertainment in the context of the ministrations intended by the gospel musicians even when the musicians do not admit it. This paper discusses performance style as basis for entertainment in Nigerian Gospel Music by identifying such performance styles and how they are employed. The paper relies on content analysis and descriptive methods, participant-observation and interviews as instruments of data collection. The 'Gospeltainment' theory is employed to foreground the discourse. It is discovered that the musicians adopt different performance modes and contexts in order to appeal and sell their music in the face of keen competition between it and other types of entertainment music that exists in the country. The paper concludes that although the main focus of the gospel musicians is to proclaim the gospel, entertainment is inherent in it even when it is not intended and performance style is one of the vehicles that drive that entertainment. This has made the music to serve a dual purpose of ministrations and entertainment because it is religious and has become popular.

Key Words: Gospel Music, Performance Style, Entertainment, Gospeltainment theory

Introduction

The Nigerian music scene is permeated by several musical types which include both religious and non-religious all of which are characterized by unique forms and styles. Gospel music is one of the religious musical types that have developed in Nigeria and has become popular, engaging various styles and themes on contemporary issues as they find relevant. As a branch of Christian music, it is employed essentially for the proclamation of the Christian message and singing in the praise of God. Gospel music is not restricted to the formal Christian liturgy but adaptable for Christian activities or social functions outside the strict liturgical settings.

Samuel (2011: 32-45) points that gospel music is one of the most widely accepted musical genres in contemporary Nigeria and, above all, indisputably the most contentious. Gospel music is popular, and because of its enviable status, it is highly variegated, and has witnessed a lot of revolutionary changes especially in recent times. This observation has earlier been made by Gijo (1998: 201) when he states that there is a continuous adaptation of Gospel music to the changing circumstances of the performers and the audience within a historical milieu. The popularity of gospel music and musicians have become so much that several of them are household names and have become common features on the radio, television stations and in print media in Nigeria.

The gospel musicians adopt different performance modes and styles in the execution of their industry which defines the compositional stylistic choices that may generally and particularly characterize this genre of music; an individual artiste's prowess and appeal to reach entertainment and appellative elements. This paper therefore describes and discusses the performance styles in Nigerian gospel music as a basis of entertainment; the explication is informed by the *Gospeltainment* theory.

1. Nigerian Gospel Music

The origin of gospel music in Nigeria has been put in the 1960s by scholars like Adedeji (2004). According to him, the term 'gospel music' was first used in Nigeria by the pioneers in the same period though it had its antecedents as from thirty years earlier. He explains that: Various names attached to it were '*orin igbàgbò*' (*Christian Song*), '*gospel*', '*indigenous sacred songs*' and '*Spiritual Songs*'. Although there were contacts with American gospel music before then, there is no evidence to suggest that the origin of Nigerian gospel music had any link with American gospel music. Thus, one might conclude that it originated independently but named as deemed fit by its pioneers and promoters (Adédéji, 2005: 145 – 152).

The specific date for the origin of gospel music in Nigeria is not certain but speculation as observed by Adedeji, is that it probably was between 1964 and 1965 because of the musical activities that form the antecedents of gospel music in Nigeria. Adedeji (2004) discussed some antecedents of Nigeria gospel music first of which is the music used by the Nigerian Indigenous Pentecostal Churches on evangelistic parades between 1930 and 1960s, and is of the opinion that it is the philosophy and practice of the music on one part that developed into gospel music.

This position is supported by Emielu (2014: 114 - 115) when in his attempt to distinguish between Church, Gospel, Christian and Popular music he traced the origin of gospel music in the West to the famous camp meetings and street revivals as seen in Azusa street mission revivals of the early 1900s. He noted that Africans that have been introduced to Christianity in the Diaspora found European religious music very boring and devoid of the ecstasy and hot rhythm of African music, and this made them to seek opportunity to re-define European religious music in African terms. They found this opportunity in the Azusa street mission revivals which became the melting pot of Pentecostalism worldwide. The connection between the two submissions is the contribution of Pentecostalism to the development of gospel music at different ends – America and Nigeria about the same period experienced different episodes that culminated into latter development of gospel music.

Other antecedents that contributed to the origin of gospel music in Nigeria discussed by Adedeji (2004: 64) are the non-liturgical music of Nigerian indigenous churches used at Christian social functions such as naming and wedding ceremonies and other festal occasions, and the music performed by missionary school bands during colonial era. Another musical activity that contributed to the development of gospel music in Nigeria according to Adedeji (2004: 65) is the renditions by invited talented individuals, choirs and independent church musical groups that performed on Radio ELWA, Igbaja which was broadcast from the 1950s.

We can conclude that antecedents of gospel music culminated into the emergence of a new form eventually classified as gospel music in Nigeria. The gospel music was influenced by Pentecostalism, non-liturgical music at social functions and the activities of talented individuals originally resident in the church. The talented individuals later took the bold step of forming independent groups within the church and later as autonomous bodies to perform and venture into the recording of albums. Putting the origin of gospel music in Nigeria as 1960s and, more precisely at 1965, because of the earliest known recorded Christian indigenous religious album, may therefore be right.

2. Theoretical Framework

We engage the *gospeltainment* theory as we proposed in 2016 in this discourse. The theory states that "There are inherent ministration and entertainment elements in every gospel music performance which can be purely musical, extra-musical or both. These elements can be latent or dominant and can either be intended or unintended (see Adeola 2016: 240; Adeola 2020: 91)

The origin and development of Nigerian gospel music reflects a strong influence of the society, and to a great extent has continued to display the influence of the secular music in its composition and performance. The power of gospel music to evoke the spirit and generate entertainment thereby displaying the relationship between gospel music and entertainment is obvious. In contemporary Nigerian gospel music and indeed in the world, entertainment has taken over its form and content. Nzewi (2012, p.1) states that:

In contemporary global imagination and experiencing, music has evolved from functioning as an original, utilitarian spiritual phenomenon into a materialistic entertainment preoccupation in both academics and public space. Music makes original sense as the creative rationalization of intangible sonic stimulations, which attain tangibility as structured configurations that engineer spiritual enrichment and psychological responses.

This statement which is quite true of the Nigerian gospel music is further corroborated by Titus (2014: 26) in his submission that:

The entertainment function of music is also not in doubt as people of different cultures, colours, ethnic groups, religious settings and creeds listen to different music during various ceremonies and during worship sessions. It is also noteworthy that messages are put across in the course of playing various music; Hence, music entertains as well as educates on religious doctrines for believers and followers of Christ.

It must be observed that a category of gospel musicians exist whose background was originally in popular secular music but later ventured into gospel music performance either as a result of their claim to be "Born Again"¹ or influence of their Christian religious upbringing and

¹ This term became popular in Nigeria in the late 1970s when Pentecostalism spread across the country to mean being born of the spirit as recorded in John 3: 3 to a new state of regeneration leading to a deeper commitment to God through Jesus Christ

affiliation which makes them to infuse Christian religious themes into their secular performances. In this category we have musicians like Sunny Okosun, Ebenezer Obey, Kris Okunie who went full swing into gospel music after they became born again and others like I.K. Dairo, Katsi Sunny Ade and more recently Yinka Ayefele who though Juju musicians are known for the rendition of Christian religious songs. Collins (2014) observes as follows:

I.K. Dairo who began his music career in the 1950s, but being a member of Cherubim and Seraphim "Aladura" church was, by the late 1970s writing many religious compositions. He even built his own church in Lagos and consequently became known as "Baba Aladura". The other juju star is Ebenezer Obey who rose to fame in the 1960s and 70s. Although he had always included some religious songs in his juju-music repertoire, from 1992 he became Evangelist Ebenezer Obey of De Cross Fellowship Centre and began focusing on "juju gospel" in record albums...

Writing on the evolution of Nigerian gospel music, Ojo (1998: 214) states the following in reference to Good Women Choir of the Christ Apostolic Church, Ibadan:

By the early 1980s, the music of Good Women Choir was becoming entertainment, and it was not long before they were appearing at Christian social gatherings such as marriage ceremonies, funeral outings, "house warming", etc. Thus, they provided the same social context as the popular Yoruba juju musicians.

Ojo's observation about the entertainment tendencies in gospel music as early as the 1980s demonstrated in the music and context of performance of the Good Women Choir and others after them indicates that the context of performance is a strong factor of influence on the Nigerian gospel music in the area of entertainment.

Scholars like Adedeji (2014) and Samuel (2013) have identified the dichotomy between the sacred and the secular in gospel music in their discussions of sacred musicology and church music respectively. Both scholars identify the entertainment tendencies in the Nigerian gospel music orchestrated by the influence of the popular musical culture. In an earlier submission Adedeji (2008: 18) said that the Nigerian public sees gospel music as many things in terms of its function. Some see it as entertainment, and some a devotional music, while to others it is just like any other music.

Emielu (2014) opined that because contemporary African Church/gospel music and musicians use a plethora of dance music styles which in many ways replicate African popular culture, there is confusion about the defining criteria of who is a music minister and who is a musician. This according to him raises the issue of the generic boundaries and definitive framework of contemporary gospel music and the social identity of its practitioners in Africa. In recent years there has been a convergence between entertainment and the local Christian Churches: leading to what might be called the emergence of 'popular' Christianity². Collins (2004) submits that "Like popular entertainment, 'popular' Christianity is an transcultural urban phenomenon that caters

² Collins, E.J, "Ghanaian Christianity and Popular Entertainment: Full Circle" in David Henige (ed) *History in Africa*, Wisconsin University, Number 31, 2004, pp. 389 - 391

for the 'intermediates' and aspiring upwardly mobile population, that taps traditional resources, is concerned with the anxieties of modernization and utilizes the commercial music, dance and drama of the masses"

It is our position that beyond the sole spiritual relevance and focus of gospel music, which the gospel musicians claim, it is a social commodity that influences and is being influenced by the society in which it exists. As such, the tendency to drift towards entertainment in the process of performance of gospel music and blend the music with the message becomes inevitable.

Therefore, the inseparability of entertainment from the performance of the Nigerian gospel music notwithstanding the context of performance cannot be denied. Gospel musicians do more than preach the gospel. Hence, we have classified their art as *Gospeltainment* (Adeola 2016: 240). Four basic elements namely the religious or gospel, the musical, the performance styles and the extra-musical define the various characteristic features of *Gospeltainment*, we therefore proceed to discuss performance styles as basis for entertainment in Nigerian gospel music.

3. Performance Styles as Basis for Entertainment in Nigerian Gospel Music

Performance and composition run simultaneously in African musical practice and this is also evident in the Nigerian gospel music. The performance styles employed by the gospel musicians vary from one artist to another as each carves out individual identity for himself or herself in terms of performance. However, one can conclude that gospel music in Nigeria is generally characterized by the following creative styles.

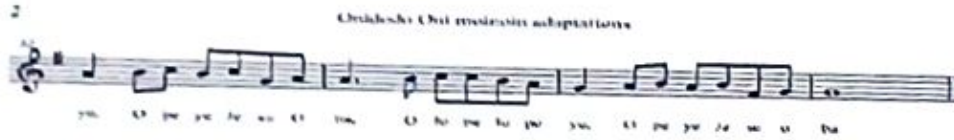
3.1. Word Choice and Appellation

Apart from setting texts to music, spoken words are used in Nigerian gospel songs for various reasons to convey the message to the listener. Words are used for special effects to heighten the power of the impact of the message that the song carry and to set patterns of performance for the artist. Words are also selected for aesthetic purposes to create beauty in terms of rhyme, repetition, and balance of ideas. The choice and use of words by musicians give them identity. Gospel artists in Nigeria, like the late *Báyò Adégbóyèga*, *Niyi Adédòkun*, *Bólá Àrè* and *Tópé Alábi*, just to mention but a few, have come to be known and identified with their choice and use of words in their compositions. While both *Báyò* and *Niyi* are popular for their use of satire in their compositions and can be confrontational, *Bólá* is persuasive in her use of words to present her message. An examination of *Tópé's* songs reveals the use of philosophical words that reflect in-depth reasoning. Her use of Yoruba language in her song texts often does not have just surface meanings but thought provoking statements that demonstrate her ability to play with words showing her creativity.

The use of words and the creativity of the Nigerian gospel artists are seen in the titles given to albums and songs. For example, *Niyi* entitled some of his albums "Mr Awáyé má lẹ" (One who thinks he will not die), "Church wa n mọmu" (Our Church drinks palm wine), while *Tópé* has titles like "Awa aláròjinlẹ la m'ópé wá" (We who can think deeply come to give thanks), "Àngẹlì mi" (My angel). Titles like "Ìlú le koko" (The country is hard) and "Báyé bá n yẹni"

(When things are good with one) respectively by *Báyò* and *Adélakùn* are other examples of the use of words in the titles of albums.

3.2. Use of mono language



The use of mono language involves the use of a specific language for a song. The Nigerian languages especially the three dominant languages in Nigeria, namely, Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo are usually used. Some factors that determine the choice of language include the languages spoken by the musician, the target audience and the desire to convey the meaning of the songs to people of other tongues. The use of either English language or Pidgin English is also a feature.

Augustine Agwuele (2008: 35-36) citing Sturrock, states that lexicon presents to us evidence of the preoccupation of a society, as language appears to determine the order of our words. He states further that language is implicated in culture, both of which have ways of informing thoughts, habitual responses and patterns of viewing events. Language in its use is not neutral; it is, in a sense, the summation of the values and orientations of a society. Abubakre (2008:108) opines that language is vital to man in every respect whether religious, social or mundane affairs.

The use of local dialects like Èkìtì, Ìjẹ̀sà, Yagba, Igbo, Itshekiri, and Hausa, and so on to appeal to the audience in context also features prominently and this is one of the things that generate

entertainment is gospel music performance. The use of local dialect is motivated by the musician's desire to speak the dialect either because he or she belongs to the tribe or as a result of understanding the dialect having interacted with it over a period of time. The reason can simply be to appeal to the people who speak the dialect and are identified in the context of performance. An example of songs in this category is Evangelist *Vin Akedokun's* "Erin ni ran ko bi mi" presented in Yoruba language. Excerpt of the song is given below:

<i>Erin ni ran ko bi mi ni</i>	My mouth will not put me in trouble
<i>Ere oloju mo ni</i>	the matter of another person that I will discuss
<i>Ei o ni o lo mo ni mo</i>	and they will send for me
<i>igbi owo mo bi oloju</i>	after the matter is exposed
<i>Ei o ni o lo mo ni o lo owo mo</i>	and I will be asked to come and repeat myself
<i>Erin ni ran ko bi mi ni</i>	My mouth will not put me in trouble

3.3. Use of Code-Switching

The use of dual or multiple languages is also a feature of the performance in Nigerian gospel music that reflects creativity and entertainment. A blend of two or more languages in a single song or different languages for different songs in the same recording is a common practice in Nigerian gospel music. Olatunji, Babalola and Durumola (2014: 148 – 165) have identified bi- and tri-lingualism as a feature of Yoruba Christian gospel music. Reflecting on code mixing and switching which focused on the contemporary Yoruba Christian gospel and Islamized music, they concluded that the use of more than one language in the rendition of gospel music is a reflection of the existence of more than one culture among the Yoruba. Olatunji (2014: 5) identifies language as one of the five dimensions in music creativity. Others are music, dance, drama and visual arts. In an earlier work Olatunji (2000: 152) asserts that the vocal language of music encompasses the vast prospect.

It is common to find the same phrase or lines sang in different languages to convey the meaning to various possible listeners. This usually is a direct translation of the same words, phrase or stanzas into different languages as exhibited in the following songs:

Ede:	Doe, Doe Doe,
	Oyeme doe, Oyeme doe
	E seun o
	Oluwa Seun, Oluwa seun
Yoruba:	Thank you Lord
	We thank you Lord, We thank you Lord
English:	
Or	
Igbo:	Mmadu nile nasi Ebube
	Ebube Jehovah mmara nna
	Mmadu nile nasi Ebube
	Ebube Jehovah mmara nna
Yoruba:	Gbogbo imiyin so pe e dara
	E dara Jehovah, e dara
	Gbogbo imiyin so pe e dara
	E dara Jehovah, e dara

English: Everybody testifies, you are good
 You are good Jehovah, you are good
 Everybody testifies, you are good
 You are good Jehovah, you are good

The use of multiple languages intermittently in the same song not necessarily translating or repeating the same lines in different languages is also a feature as reflected in this song by Tozin Ajoloré:

Wéris ló bá mi sè

Wéris ló bá mi sè, x2
Ohun t'àyé rò pé kò sè sè
Wéris ló bá mi sè
Oyigiyigi, a lèwí lèwí
Ohun l'òba àwọn ọba o
A ta má tásé, arúgbá ọjọ
Ohun l'òlórún ghogho aiyé
There is nothing that he can't do
He's the great a mighty God
Okan láná, ọnl át'ọlá
Ah, wéris ló bá mi sè
Tó bá ti wí bẹ́, á sẹ́ bẹ́ ní
A wí má yehun ní
Ilẹ́kún tó sí kò sẹ́ni lẹ́ tìl
Ohun tó bá ti wí pọ́ kò sè tó
He is beautiful for situations
He's the joy of the whole world
Ohun ló tó bẹ́ tó tún jù bẹ́ lẹ́
Ah, wéris ló bá mi sè

He did it for me easily
 What people think is impossible
 He did it for me easily
 Oyigiyigi, one who can say and do
 He is the king of kings
 The precise archer, ancient of days
 He is the God of all the earth

The same yesterday, today and tomorrow
 Ah, he did it for me easily
 When he speaks, it comes to pass
 He does not go back on his words
 No one can shut the door that he opens
 What he joins together cannot be separated

He is enough and more than enough
 Ah, he did it for me easily

Another example is this song by Bolu Olorun

Wón ti fẹ́ kórín gospel ọjọ́ tipé o
Àmọ́ sá sẹ́gbé mo ní
Number one ni gospel apalá yí jẹ́
Wón ti fẹ́ kórín gospel ọ̀nà tí jìn
Àmọ́ sá sẹ́gbé mo sure
Number one ni gospel apalá yí jẹ́
Ghogho rẹ́ la tí gbọ́ rí o
Classical music, Raggae music,
Funk music, Jazz music
Àmọ́ sá sẹ́gbé mo ní
Number one ni gospel apalá yí jẹ́
Real, Real Apalá ni tí wa o
Gospel Apalá lá wa fẹ́

People have sang gospel songs for long
 But my colleagues I say
 This gospel Apala is number one
 They have sang gospel song for so long
 But my colleagues I am sure
 This gospel Apala is number one
 We have heard all of them before

But my colleagues I say
 This gospel Apala is number one
 Our's is real, real Apala
 We sing gospel Apala

<i>Moni authentic ipálà sòbun la ghé dé o</i> <i>Gospel ipálà là wa n ko</i> <i>Anointed Apálà sòbun la ghé dé</i> <i>Gospel ipálà là wa n ko</i> <i>Moni ó wá authentic</i> <i>This is authentic, this is original</i> <i>Ojálómó, gospel ipálà</i> <i>Latòde èrun ni wéni ti import èyi wá ...</i> <i>... We praise God, Taeli God,</i> <i>And shout halleluya, victory is ours</i> <i>Our Jesus Christ,</i> <i>E seun ti e wá lani kú fim wa</i> <i>Tini aiyé là ó ma yin ó o,</i> <i>Immortal invisible God</i> <i>A dúpé é, A dúpé</i> <i>Ghogbo wa là n praise the Lord</i> <i>A dúpé é, A dúpé ...</i>	<i>I say we have brought authentic Apala</i> <i>We sing gospel Apala</i> <i>We have brought anointed Apala</i> <i>We sing gospel Apala</i> <i>I say it is authentic</i> <i>authentic gospel Apala</i> <i>This is imported from heaven</i> <i>Thank you for coming to die for us</i> <i>We shall praise you through out life</i> <i>We thank you, we thank you</i> <i>All of us are praising God</i> <i>We thank you, we thank you</i>
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Another example is an excerpt from a song by Lara George

I'm acknowledging you for Who You are
For what you've done in my life
I'm acknowledging you for Who You are
Dansaki re, Dansaki re (Praises to you, Praises to you)
I'm acknowledging you for who you are
Dansaki re, Dansaki re Baba (Praises to you, Praises to you Father)
Bi mo ba fi jo si mo dansaki re (If I begin to dance, I'm giving you praise)
Dansaki re, Dansaki re Baba (Praises to you, Praises to you Father)

3.4. Adaptation of secular/popular tunes

Direct setting of secular popular tunes to new text to reflect Christian doctrine is another style used in the creation of gospel music which serves as basis for entertainment. This involves adopting existing popular secular tunes for Christian texts. This is particularly evident in the songs by musicians who adopt the use of popular secular styles like Apala, Waka, Fuji, Ragga and so on. Some examples include the tune of a song made popular by Miriam Makeba "Malaika" which has been set to a new text used in gospel music and sung in churches as 'My life time.'

Original Text:	<i>Malaika... (Angel)</i> <i>Na-ka-penda malaika (I love you my angel)</i> <i>Ningekwa, Mama (I would have married you, Mommie)</i> <i>Ningekwa, Dada (I would have married you, sister)</i> <i>Nashindwa na mali sina we (I am defeated, and don't have any money)</i>
-----------------------	--

Ningekina, Malaika (I would have married you, angel)

Gospel Adaptation: My life time
I will give God my life time
If I give God my life time
He will take care of me
He will never, never let me down
I will give God my life time

The popular highlife tune 'Onidòdò oní mọ́in mọ́in' whose author is not ascertained but which was waxed by the late *Fela Anikulapo Kuti* and performed by the late *Victor Olaiya* and *Adeolu Akinmureye* was adapted by *Chief Bisi Olorunfoba*, a gospel musician who actually classified his band as 'gospel entertainers' in a song titled 'Jesu mbo wa'

Original:	Oni dódò oní mọ́inmọ́in Oni dódò oní mọ́inmọ́in Ìgbà tí ò tà ó gbé'gbá kalẹ̀ Ẹ wá wo já ní láfiàjì	Plantain and moinmoin sellers Plantain and moinmoin sellers When he did not sell, he put down the wares Come and see fight in lafiàjì
Gospel Adaptation:	Aláìgbàgbọ̀ ẹ̀ tún dé Aláìgbàgbọ̀ ẹ̀ tún dé Ẹ̀yin lẹ̀ n sọ isọkúso Pé Jésù ò ní dé mó Ìwé mímọ̀ sọ àsọtẹlẹ̀ Pé Jésù n bọ̀ wá	Unbelievers you have come again Unbelievers you have come again You are talking rubbish That Jesus will not return The Holy book gave the prophesy That Jesus is coming

The same tune was adapted by Evangelist *Joseph Adelakun* as principal theme in a song title "Bàbá mo mọ́pẹ̀ mi wá" as follows:

Adaptaion:	Bàbá mo mọ́pẹ̀ mi wá Bàbá mo mọ́pẹ̀ mi wá Ọlọ́pẹ̀ ọ́pẹ̀ yẹ, Ọ́pẹ̀ yẹ Jésù ọba Ọlọ́pẹ̀ ọ́pẹ̀ yẹ, Ọ́pẹ̀ yẹ Jésù ọba	Father I bring my thanksgiving Father I bring my thanksgiving The owner of praise is worthy Jesus is worthy of praise The owner of praise, Jesus is worthy of praise
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The musical excerpts of the adaptations are presented below:

Onidodo Oni moinoin adaptations

1 U ni da da U ni mo in mo in U ni da da U ni mo in mo in

2 I gba ti o ta o gba gba ka le E wa wo' ja ni la fi a ji

3

Adaptation

4 A la i gba gbo e tun de, A la i gba gbo e tun de

5 E yin le mo i so ku so pe le sa o ni de mo, I we mi mo so a so te

6 le pe le sa n bu wa

Adaptation

7

8 Ba ha mo m'o pe mi wa, Ba ha mo m'o pe mi wa, O lo pe lo pe

Conclusion

We have given a brief historical background of the origin and development of Nigerian gospel music in the context of its existence with other secular genres which has been a force of influence on it. We have also engaged the *gospeltainment* theory in identifying and discussing performance styles in the Nigerian gospel music as basis for entertainment in the musical genre. Four distinct performance styles have been identified namely use of words, use of mono language, use of code-switching and the adaptation of secular/popular tunes. Although the main focus of the gospel musicians is to proclaim the gospel, entertainment is inherent in it even when it is not intended and performance style is one of the vehicles that drive that entertainment. This has made the music to

serve a dual purpose of ministration and entertainment because it is religious and has become popular.

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