

‘Dance Your Sorrow Away!’: Spirituality, Community and Wellbeing in Christ Apostolic Church, Dublin¹

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Abstract: Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) is a Pentecostal and African Initiated Church that emerged from the Yoruba *Aládùrà* movement of early twentieth-century Nigeria. In this article I unpack the concept of ‘dancing away sorrow’, one of the distinctive rituals that members of CAC Dublin have brought with them from Nigeria. I explore members’ beliefs about wellbeing and its links with spirituality and community, and examine how music and dance help to facilitate connections with God and fellow worshippers. While the practice offers positive benefits to first generation migrants, it highlights the dissonance perceived by the second generation between Yoruba and Irish culture.

Keywords: dance, wellbeing, migration, Yoruba, Christ Apostolic Church (CAC)

Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) is a Pentecostal and African Initiated Church (AIC) that emerged from the Yoruba *Aládùrà* (meaning ‘people who pray’) movement of early twentieth-century Nigeria. In an age of increased migration, many AICs are being established in Europe and North America. Although an aspiration for ‘reverse mission’ (to evangelise indigenes of the host culture) is often articulated by members of such churches, patterns of worship utilised in the countries of origin tend to be replicated in order to meet the needs of African Christian migrants (Adedibu, 2013; Ukah, 2009; Asaju, 2008; Gerloff, 2008; Hock, 2008; Kalu, 2008, pp. 271-291; Ugba, 2006; Adogame, 2000). The first CAC congregation was established in

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Ireland approximately sixteen years ago, and the Vineyard of Comfort zone² now has six assemblies (Dublin, Cavan, Drogheda, Dundalk, Midleton and Galway).³ The Dublin headquarters, the congregation which forms the case study for this article, is constituted by a majority (approximately 95%) Yoruba membership and has an average weekly attendance of about 150-200. I carried out ethnographic fieldwork there over a four-month period in 2012 and returned at the end of 2013 to complete a year-long study. I conducted fieldwork through participant-observation (as a member of the congregation) and interviews with church leaders, congregants, musicians, singers, adults and youth. I had not attended this church prior to commencing fieldwork, and as a British Caucasian I was a cultural outsider. My identity as a Pentecostal Christian, however, aided my acceptance within the community, helping to establish trust and elicit openness from interview participants.

Dance is a central feature of worship in CAC Dublin and accompanies the praise and worship, peace offerings, thanksgiving and testimonies, tithes and offerings, monthly thanksgivings, and periodic special thanksgivings. The monthly thanksgivings in particular, as illustrated in Figure 1, provide an extended time for processional singing and dancing. These special times of thanksgiving are usually introduced with the phrase, 'Dance your sorrow away!' This same exhortation, or a close variant of it, was used by the majority of interview participants in response to questions about the role of dancing in CAC. In this article I will explore the practice of 'dancing away sorrow' in CAC Dublin, drawing on interview responses and ethnographic observations. I will investigate members' beliefs about wellbeing and its links with spirituality and community, as these inform the practice of 'dancing away sorrow'. I will examine how music and dance help to facilitate connections with God and fellow worshippers, thereby aiding wellbeing. I will also consider 'dancing away sorrow' in relation to the migrant setting: while the practice offers positive benefits to first generation members, it highlights the dissonance perceived by the second generation between their parents' culture and that of the wider Irish society in which they are growing up.

² A zone is part of the organisational structure of CAC. An assembly (or congregation) is the smallest unit in the structure. Up to 35 assemblies (usually in the same geographic location) form a district, and up to 20 districts form a district coordination council (DCC). A zone is a lower type of DCC, formed when there are not enough districts to warrant a DCC (see, http://www.cacworldwideonline.org/cac_structure.html). The Vineyard of Comfort zone is led by its founder, Prophet S.K Abiara, and has its international headquarters in Ibadan, Nigeria.

³ CAC have another five assemblies in Ireland which come under the CAC Outreach zone, and there are a further six assemblies that broke away from CAC to form independent churches.



Figure 1: Congregants dancing in the monthly thanksgiving procession (still from author's fieldwork video, September 7, 2014).

The Spiritual Element of Dance

Many interview participants contrasted dancing in church with dancing in social settings such as pubs and nightclubs. The latter was mostly associated with the consumption of alcohol as an attempt to feel happy, and was judged to be only temporarily effective – when the alcohol wears off, the problem remains. Dancing in church, on the other hand, is considered a more successful means of alleviating sorrow. Evangelist Stephen Olasupo expressed this distinction between the social and sacred settings when he told me that dancing outside church is ‘for fun’ and ‘not for dancing away the sorrow’ (Evangelist Stephen Olasupo, interview, 07/12/2014). The fact that ‘dancing away sorrow’ takes place exclusively within the sacred setting of the church suggests that it has spiritual connotations. In order to better understand this secular/sacred distinction, and the perceived variance in efficacy, we need to consider the beliefs that are held by participants about spirituality, mental health, and depression.

Beliefs about Spirituality and Mental Health

Members of this community hold a holistic view of personhood, in which the spirit, soul, and body are interconnected. Dr Adewale Kuyebi, the senior pastor, told me that although he does not believe all illnesses have a spiritual cause, he thinks that some do. He contrasted what he perceives to be African and Western perspectives, the former holistic in its approach to wellbeing and the latter tending to divide up and treat the various parts of the person separately.⁴ Practitioners working in the area of mental health among Africans in the diaspora have also noted this belief in the connection between mind, body and spirit (Ojelade, McCray, Meyers & Ashby, 2014, p. 493; Monteiro & Wall, 2011, p. 235).

⁴ For more on this, especially as it relates to the interconnectivity of music, religion, and medicine, see Friedson (1996).

Members of CAC Dublin believe that the spiritual and physical worlds can affect each other; the physical body can be affected by spiritual forces, and can in turn exert its influence over the spiritual realm. According to Evangelist Yetunde Olaseni, the female choir master:

Even the Bible says we are contending with the things that we cannot see... It says we are fighting against principalities, rulers of darkness, and we have to take it by violence. That is what the Bible says... We want to deal with the enemy or the forces behind anyone. Not every problem is spiritual. Not every problem is. It might be not a problem. But we believe, that is how we were brought up culturally. That is what we believe. (Evangelist Yetunde Olaseni, interview, 13/09/2014)

The biblical passage referred to by Evangelist Olaseni is most likely:

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. (Ephesians 6:12, New International Version)

The means of dealing with evil spiritual forces, according to Evangelist Olaseni, is 'by violence', which implies the use of great force or strength. The main method in CAC of addressing spiritual forces is through prayer, which is expressed physically with loud voices, intense facial expressions, and vigorous gestures such as pacing the floor, punching the air, wagging one's fingers, and rapidly shaking one's head. The physicality of prayer in CAC Dublin reflects a belief in the interconnectivity of the material and spiritual realms.

Depression is considered by church members to be something external to the individual, which can be removed. Pastor Peter Ibiyemi, for instance, explained to me that as you are singing and dancing, 'God can remove that body that [...] pulls you down – God will remove it [claps hands]!' (Pastor Peter Ibiyemi, interview, 20/09/2014). The use of the word 'body' to describe something that is 'pulling you down' ascribes physical form to it, and the idea that it can be removed implies that it is not a part of the psyche. This perspective helps to explain the belief that sorrow can be removed instantaneously, rather than needing to be addressed over time through, for example, counselling or psychotherapy.

In CAC Dublin, depression is often attributed to spiritual causes, of which there seem to be three potential sources: a poor relationship with God; Satan; and people practising witchcraft. In relation to the first, maintaining a good relationship with God is believed to positively influence one's circumstances and outlook, whereas neglecting divine connection may lead to difficulties and sorrow. Pastor Ibiyemi noted during a sermon that when you are crying with problems, it is because you are not with your Heavenly Father; if something is wrong in your life, he said, you should check whether you have the right relationship with God. This view clearly reflects African beliefs. According to Monteiro and Wall (2011):

[I]n traditional African societies, illness that manifests in psychological or mental symptoms is understood as a disruption in the natural order of humans' interactions with the spirit world, or, depending on the specific religion, lack of appropriate connection with God or the Supreme Being. (p. 236)

The idea that relationship with the divine is expected to attain tangible results in the life of the worshipper is evident in numerous Yoruba proverbs, such as: *Bí alàgbà-á bá jùbà f'Ólúwa, ònà á là*, translated, 'If the elder pays homage to God, the path opens' (Owomoyela, 2005, p. 297).

A second spiritual source of depression is Satan. Pastor Korede Aderounmu, visiting Dublin from Nigeria for the national CAC convention in August 2014, referred to the biblical story of Job during a sermon. Job experienced many difficulties including the death of his children. But, rather than attributing Job's sorrow to his circumstances Pastor Aderounmu stated that 'Satan stole his happiness'. While this point arises from the biblical story (as Satan is given permission to attack Job) it can also be related to traditional Yoruba religious belief. The Yoruba often attribute difficulties in their lives to the work of *Èṣù*, one of the divinities in traditional Yoruba religion. Although it is considered possible to placate *Èṣù* in order to attain some benevolence from him, he is generally considered to be a mischievous and wicked god who causes misfortune (Alana, 2004, p. 71).

A third source of difficulty is other people, who are thought able to influence one's mental and physical wellbeing through supernatural means such as *jùjú*. As Evangelist Florence Kuyebi, the senior pastor's wife, told me:

Coming from Africa, we believe that there are different people with different kinds of evil spirits, and it is very, very real, you know... People do *jùjú* ... There are witches and wizards and they use their power to destroy people's lives. (Evangelist Florence Kuyebi, interview, 28/11/2014)

The belief that such spiritual forces are a source of physical and mental illness is prevalent among Nigerians at home and abroad, as noted by other scholars (Adepoju, 2012, p. 42; Ola, Crabb, Krishnadas, Erinfolami, & Olagunju, 2010, p. 178).

Having considered beliefs about spirituality and wellbeing, I would like to examine the two main ways in which 'dancing away sorrow' addresses the spiritual realm. The first relates to the worshipper's connection with God and involves expressing humility and appreciation, which in return secures His⁵ favour and blessing. The second addresses negative spiritual forces – such as Satan, or people practicing witchcraft or *jùjú* – and is intended to block any harm that has been directed towards the worshipper.

Expressing Humility and Appreciation to Attract God's Blessing

It is important to emphasise that dance in CAC Dublin, although culturally infused, is framed by a biblical narrative. The story of King David dancing before God as the Ark of the Covenant is brought back to Jerusalem (found in 2 Samuel 6) was often referred to within worship services and interviews. David's dance is understood as a means of expressing humility towards – and appreciation of – God, and is taken as a pattern to follow.

In the following transcription, taken from the preamble to a monthly thanksgiving, Pastor Ibiyemi drew directly on the story of David:

Forget about your sorrow;
Forget about your pain;

⁵ In this article I refer to God as masculine and employ capitalisation, in order to respect the views and practices of my informants.

Appreciate God!

...

Please, put on your dancing shoes;

Dance your sorrow away;

And let God look down from heaven and shower blessing upon you!

For dancing before God,

That is the area where David has been blessed,

Always blessed!

He danced before God,

And God always blessed him.

I want to see you dance like David this afternoon.

God bless you as you dance before the Lord,

In Jesus' name!

(Pastor Peter Ibiyemi, CAC Dublin, 02/02/2014)

Praising God through dance is seen to elicit divine favour, and this theme in the story of David is highlighted by Pastor Ibiyemi.



Figure 2: Evangelist Oladeru (centre) adopts the standard stoooped posture (still from author's fieldwork video, September 7, 2014).

David's expression of humility towards God through dance is also emulated in CAC Dublin. As one member stated, 'David was the king and he humbled himself before the Lord and danced in public with the heart of thanksgiving. CAC practise the way King David praised the Lord' (2012 survey response). Certain movements employed in CAC express humility particularly well. Firstly, there is a standard posture, typical in West Africa, in which the upper torso is bent forwards, back straight, and the lower torso is flexed forward at the knees (see Figure 2); this creates a stoooped posture directed towards the earth (Ajayi, 1998, p. 35; Drewal

& Drewal, 1990, p. 138). Ajayi (1998, p. 69) explains this stooped posture as representing humility, reverence for nature and respect for others.



Figure 3: A member of the choir rolls on the floor during the thanksgiving and testimony (still from author's fieldwork video, October 19, 2014).

Secondly, members often prostrate themselves and roll on the floor, especially during thanksgiving and testimonies (see Figure 3). Individuals may roll side to side in one place or they may roll from one side of the building to the other and back again. Interview participants explained this practice as a way of expressing thanks and appreciation to God, often in response to a request that God has fulfilled. Pastor Ibiyemi described it as follows:

Rolling before God – this is Father whom you cannot even look at His face – is a humble way of appreciating God. ‘Ah, Lord I honour You! I glorify You for all things You have done for me! I am not worthy of somebody to stand before You and thank You, but for this reason I will roll myself. I give You all the honour, all the adoration!’ That is how that works. (Pastor Peter Ibiyemi, interview, 20/09/2014)

While rolling on the floor expresses humility and appreciation towards God, it is also expected to secure further blessings, as Pastor Ibiyemi continued:

Rolling before God makes God look down and even what you don't expect, all the blessing you don't expect, He will surely, ‘Ah! Ah! So you know how to appreciate me!’ (Pastor Peter Ibiyemi, interview, 20/09/2014)

Pastor Ibiyemi went on to relate the story of a woman attending a revival meeting who was unable to jump due to an illness. She still wanted to show God her appreciation so she decided to roll on the floor instead. While she rolled on the floor her sickness vanished and

when she got back up she was able to jump like everyone else. “That is [a] miracle of God!” Pastor Ibiyemi exclaimed.

Rolling was also explained by a number of interview participants in cultural terms. One church member, who I will refer to as Grace⁶, after explaining how rolling expresses appreciation and thanks to God, compared it to Yoruba cultural practice:

Like in Yoruba culture, when you give me something, like when you give me this thing, I really appreciate it. How do I show my appreciation? Next, in our culture, you have to lie down, lie down and say, ‘Oh, I thank you! Thank you so much for giving me this thing. I really appreciate it. Thank you so much!’ You show that appreciation. (Grace, interview, 18/11/2014)

Prostration and rolling on the floor are used in Yoruba culture as a means of expressing thanks and showing respect, particularly for one’s elders. In this case the practice is applied to help maintain a good relationship with God.

Repelling Evil Forces

Movement and dance are not only means of attracting God’s blessing, but are also considered effective in repelling evil forces. I witnessed a particularly striking example of this during the 2014 Annual Convention of CAC Ireland. During one meeting, Pastor Aderounmu led the congregation in a prayer time that featured declarative songs, one of which was ‘Satan, come out of the road’⁷. This was a short song, consisting of a call (‘Satan, come out of the road’) and a response (‘I hit, you go die’), which were repeated many times. Everyone sang the song, waving their arms or punching their fists in front of them, as directed (see Figure 4). Pastor Aderounmu stopped the performance, however, saying ‘You are panicking; are you a coward?’ He told the congregation, ‘I want you to display’, encouraged everyone to accentuate their movements, and assured them that the ‘devil cannot possess you.’ After a second, apparently more successful, performance, he exclaimed, ‘I could see! I could see! The enemy of your families is dying. Look at him!’ He continued to encourage people, saying, ‘The more you pray, the more you will be moving him.’

⁶ This interview participant’s name has been changed, as she requested to remain anonymous.

⁷ A video recording of this performance, made by the author, is available to view at the following link: <https://youtu.be/jMwv4g7YOJU>. It is worth comparing the CAC Dublin performance with that of South African gospel singer Solomon Mahlangu, which is available at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JDWB9w0MFSc> (accessed 02/01/2016). Mahlangu sings a slightly different version than that used in CAC. The words he sings are: ‘Satan, comot for road o, I dey carry Holy Ghost, I no get break o, I go jam you, you go die.’ All four lines are sung as both the call and the response, and the last line is turned into a refrain. The overall feel of Mahlangu’s performance is vastly different to the CAC rendition, the former being sung in a more relaxed manner with gentle actions.



Figure 4: The congregation perform ‘Satan, come out of the road’, led by Pastor Aderounmu (still from author’s fieldwork video, August 23, 2014).

The instructions and commentary provided by Pastor Aderounmu demonstrate a belief that the intensity of the dance moves positively correlate with the spiritual efficacy of the performance. This brings us back to the earlier comments of Evangelist Olaseni concerning the ‘violence’ with which spiritual forces need to be confronted.

The purpose of clearing Satan out of the way is to dispel evil spiritual influences that may be blocking the path ahead and hindering progress. As discussed earlier, depression and difficulties are often attributed to evil influences (whether Satan, or people practicing *jùjú*) and so addressing such forces is a critical requirement in the pursuit of happiness and wellbeing.

The Communal Element of Dance

Ideas about Community and Wellbeing in African and Yoruba Thought

In African cultures, the individual tends to be understood within the context of community. The concept of *ubuntu* in South Africa is perhaps the most cited example and emphasises collectiveness and interdependence. *Ubuntu* is reflected in the Northern Sotho and Zulu expressions translated, ‘I am, because we are; and since we are, I am’ (Mbiti, 1990, p. 106; Van Dyk & Nefale, 2005, p. 54). It is generally agreed that this same concept can be found across Africa, finding expression, for instance, in languages spoken in Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, Democratic Republic of Congo and Angola (Dreyer, 2015, p. 195; Kamwangamalu, 1999, p. 25).

This same emphasis on community and interdependence is evident in Yoruba culture and is expressed in a great number of Yoruba proverbs. *A kì í nìkan jayé*, translated, ‘One does not enjoy life alone’ (Owomoyela, 2005, p. 275), expresses the idea that individual happiness is understood to be possible only within the context of community. The community is considered to provide security and protection for the individual, as articulated in the following proverb: *Àìsì ẹ̀nìkẹ̀ta nì ẹ̀nì méjì-í fì ńja àjàkú*, which translates, ‘It is the absence of a third person that makes it possible for two people to fight to the death’ (Owomoyela, 2005, p. 276). *Àjẹ̀jẹ̀ ọ̀wọ̀ kan ò gbégbá kàrí*, translated, ‘A single hand does not lift a calabash to the head’

(Owomoyela, 2005, p. 301), indicates that success is considered to be a benefit of communal, rather than of individual, pursuit. From such proverbs it seems that Yoruba worldview prioritises community over individuality. The individual is seen to benefit from community, through which they experience enjoyment, safety, and success.

In socio-centric African societies, individuals experience wellbeing within the context of community. For this reason, community is often regarded as a fundamental aspect of healing practices (Monteiro & Wall, 2011, p. 293) and its absence can lead to intra-psychic tension, conflicts and frustration (Van Dyk & Nefale, 2005, p. 55). Traditional African healing dances often involve the community and seek to address relational issues. In Senegal, for example, it is understood that strained social relations may disturb a particular spirit and lead to physical or emotional illness in an individual. Such illness is treated through the *Ndeup* ritual, which involves drumming, dancing and trance, and aims to restore harmonious relationships and heal the sick person (Conwill, 2010). The *Ju|'Hoan* healing dance, performed by the *Ju|'hoansi* people of Botswana, is a communal healing ritual (Katz, Biesele, & Denis, 1997, pp. 17-27), and Igbo mourning dances in Nigeria draw members of the community around those who mourn loved ones (Akunna, 2015, p. 48).

Dance, Community, and Wellbeing in CAC Dublin

Community is emphasised in CAC Dublin as a context within which individual healing can take place. As Dr Kuyebi explained:

Some people come [to church] and will just be crying there. And for people who are downcast, somebody will go to them and say, 'Are you OK?' 'No, I'm not OK.' You can talk, and they can pray over it and reassure them that everything is a phase in life. 'This is a phase you are going through. So, God will see you through. There's nothing I can do, but I will pray for you.' But for somebody to sit and pray for you, it brings healing. (Dr Adewale Kuyebi, interview, 18/12/2014)

Music and dance are thought to be especially powerful within the communal setting. In a group interview I carried out with the choir, Evangelist Joseph Oladeru, the male choir master, explained:

Evg. Oladeru: When you are down in spirit, when you are in the midst of people singing and dancing, your spirit will be...

Others: Lifted.

Evg. Oladeru: Will be lifted, and all the sorrow in you will just [claps hands]...

Others: Vanish

Evg. Oladeru: Will just [claps hands] vanish. So that is why we believe that when we come where people pray, where people dance... [claps hands]... you'll receive what you want.

(Evangelist Joseph Oladeru and choir members, interview, 18/10/2014)

According to Evangelist Oladeru (and the other participants who interjected), being in the midst of people singing, dancing and praying brings relief from sorrow and an increase of

joy. Music, dance and prayer seem to work in conjunction with community and it is the combination of these that is believed to be potent.

More than just taking place within community, though, music and dance actually help to create community. Pastor Adeeko Akinola explained to me his perception that music plays a special role in facilitating connection, both with God and with fellow worshippers:

Worship connects the soul – appeals to the soul – faster, more efficiently, and better than ordinary talk. We get motivated, moved, and occasionally get carried away by music. It touches us. There is something that it touches in our emotions that gets us connected to God. Yah, I will say so. And it makes us to be in unity, because when music is sung and we all can flow with the music, it makes us to be in the same atmosphere and in the same spirit. (Pastor Adeeko Akinola, interview, 15/11/2014)

According to Pastor Akinola, the power of music lies, firstly, in its ability to touch our emotions more effectively than speech and, secondly, in the way that it enables people to ‘flow’ together. Pastor Akinola seems to be saying that music unites people by creating a shared physical, emotional, and spiritual experience. It is in the shared sensations of the musical performance that interpersonal connection can occur.

Dance also helps to build community by providing opportunity for interaction. When I asked Pastor Akinola about the role of processions he explained:

[Processions are] a way of meeting others that you have not met before, a way of socialising. We do that so that we know one another, and it’s an opportunity for us to really see one another again. As you might have known, we have three different rows. If we all come and sit down and go, occasionally we might not even know that the other party comes. But if we all dance and say, ‘Ah, I’ve seen you today’, then we might actually relate to one another as family. (Pastor Adeeko Akinola, interview, 15/11/2014)

Dancing in processions facilitates socialising among church members, leading to an increased sense of connection. Interaction takes place during dancing by greeting one another (as seen in Figure 5), watching each other and responding with facial expressions, movements (as seen in Figure 6), and sounds (such as whistling, verbal comments, clapping or laughing).



Figure 5: Dr Kuyebi greets a church member during dancing (still from author's field-work video, September 7, 2014).



Figure 6: Two female choir members interact during dancing (still from author's field-work video, December 7, 2014).

Communal dance in CAC Dublin also addresses sorrow by directing people's attention away from their problems. As Grace explained:

When you see me dancing in front of you, even if you are having something going in your head, thinking something, sometimes when I dance it might make

you forget what you are thinking. It will be, 'Okay, this woman is dancing!' Or maybe you even know my problem. You are my friend and you know my problem and you still see me the way I'm dancing. You are thinking something - you might forget it too! (Grace, interview, 18/11/2014)

In this way dance acts as a kind of distraction technique, helping to draw attention away from sorrow and redirect it towards the joy being expressed. I participated at times in the monthly thanksgiving processions but, as I am not much of a dancer, I tended to walk rather than dance. On one of these occasions, a woman who was dancing alongside me took my hand and made it dance in the air with hers. Looking at me with a large grin on her face, she said, 'This is fun, isn't it?' The actions of this member were intended both to draw me into community through dance and to direct my attention to joy.

The idea of building community through music and dance can be related to theories of entrainment and flow. Entrainment is the synchronisation of two rhythmic processes through their interaction with each other. It can take place as an individual engages with music (such as tapping their foot to the beat), but it can also occur in the social interactions that take place through music and dance. Blacking described the way in which musical actors synchronise with each other's physical movements, a phenomenon he referred to as 'bodily resonance' or 'bodily empathy'. He described bodily resonance as both co-ordinated motion and emotional connection (1983, p. 57). Lomax (1982, pp. 149-150) noted that rhythm, as 'a common framework of identification', helps to connect and coordinate people and facilitate group activity. The interactional synchrony that can occur between individuals in the context of music and dance can help to build community. Furthermore, there is some correlation between entrainment in social interactions and positive affect (Clayton, Sager, & Will, 2004, p. 13), which confirms the assertion of CAC members that dancing together in church alleviates sorrow and increases joy.

'Flow' – a theory developed by Hungarian psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi – is a state of intense concentration in which an individual engaged in an activity becomes completely absorbed in the present moment. The individual experiences a suspension of all concepts of time, forgets his/her everyday life (including its problems), and thus feels a sense of freedom and relief. Particular activities – music, sport, and dance – seem especially suited to engendering a state of flow (Turino, 2008, pp. 4-5; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). There are two aspects of flow that are of particular interest in relation to 'dancing away sorrow'. Firstly, experiencing flow has been proven to increase positive affect (Rogatko, 2009; Eisenberger, Jones, Stinglhamber, Shanock, & Randall, 2005; Bryce & Haworth, 2002; Clarke & Haworth, 1994; Haworth & Hill, 1992;). Secondly, a shared experience of flow (social flow) may lead to the development of empathy (Hart & Blasi, 2015) and induce greater enjoyment than solitary flow (Walker, 2010). If dance in CAC Dublin is considered from the perspective of flow, these results support the claims that it can alleviate sorrow and increase feelings of happiness, and that dancing with others is more effective at achieving this than dancing alone.

Much of the literature on dance/movement therapy (D/MT) offers interesting insights that could aid our understanding of 'dancing away sorrow'. Some of this literature ties in quite well with theories of entrainment, even if it is not specifically referred to. The pioneer D/MT therapist Trudi Schoop believed that mirroring psychiatric patients' movements enabled her to embody their feelings and enter their world in a state of intersubjective communication, and Marian Chace believed that establishing a relationship with patients through empathic reflection enabled her to pick up the qualitative dynamics of their movements (Berrol, 2006, p. 309).

This concept of empathic reflection, practised instinctively by D/MT therapists, has more recently been underpinned by discoveries in neuroscience. It has been reported that observing the actions of others can induce brain activity in the observer (Rizzolatti & Craihero, 2004), which may affect empathic behaviour (McGarry & Russo, 2011). An individual observing another person performing a movement can have identical sets of neurons (mirror neurons) activated as the one actually engaged in that movement (Berrol, 2006, p. 302). Horwitz et al. (2015) found out that dance seems to be involved in the body's emotional interplay with others, such that there may be some clinical benefit in exposing those suffering with alexithymia (dysfunction in emotional awareness, social attachment, and interpersonal relating) to dance. Based on these findings, it is clear that emotional interaction and mirroring takes place between humans through movement and dance. These studies corroborate the assertion made by CAC members that merely watching someone else dance can lead to the observer experiencing the same emotion (in this case, joy). The CAC Dublin use of dance specifically to rid members of sorrow also finds support in the literature. Numerous studies show that participation in dance or dance/movement therapy helps to decrease depression and increase positive affect (Pylvänäinen, Muotka, & Lappalainen, 2015; Mavrovouniotis, Argiriadou, & Papaioannu, 2010; Koch, Morlinghaus, & Fuchs, 2007; Jeong & Hong, 2005; Stewart, McMullen, & Rubin, 1994). Interaction through movement draws individuals into intersubjective union (thereby contributing significantly to group cohesion and the creation of community), and increases participants' feelings of happiness.

'Dancing Away Sorrow' in Migration

Positive Benefits

As I have already established, Yoruba culture – like many other African cultures – understands the individual within the context of community, and views community as essential to wellbeing. For the Yoruba migrant residing in a more individually-oriented European nation, the creation of community is important. Dance in CAC Dublin contributes significantly to the building of community in a number of ways. Members are drawn together through the performance of shared cultural practices and the reaffirmation of common understandings and shared values. Dance also facilitates social interaction, through which a sense of connection is forged. As bodies move to the same rhythm, unity is physically enacted and community takes on tangible form within the performance. Movement and dance are considered to be an important part of efficacious ritual, able to aid divine connection and to address the spiritual forces believed at times to be behind physical and mental illnesses. Providing a context for dance within Christian ritual allows worshippers to experience a sense of power over their circumstances, which leads to an increased sense of peace. Dance also reconnects members with the homeland on a physical, mental and emotional level. As the body re-enacts familiar movements, memories of place and belonging may be triggered, restoring a sense of connection, normality and familiarity that help to heal the shock of cultural upheaval. Other scholars have similarly noted the role played by music and dance in building community and creating cohesion (Smith, 2015, p. 551; Turner, 201; Bohlman, 2011, p. 155; Turino, 2008, p. 2; Baily & Collyer, 2006, pp. 175-176), evoking memories and reconnecting migrants with their homelands (Russell, 2011; Shelemay, 2006, p. 306; Stokes, 1994, p. 3) and providing therapeutic benefits for migrants (Baily, 2005, p. 230).

Church Attendance

Some CAC Dublin members have tried attending Irish-led churches but have not felt satisfied by their styles of worship. When Mrs Pauline Afeni, a member of the choir, first came to Ireland she joined the Mormon Church but found it to be ‘too dull’ and ‘too quiet’. She told me, ‘The way we dance away our sorrows [in CAC] – they don’t do that thing.’ Instead, she said, ‘They sing as if you are in a funeral home, so I don’t feel anything’ (Mrs Pauline Afeni, interview, 16/11/2014). Evangelist Oladeru referred to the Catholic practice of making the sign of the cross and told me that it doesn’t ‘move’ him, whereas he finds that singing, dance, and prayer in CAC ‘work’ (Evangelist Joseph Oladeru, interview, 18/10/2014). ‘Dancing away sorrow’ satisfies CAC Dublin members’ perception that physical action ensures the efficacy of religious ritual. Through it, members are able to attract God’s favour and dispel evil, thereby ensuring happiness and success in life. For this reason, members are drawn to CAC rather than those churches that lack dancing and, in their view, seem to practise less ‘powerful’ ritual.

The Second Generation

While dance in CAC Dublin provides positive benefits for first generation Yoruba migrants, such effects are not universal. The second generation (i.e. the youth who were born and raised in Ireland) do not tend to dance in the CAC worship services, much to the consternation of first generation members. Dr Kuyebi addressed this issue during his sermon one Sunday, voicing his concern that the youth’s lack of dancing will lead to their church becoming ‘lukewarm’ and ‘boring’ in the future. In his introductions to the monthly thanksgivings, Pastor Ibiyemi often makes appeals to the youth to join in with the dancing, and on one occasion he told them, ‘You are not a zombie – you dance!’

During my interview with four youth members (aged 13-15 years) I asked them how they feel about the dancing in church. They responded as follows:

Joy⁸: Uh... I dunno... it’s... just... so... out there. Like, they literally just move *everything*. Like, it’s such a *free* way of dancing... Yeah... it’s free.

[Laughs]

David: Like, it makes you smile. [Stephen speaks at the same time: Awkward...]

Like, it makes you wanna join in...

Sarah: Yeah.

David: Like... [Laughter and cross talk]

Sarah: [To Stephen] You feel awkward?

Stephen: Yeah. For me it’s awkward... [Laughter]

RU: It’s awkward? Why is it awkward for you?

Stephen: ‘Cause they expect you to dance as well.

Joy: Yeah.

Sarah: That’s annoying at times.

Joy: Yeah.

RU: They expect you to dance?

Sarah: The way they’re dancing...

Joy: Yeah. Like, I’d rather just... I wouldn’t do that... with them watching me...

⁸ Names of all youth participants have been changed in order to maintain anonymity.

Sarah: Like, the way they dance compared to the way we dance is like completely different!

Joy: Yeah.

Sarah: Like, we just move from side to side... But they're like...

Joy: Exactly! [Laughter] You just see the difference between the middle [adult] section and the youth section – like we're just standing still... and then they're going crazy!

(CAC Dublin Youth, interview, 23/11/2014)

Joy's description of those in the middle section of the church (the adults) dancing and the youth section 'standing still' is very accurate, and is something I consistently observed. A few of the youth do move, albeit very minimally, during the praise and worship, but the vast majority stand still. During processions most of them walk, though a few move their feet in time with the beat in a right-left-left-right pattern. One of the issues here is that when the youth do dance their movements are 'completely different' to the adults. Whereas the youth limit movement to their feet and a side-to-side motion, the adults move in multiple directions (forward and backward; up and down; left and right; and twisting motions) and utilise the whole body (head, shoulders, arms, hands, torso, hips, legs, knees, and feet).

A number of adult interview participants attributed the difference in dancing between the generations to migration. As Grace told me:

The youth that are coming from Nigeria that are used to that kind of music, those are the people that dance very well in the church if you notice, if you understand. But those children that were born here, the way they dance, the way they move, is really, really different from those people that are coming from Africa. (Grace, interview, 18/11/2014)

Although they are being brought up in Nigerian homes, and attend a predominantly Yoruba church, the youth in CAC Dublin do not dance in the same way as first generation members. They are not only influenced by the Yoruba culture of their families and church community, but are also exposed to the culture of the wider Irish society in which they live. Whereas the majority of interview participants over thirty described themselves as 'Nigerian', those in their teens and twenties self-identified as 'Nigerian-Irish'. The adoption of a hybrid identity reflects the fact that the second generation have absorbed elements of Irish culture. The awkwardness expressed by the youth I interviewed did not relate so much to the way the *adults* dance, but more to the adults' expectation of *them* to dance in the same way. Although Sarah said she would 'love to be able to dance like [the adults]', all the youth interview participants agreed that they would look 'weird' whereas the adults just look 'natural'. Sarah explained that the way the adults dance is 'more cultural', and David put the adults' dancing down to 'the way they were brought up'. While the dance moves of the first generation enable them to express their Yoruba identity those same moves do not allow the youth to articulate their affinity with Irish culture. The youths' choice of vocabulary – 'weird' and 'awkward' – highlights the dissonance they perceive between the Yoruba values and aesthetics expressed in their parents' dancing and those of the Irish culture in which they are growing up and developing their identities. As Blacking noted, social processes and music are inseparable: '[T]he function of music is to reinforce, or relate people more closely to, certain experiences which have come to have meaning in their social life' (1973, p. 99).

The reluctance of the second generation to dance like their parents may also relate to a shift in emphasis from participatory to presentational performance. As Turino (2008, p. 46) points out, individuals growing up in societies where presentational music and dance are prominent may experience performance anxiety. The first generation in CAC Dublin focus on participatory dance and, for this reason, do not feel worried about making ‘mistakes’ or achieving a high standard. The youth, on the other hand, are reluctant to take part in it, especially ‘with them [the first generation] watching.’ As Sarah put it, ‘The way we dance is just trying not to look embarrassing in front of them. They’re not afraid of how they look.’ This fear of how they will look indicates that the youth view dance more as a presentational, rather than participatory, performance.

There seems to be a degree of cross-generational tension in the area of dance. The adults have grown up in Nigeria and have absorbed a particular style of dancing. The youth have grown up in a very different culture where, although they encounter their parents’ style of dancing in church, what they see around them among their peers, and in the country at large, is very different. Dancing in the style of their parents does not feel natural or easy. Due to the worldview with which the adult members have grown up – in which dance is greatly emphasised and even considered integral to ritual efficacy and the expression of worship – the youths’ reluctance to dance in church is a cause for concern among the adults. Out of this concern, the older generation place a degree of pressure on the youth to join in with the dancing. The youth feel the pressure and expectation to dance ‘in the same way’ as the adults, but are not able to fulfil this expectation. Both generations keenly feel this tension.

Conclusion

The ability of dance to remove sorrow and induce joy for members of CAC Dublin rests upon both its spiritual and communal nature. In Yoruba culture (and in Africa more generally) mental and physical states are often associated with spiritual matters. The physical and spiritual realms are thought to be connected and thus able to influence one another. Dance, as a physical activity taking place within religious ritual, is believed to influence the spiritual world, both repelling evil forces and attracting God’s blessing. Emotional wellbeing is also understood to be contingent upon community. Music and dance help to build community and facilitate communal interaction, raising levels of happiness and wellbeing. While such perspectives are clearly rooted in Yoruba worldview, in CAC Dublin they are placed within a biblical narrative, with the story of King David’s dance providing a pattern to follow.

‘Dancing away sorrow’ serves the needs of the first generation migrants as it reconnects them with familiar practices from the homeland and builds community around shared understandings. This enables them to deal with the challenges of migration, leading to a sense of empowerment. As dance – and movement more generally – is thought to positively correlate with spiritual potency, its practise draws Yoruba Christians to CAC rather than to Irish-led churches. While ‘dancing away sorrow’ offers positive benefits to first generation members, it highlights the dissonance perceived by the second generation between Yoruba culture and that of the wider Irish society in which they are growing up. While the dance moves of the first generation enable them to express their Yoruba identity, those same moves do not allow the second generation to articulate their hybrid identities and their affinity with Irish culture. The more restrained moves of the youth are a cause of concern for the older generation, who equate vigorous movement with spiritual efficacy. For the second generation, there seems to be a move away from participatory dance performance, which perhaps indicates a change of thought with

regard to the relationship between individual and community. 'Dancing away sorrow' in CAC Dublin is rooted in Yoruba (and, more widely, African) beliefs concerning spirituality and community. Due to the shifting identity and worldview of the second generation as they adapt to Irish culture, it is unlikely that they will continue the practice of 'dancing away sorrow', at least in its current format.

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