

(RE)Thinking Popular Music Studies in Public Universities in Ghana

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Abstract

Popular music permeates every society's socio-cultural, religious, political, and economic life, thus, leading to the introduction of popular music programmes in some academic institutions across the globe. However, in Ghanaian public universities' music departments, it is the least-studied genre. Despite its introduction to Ghana's universities almost three decades, its impact on the music industry is inconsequential. It is becoming a challenge for these music departments to boast of significant contributions in human resources to the music industry over the years. In this study, we review the place of popular music within the undergraduate music programme of three public university music departments in Ghana. We also assess the socio-economic and academic relevance of the popular music courses taught in the three universities to Ghana's music industry and make recommendations to fill the gap and break the *myth of the ivory tower*. Using content analysis, we realise that studying popular music in the three music departments is skewed towards historical and socio-cultural perspectives, thus, ignoring the structural and theoretical dimensions that will guide compositional and performance trajectory. Hence, we conclude that the popular music courses taught in the three music departments are not practically beneficial to the popular music-oriented student after graduating, consequently affecting the Ghanaian music industry. We, therefore, recommend that Ghanaian academia create a pathway programme in popular music with more industry-based popular music courses with the academic structural and theoretical approach to meet the socio-cultural and socio-economic needs of the students and the country. This study is expected to add to the ongoing discourse in popular music education.

Keywords: Course manual, Ghanaian universities, music departments, music industry, popular music

DOI: 10.7176/JEP/13-17-01

Publication date: June 30th 2022

1. Introduction

The term *popular music* has recently increased in focus in music scholarship; however, scholars are still grappling with its definition because of its complexity. Many scholars define popular music based on the goals they hope to achieve, which is quite understandable and also supports the above assertion. Consequently, there is no generally accepted definition of popular music. Previous studies (Clauhs et al., 2020; Middleton & Manuel, 2001; Ojukwu et al., 2016; Shonekan, 2012; Tagg, 1982; Taylor, 1997) have attempted to define popular music by its inherent mass production, consumption, and economic viability. Nonetheless, this definition usually emphasises the music's appeal to the masses rather than the artistic creation. Notice that we are not attempting to contribute to any more ambitious generalised definition of the term *popular music*, thus concluding to having a wider appeal because that could lead to unfruitful debates and contradictions. However, we will deduce what other scholars have defined as popular music concerning popular culture, social control, and commercialisation. This study looks at popular music as music distinct from art and traditional/folk music.

Popular music is inarguably the most produced and consumed music genre in Ghana and globally. Supporting the above statement, Emielu (2013) postulated that the dominant music in modern industrialised and urbanised societies is *popular music*. Sunday-Kanu (2016), in a similar manner, contended that popular music is the most listened to in the categories of music in Africa and contemporary society and sometimes in rural environments; even so, the issues surrounding incorporating popular music studies in academic institutions have continued. Many scholars have discussed the importance of teaching popular music in higher education (Bennett, 2017; Cutietta, 1991, 2004; Green, 2002; Woody, 2007). However, while some academic institutions have prioritised popular music studies the same way as art and traditional music in their music programmes, others, too, are reluctant (Larson, 2019).

Interestingly, some academic institutions only accept the relevance of popular music studies because it is the preference of most of their students and, as a result, have limited space for its study in their music programme. Therefore, it is quite surprising that despite the interdisciplinarity of popular music, its acceptance and inclusion in the *ivory tower* are always met with resistance. However, according to Sunday-Kanu (2016), the study of popular music is inching into classroom music learning, which has absorbed popular musicians into school music while maintaining their life careers and genres of music. Sunday-Kanu further argued that the perception of popular music as *fun music* has changed and created jobs both for individual empowerment and

nation-building. Hence, it is not surprising that many scholars have advocated studying popular music in academic institutions (Adams, 2019; Bates, 2013; Coffie, 2019; Cohen, 1993; Collins, 2011; Ekong & Udoh, 2017; Flory, 2020; Frith, 1982; Larson, 2019; Tagg, 2011; Vordzorgbe, 2009; Wright et al., 2020).

Popular music permeates every society's socio-cultural, religious, political, and economic life. Consequently, the inevitable fame and popularity of popular music have led to the introduction of popular music programmes in many academic institutions across the globe. However, Ghanaian universities are restricted to only performance and peripheral studies hinged on historical and socio-cultural perspectives of popular music (Otchere, 2017). Music Departments of Ghanaian universities have produced and continue to produce graduates over the years to contribute to Ghana's socio-economic development. For instance, popular music was first introduced in Ghanaian universities' music departments as an academic study nearly three decades ago. The universities engaged some prominent Ghanaian popular musicians such as Kwaa Mensah (University of Cape Coast), TO Jazz, Ebo Taylor (University of Ghana) and Bob Pinodo (University of Education, Winneba) at some point in time. This engagement was to help entrench the study of popular music. We want to emphasise that there used to be a perception that there is no *room* for popular music in the Ghanaian universities' music programmes. Not surprisingly, the presence of these iconic popular musicians at the various universities also attracted popular music-oriented students, refuting the above perception.

Despite introducing popular music in Ghana's academic institutions for almost three decades, the impact on the music industry is *significantly inconsequential*. It is becoming a challenge for Ghanaian universities' music departments to boast of significant contributions in human resources to the music industry over the past two decades. One may be tempted to mention Ghanaian highlife musicians Bessa Simons and gospel musician Michael Oware Sekyi, known as *OJ*, as examples of academia's contributions to Ghana's popular music industry. The musicians mentioned above hold a Diploma in Music from the erstwhile National Academy of Music (NAM) and the University of Ghana. While the above statement may be true to some extent, an investigation into their academic life suggests otherwise. For instance, Bessa Simons enrolled at the National Academy of Music, now the Department of Music Education at the University of Education, Winneba, in 1980. Popular music studies were non-existent in the music programme in the then academy, dominated by Western art and African traditional music. This situation happened four decades ago.

Similarly, but interestingly, *OJ*, who is much younger, enrolled in the Department of Music of the University of Ghana in 2003; his enrollment coincided with the release of his debut album, *Adom ne ɔdo* (Grace and Love), which ultimately brought him to national prominence. In *OJ*'s case, popular music was a taught course; however, it was only the history of African popular music. According to *OJ*, he would have loved to pursue a Bachelor of Music degree after the diploma programme. However, he was discouraged by the music department's art and traditional music hegemony, which usually served very little interest to the popular music-oriented student. *OJ*'s sentiment is shared by Larson (2019) that popular music-oriented students enrol in the hope of expanding, enhancing or fine-tuning their knowledge acquisition through more formal learning methods. Nonetheless, the students are taught to write retrograde inversions of twelve-tone rows or how to improvise over *Giant Steps* at 160 bpm instead of materials relevant to contemporary popular music.

In 2014, one of the authors made a seminar presentation at the Music Department of the University of Ghana on the topic: *Highlife Composition and Performance Workshop: A Proposed Taught Course*. This course was proposed because composing and performing in the conventional highlife style was becoming a challenge to music students. Highlife is Ghana's first and foremost important homegrown popular music for those unfamiliar with it and hearing it for the first time. Highlife is essential to Ghanaians as the twelve-bar blues is to the Americans (Coffie, 2020c; Collins, 2018). Nevertheless, surprisingly, the faculty members did not see the relevance of such a course in that it should instead be incorporated into music composition. Incorporating it into music composition is not bad; however, the lecturers in charge of the music composition course are art music composers with no practical and theoretical knowledge of popular music. Hence, music composition is always viewed from the perspective of Western art music.

In a related scenario in 2020, one of the other authors also experienced a similar rebuttal from some colleagues during a seminar at the University of Education, Winneba, when he presented *Struggling for Survival – Ghana's Jazz Story*. As a result, the author recommended studying popular music in the Music Department from a structural and theoretical standpoint in the presentation. This recommendation was towards a standardised and academic approach to composing popular music and its consequent performance ideals to cater for popular music-oriented students, subsequently enhancing its standards in Ghanaian society. Nevertheless, despite this needless gulf, it seems strange that some faculty colleagues do not see the need to seal this lacuna that will merge the needs of society and academia to create that symbiotic link between academia and society and, for that matter, the popular music industry.

To further pry into the quest of socio-economic relevance of popular music courses taught in Ghanaian universities, the following posers can guide our thoughts: Can the Ghanaian academia boast of fully impacting the musicians above as its contribution to Ghana's music industry? Are Ghanaian university music departments

fulfilling and meeting the career needs of all their students? Music is an art of diverse shades, styles and types. In contrast, some musicians are experts in traditional and folk; others may have their musical career practices skewed or tilted towards popular music, art music, or any of the above, two or all three categories. Suppose the above statement is true, a standard and reality; in that case, it should guide and inform the musical training in Ghana's universities to cater for society's needs for a balance. Whereas some students who enrol in the university music programme have a strong inclination toward traditional music, others may want to be popular music or art/classical music practitioners based on their orientation. Larson (2019) averred that the educational framework prioritising Western classical over popular music does a disservice to popular music-oriented students. The students, who may be talented, intelligent, intuitive, and ambitious, play the *wrong* kind of music. Undoubtedly, some music practitioners can be very versatile in two or three music categories. However, does the music course content adequately satisfy all three main categories? The negative answer to this question has been premised on this study.

2. Literature Review

2.1 *The Hegemony of Western Art Music Over Popular Music in the Academic Institutions*

It is truisitic that there is a growing gap between the environment in which students are trained and the economic opportunities for musicians. Popular music embodies popular cultures, which also interests the youth; however, surprisingly, it has been severely neglected on the list of programmes of some music faculties. This view is supported by Ekong and Udoh (2017) that the Nigerian music scene is characterised by three basic practices: traditional, popular and art music. However, popular music dominates the other two. Paradoxically, the curricula of some faculties with traditional and art music are prominently represented, with popular music as an area of study of particular importance. Wright et al. (2020) contended that popular music had become a viable area of interest within musicology. However, popular music studies within ethnomusicology, musicology, and music theory are at a low ebb because many academic programmes consider them minor.

Clauhs et al. (2020) also noted the ongoing concerns about the apparent discrepancy between school music and music as it exists outside the school. They also argued that while there are good reasons to keep long-standing traditions in school music, young people have access to many styles, genres, and approaches to learning music through digital streaming and online content. Nonetheless, popular music remains the most popular of all musical styles heard, shared, emulated and created by amateur and professional musicians alike. Coffman (2021) interestingly postulated that career opportunities for musicians trained in classical and jazz continue to decline, which also requires a shift in undergraduate music teaching to examine the role music programmes play in bridging the gap between what they teach and what students require on the field. Coffman acknowledged that the proliferation of tertiary popular music programmes had highlighted the benefits of creativity-oriented practices, with technologies known to facilitate such practices. However, the hegemony of classical and jazz music in colleges due to the band-orchestra-choir structure makes the teaching and ensembles of popular music a difficult choice for school authorities. Moreover, music educators are aware of the supply and demand problem, severely disadvantaging musicians with strict classical training and their jazz colleagues for meaningful employment. As a result, most schools still only offer their students classical and jazz music to the detriment of popular music, which is consumed globally and more exposed to students, as Larson (2019) informed.

Many scholars have recently discussed the hegemony of art music over popular music (Aksoy, 2020; Cournane, 2019; Gay, 2015; Vasil et al., 2019). The neglect of popular music in African universities, which is the interest of the youth and also embodies popular cultures, has been criticised by music scholars such as Adams (2019), Coffie (2019), Collins (2011), Ekong and Udoh (2017), and Vordzorgbe (2009). Interestingly, in Ghana, for instance, there is a growing body of literature on Ghanaian popular music and highlife music in particular in recent times (Aidoo, 2014; Boahen, 2015; Coffie, 2012, 2018, 2019, 2020c, 2020a, 2020b; Coffie et al., 2020; Collins, 1994, 1996, 2005, 2006, 2016, 2018; Kudonu, 2012; Kudonu et al., 2021; Marfo, 2016; Owusu-Poku, 2021; Yamson, 2016). It is worth stating that the above studies cover diverse areas of Ghanaian popular music scholarship, such as social history, biographical studies of notable composers, performers and bands, and analytical studies of significant works. Recent additions to Ghanaian popular music literature include *highlife guitar and keyboard accompanying styles* and *live sound and audio recording practices* (Acquah et al., 2021; Coffie et al., 2022; Gyebi-Tweneboah et al., 2022; Owusu-Poku, 2021). One may think that the increase in popular music literature will also be relevant to popular music in Ghanaian academia. However, the Ghanaian music education practices appear to be unresponsive to learners' socio-cultural and socio-economic needs.

Barton and Riddle (2021) postulate that preferring some styles over others may disadvantage learners who have no lived experience or frame of reference in these dominant styles. Therefore, the need to review the place of popular music within the undergraduate music programme of three public universities' music departments in Ghana (UG, UEW, UCC) and also assess the socio-economic relevance of the popular music courses taught in the three music departments to the Ghanaian music industry, and make recommendations as an attempt of breaking the *myth of the ivory tower*.

3. Method

In this study, we employed content analysis, one of the qualitative research methods. According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p. 1278), content analysis is *a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns*. Data for this study were collected through document review and observation. First, we collected the undergraduate course manual, course outline and instructional materials for practical areas of the Ghanaian music departments under study (UG, UEW, UCC). These universities' music departments were purposely selected for this study because they are the only fully-fledged music departments in Ghana offering undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. In addition, the three departments have been in existence over the past four decades. We then reviewed the course manual to find the place of popular music in the undergraduate music programme of the music departments under study. We also collected the course outlines of the popular music courses in the undergraduate music programme and observed how they are taught. We then used content analysis to assess the popular music courses to Ghana's music industry and socio-economic relevance. We subsequently made recommendations to enhance and entrench the study of popular music in Ghana's public universities' music departments under study.

4. Presentation of Findings

Table 1: Department of Music, University of Ghana (UG) – Undergraduate Course Manual.

S/N	Course Code	Course Title	Year
1.	MUSC 131	Introduction to Music	1
2.	MUSC 133	Practicals and Ensemble I	1
3.	MUSC 132	Introduction to harmony and Part-Writing	1
4.	MUSC 134	Practicals and Ensemble II	1
5.	MUSC 231	Harmony and Counterpoint I	2
6.	MUSC 233	Practical and Ensemble III	2
7.	MUSC 235	Musicianship I	2
8.	MUSC 232	Harmony and Counterpoint II	2
9.	MUSC 234	Practical and Ensemble IV	2
10.	MUSC 236	Musicianship II	2
11.	MUSC 335	History of Music of the Baroque and Classical Periods	3
12.	MUSC 337	Contemporary Music of Ghana	3
13.	MUSC 355	Music in African Cultures	3
14.	MUSC 331	Harmony and Counterpoint III	3
15.	MUSC 333	Practical and Ensemble V	3
16.	MUSC 339	The Orchestra and Orchestral Techniques	3
17.	MUSC 341	Music of West and Central Africa	3
18.	MUSC 343	Introduction to Music Studio	3
19.	MUSC 345	Musical Cultures of the World	3
20.	MUSC 347	Ghanaian Popular Music	3
21.	MUSC 349	Musical Form and Analysis I	3
22.	MUSC 351	Research Methods	3
23.	MUSC 336	History of Music of the Romantic Period	3
24.	MUSC 338	Traditional Music in Ghana	3
25.	MUSC 332	Harmony and Counterpoint IV	3
26.	MUSC 334	Practicals and Ensemble IV	3
27.	MUSC 342	Orchestration I	3
28.	MUSC 344	Music of Southern Africa	3
29.	MUSC 346	Process of Art	3
30.	MUSC 348	African Popular Music	3
31.	MUSC 352	Composition I	3
32.	MUSC 430	Long Essay/Composition/Recital	4
33.	MUSC 437	Musical Traditions of the African Diaspora	4
34.	MUSC 431	Harmony and Counterpoint V	4
35.	MUSC 433	Practicals and Ensemble	4
36.	MUSC 435	Form and Analysis II	4
37.	MUSC 439	Music Studio	4
38.	MUSC 441	Choral Repertoire and Directing	4
39.	MUSC 443	Orchestration	4
40.	MUSC 445	Composition II	4

S/N	Course Code	Course Title	Year
41.	MUSC 430	Long Essay/Composition/Recital	4
42.	MUSC 442	Introduction to Musicology	4
43.	MUSC 432	Harmony and Counterpoint VI	4
44.	MUSC 434	Practicals and Ensemble	4
45.	MUSC 436	Music of East Africa	4
46.	MUSC 438	Music of North Africa	4
47.	MUSC 444	History of Music of the Twentieth Century	4

Table 2: Department of Music Education, University of Education, Winneba, (UEW) – Undergraduate Course Manual.

S/N	Course Code	Course Title	Year
1.	BMU 113	Musicianship and Ensemble I	1
2.	BMU 117	Rudiments and Theory of Music I	1
3.	BMU 118	Music Appreciation	1
4.	BMU 119	Performance Practice in Ghanaian Traditional Music	1
5.	BMU 123	Musicianship & Ensemble II	1
6.	BMU 126	Introduction To Western Music Literature	1
7.	BMU 127	Rudiments and Theory of Music II	1
8.	BMU 128	Introduction to Music Technology	1
9.	BMU 232	Musicianship and Ensemble III	2
10.	BMU 237	Rudiments and Theory of Music III	2
11.	BMU 238	Basics in Sound Engineering	2
12.	BMU 239	Instrumental Ensembles	2
13.	BMU 234	Art Music in Ghana	2
14.	BMU 236	Popular Music in Ghana	2
15.	BMU 242	Musical Aesthetics and Criticism	2
16.	BMU 243A	Musicianship& Ensemble IV	2
17.	BMU 247	Rudiments and Theory of Music IV	2
18.	BMU 247A	Choral Directing	2
19.	BMU 248	Introduction to Psychology of Music	2
20.	BMU 249A	A study of Ghanaian Popular Musicians	2
21.	BMU 249B	Ghanaian Art Music Composers	2
22.	BMU 353A	Musicianship & Ensemble V	3
23.	BMU 357	Compositional Techniques	3
24.	BMU 358A	Introduction to Musical Analysis	3
25.	BMU 359A	Indigenous Ghanaian Music and Dance	3
26.	BMU 359B	Popular Band Management	3
27.	BMU 351	Research Methods	3
28.	BMU 363A	Musicianship& Ensemble VI	3
29.	BMU 365	Film Music	3
30.	BMU 366	Music of the Baroque and Classical Eras	3
31.	BMU 367	Composition Project	3
32.	BMU 368	Music and Mass Media	3
33.	BMU 369	Introduction to Musicology	3
34.	BMU 471A	Music of the Romantic and 20 th Century Eras	4
35.	BMU 472A	Musicianship& Ensemble VII	4
36.	BMU 473A	Instrumental Performance I	4
37.	BMU 475A	Introduction to Sociology of Music	4
38.	BMU 478	Fundamentals of Music Therapy	4
39.	BMU 476A	Popular Music in Africa	4
40.	BMU 476B	Choral Music in Africa	4
41.	BMU 482A	Instrumental Performance II	4
42.	BMU 482B	Musicianship and Ensemble VIII	4
43.	BMU 483	Introduction to Philosophy of Music	4
44.	BMU 486	The Music Industry	4
45.	BMU 481	Research Project	4

Table 3: Department of Music & Dance, University of Cape Coast (UCC) – Undergraduate Course Manual

S/N	Course Code	Course Title	Year
1.	DAN 111	Introduction to Dance Technique	1
2.	MUD 111	Rudiment of Music	1
3.	MUD 113	Introduction to Performance Studies	1
4.	DAN 112	Introduction to African Dance	1
5.	MUD 112	Introduction to Music Theory	1
6.	MUD 114	Performance Studies	1
7.	DAN 221	Music, Dance and Society	2
8.	MUD 221	Melody Writing	2
9.	MUD 223	Intermediate Performance Studies	2
10.	DAN 222	Introduction to Research in Music and Dance	2
11.	MUD 222	Elementary Harmony	2
12.	MUD 224	Advanced Performance Studies	2
13.	DAN 327	Ghanaian Traditional Dances Practical	3
14.	MUD 321	Form and Structure in African Music	3
15.	MUD 322	Music in Contemporary African Societies	3
16.	MUD 323	Applied Music and Musicianship	3
17.	MUD 324	Intermediate Applied Music and Musicianship	3
18.	MUD 325	Music Theory and Analysis	3
19.	DAN 326	Production Participation: African Dance Drama Practical	3
20.	MUD 326	Intermediate Music Theory and Analysis	3
21.	MUD 327	Music Composition	3
22.	MUD 328	Intermediate Music Composition	3
23.	MUD 329	History of Art Music – c. 500–800	3
24.	MUD 330	History of Art Music – c. 1800–Present	3
25.	MUD 336	History of African Popular Music	3
26.	MUD 399	Research Methods	3
27.	MUD 331	History of Film Music	3
28.	MUD 332	Film Music Analysis	3
29.	MUD 333	Computer-Based Music Notation	3
30.	MUD 334	Music Technology	3
31.	MUD 335	Musical Acoustics	3
32.	MUD 410	Advanced Public Performance and Musicianship Practical	4
33.	MUD 421	Music Business	4
34.	MUD 423	Advanced Music Theory and Analysis	4
35.	MUD 425	Advanced Music Composition	4
36.	MUD 427	Music Journalism	4
37.	MUD 429	Research Seminar in Music	4
38.	MUD 430	Psychology of Music	4
39.	MUD 431	Film Music Composition	4
40.	MUD 403	Public Performance and Musicianship Practical	4
41.	MUD 422	Advanced Music Business	4
42.	MUD 424	Seminar in Music Education	4
43.	MUD 425	Advanced Music Composition (Practical)	4
44.	MUD 426	Perspectives in Church Music	4
45.	MUD 428	The History of Jazz	4
46.	MUD 432	Stage Craft	4
47.	MUD 433	Advanced Music Technology	4
48.	MUD 435	Music in the African Diaspora	4
49.	MUD 499	Project Work	4

Table 4: Summary of Undergraduate Music Courses in the three universities (UG, UEW, UCC)

Institution	Total Number of Music Courses	Total Number of Popular Music Courses
University of Ghana	47	3
University of Education, Winneba	45	4
University of Cape Coast	49	1

Considering the undergraduate music programme of the three public universities in Ghana (UG, UEW, and UCC), we have classified the music courses into five main categories as follows:

- A. Music Theory courses (All that involve notation-viz; scales, chords, melody writing, aural skills and musicianship, composition, orchestration etc.)
- B. Music History and Sociology (includes history, role and functions of musical genres in society, performance practice of musical genres, society's perspective of music, biographies of composers, performers and patrons etc.)
- C. Music Performance (musical repertory for individual musical instruments and ensembles)
- D. Music Technology (notation and recording software, Finale, Cubase etc.)
- E. Liberal Studies in music (music education and pedagogical courses, philosophy, sociology, psychology and aesthetics of music)

Considering the findings in tables 1,2,3 and 4 above, we are not attempting to review and correct or amend what is already in existence. However, we attempt to fill a yawning gap that will make the undergraduate course content more substantial and extended in the spectrum for the socio-economic benefit of Ghanaian society. Also, for the gamut of the study, we focused on categories A and C for the discussion. Notice that the music courses are highlighted and italicised in tables 1–3.

5. Discussions

There is an ongoing debate on course content, pedagogic approaches, and the suitability of popular culture for serious study within the academy, as observed by (Moir & Medbøe, 2015). One sees a broad basis for studying popular music in Ghanaian universities, looking at the existing course content in the three universities. The course introduces the main approaches in popular music studies from scholarship or musicological perspectives. The course takes a point of departure from theoretical perspectives as both the social sciences and the humanities. Specific topics explored and discussed include the music industry; readings of popular music texts concerning race, class, age and gender; music video and popular music in film; ethnographic and historical approaches; exploring popular music genres in Ghana and Africa, world music and globalisation. There is no aspect in the content dealing with popular music composition, analysis and performance. The popular music course content is hinged on socio-ethno and musicological perspectives. In this regard, a rhetorical poser comes to mind; *If music is not produced and consumed as a product, where will scholars get content for intellectual discourses?* That is not to say that only formally trained composers have the artistry or creative shrewdness to compose. As mentioned, students who enrol in the music programme have diverse orientations and ambitions. It is common knowledge that many students in the three music departments have the ambition to become popular musicians, either secular or gospel artists. However, their needs are just virtually or nearly met.

Looking at the above categorisation of the undergraduate courses, it is evident that contents in categories A and C cater to the production, performance, and consumption of all musical genres and types, including popular music. Interestingly, there are many popular music types in Ghana: *highlife*, *burger highlife*, *osoode*, *kwaw*, *siky* and *hiplife*, among others. However, can we ask if the repertory of these popular music types is documented or, to be precise, notated? One reason is that many of the popular musicians in Ghana, including the gospel artists, are aural practitioners, both composers and performers. Popular music history informs us that the 19th and early 20th centuries saw the publishing of sheet popular music by the Tin Pan Alley in New York. To date, most standard popular music genres and jazz in Europe and America are documented or notated. Some universities and colleges offer programmes for students majoring in popular music, jazz composition and performance.

5.1 Content of Category 'A' in Ghanaian Universities

The content of the above category clearly defined in the various course outlines is fashioned or crafted along with Western art music standpoints. A careful peruse points to and emphasises art music. One cannot rule out pitch, scales, chords, chord nomenclature, harmonic theories and rules, texture, form, compositional techniques based on themes and motifs, diminution, augmentation, instrumentation, orchestration, among others, are not peculiar to only art music. Popular and traditional music can also be analysed with these elements and structures. Based on the above content, one can argue that the popular music-oriented and ambitious student should not have a problem composing or producing his or her music comfortably with the above elements. However, one can also argue that popular music, like any art music form, has a standard with a set of rubrics that defines and identifies its structure. For example, looking at *sonata* form, one cannot do without exposition, development and

recapitulation, and everything within these three sections cannot be glossed over or flouted. Based on these structures and standards that African and Ghanaian art music composers like NZ. Nayo and Fela Sowande were able to write symphonies and suites that were accepted internationally. Additionally, in writing or composing a *march*, one cannot gloss over the usual three *strains*, the sections with well-defined melodies, and the contrasting section called a *trio*. An *aria*, *recitative*, *minuet* and *trio*, among others, have their structures and how they should be written and performed.

From this perspective, popular music also has its standards and structure, for that matter. The commonest is the *intro-verse-chorus-verse*, *chorus-bridge-chorus-outro*. The Atlanta Institute of Music and Media also structures a standard popular or hit song just as stated above but with a bit of variation: *intro-first verse-pre-chorus-chorus-rinse and repeat, bridge-outro*. The import of this study brings to the fore that pop music also has a structure and a standard. From our observations and audits during composition lessons or classes, requirements and examples are mostly fashioned around hymn tunes, fugue, other contrapuntal styles for mixed voices, solo aria, vocal duet, solo instrument and accompaniment, or writing for a chamber ensemble; purely Western or African instruments or a combination of both.

Consequently, the popular music-oriented and ambitious student has no freedom to harness his/her true artistry and musicality; he/she is forced to write the hymn tune. However, there comes a window of relief and artistic catharsis for this determined popular music-oriented student. This period in his academic life is when they are to compose original music as part of the requirement for the award of the degree or diploma in music; it is only during this period that the popular music student-musician is free to express him/herself. Nevertheless, one would ask how this student-musician writes his music? Does he or she know the standard structure of writing popular music? Do the lecturer-supervisors who supervise these compositions appreciate the structures of popular music composition and analysis? It is truistic that no Ghanaian university has ever mounted a music programme in popular or jazz music studies. Nevertheless, over the years, music lecturers or musicians in academia have also gone through the same art music-skewed training.

5.2 Content of Category 'C' in Ghanaian Universities - principal and minor instrument repertory (Applied)

Through observation (reviewing and listening to the scores and repertory), we realised that the repertory is predominantly Western and Ghanaian/African contemporary art music in the three departments, which are purposely or originally composed or an arrangement of folk or traditional tunes for the diverse instruments available in the departments. Students pursuing the undergraduate programme, for instance, in UEW, are required to specialise in at least two (Applied) instruments, one taken as a principal and the other minor, with the keyboard or piano being a constant. If the piano is a student's principal instrument, he/she must take another instrument as a minor. If one's principal instrument is (trumpet, violin, classical guitar, bass, or African/Ghanaian musical instruments), the minor instrument is compulsorily the keyboard.

In contrast to UEW, students must take only one applied instrument in UG and UCC; also, the piano is not constant. Conversely, the terrain of UCC has lately unravelled another interesting content of *musicianship* that hinges solely on the keyboard, thus doing away with *Aural* and *Sight-singing* skills. This course is designed to equip the student-musician to play and accompany any song or melody strictly by ear but structured on primary and secondary chords and beyond these; hence, moving into secondary dominants, sixth chords, and others on the individual ability of students. According to the lecturer in charge, basic accompaniment styles like *alberti* bass and block chord accompaniment are introduced to the students who are not only to learn this skill to accompany others but as a requirement to play and accompany yourself for assessment. As it were, this musicianship course at UCC also gives the pop music-oriented student creative expression to only nibble at his/her potential, which is still marginal because repertory is not strictly popular music.

5.3 Available musical instruments

The musical instruments include voice (soprano, alto, tenor, baritone, bass), orchestral strings (violin, viola, cello and double bass), woodwinds: reeds (clarinets, all saxophones, oboe; not consistent over the years), brass (trumpet, cornet, euphonium, trombone, tuba, French horn, sousaphone), *atenteben* (bamboo flute) and guitars (classical and bass). Interestingly, Western percussion instruments have also not been given serious consideration over the other melodic instruments; however, percussions feature in ensemble performances in the departments. Traditional Ghanaian drums and *gyil* (the Ghanaian version of the balafon) are usually the alternatives.

5.4 Repertory of Applied (Major Areas – musical instruments and voice)

Regarding the theory courses reviewed above in the category 'A', it is quite apparent, and it may be surprising to have popular music content featured in the aspect under consideration. Voice repertory covers old English sea shanties and Stephen Foster songs like *Cockles and mussels*, *Beautiful Dreamer*, and *Old folks at Home*, among others upgraded to German *lieder* of Schubert, Brahms (*Night and dreams*, *To music*, *Lullaby Andie tauben*

among other solo pieces further spanning solos from cantatas, oratorios, operas and other standard Western vocal solos including Bach's *Jesu Joy*, Handel's *Arm arm Ye brave*, Mozart's *Cosi fan Tutte*, Gounod's *O Divine Redeemer* and a horde of other pieces by the great masters.

The repertory for the other orchestral instruments is no departure from the voice. For example, trumpet pieces include simple pieces and voluntaries, suites to movements from trumpet concertos - Haydn's famous *Trumpet Concerto in C major*, among other classical trumpet standards. Orchestral strings repertory also holds fast to the classical/art norm with pieces from the Baroque suites, Corelli pieces for violin, German lieder and other lyrical pieces arranged for individual string instruments. So, for example, is Schumann's *Traumerei* and Mendelsohns' *Spring Song* originally romantic miniatures for piano but arranged for the 'cello. The case of the woodwinds and the reed family of instruments is also not different. Typical art/classical repertory is constantly core, ranging from simple pieces to clarinet concertos.

Guitars are no exception. The concentration is on the classical style, which goes with a classical repertory, including Bach's suites and pieces originally written for classical guitar and some tunes re-written for the classical guitar and the bass guitar. Occasionally, popular songs like Paul McCartney's *Yesterday*, ABBA's *Lay all your love on me*, and others unintentionally make their way into the repertory. The keyboard skills and piano repertoire are also classical; short piano pieces like movements from suites like minuets, sarabande, gavottes, preludes and fugues, movements from sonatas, and complete sequences of sonatas.

5.5 African/Ghanaian art music

To complement the strict Western art/classical repertory is the addition of pieces of music composed by Ghanaian and other African art music composers. This repertory is available for all the instruments mentioned above. Some examples are E. Amu's *3 Solo Pieces for voice and piano*, J.H. Nketia's *African songs for voice and piano*, N.Z. Nayo's *Husago Theme* for 'cello, J.H. Nketia's *African Pianism* collection of short pieces written for the piano with Ghanaian/African idioms.

5.6 Ensembles and their repertory

The music departments have various performing ensembles; the winds band, the string ensemble, the choral ensemble, the traditional African music and dance ensemble and the pop band. The winds band's repertory is also classical/art music to the core. It includes Sousa marches, hymns, and other repertoires rearranged with or without percussion and highlife and other pop genres like rhumba tunes like *La Paloma* and Makeba's *Malaika*. The repertoire of the orchestral strings' ensemble is also art/classical to the core, covering works by Purcell, Bach, Handel, Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, Schubert, among others. The string ensemble repertory includes African/Ghanaian contemporary art music by J.H. Nketia, E. Amu, and H. Acquaaah. As usual, there is an occasional *pop tease* peeping among the repertory of the string ensemble. Also, string arrangements of popular songs like *Can't help falling in love* by Creatore and Weiss for Presley, other Western popular songs and Ghanaian *highlife* tunes are arranged for the string orchestra.

7. Conclusion

In this study, we have examined the place of popular music within the undergraduate music programmes of three public universities' music departments in Ghana. However, considering the course structure, content and approach of the music departments, it is evident that the study of popular music is still at the embryonic stage, despite the introduction of popular music studies in the departments nearly three decades ago. Furthermore, the study of popular music in the three music departments is skewed towards historical and socio-cultural perspectives. Thus, ignoring the structural and theoretical dimensions that will guide compositional and performance trajectory as treasured and seen in art and traditional/folk music instruction in the three public universities. Besides, the popular music courses are not structured progressively and systematically. Furthermore, the limited number of progressive and systematic popular music courses in the music departments compared to art music tends to treat popular music as complementary and supplementary to academic study rather than integral.

Meanwhile, popular music has become a significant study area in some jurisdictions, just like Western art and jazz music. Therefore, we conclude that the subtle and marginal attention given to popular music in Ghanaian academia, usually restricted to only performance and peripheral studies hinged on historical and socio-cultural perspectives, is not beneficial to the popular music-oriented student and its consequent popular music production and practice in Ghana. This situation, if not amended, could eventually discourage potential popular music-oriented students from pursuing higher education.

8. Recommendations

We want to emphasise that popular music continues to be the most consumed music globally and should not be taken for granted. Hence, popular music must be given the academic structural and theoretical approach in

Ghanaian universities' music departments. However, we are also not oblivious that popular music-oriented instructors are very few in the three music departments. As a result, it is usual to find music lecturers or professors with no experience and orientation in popular music giving students structural and analytical popular music instruction. To ameliorate the above situation, the music departments should engage with industry players to hold performances and masterclasses to train pop-oriented students alongside the professors who will, through these interactions, gain insight into structuring a popular music course design with time. In order to complement the above approach, the international relations offices of the universities in focus should, as a matter of utmost concern, arrange to engage the services of some experts in popular music from some foreign universities that run popular music programmes. These professors, lecturers, or experts in popular music could be contracted for some time; their presence can help streamline the initial effort mentioned above to create Ghanaian popular music departments in the universities in focus. At the pre-tertiary level (basic and high schools), we should be reminded that pupils and students come in contact with popular music, especially at this age of electronic and information technology; the initial musical orientation of the developing child includes popular music. Pupils and students at the basic and high schools become acquainted with popular music because the riffs are catchy and easy to relate to and sing. Will it not be appropriate and easy to use familiar popular music or its *riff* to illustrate or teach any structural concepts in music? Therefore, we recommend that Ghanaian academia create a pathway programme in popular music with more industry-based popular music courses to meet the socio-cultural and socio-economic needs of the students and the country. Undoubtedly, these programmes would help bridge the knowledge and the yawning gap between academia and industry, augment the music education curriculum at the pre-tertiary levels and enrich basic and high school music content with that *pop tinge*. Finally, this study, for clarity, based on its goals and scope, may have excluded other potential digressions. Thus, future research should explore the stakeholders' perspectives, such as students, lecturers, instructors, heads of departments and deans of the institutions. Future research should also expand and explore whether our findings are generalisable to private universities in Ghana.

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