ARREST THE MUSIC! THE REBEL ART AND POLITICS OF LAPIRO AND VALSERO: A PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This article is a celebration of the vendetta of two anti-establishment songwriters in Cameroon. It chronicles the protest trajectory undertaken by Lapiro de Mbanga and Valsero, alias Le Général against the government of the President of Cameroon, a cancerous regime that thrives on the rape of democracy, human rights abuses, and the emasculation of social justice. The songs analyzed in this article constitute a caustic critic of the inhumaneness, misgovernment and the abortive democratization process with which Cameroon has come to be identified. The leitmotif in the music of these songwriters is dystopia and protest in post-independence Cameroon under President Biya. As songwriters, Lapiro and Valsero have distinguished themselves from their peers by dint of bravado, valiance and the audacity to speak truth to power. The purport of this article is to underscore the critical role played by protest music in fostering post-independence revolutionary ideas in Cameroon and Africa. To do this effectively, we have revisited the songwriters' musical compositions during the 1990s, an era that marked the advent of multiparty politics in Cameroon. The overriding objective of our work is to propose a few dependable pedagogical paradigms that could be utilized by instructors desirous of adopting the works of these renowned songwriters for pedagogical purposes.

Keywords: Orature, protest, dystopia, lapiroism, resistance

1. Introduction

Orature is fascinating in several respects but the aspect that captivates the attention of the audience is the performing art of the narrator. Groomed to not only entertain live audiences but also to blow the whistle on individual and collective foibles, oral performers command unquestionable respect in Cameroon and Africa at large where they are named differently depending on their provenance. In the Xhosa-speaking communities in South Africa, for instance, the *imbongi*[2] has the privilege of singing the praises of paramount chiefs and other high-ranking traditional leaders. In West Africa, notably among the Mande peoples (Mandinka, Malinké, Bambara, etc.), the role of praise-singing devolves on the *griot*. Griots are perceived as repositories of oral traditions and indigenous knowledge. By this token they are often referred to as sages. Griots are considered roving libraries because of the encyclopedic knowledge they possess. They have profound knowledge of the folklore, culture and mores of the people and are capable of extemporizing on current events and fortuitous incidents. Although popularly known as 'praise-singers,' griots often use their verbal artistry to chastise, satirize, and make loaded comments on traditional and political leaders in the

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2. Composer and orator of poems praising a chief or other traditional figurehead

communities to which they belong. We contend throughout this article that Lapiro and Valsero double as griots, entertainers and social critics in the musical compositions that constitute the corpus studied. We have not analyzed all the songs written by these prolific songwriters because of space and time limitations.

In Cameroon, oral performance responds to communal needs in both literate and illiterate communities. Consequently, orality and literacy co-exist as two faces of the same coin. One feeds the other. Musicians like Lapiro and Valsero no longer sing ex-tempore; they compose songs in isolation and then perform in front of live audiences. Oftentimes, the raw material they utilize is culled from a communal font—folklore. Arguing along similar lines Scheub (1985, p. 16) notes:

> With the advent of literature, the oral tradition did not die. The two media continued their parallel development: both depended on a set of similar narrative and poetic principles, and each proceeded to develop these within its own limits (....) There is no unbridgeable gap between them; they constantly nourish each other.

Such a literary synthesis is feasible only insofar as a given number of conditions are present at the point of encounter between oral and written traditions, including especially the extent to which the synthesizing artist is well rooted in the oral forms of traditional narratives. It is in this light that we have referred to musicians in general throughout this paper as songwriters rather than singers. As Ong (1982, p. 2) observes in his seminal work, *Orality and literacy: The technologizing of the word*, "the relationship between these two media should be construed from a historical vantage point: It is useful to approach orality and literacy synchronically, by comparing oral cultures and chirographic (i.e., writing) cultures that coexist at a certain time. But it is (...) essential to approach them also diachronically or historically, by comparing successive periods with one another."

According to Ong, a historical study of orality and literacy and the various stages in the evolution from one to the other sets up a frame of reference in which it is possible to understand better not only the pristine oral culture but also the subsequent writing culture. It is not just the profit motive that serves as a catalyst for translating orality into literacy. An equally valid reason why these artists translate orality into the written word is to preserve intellectual property that will be bequeathed to progeny. In this light, oral performers fulfill critical social functions in Africa. Their tales encapsulate the most deeply felt emotions of the people whose lives are mirrored in the narratives. Songs suggest to members of the audience the route to wholesomeness. No wonder then that the quest for wholesomeness is the leitmotif in the musical compositions of Lapiro and Valsero as will be seen subsequently in this article. Many of their songs chronicle the trail of dystopia, disenchantment and disillusionment in Cameroon. In other words, the anecdotes they tell in their songs prick the conscience of perpetrators of

social anomy. These songs serve as mirrors of the very nature of Cameroonian society currently. They are the prisms through which emasculators of social ideals could be seen. Most importantly, their songs constitute the means by which Cameroonians find their own connections with a world replete with unfathomable meanders.

The songs that make up the corpus studied in this article take readers into the innermost recesses of their consciences and, by means of luminous images, cast mind-searching light into their deepest and most secret places. As Scheub (1971, p. 198) would have it, "storytelling chronicles our great transformations and helps us to undertake periodic transfigurations." At the explosive center of Lapiro and Valsero's rebel art can be found our most profound hopes and aspirations, the quintessence of our own very existence as global citizens. Their songs create a continuum from the past to the present. For this reason, Scheub (2002, p. 201) postulates that "it is the task of the storyteller to forge the phantasmagorical images of the past into masks of the realistic images of the present, thus, enabling the performer to pitch the present to the past, to visualize the present within a context of and, therefore, in terms of the past." The music of Lapiro and Valsero bridges the gap between the past and the present by juxtaposing the regimes of Presidents Biya and Ahidjo of Cameroon and the ideals by which each leader stands. In doing so, the songwriters underscore the mindboggling dichotomies that exist between these statesmen and their governmental modus operandi. Salient themes woven into songs enable Lapiro to adumbrate the concept of "good governance" as seen in the following except from his most recent album titled *Démissionnez* (2012):

Trente ans de championnats
You dong composé équipes
Wuna dong buka ndamba for all kain stade
Sep so soso défaite because of over boum! boum![3]

I say hein wuoh, dat équipe for Lions domptables
Wei you dong nuong for Besie for Kondengui
Ana for Besie for New Bell
Wei na popo you dong formé yi,
Yes, na you be Sah for da équipe
Nationale de shiba
Na you di recruiter joueurs
And na you di make dem licenses.
Na you be sélectionneur,
Coach and capitaine joueur,
Na you di make classement for ndamba.

3. Thirty years of tournament
You have formed teams
Your teams have played soccer in all kinds of stadia
Regardless, they have incurred nothing but defeat upon defeat
On account of excessive boum! Boum!

This stylistic device may not make sense to folks who do not understand the game of soccer. However, Lapiro's recourse to soccer metaphors makes perfect sense to the people of Cameroon for whom football has become a national 'religion' of sorts. It should be noted that the word "wuoh" called from the native tongues of the grasslands people in the Northwest Region translates a relationship of camaraderie. However, used derogatorily as Lapiro does in this song, the word takes on a different signification—expression of contempt for the Head of State. Lapiro lambastes the Cameroonian President for his predilection for power monopoly: "Na you be sélectionneur/Coach ana Capitaine joueur/Na you di make classement for ndamba". In other words, the President is the selector, coach and captain. He sorts out players for matches that often result in defeat. It is on this count that Lapiro describes the Head of State's team as "youa own sia Manchester." He reminds the president that victory in soccer requires wit and tact:

> Kondre man, ndamba no be boum! boum!
> Ndamba na sense!
> Ndamba na sense, ancien répé
> No be na boum! Boum!

Lapiro's intent is to draw the attention of the public to the Cameroonian President's usurpation of power from the judicial and legislative branches of government. The Head of State has silenced Cameroon's judges and members of Parliament who remain at his beck and call. In the foregoing excerpt, Lapiro contends that for forty years, the President has failed to deliver the political goods that Cameroonians expected of him. The songwriter attributes this monumental failure to lack of clairvoyance on the part of the leader ("because of over boum! Boum!") This songwriter seems to suggest that good governance stems from clairvoyance and the ability to connect with the populace. Other themes that are recurrent in Lapiro's songs are notions of accountability and responsibility as seen in the following excerpt:

> You wan dammer you mimba we,
> You wan souler you mimba we,
> You wan nyoxer you mimba we-oh.
> Oh Mimba we-oh, tara!
> [At table, remember us;
> When you're having a drink,
> Remember us when you're having sex-oh
> Oh, remember us, you are our leader!][4]

Lapiro's clarion call does not stop at the doorstep of political leaders. He extends his appeal to the oppressed populace as well, urging them to stand up and fight for their rights. He believes that his compatriots acknowledge their predicament but shy away from taking the necessary action to right the wrongs of the past. They have resigned to their fate and refused to indulge in bold actions necessary to halt misgovernment and dereliction of duty in

4. All translations are mine except otherwise indicated

Cameroon. They do not want to indulge in actions perceived as criminal by forces of law and order as the following excerpt indicates:

> We noi wan kick-oh
> We no wan go for ngata
> We de daso for ndengwe
> A beg mimba we-oh, yes tara.
> We no wan problème para
> We no wan go for Ndengui
> We di fain daso garri
> For helep we own family-oh!
> [We do not want to steal
> We do not want to go to jail
> We just need to work
> We beg you to think about us, boss
> We are not looking for trouble
> We don't want to go to Kondengui
> We are only looking for a means
> To help our families-oh!]

Fear of the unknown is the leitmotif in the song referenced above. Lapiro seems to suggest that Cameroonians have been rendered inactive by fear of arrest and incarceration. It should be noted that the word "Ndengui" is an allusion to Cameroon's notorious prison in Yaoundé, the nation's capital city. "Mimba we" is a loaded song that calls upon the Head of State and his henchmen to refrain from turning a blind eye to the legitimate grievances of the people they govern. Lapiro appeals to those at the helm to be mindful of the thorny problems engendered by the socio-economic morass in Cameroon. In "Mimba we" Lapiro brazenly admonishes the President against overlooking the plight of the downtrodden in Cameroon. Words like 'dammer', 'suler', 'tara' and 'nyoxer' are lapiroisms[5] created for the sole purpose of veiling the songwriter's intent to commit what Verschave (2004, p. 8) describes as "*crime de lèse majesté* or insult to the Head of State's honor. It is a composite language minted to underscore the metrolingual context in which Lapiro composes his songs. 'Dammer' is a camfranglais word for *manger* (to eat); 'suler' translates the standard French word *boire* (to drink); 'tara' is slang for the French word *patron* (boss or big shot); 'nyoxer' is a euphemism for *baiser* (have sexual intercourse.) Lapiroisms reflect the provocative attitude of its speakers and their jocular disdain for linguistic correctness, clearly revealing its function as an anti-language (Halliday, 1977).

Like most protest songwriters, Lapiro drums up support from the rank and file as this excerpt clearly indicates:

> Nkoululu ah wan tok,
> Mokolo ah wan gi ticket
> Marché Central ah go

5. Neologisms created by Lapiro de Mbanga

Troweh, heh! heh!
Sauveteurs, ah chakara?
[Nkoululu I want to speak,
Mokolo I want to criticize
Marché Central I will talk, heh! heh!
Sauveteurs, I will spill the beans.]

Because he has arrogated to himself the role of mouthpiece of the underprivileged, Lapiro drums up their support in this protest song against the despotic regime in Cameroon. These lyrics bear testimony to the disenchantment of the songwriter. He chides the president and his henchmen for corruption, indifference to the plight of the people, and dereliction of duty. "Mimba we" is the cry of a disillusioned Cameroonian whose heart throbs for his fatherland. "Mimba we" seems to be an indictment of the dysfunctional government of Paul Biya, especially the economic crisis that has hit the nation hard:

For dis heure for austérité so,
For dis heure wey cinq no mus change position
Yes, austérité da be sei dollar no mus change foot
Wusai we own espoir deh no?

[At this time of austerity
At this time when every dime must stay where it is,
Yes, austerity means that each dollar must be spent judiciously
Where is our hope today?]

The rhetorical questions that punctuate Lapiro's lyrics are symptomatic of the singer's mental discomfort in a country that has gone topsy-turvy. He lives in a country where democracy has metamorphosed into demo-dictatorship; rigor and moralization have morphed into reckless abandon and immorality. In 'mimba we' Lapiro underscores the fundamental ailments that have eaten into the moral fabric of Cameroonian politicians and caused the deplorable status quo that is observable in Cameroon. The song writer notes that there is a gamut of cankers burrowing deep into the social fabric of Cameroon under the incumbent, not the least of which are corruption, dereliction of duty, double-speak and a penchant for vengeance on the part of politicians. It should be noted that Lapiro has paid the price for insubordination, including imprisonment. This notwithstanding, he has stood his grounds and remained a political gadfly. Angered by imprisonment, Lapiro composed a song titled "Constitution Constipée" (2008) (Constipated Constitution), in which he describes the country's president as a senile man caught in a web of machinations that have compelled him to stay in power even though he is visibly exhausted. In this song, Lapiro calls for help, probably from international role-players, to stop the constitutional rape in Cameroon. Clearly, the singer states that the Head of State is burned out and should resign without further ado as seen in the excerpt below:

Au secours!
L'heure est grave
Les bandits en cols blancs
Veulent braquer la constitution de mon pays
Les fossoyeurs de la République
Veulent mettre les lions en cage (...)
Le coq est harcelé et menacé
D'une tentative de holdup (...)
Big Katika don taya'oh!
Répé don slack'oh!
Wuna lep yi yi rest
Répé don fatigué
Yi wan go rest (...)

[Help!
Come deliver us
There is danger out there
White-collar thieves are
Bent on mutilating the Constitution of my country
The Nation's grave-diggers want to
Put the Lions in the cage (...)
The rooster is harassed and
Shaken by threats of hold-up
The Big Boss is tired-oh!
The Father of the Nation is exhausted
Give him the opportunity to rest
Pa is tired
He needs help (...) [xi]

This lampoon is a mix of French and Cameroonian pidgin English. Soon after its release, it became the unofficial anthem of protesters during the 2008 youth uprising in Cameroon, and Lapiro was arrested and charged with inciting unrest. Despite this humiliation by the government of his homeland, Lapiro regained international renown and became even more vocal against the misdeeds of the regime. During the presidential poll that took place in 2011, the singer called on all conscientious Cameroonians to cast blank votes to show their disapproval of the President's intention to run for another term. In November 2009, he was selected as the winner of the global "Freedom to Create Imprisoned Artists Prize". The jury remarked that his songs constituted a cultural megaphone by which the disenfranchised and politically endangered can vicariously exercise freedom of speech. Later, in 2001, Lapiro wrote a song titled "Na You" in which he sounded brazenly confrontational. "Na You" is a pidgin expression that could be translated as, 'You are to Blame.' Circumstances surrounding the composition of this song are a classic example of the transformation of a social rebel into an astute and indefatigable political combatant. In "Na You", Lapiro bemoans the rape of democracy in Cameroon. As he puts it, people should make a distinction

between multiparty politics and democracy. He believes that what exists in Cameroon is multiparty politics, not democracy. He argues that within opposition political parties, the attitude is the same because militants with innovative ideas and contrary views are seen as enemies within the house and if they insist on change they are dismissed (Sone, 2009, p. 25.) In "Na You" Lapiro speaks truth to power defiantly:

You go for Bamenda
Abakwa boys dem di sofa.
From north to south
Ma complice dem di hala-oh!
From east to west-oh!
Free boys dem di gaz-oh!
Na you do'am –oh!
Na you do'am –oh!
Na you do'am –oh! Heh! Heh!
Na you sipoil dis kondre
[If you go to Bamenda
You'll find Abakwa boys suffering
From north to south
My friends are protesting!
From east to west-oh!
Free boys are farting-oh!
You are to blame-oh!
You are to blame-oh!
You are to blame-oh! Heh!Heh!
You have ruined this country.

The accusing finger that Lapiro points in the face of the President is as provocative as his words are defiant. He holds the president accountable for all the mess in Cameroon: "Na you do'am–oh!"/ "Na you sipoil dis kondre!" This statement could be translated into Standard English as "You're to blame!" / "You have ruined this country."

The rebellious songwriter does not stop at accusation; he enjoins the Head of State to clean up the mess without further ado:

You mus fix'am–oh!
You mus fix'am–oh!
You go fix'am–oh!
Na you demage dis kondre
You mus fix'am–oh!
You go fix'am–oh!
[You must fix it–oh!
You must clean it up –oh!
You have to clean up the mess–oh!
You have ruined this country
You must fix it–oh!]

Lapiro insists on getting to the bottom of the conundrum by promising to tell the truth and nothing but the truth. It is important to note that Lapiro's lyrics amount to political commentary. His songs are imbued with socio-political reality as seen in the following excerpt:

> La vérité étant… ce qu'on ne retrouve jamais
> Aux tables des menteurs
> Je jure de chanter la vérité et rien que la vérité
> Mombo ah go brass before dem meng me
> But ah go bras daso
> Baisse de salaire na you!
> Arriéré na you!
> Compression du personnel na you!
> Licenciement na you!
> Privatisation na you!
> Liquidation na soso you…
> Moi ah comprends sei
> Do how, do how Johnny Four Foot
> Go las come dammer nylon ana carton for dis kondre… [xv]
> [Truth is never… found at the table of liars
> I promise to tell the truth and nothing but the truth
> My friend, I will speak at the risk of being killed.
> I will speak regardless of what happens to me
> Salary cuts is your handiwork,
> Deferred payments of arrears are your call,
> Employee lay-offs are attributable to you
> Privatization of State enterprises are your call,
> Running companies aground is still due to you
> It is clear that in the not too distant future
> The goat will have no choice but to eat
> Nylon and cardboard boxes in this country.]

Lapiro's tone is both aggressive and provocative. In a damning diatribe, he banishes truth from the discourse of politicians: "La vérité étant… ce qu'on ne retrouve jamais aux tables des menteurs." He does not only portray politicians as liars, but he also puts on them the blame for chronic unemployment, pay-cuts, employee lay-offs, and the privatization of state enterprises. He contends that if this decline continues, there will come a time when Cameroonians will go through hard times: "Do how, do how Johnny four foot go las come dammer nylon ana carton for dis kondre." Lapiro underscores the dire consequences of this dystopia as follows:

> Consequence, boys dem dong ton na attaquant
> Nga na ninja
> Small tchotchoro for quartier dem dong begin
> Agresser man pikin for carrefour…
> Licencié na taximan
> Ala wan na bendskinneur

BTS na secrétaire for long sitik
Someone na bayam sellam
GCE O/L na cuti mbanga wet cuti rubber
Ala wan di wok na for farm banana
Breveté na chargeur
Ala wan na forceur
GCE A/L na bloke stone
Someone di dig na san-san
Na we dis today kondre dong fall stock…"
[Consequently, boys have become attackers
Girls have become ninjas
Little girls are now sexually harassing
Men at street corners
BA degree holders are taximen
Others are bendskin commuters
BTS holders work as secretaries in offices
Others are bayam sellam
GCE O/L holders are harvesting
Palm nuts and rubber for a living
Others are involved in manual labor
On banana plantations
Brevete holders are park boys
Others are loaders
GCE A/L holders break stones
As a means of livelihood
Here we are living in a country
That has become bankrupt …]

In a nutshell, Lapiro's oral tales are songs of resistance written with gusto and performed with zest. His songs harbor allusions, innuendos, and metaphors. They provide listeners with a new pair of lenses through which to perceive and appreciate the intent of oral narratives emanating from Cameroon. He is a gifted songwriter endowed with a gargantuan sense of self-confidence. His songs constitute a lamentation for a native land in decrepitude.

Lapiro is not a lone voice in the vendetta against the cancerous society that Cameroonians have inherited from the incumbent. Valsero has followed in his footsteps with a song titled '*Ce pays tue les jeunes*'[6] in which he bemoans the fate of Cameroon's lost generation — the young college and high school graduates whose future hangs in the balance on account of governmental dysfunction:

Pour 2008 je me parle
Pour 2008 je te parle
J'espère que tu vas bien
Et qu'il t'arrivera des choses bien (…)

6. This country kills its younger generation

Tous ces diplômés chôment,
Cette génération ne verra
Pas le fameux bout du tunnel
De toutes les façons je n'y crois pas,
La jeunesse crève à petit feu,
Tandis que les vieux derrière les forteresses
Se saoulent à l'eau de feu
Ce pays tue les jeunes.
Cinquante ans de pouvoir
Après ça ils ne lâchent pas prise
De bled dénature (…)
La vie est trop dure
Le système la rend encore
Plus dure, plus dure,
Ils le vivent.
A Yaoundé ils le savant
Ce pays tue les jeunes.
Ce pays Est come one bombe
Pour les jeunes à tombeau.
Faites attention quand
ça va péter ça va tuer
Tous les lambeaux
Alors les vieux, faites de la place.
Il faut pas le flambeau.
Ce pays tue les jeunes.
Les vieux ne lâchent pas la prise
De bled dénature (…)
[For the sake of 2008
I speak to myself
For 2008 I speak to you
I hope all is well with you
And I hope that good tidings
Will come your way (…)
All the college graduates who are jobless
This generation that will never see
The proverbial light at the end of the tunnel
In any case, I do not believe they ever will
The youngsters are dying slowly
Whereas old folks are getting
Drunk in their bunkers.
This county kills its youngster
Fifty years in power
And, yet they still won't
Relinquish power peacefully
Life is too tough
The system makes it even tougher.

They experience it
In Yaoundé, they know it.
This county kills its youngsters,
This country is like a time bomb
For the dying younger generation
Watch out! When it shall explode,
It shall destroy everyone
So, I am asking the older generation
To make way for the younger citizens
Let us avoid flames
This county kills its youngsters.
The old folk will not relinquish
Power peacefully (…)]

Notice that Valsero's lyrics are fiery as evidenced in the foregoing verses. The songwriter is unapologetic in his opprobrium on a regime that destroys the future generation. In fact, his diatribe against a carnivorous government seems to be the leitmotif in this long song of protest. Notice the songwriter's deliberate parallelism in the verse "*Ce pays tue les jeunes."* This narrative device enables the songwriter to underscore the uncertain fate of young Cameroonians. As insinuated in the song, the President of Cameroon is likened to an animal that feeds on its offspring. Valsero's reference to the year 2008 is significant given that this year constitutes an indelibly dark spot on the regime in Cameroon. In February 2008, the Head of State ordered his bloodthirsty security forces to open fire on unarmed protesters, mostly youth adults, who had embarked on a protest match to vent their frustration against food shortage and a hike in gas prices. The 2008 protests constituted a series of demonstrations in Cameroonian cities, namely Yaoundé, Douala, Buea and Bamenda. In reaction, the government sent out troops armed to the teeth to crack down on protesters and hundreds of Cameroonian young men and women were killed. It is interesting to note that Valsero perceives the macabre silence that hangs over the heads of Cameroonians as a time bomb that will soon explode. He calls on the gang of kleptomaniacs hibernating in Yaoundé to decamp before it is too late to do so: "Alors les vieux, faites de la place/Il faut pas le flambeau."

Though singing in standard French, the singer infuses his lyrics with Camfranglais[7] in order to be understood by the younger Cameroonians for whom his message of protest is intended. Words such as 'bled', 'crève' and 'se saoulent' [country, die and get drunk)] are colloquial French expressions chosen with circumspection by the songwriter to translate not only semantics but also sentiments.

In another song titled '*Lettre au président*' Valsero, addresses his message directly to President of Cameroon:

7. Hybrid language created by Cameroonian younger generation

Puis-je savoir, Prési,
Pourquoi pour nous ça ne marche pas
J'ai fait de longues années d'études
Et j'ai pas trouvé d'emploi
Je te rappelle que t'avais promis
Qu'on sortirait du tunnel
On y est toujours, ce sont les mêmes
Qui tiennent la chandelle (...)
Prési, tes potes vivent au bled
Comme s'ils sont de passage
Ils amassent des fortunes,
Spécialistes des braquages
Ils font preuve d'arrogance,
Ils frustrent le peuple
Ils piétinent les règles
Et ils font ce qu'ils veulent
Ah Prési, arrête ça c'est ça ton travail
Ou inch'Allah, je jure, un autre fera le travail
Le peuple n'en peut plus, les jeunes en ont marre
On veut aussi goûter du miel sinon on te gare (...)
Prési, les jeunes ne rêvent plus
Prési, Prési, les jeunes n'en peuvent plus
La majorité crève
Dans le vice ils basculent
Et quand le monde avance, nous, au
Bled, on recule (...)
Le peuple est souverain il n'a jamais tort,
Il a la force du nombre,
Il peut te donner tort
On n'a pas peur de la mort,
Même si tes potes appellent des
Flics en renfort
Ils disent de toi que c'est toi "l'homme lion"
Mais ils n'ont qu'un rêve: ils veulent tuer le lion.
[May I know, Presi, why nothing works for us
I have spent several years at school
But still can't find work
You must remember that you promised
Bringing us to the end of the tunnel
Here we are today still marking time,
While the same people call the shots (...)
Presi, your ministers live in this country
As if they were strangers on vacation
They amass wealth
They are skilled in the art of holdup
They are arrogant, and they frustrate the people

They flout laws and act with impunity
Oh Presi, put an end to all that, it's your job
Otherwise, Inch Allah, I swear
Someone else will do the job in your place
The people cannot take it anymore
The younger folks are fed up
We want to have a taste of the honey too
Otherwise, we will give you the boot (…)
Presi, the youth no longer have dreams
Presi, Presi, young people cannot take it anymore
Most of them are dying
They live in vice.
We retrogress in this country
While the rest of the world progresses
The people are sovereign, they are never wrong
They have numerical strength
They can give you a vote of no confidence
We are not afraid of death,
Even if your henchmen summon
Cops for protection
The people say you are the 'Lion Man']
But their sole dream is to kill the 'Lion.']

Valsero's interrogative missive to the Cameroonian Head of State is incisive. Not only does he take the president to task for promises unfulfilled, he also enjoins him to perform the job for which he was elected. The song is an acrimonious satire that conveys the anger of the Cameroonian people frustrated with a regime that has failed them in many aspects, not the least of which is accountability. The sagacious rapper demands answers to numerous vexing questions, notably the reason for governmental dysfunction in Cameroon. Valsero's songwriting reflects the sorrows, hopes and desperation of the people whose lived experiences constitute the subject matter of his songwriting. As Hesch (2007, p. 1) points out, "songwriting may be the one true expression of a people's sorrow, despair and hope." He notes that the Wobblies wrote and performed songs as instruments of mobilization in the early twentieth century. Music and the American civil rights movements of the sixties became almost synonymous, as many African American musicians, from James Brown to Stevie Wonder, celebrated black consciousness and called for social change. In the same vein, McQuillar and Johnson (2010) observe that Tupac Shakur's rap songs translate the traumas experienced by Tupac himself and disillusioned African Americans. In the same vein, '*Lettre au président'* is the cry of a disenchanted Cameroonian rapper at odds with a regime that excels in arrogance, insolence, double speak, and dereliction of duty. From a linguistic point of view, this song is more colloquial than '*Ce pays tue les jeunes*.' The reason is that Valsero is speaking on the behalf of Cameroon's younger generation and has chosen to employ a lingo that is

characteristic of the social class for whom he is a mouthpiece. The musician constantly culls words and expressions from figurative French as seen in the following examples: 'tiennent la chandelle' (perform a duty), 'en ont marre' (fed up), 'bled' (home, country, and village), 'potes' (friends, henchmen, comrades), and 'crèvent' (die). These words fit into the register of 'youth talk' in Cameroon. It is interesting to note that this rapper transposes foreign language expressions into French. The Arabic word 'Incha'Allah' is one such loan word. Notice that Cameroon is a multilingual country where over two hundred indigenous languages are spoken, including Arabic. Musicians constantly cull words and expressions from these native tongues in a bid to fictionalize the linguistic tapestry of Cameroon. Most importantly, Valsero has had recourse to an expression to which all Cameroonians are familiar: 'L'homme lion 'or 'Lion man,' a sobriquet for the Cameroonian Head of State. This pseudonym describes the brutality with which the president responds to legitimate complaints from citizens about governmental ineptitude.

In sum, Lapiro and Valsero could be portrayed as talented musical virtuosos who play several roles in their songwriting—entertainers, social critics, bards, humorists, counselors and chroniclers—all functions they fulfill with remarkable success. Given the fact that their messages are directed at specific audiences— the powers-that-be and the wretched of the earth, to borrow words from another revolutionary writer, Franz Fanon (1963), Lapiro and Valsero steer clear of linguistic sophistry. As a matter of fact, most of the time, they sing in Cameroonian lingua francas—Pidgin English and Camfranglais. They have no compunction about resorting to profanity when they deem it an appropriate tool to communicate their messages and pent-up emotions. Proficiency in Pidgin English and Camfranglais would be necessary if members of the audience were to holistically decode the semantics contained in the lyrics. Words like "katika", "sauveteurs", "nyoxer", "tara", and "ngata" could be semantically challenging to those fans who are neither pidginophones[8] nor camfranglophones[9]. The music of Lapiro and Valsero is weighty and communicatively incisive. The songwriters are unfazed in their determination to tell the truth to the Cameroonian government and the governed. The question that arises at this point relates to the ramifications of the foregoing discourse analysis for music instructors who are interested in teaching Cameroonian music in particular and African music in general? How could instructors utilize this information effectively in developing curricula that would enable the teaching of College level music courses?

2. Toward a Pedagogical Canon for Music Instructors

Interpreting music can be a daunting task, the more so because each musical composition harbors textual and non-textual elements. Arguing along similar lines, Scheub (1971, p. 28) observes:

> The problem for the translator of oral materials into a written form

8. Speakers of Pidgin English

9. Speakers of Camfranglais

> are enormous, some of them insurmountable except by extensive multi-media production, and even then, the impact of the original performance is diminished. The problem of developing literary correspondences for oral non-artistic techniques is staggering, for the translation of single narrative-performance involves profound transformations which defy equivalence.

Given the enormity of the problem that faces the translator of African music into the written word, instructors charged with the critical task of teaching music originating from the African continent need to conceive dependable multidimensional paradigms that would guarantee not only the holistic interpretation of musical compositions but also the attainment of final learning objectives (FLOs). In the paragraphs that follow, we shall shed ample light on three tried and tested pedagogical canons that have come in handy for music education:

2.1 Bloom's Taxonomy

In his taxonomy, Bloom (1956) postulates that effective textual analysis entails the following processes:

Evaluation: making value judgments about issues, resolving controversies, assessing theories, composing ideas, and evaluating outcomes;

Synthesis: creating a unique original product that may be a combination of ideas to form a new whole, using old concepts to create new ones;

Application: using knowledge, facts and principles to facilitate problem solving;

Comprehension: interpreting and translating information from one medium to another, and

Knowledge: recall of information, discovery and observation.

The framework enunciated above is germane for interpreting songs originating from Africa given the multifaceted nature of the musical compositions, the multiplicity of messages conveyed by songwriters, and the plethora of rhetorical devices used by singers. Bloom's model is particularly useful in unraveling the significations embedded in the linguistic and extra-linguistic components of the songs written by Lapiro and Valsero. With the kernel of the lyrics laid bare, music instructors would be in a position to design lower-order and upper-order thinking tasks that would enable learners to achieve outcomes of learning.

2.2 Hermeneutic Model

The theory of Hermeneutics propounded by Schleiermacher (1834) underscores the importance of interpreting, not only the implied meanings embedded in a culture-rich text but also unraveling the situational dimensions that constitute the matrix in which the text is rooted. The most vital feature of the theory of hermeneutics is the concept of Hermeneutic Circle. The Hermeneutic Circle refers to the situation in which when learners encounter

an oral text, they tend to make sense of it with reference to other texts. This intertextuality is an integral part of music composed by African musicians given the correlation that exists between orality and literacy as adumbrated earlier on in this paper. The Hermeneutic Circle enables learners to come to grips with the circularity inherent in the cultural, historical, linguistic and non-linguistic components of an ethnographic text. Noteworthy also is the fact that the Hermeneutic Model is particularly suited for interpreting music from Africa given the palimpsestical nature of musical compositions originating from the continent. Chantal Zabus (1991, p. 23) defines the African palimpsest as "the writer's attempt at textualizing linguistic differentiation and conveying African concepts, thought patterns and linguistic concepts through the ex-colonizer's language."

Most musical compositions emanating from contemporary Africa are calqued on oral traditions of the past. In other words, modern songwriters tend to borrow not only the themes but also the esthetics of oral performers. Scheub (2002) sheds ample light on four characteristics of oral performance that the contemporary songwriter has to grapple with in the course of the compositional process. These include the verbal and non-verbal elements of the performance, their structural characteristics, and the broad matrix from which individual images emerge. By "structure" Scheub is referring to the organization, arrangement and relationship of the various parts of the oral production, as well as the nonverbal components of the narrative such as tone of voice, rhythm, facial expressions, gestures, bodily movements, particularly images created by sound, body and the imagination. The structural manipulation of these images creates plot and reveals themes. African songwriters who borrow from oral traditions are conversant with the motifs and symbols developed on the surface of the performance. Above all, they are sensitive to the poetic use of culture-based tropes. The Hermeneutic Model is particularly suitable for teaching the protest music of Lapiro and Valsero because it enables the instructor to interpret their musical compositions from the perspective of the Essential Elements of Information (EEIs) embedded in the lyrics—who, what, where, why, when and how factors.

2.3 Styles-and Strategies-Based Instructional Model (SSBI)

The Styles-and Strategies-Based Instructional Model is a learner-centered approach to teaching that explicitly combines styles and strategies-based instructional canons with everyday classroom activities (Oxford, 1990; Cohen & Dornyei, 2002; Cohen & Weaver, 2006). The principle that undergirds the SSBI Model is the precept that learners should be given the opportunity to understand not just what they are processing in the classroom but also the manner in which they are assimilating the material the way they do. Though conceived to serve the purpose of second language acquisition, the SSBI model has now become a boon for music instructors on account of the unquestionable correlation between musical and linguistic competencies. The Styles-and Strategies-Based Instructional Model is anchored on the theory of scaffolding—the idea that at the beginning of the learning process,

learners need a great deal of support; gradually, this support is taken away in bid to allow students to develop a sense of self-directedness in the learning process. Cohen and Weaver (2006) describe this sense of autonomy as the gradual release of responsibility. Other facets of the SSBI model include the following—modeling, collaborative learning, activation of prior knowledge, student choices and self-initiated learning. The Styles- and Strategies-Based Instructional Model is a learner-focused approach that calls into question conventional practices and the belief in the lecture as an effective paradigm for engaging learners in self-empowering critical thinking and problem-based learning (PBL). It shifts the focus of pedagogy from a passive teacher-centered approach to that of a learner-centered collaborative transaction. The aspect that makes this model appropriate for teaching the music of Lapiro and Valsero is the fact that it underscores self-directed learning and learner autonomy in the performance of learning tasks.

Briefly, teaching the protest music of Lapiro and Valsero using the canons adumbrated above would be a win-win enterprise for both instructors and learners. Instructional motivation calls for dependable paradigms such as the ones elucidated in this paper. Teachers who resort to multidimensional instructional models inevitably derive immense benefit and satisfaction from the design and implementation of learning tasks that result in the accomplishment of intended learning outcomes. Instructors charged with the critical task of teaching African protest music at all levels of the academic ladder should reckon with the fact that no one size fits all.

3. Conclusion

In sum, the critical analysis accomplished in this paper leaves no room for doubt that the protest music of Lapiro and Valsero is teachable. Their songs seem to address Cameroon's perennial problems. They call upon the perpetrators and victims of human rights abuses in the country to make volte-face. The rationale behind the musical compositions of these two protest songwriters is to raise awareness in the hope of galvanizing the population into a revolution. Mandela (1994) aptly captures the quintessence of protest music when he observes that African music is often about the aspirations of the African people, and that it can ignite the political resolve of those who might otherwise be indifferent to politics. Lapiro and Valsero are protest songwriters whose lyrics harbor seeds of a revolution. Their danceable lyrics translate mixed messages of despair and hope. The motif that runs through the songs of these combative musicians is civil rights and fundamental freedoms. Their songs have produced a tonic effect on the younger generation of Cameroonians who have taken their destiny into their own hands as evidenced in the ongoing Ambazonian Revolution, or civil war in Cameroon. Language is a lethal tool in the hands of Lapiro and Valsero. They wield it tactfully in a bid to attain their objectives. These musicians have distinguished themselves as virtuosos endowed with versatile minds. Their sound beats have earned them encomium at home and in the diaspora.

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