

Gender Roles in Traditional Musical Practice: A Survey of the Esan in Edo State, Nigeria

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KEYWORDS Gender roles; traditional music; ensemble; and subordinate roles

ABSTRACT Viewed from the point of uses and functions of African Music, it is readily seen that music in Africa plays an encompassing role. In every event of life - birth to death, music is profusely made in all the ethnic nationalities in Africa. In the various ensembles that make the music used for such events, men form, over half of the instrumentalists, singers and instructors. A striking feature similar to the remark above is that women in Esan play a little above nominal roles in their ensembles. Owing to the situation above, this paper surveys the reasons for the neglect of women. This paper opines that the reasons are largely because of beliefs which are not too empirical and goes ahead to posit that for the continuity in practice of traditional music in Esan, women must be given a due consideration since by gender role definition in the area, they are closer to their children at the formative stages.