



The Benefits Derived from the Use of a Keyboard Workstation in Providing Orchestral Accompaniment to a Live Choral Performance

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ABSTRACT

In present time, a lot of modern technologies including hardware and software for music have been invented and are in use nowadays. Samuel (2009) and Olorunsogo (2009) itemized these technologies and they include music players like iPods, VCD, MP3, DVD, CD-ROM, projector and software for music production like cakewalk, cubase, sawpro as well as software for writing music like finale, Sibelius and so forth. However, as interesting as the use of modern technology in music education is, care must be taken in such a way that it does not distract the attention of the learners. This paper will be discussing the benefits derived from the use of the keyboard workstation to supply full orchestral accompaniment to a live choir performance. Drawing from the problems and challenges in organizing a music concerts and other musical gatherings which has been traced down to the unavailability of skilled instrumentalists and fund to employ the services of the orchestra have been addressed by some applications as designed in the keyboard technology. This study recommends the integration of orchestra programming or music sequencing into the school curricula as a separate subject. Engaging the students in seminars focused on the use of the keyboard workstation is encouraged.

Keywords: Keyboard workstation, orchestral accompaniment, live choral performance, music technology

INTRODUCTION

Music can be used to express oneself and bring enjoyment to life. Music can be live or recorded. A recorded accompaniment provides the rhythmic and/or harmonic support for the melody or main themes of a song or instrumental piece. A recorded accompaniment can help you with keeping a steady plus and intonation. In an audition setting or a competition, a live accompaniment is best and is sometimes required. The only time that a live accompaniment would be detrimental to your performance, would be if you do not have access to a competent accompanist.

Music is an aesthetic art which requires peace of mind and serene environment. Music, no matter the form exists for expression of gratitude and in most part, symbolic. Uzoigwe, (1996:2) defined music by saying that music is not just an aspect of only the human culture. It is a solemn activity which is unavoidably engaged by man and the world around him, consciously and most often unconsciously. Nature is always in constant expression of gratitude to the Almighty Father. Every aspect of nature has its way of giving praises and thanks to God according to its level of awareness. According to Onwuekwe:

For instance, the cricket at its own level of evolution chips praises to God, the snake hisses, the dog growls, the owl hoots, the bee buzzes, the thunder rolls, the rain prattles, the cock crows, many other phenomena in nature express praise to the Almighty Father in one way or the other. Above all, man expresses his adoration and praises through singing. Is it any surprise to observe what a marvelous musician everything in creation is?

Music, in our modern society is more appreciated than it is analyzed. Most individuals when listening to music cannot name the different elements that can be found in a song. However, when one examines a song it is easy to find what elements in each song or genre that appeals to them. In fact, when discovering what elements are in each song, it can create a further appreciation for that type of music. When examining the musical style of certain genres or songs one gains a new insight in to music and allows them to better understand musical thought.

Music is a combination of an art and science that depends on the use of technology to ensure that its objectives are realized. Technology has been described as the practical use of scientific knowledge to solve man's problem so as to make man's life and his environment become better (Raymond and Byrne, 2002). Music and technology are like inseparable entities because they complement each other. For instance, several traditional musical instruments like *gòjé* (African string instrument), *àgídigbo* (thumb piano), *dùndún* (talking drum), *kàkàkí* (African blown instrument), as well as western ones like slide in trombone, tensions in drum sets, valves in trumpets, and strings on guitar as well as other musical materials are all products of technology.

A musical performance has numerous interactivity taking place between the music, text, performers, audience, and space that all can contribute to a great performance.

The advent of technology to the music world can be said to be older than the Amalgamation of Nigerian protectorates by Sir Lord Lugards. Since 1914, the formal education in Nigeria has witnessed series of reformation, changes, and development. For instance, Omibiyi, (1992), Omojola, (1995) and Okafor. (2005) among others submitted that formal music education, which started in the nineteenth century as mere singing class, dancing class, game songs and melo-drama in primary, secondary and even teachers training colleges of the colonial time, has now developed to become a subject of study at the University level.

While some scholarly works have focused on the impact of modern technology on indigenous music on one hand (Agu, 2011; Adeleke, 2013 and Idamoyinbo, 2011), some others have identified benefits of the technology in music education on other hand (Loko, 2013; Samuel, 2009; Olorunsogo, 2009). Correspondingly, this paper elucidates the indispensability of technology in musical practices and performances. Its concentration will be on the use of work station sequenced orchestration for classical musical performances.

Some of the Benefits Derived from the Use of a Keyboard Workstation in Providing Orchestral Accompaniment to a Live Choral Performance

1. Cost-Effectiveness: It can be very expensive to hire live musicians, particularly for smaller scale productions or if you have tight budget. With recorded accompaniment, the need to pay multiple musicians has been eliminated, making it a more cost-effective option or more financially viable. For low-budget or community theatre, the pre-recorded accompaniment can serve as a workable solution. It enables them to produce professional level music, be it instrumental, vocal and/or both, while saving them the exorbitant costs of hiring live musicians to perform it. A Recorded accompaniment either at the studio recording or with the keyboard workstation is a budget-friendly alternative, especially when hiring the entire orchestra or a band is financially prohibitive. The recorded accompaniment helps

performers to attain to a rich and full sound production without having to attract fees associated with hiring the services of live musicians, such as travel cost, rehearsals allowances, accommodation, and performance fees.

2. Ease of Rehearsal Sessions: Rehearsal sessions with a recorded accompaniment are more convenient and efficient compared to the challenges that abound in coordinating schedules with live musicians. With recorded accompaniment, performers enjoy the privilege of practicing at their own pace as long as they desire, repeat sections as they fit, and adjust the playback when necessary. This flexibility is very useful as it encourages individual practices or when they have to rehearse in different locations. A recorded accompaniment can be used for multiple performances, saving time and effort in the long run. Recorded accompaniment also provides a convenient tool for practicing solo and chorus performances. They can use recorded tracks to practice their individual voice parts, work on timing and phrasing, and try it out with different interpretations as possible. This allows performers to refine their skills and develop a deeper connection with the music long before presenting it live.

3. Pristine Sound Quality: The use of Recorded accompaniment offers a wide range of undefiled sound quality, especially when it is professionally sequenced, mixed, and produced. This proffers a high level of clarity in the sound production, optimal sound quality and balance, and ensuring a pleasant listening experience for the audience. It ensures a high level of audio brilliance and poise. Recorded accompaniment provides the advantage of professional production quality. It allows performers to access high-quality recordings made in a keyboard workstation with high-level recording and mixing techniques. Consistency in sound quality is guaranteed throughout the performance with the use of the recorded accompaniment. This is particularly relevant in large venues or challenging acoustic environments where maintaining a consistent sound balance can be difficult. The use of a recorded accompaniment addresses the need for sound reinforcement challenges that are commonly experienced in working with live musicians. Recorded accompaniment tackles issues like balancing of the sound, proper microphone placements thereby avoiding feedback, thereby resulting in a more controlled and consistent sound quality.

4. Consistency: The recorded accompaniment provides consistency in musical elements like the tempo, dynamics, timing, etc. This tempo which is adjustable, maintains its speed whenever and wherever it is played. The adjustment of volume to strike a balance between the accompaniment and the voices, and other aspects of the accompaniment to suit their preferences and needs are easily achieved. With recorded accompaniment, performers have complete control over the musical elements like the dynamics which forms a part of strong elements in music production. The recorded accompaniment maintains the exact tempo of the music as stipulated by the composer or as desired by the performer throughout the performance without any kind of compromise. Performances done with recorded accompaniment tend to be richer and more reliable in dynamics as it takes just as little as nothing to navigate through all the various forms of musical dynamics. These various musical dynamics like the Piano (P), Pianissimo (PP), Forte (F), Fortissimo (FF), Moderato, Crescendo (Cresc), Diminuendo (Dim), and others are very exact and their ratio as it concerns any of the dynamics are observed to be even as it takes just a clockwise or an anticlockwise movement of the volume knob in achieving this great deal of musical expression. In other musical elements like the acoustic, recorded accompaniment provides consistency in performances, regardless of the venue or performance conditions. Performers can rely on the same recorded track for each performance,

5. Affordability and Accessibility: Recorded accompaniment allows for higher availability with regards to repertoire choice. A wide range of musical arrangements and styles that may not be feasible to

replicate with live musicians is made available to performers through the use of recorded accompaniment. This offers the possibility of incorporating electronic sounds, complex orchestrations, or other production elements that may enhance the overall performance. It also enables performers to use music recorded by professional musicians that may not be readily available or affordable for a live performance.

6. Flexibility and Performance Consistency: When it comes to venue and performance logistics, recorded accompaniment provides flexibility thereby eliminating the need to provide space for live musicians/instrumentalists and their instruments, making it much easier to adapt to different performance settings or venues. Performers can easily adjust the volume, mix, or specific sections of the accompaniment to suit the performance space or the needs of the production, provides flexibility in adapting the musical arrangement to suit the specific needs of a performance. Performers always enjoy the liberty to edit or modify sections of the accompaniment, transpose the key, or adjust the tempo to accommodate the preferences or limitations of the performers or the overall production. Recorded accompaniment ensures a consistent musical experience across multiple performances. This is especially relevant for long-running shows or touring productions where maintaining the same quality and musical interpretation is important regardless of the venue or location. These very aspects of musical performances (FLEXIBILITY and PERFORMANCE CONSISTENCY) can only be achievable with recorded accompaniments as it requires just as little as the flash drive hardware or the corresponding software, the electronic midi data as the orchestra in its entirety. The music director in this regard is not faced with the challenge of conveying the orchestra to the new venue because the orchestra is already contained in the flash drive or even the mobile phone. This method tends to eliminate the need to arrange appointments and logistics with instrumentalists and their musical instruments. The keyboard workstation can be swiftly transported, stored, and played back using modern audio equipment, making it a convenient option for performances in different venues or on-the-go situations.

7. Control over Sound Balance, Design, and Effects: The performers are provided with absolute control over the balance connecting the accompaniment and their own vocals or instrument. In a performance, this gives the opportunity to adjust the sound levels, ensuring that their part is clearly heard without overshadowing or being overpowered by the accompaniment. This offers huge prospect for sound design and effects, allowing performers to incorporate pre-recorded sounds, samples, or synthesized elements that may be challenging to play live. Depth, texture, and atmospheric effects to the performance can be achieved, enhancing the overall sonic experience. This is easily achieved by adding the desired effects to the individual tracks of the orchestra or instruments, and from the console at large.

8. Collaboration across Time and Space: The use of recorded accompaniment allows performers to join forces by collaborating with musicians who may not be physically present. They can use the recordings made by musicians from different locations or even from different time periods. This provides opportunities for cross-cultural partnership, historical recreation, or artistic projects that go beyond geographical boundaries.

9. Reproducibility: This arrangement ensures that the same musical accompaniment can be obtained in different performances, notwithstanding the location or venue. The use of recorded accompaniment is very useful especially to touring productions or performances that require consistent musical, such as orchestral concerts or musicals.

10. Adaptability to Non-Musical Performances: In a non-musical display like dance productions or theatrical plays, this process can be used to enhance the overall ambience, equally provide sound effects,

or create a particular mood. It makes flexible the integration of music easy with other artistic components, thereby enhancing the overall aural experience for the audience.

11. Poorly Skilled or Incompetent Breed of Instrumentalists

Recorded accompaniment can be a valuable resource for performers who have limited access to live musicians or orchestras due to geographical and logistical constraints or even the problem with the present youth. It enables them to have access to professional-level accompaniment tracks, allowing them to showcase their talents and perform in a more comprehensive musical setting. In this present dispensation, the young ones are not interested in the process of making money and that's why the majority is on the fast track in making fast money. The unavailability of skilled instrument handlers is a big problem that is militating strongly against live performances.

CONCLUSION

Music is not very clearly constricted or defined by one definition. With so many types or genre of music, it is quite difficult to actually say what aspect of music that is the most important. To some people, music history and the appreciation of music are the most important aspects to take into consideration. Music: the art of organized noise. The mix of pitch and rhythm combined in different means and enjoyed by our ears. Others think that the complexity in rhythms and melodies make the best music. The rest dedicate their whole lives to studying one genre of music in order to fully understand how that genre works. While all these aspects of music are important, none of them can truly be compared with each other on a fair playing field.

The importance of technology in today's music, has, over the previous century been charted through the study of musical examples and through viewing how human values are seen in this century's timely music. There are very many different types of music that are listened to. There are writings, lectures, readings, and discussions on all these different types of music.

The decision between the use live and recorded accompaniment solely depends on the specific artistic goals, performance context, and available resources. Nevertheless, this paper reveals that the use of a pre-recorded accompaniment is of great relief to the numerous challenges that are encountered in the use of live orchestral accompaniment in the classical music performances. It also shows that the use of keyboard workstation in achieving this great goal is proven to be the best as it assures accuracy in all ramifications. For example:

1. In fixing mistakes, it is easy. Simply put-in and re-record any wrong notes.
2. Editing between multiple takes is possible too.
3. When recording accompaniment, studio production effects like compression which helps control accompaniment dynamics, reverb which provides depth and ambience on accompaniment giving the sense that they were performed in a real acoustic space, equalizer which assigns various frequencies to all the orchestra instruments present in the sequencing, etc are all present in the keyboard workstation music edit console.

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APPENDIX I

SAMPLE PICTURES OF A KEYBOARD WORKSTATION



