



PRODUCTION AESTHETICS OF MUSIC IN NOLLYWOOD FILMS: A STUDY OF AMAECHI UKEJE'S ENYIMBA THE GREAT WARRIOR 1 & 2 (2025)

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Abstract

Music forms a fundamental element of the audiovisual construction of film and plays a serious role in determining narrative meaning, emotional engagement, and audience understanding. Despite its significance, the production and aesthetic functions of music remain inadequately explored within Nollywood scholarship, where more prominence has been customarily placed on the themes of narrative and the structures of industry. This study examines the production aesthetics of music in Nollywood using Amaechi Ukeje's *Enyimba the Great Warrior 1 & 2* (2025) as a case study. Anchored on André Bazin's and Sergie Eisenstein's theories of realism and formalism respectively, this study examines how musical elements interrelate with pictorial images to produce narrative consistency, emotional resonance and cultural genuineness. The study adopts a qualitative methodology and textual content analysis, the research critically assesses the deployment of indigenous musical forms within the film. The findings reveal that music functions as a crucial narrative device by establishing mood, reinforcing historical context, intensifying dramatic tension, and enhancing therapy. However, the study also observes that the film's musical design remains underdeveloped in areas such as character-specific leitmotifs and thematic scoring, thereby limiting its full narrative potential. The study concludes that skillful production and appropriate application of music are key to effective narrative aesthetics of films. It therefore recommends the deliberate integration of professional music creators and sound designers as part of the production crew to enhance the aesthetic and narrative qualities of Nigerian films.

Keywords: Production, Aesthetics, Music, Nollywood, Film

Introduction

Film productions usually emphasize beauty and the general aesthetics of the graphics and sensory components. This process, described by Bordwell (1985), involves the meticulous organization of "mise-en-scène" to guide viewer perception. The task of actualizing aesthetics has often led directors to be more diligent in the way in which various production elements are handled.



Production aesthetics is essentially an outcome of effectively integrating numerous elements that collectively contribute to the overall storytelling process. This involves the careful harmonization and application of storytelling components such as plot, acting, costume, music, makeup, set design, lighting, camera angles, shot composition, movement, and editing techniques. This study focuses on music, which is identified by Gorbman (1987) as a primary "unheard melody." Music provides the emotional texture and narrative lucidity essential to film engagements.

Furthermore, music plays a vast and multifaceted role in human society. Scholars such as Annabel J. Cohen (2001) argue that music is an "implicit narrator" that modulates the emotional flow and reinforces or subverts narrative elements. Beyond its harmonious sounds that ignite moods and emotions, music provides aesthetic pleasure, interconnects ideas, enhances narrative clarity, shapes social perspectives, stimulates emotional responses, and serves educational and ritual functions. Due to its immense communicative potential, music has become essential to several art forms, including drama, poetry, oral literature, prose, and dance. Film, one of the most powerful modern artistic and communication media, relies heavily on music to enhance narrative clarity and emotional engagement. Cohen (2001) argues that music serves as an "implicit narrator" that modulates emotional flow and reinforces or subverts narrative elements. In spite of this significant role, however, music has remained one of the least explored aspects of film production in Nigerian film scholarship. Consequently, music often appears peripheral in discussions of film aesthetics. It is within this context that this study analyzes the use of music in Amaechi Ukeje's *Enyimba the Great Warrior 1& 2* (2025) with the aim of highlighting its aesthetic and narrative contributions.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on André Bazin's and Sergei Eisenstein's theories of realism and formalism respectively. André Bazin's theory of realism gives priorities to truthfulness in representing actualities while Sergei Eisenstein's formalism emphasizes on the use of techniques in establishing new meaning. These theories constituted the framework for this study.

Review of Relevant Literatures

Much has been done to shed light on the idea of Production Aesthetics in film studies. According to Fiveable (2024), "Production aesthetics encompass the deliberate combination of visual and aural elements, such as cinematography, production design, and sound to establish a film's tone, atmosphere, and emotional impact". Fiveable's explanation above highlights the application and intentional use of techniques in both pictorial and audible components to achieve film's desired narrative impact. As Iloma and Ajiwe (2024) observe, the emergence of many unparalleled celebrities of film practice in global history are mainly drawn from their captivating narrative techniques". Citing David, A Cook (1990), Iloma and Ajiwe explain how David Wark Griffith came to global prominence and reputed as the "father of film technique, the man who invented Hollywood, the cinema's first great auteur and the Shakespeare of the screen". Due to his outstanding narrative techniques which yields strong aesthetics in his productions. Iloma and Ajiwe explain how Griffith's techniques which include: replacement of real time with a cinematic sense of time through brilliant techniques such as parallel editing and fragmentation of scenes into shots allowed the audience to move gradually into the emotional heart of the scene thereby, increasing their dramatic aesthetics and fascinations.

Furthermore, Iloma and Ajiwe note that the Soviet veteran, Sergei Eisenstein, believably, the greatest of Russian directors of his time came to global prominence for both his postulation

and practical demonstration of *montage*. The clashing of images and ideas, intensification of dramatic tension by shortening and abbreviating the length of each shot to a barest minimum which remained dominant in his narrative techniques. Citing Dancygar, (2007). Iloma and Ajiwe note that Eisenstein's strategy of seeking filmic solutions to prevailing political problems in Russia was aimed at engaging audience's rationality as a crucial means of charging them for involvement in the revolutionary struggles. His development of anti-narrative techniques which deliberately created disconnections along his narrative flow accounts for more techniques like incongruous lightning and spatial relationships, illogical ordering of images, shallow focus and frequent use of close up shots, amongst others. His works which are primarily exemplified by *The Strike*, (1925) and *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) all contain engrossing and aesthetic effects.

Iloma and Ajiwe observe that in spite of the appeals in the works of the veterans identified above, the absence of music posed great challenges to the overall eloquence and aesthetic values of their films. They note that these veterans thrived within the silent era of film history when the technologies which enabled film sound were yet to be discovered. Although, Iloma Nyenwemaduka Richard ((2015) believes that within this period, sound "appeared notional as the mere sight of moving images secured an overwhelming attention" however, he also believes that the later discovery of the magical potentials of sound in film narrative made its need to be eminent. He opines that due to the crave for sound in films, filmmakers of the silent period resorted to the use of live sounds in the form of music and commentaries to accompany the screening experience of films. Citing Bordwell and Thompson, Iloma maintains that silent films were accompanied by orchestra, organs and piano and music which filled the silence, giving the spectator a more complete perceptual experience. Iloma and Nwafor (2014) further suggest that the successful experimentation with film sound in Alfred Hitchcock's *Blackmail* (1929), Fritz Lang's *M* (1931) and Reuben Mamolian's *Applause* (1929) were known to be remarkable that sound became viewed as another unique element that along with visuals could help to create wonderful experience in film narratives.

Although sounds in film primarily cover everything audible, such as dialogue, sound, sound effects and others, the focus of this study is however. According to Chenyue Zhuang (2023), "music is the composition of sounds... and has been intertwined with film to create art that resonate the audiences on an emotional and societal levels. He notes that both music and film share profound connection that is rooted on the realms of emotion. He believes that the individual emotions are amplified in music while in films, they burst forth. Hence, the audience seek a sense of balance and inner peace when they immerse themselves in the union of music and cinema. . Zhuang further explains that music is strategically employed throughout various stages of a film, setting the tone at the beginning, fading into the background during transitional scenes and often takes centre stage in the climatic movements as it approaches the end. Zhuang believes that music is what makes a film come alive by harmoniously linking the audience to the arousing deep emotive reactions that vibrate in their hearts. Zhuang therefore identifies several areas in which music impact films. While discussing the impact of music on the film's characters, Zhuang posits that music influences the viewer's interpretation of film content especially in the area of shaping their views on characters and narratives. Zhuang also explores the effects of music on film narration and explains how music plays pivotal role in narrating the film's setting. He also believes that music contributes to shaping the audience's expectation of forthcoming developments in the narrative of the film.

Furthermore, Iloma (2022), in a study titled: Towards a Theorization of Communal War Sub-Genre of Action Film in Nollywood highlights the power of music in accelerating pace in film



narratives. Using Bolaji Dawodu's *The Battle of Musanga* as a case study, Iloma explains how music helps the movie to intensify the mood of war especially in the scenes of horrendous clash between the people of Musanga and that of Ohafia. Iloma appraised the way in which the songs are well presented with special attention paid on rhythmic flow, lyrical concern and semantic value. He believes that the skillful handling of music in the film helped change the audiences' emotional sensation. Iloma praised the energetic ways in which highly charged war songs are aptly synchronized against vigorous combatant visual activities. Citing the example of the scene where the combined forces of *Ohafia* and *Arochukwu* warriors present themselves to the Chief Priest for fortification in which the *Ebelebe Jimjim* war song was scored against highly spirited combatant movements. Thereby creating depth and verisimilitude. Iloma describes the impact of music in these scenes as culminating into high motivations that propel the spirit of war to both the fighters and the viewing audience. Ajiwe and Iloma (2024) believe that lighting evoke comparative features with music in the areas of setting the tone and creating moods. Nwuche and Iloma (2024) further explain how music helped to make the African dance dynamic and how the initiations in *Nwokologbo* dance are accompanied with ritual songs to get the spirits engaged.

Clifford and Iloma (2024) further explain how the use of emotionally engaging music helped in promoting the narrative values of films. Iloma (2023) in a study titled: *Crude Oil Crises in the Niger Delta: Prospecting a Theorization of Militancy Sub-Genre of Action Film in a Selected Nollywood Narrative*, and Iloma and Nwafor (2014) in "The Film Editor in Nollywood, A Case Study of Teco Benson's War Front" the preponderance of bombing of pipeline facilities, heavy explosions, crossfire of gunshots and other explosives, narrow escapes and others which helped in revealing attributes of action film in Jeta Amata's *Black November* (2012). and Teco Benson's *War Front* (2004) respectively got the audience very engaging the accompanying sound effects and music helped in making the narrative even more dynamic.

Research Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research and content analysis to examine the aesthetics of music in Nigerian film narratives. The study was limited to Amaechi Ukeje's *Enyimba The Great Warrior 1& 2* (2025). The researcher relied on a purposive sampling method in which, the researcher's choice of film was intentionally guided to suit his purpose of study was utilized. This is in agreement with Ofo (1999, p.65) who suggests that purposive sampling is a method in which the researcher simply hand-picks the sample because he considers them typical to what he wants. This study adopted both the primary and secondary sources of data collection to respectively investigate a Nollywood film and other library materials. A critical reading of the Nollywood film titled: *The Great Warrior 1& 2* (2025) as directed by Amaechi Ukeje Enyimba, constituted the researcher's method of data analysis.

Discussion

Production Aesthetics of Music in Amaechi Ukeje's *Enyimba The Great Warrior 1& 2* (2025)

Amaechi Ukeje's *Enyimba the Great Warrior 1& 2* (2025) is a narrative revolving around Enyimba, the great hero of Ogudasa Kingdom who lost in his wrestling context against Okafor of Arunmehi Kingdom. Arunmehi is a man whose physique is half the body size of Enyimba. Enyimba who encountered a monumental defeat in the hands of orator feels greatly disappointed and disgraced. To worsen the situation, his own people, the people of Ogudasa, out of shame of being defeated booed at him in anger. Enyimba goes home crying like a little child and unable to recover from this pains of loss, humiliation and failed expectations, he got into psychological trauma and



psychiatric defect. He started exhibiting physical violence on everyone he sees, including his fiancée, the Princess of Ogudasa Kingdom, his guards, maids and even his medicine man. At a time when all hopes of healing are lost and everyone confused, Uchenna, a talented young man reputable in the craft of producing melodious sounds from the local African flute *Oja* appears with a fascinating chord. This however creates a sudden twist of happenings as the raging Enyiba who had violently thrown his medicine man into a swamp and already strangling and drowning him while everyone, including the King and his entourage became confused and helpless. In the company of his father, appear with an enthralling chant from the traditional flute, on hearing the sounds well sung, Enyimba's sanity begins to return. The King of Ogudasa Kingdom, the would be father-in-law together with his wife, the Queen who had vowed to ensure doing everything needful to restore Enyimba's sanity became very excited as they resort to musical therapy in healing Enyimba.

The narrative aesthetics of this film was strongly enhanced through the magical powers of music. Music played a pivotal role through mood establishment, reinforcing historical context, and intensifying dramatic tension. Music was also used in the film for therapeutic purpose.

The aesthetic value of music in establishing mood in the film cannot be underestimated. From the beginning to the end of the film's narrative, music was useful in creating mood and enhancing the film's emotional texture. At the beginning of the narrative when the gods reveal to *Eze-anyi*, the Priestess to go in rescue of an unborn child at the compound of Mazi Aduna whose helpless mother was to be killed during labour and the child stolen by evil midwives, the gods have revealed that yet to be born child comes with great destiny that would change the fortunes of the entire community for good. The establishment of horrible rumbles of none dietetic sounds was very credible in creating the aesthetic illusion of metaphysical presence which established powerful mood in the film. Even more moody was the way in which these sounds were aesthetically synchronized with pictures of the messenger of the gods who was engaging in deep incantations expressed with a touch of choreographic movements that explains her spiritual nexus with the supernatural forces. The mood established here conjures the viewer's immediate emotional involvement in the film. This enabled him to activate his instinctive sense of humanitarianism by identifying with the motif of saving a heavily pregnant woman from the claws of death and her unborn child with great destiny as was prophesied from theft by desperate and evil midwives

Furthermore, music was used as a crucial tool in re-enforcing historical context and heightening dramatic tension in the film. The film was purely of the epic genre which dwell on historical themes and subjects as evident in its setting, costume and language which depicted the virginal ancient traditional Nigerian community of the South-Eastern Region. Complimentary to the afore mentioned indices of the epic was the choice of music instrument which produced these aesthetic sounds and the type of music utilized. The major music of the film was drawn synchronously from traditionally made wooden flute called *Oja* as shown in plate 1 below.



Plate 1. Uchenna is singing engrossingly from the traditional Igbo flute called *Oja*.

The music produced from this *Oja* was scintillating and extremely captivating, thereby heightening the narrative appeal and adding remarkably to the auditory aesthetics and dramatic tension of the films. Uchenna's father had been worried about his son's choice of career in life. In traditional Igbo society of this period, a man is expected to take to more practicable and realistic life engagements like farming, fishing or hunting in order to guarantee food security. Instead of taking to any of these, Uchenna's penchant for music consumes all his time thereby raising strong concern from his father. Uchenna's father had already concluded that his only son had derailed from life expectations. This had been his conviction until, he realized how he himself had been unconsciously carried away by the fascinations from the flute. This prompts him to sending his son to the music legend, Oghene of Emekuku at Onitsha to undergo training. Upon conclusion of the training, Uchenna starts demonstrating mastery of the art. Since then, he had become a household name in the community.

Apart from the aesthetics in the songs produced through Uchenna's wooden flute, the film utilized series of sounds to heighten dramatic tension. In the scene where *Eze-anyi* is to have divination with the gods, different kinds of rumbling sound were introduced to ignite tension and prompt great expectations, this is replicated throughout the narrative flow of the film.

Furthermore, because of the aesthetic pleasure it created, music was used for medicinal purpose. Enyimba's psychiatric condition which makes him to become violent was controlled through the magical powers of music. Enyimba, the great hero of Ogudasa Kingdom had lost in his wrestling context against Okafor of Arunmehi community, a man who was half his body size, Enyimba was booed by his people as a result of this loss. He suddenly sees himself losing drastically, his fame, honour and pride in a very ridiculous manner. This, he cannot withstand, Enyimba would confront everybody that comes his way violently, yelling, "Hail me, hail me". In the scene where his fiancée of the royal family, the Princess of the land visits him alongside, her royal entourage to serve him food she had prepared by herself, Enyimba's mood suddenly switches immediately to the sad incident of his loss, and he violently holds the Princess and her maidens to the point of almost squeezing life away from them. This condition has defiled any known treatment

in the land. Even when the traditional medicine man, reputed for curing mad people is invited to cure Enyimba's psychiatric condition—at the invitation of the king, as everybody gathers, hopeful of positive outcome, Enyimba's madness suddenly switches on. At this time, he carries the medicine man violently and runs straight to the rivers side, and flings him several times on the water trying to drown and strangle him to death. At this point, everyone had given up. There is no more hope of healing. This situation however comes to an abrupt reversal as soon as Uchenna's Oja is heard approaching from a nearby distance. To the amazement of all. Enyimba, lets go of his victim as dramatic calm is seen. He moves towards the approaching music with excitement as he dances to its rhythm.



Plate 2: Enyimba violently jacks his medicine man and runs straight to the river side.



Plate 3: Showing Enyimba in a violent attack to drown and strangle his medicine man



Plate 4 shows how music calms Enyimba as he dances to the rhythm of songs from Uchenna's flute



Plate 5: reveals Enyimba, calming to the tune of music.

Despite the aesthetic values of music in the film, it is observed that the film's musical design remains underdeveloped in areas such as character-specific leitmotifs and thematic scoring, thereby limiting its full narrative potential.



Conclusion

This study examined the aesthetic value of music in film Productions in Nollywood, looking at Ukeje's *Enyimba the Great Warrior 1 & 2* (2025) as case study. In this study, indigenous musical forms within the film was explored.. The findings reveal that music functions as a crucial narrative device by establishing mood, reinforcing historical context, intensifying dramatic tension and enhancing therapy. The study therefore concludes that skillful production and appropriate application of music are key to effective narrative aesthetics of films

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