
pdROLE OF MUSIC IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION: USING MUSICAL THEATRE -

‘BLOOD ON OUR HANDS’ TO FOSTER PEACE AND UNITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The role of music in conflict resolution is a burgeoning field of research, with growing recognition of its transformative potential in addressing societal divisions caused by violence and trauma. This paper explores the use of musical theatre, specifically *Blood on Our Hands*, an Afro-musical set in Plateau State, Nigeria, as a powerful mechanism for peacebuilding. The research investigates how music in musical theatre can foster unity and reconciliation among divided communities by engaging their cultural, emotional, and social dimensions. The play's narrative, deeply rooted in the ethnic and religious conflicts of Plateau State, showcases the profound role of music in mediating tensions and offering an alternative to conventional conflict-resolution methods. This paper analyses the thematic elements, music, and production of *Blood on Our Hands* to demonstrate how musical theatre can bridge cultural divides, facilitate interfaith dialogue, and provide a platform for healing the emotional wounds caused by conflict. Central to the analysis is the exploration of music's ability to create shared emotional experiences that can lead to understanding, empathy, and social cohesion. By evaluating *Blood on Our Hands* as a case study, this paper argues that musical theatre offers a unique tool for conflict mediation that addresses both the psychological and social aspects of conflict. The results help expand the growing body of research on the role of music in peacebuilding and advocate for the integration of musical theatre into broader conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives, particularly in Nigeria and other conflict-prone regions.

Key words: musical theatre, peacebuilding, unity, interfaith dialogue

Introduction

Nigeria, a nation characterised by ethnic and religious diversity, has experienced ongoing conflicts that have significantly fragmented its social fabric. These conflicts, notably in the Middle Belt region including Plateau State, are driven by a complex interplay of influences such as land tenure, political power struggles, and religious differences. The origins of these issues can be traced back to the colonial period, during which the British system of governance and ethnic divisions inadvertently intensified existing tensions. Consequently, communities across Nigeria, particularly in Plateau State, have faced cycles of violence, resulting in emotional and psychological wounds that traditional peacebuilding efforts have yet to fully remedy.

Traditional peacebuilding frameworks, including legal frameworks, arbitration, and mediation, have largely proven inadequate in bridging profound divisions. While legal structures are crucial for ensuring justice, they frequently overlook the emotional and psychological dimensions of conflict, which are vital for establishing sustainable peace. As Lederach (1997) asserts, "Peacebuilding must go beyond the cessation of violence, addressing the deeper psychological and emotional wounds that divide people." This shortcoming in conventional peacebuilding methods highlights the need for alternative approaches that address both the emotional and rational facets of communities affected by conflict.

In response to this challenge, musical theatre has emerged as a potent and frequently underexplored instrument for conflict resolution. Musical theatre, which synthesises music, drama, and dialogue, can provide an emotionally compelling and culturally pertinent platform for reconciliation. It facilitates the expression of shared emotions and narratives, thereby fostering empathy and understanding among diverse groups. "Blood on Our Hands," an Afro-musical authored and

directed by Davou et al. (2022), exemplifies how musical theatre can engage with the intricacies of ethnic and religious conflicts. Set amidst the crises in Plateau State, "Blood on Our Hands" employs music, drama, and cultural storytelling to bridge divides among conflicting groups, offering a novel perspective on peacebuilding within Nigeria.

Blood on Our Hands focuses on the historical, social, and emotional divides between various ethnic and religious communities in Plateau State. The musical narrative explores the deep-rooted tensions between the Berom, Afizere, and Anaguta indigenous groups and the Hausa/Fulani settlers, exacerbated by religious extremism. It addresses the trauma experienced by these communities, not just through the portrayal of violence but through music that carries emotional weight, offering an opportunity for the characters to heal and reconcile. According to the authors of *Blood on Our Hands* (Davou et al., 2022), the musical offers a "bridge for dialogue and understanding, providing a space for communities to engage with their past traumas and work toward a peaceful future."

This study aims to investigate how musical theatre, specifically *Blood on Our Hands*, contributes to conflict resolution, particularly in Plateau State. The research aims to assess how the musical's use of music, dance, and dramatic storytelling fosters social cohesion in a divided society. Music, being an emotionally resonant art form, can play a significant role in mediating conflict, providing a cathartic release for both performers and audiences. *Blood on Our Hands* exemplifies this potential by incorporating elements of Nigerian music and dance to address not only the conflict's social and political dimensions but also its emotional and psychological dimensions.

Through this study, the paper also seeks to evaluate the emotional and psychological effects of music in conflict resolution. Music can express feelings that may otherwise be difficult to articulate, allowing individuals and communities to connect on a deeply emotional level. *Blood on*

Our Hands does not merely entertain; it offers its audience an emotional experience, providing a means to reflect on personal and collective trauma. In fact, as Hargreaves and North (2010) suggest, "Music provides a channel for the emotional and psychological reconciliation necessary in conflict-torn societies."

Another key objective of this research is to investigate the potential for integrating musical theatre into Nigeria's peacebuilding strategies. While the traditional focus in Nigeria has been on political negotiations and legal interventions, integrating cultural forms such as musical theatre offers an opportunity to address the intangible aspects of conflict, including the emotional healing required for long-term peace. By focusing on *Blood on Our Hands*, the paper aims to show that musical theatre can play a critical role in addressing the root causes of conflict and in promoting a shared vision of peace and reconciliation. The study will also explore how *Blood on Our Hands* serves as a model for other cultural initiatives that could contribute to peacebuilding in Nigeria and beyond. The significance of this study lies in its contribution to the growing body of research on music and conflict resolution, particularly in the context of musical theatre. The study underscores the emotional and psychological aspects of conflict, often disregarded in conventional peacebuilding strategies. Davis (2005) says, "Healing from conflict is not just about resolving disputes; it is about rebuilding relationships, restoring trust, and addressing the emotional scars that linger long after the violence has ended." This paper advocates for the integration of music and drama, particularly musical theater into peacebuilding initiatives, especially in regions like Plateau State, where ethnic and religious violence has been pervasive.

By analysing "Blood on Our Hands" as a case study, this study demonstrates how music and theatre can be leveraged as powerful tools for conflict mediation. It also points to the opportunity for musical theatre to contribute to a broader peacebuilding agenda that includes both the cessation of

violence and the restoration of social harmony. The use of indigenous Nigerian music in *Blood on Our Hands* offers a culturally relevant way to address conflict and foster reconciliation, resonating deeply with local audiences. This paper also suggests that musical theatre can be an effective tool for peacebuilding in other conflict-prone regions, where the combination of art, music, and dialogue can help bridge divides and promote social cohesion.

In conclusion, *Blood on Our Hands* exemplifies the untapped potential of musical theatre as a peacebuilding tool in Nigeria. Through its use of music and drama, the musical offers an opportunity for emotional expression, reconciliation, and healing, demonstrating the power of the arts to address the deepest wounds of conflict. By integrating music into the peacebuilding process, *Blood on Our Hands* offers a new pathway toward understanding and unity in a country divided by ethnic and religious tensions. The study concludes by calling for the inclusion of musical theatre in Nigeria's peacebuilding initiatives, as it can serve as a powerful tool for not only mediating conflict but also fostering long-term social harmony.

Music is universally recognised as a powerful medium that transcends cultural, ethnic, and societal boundaries. As a tool for conflict resolution, it plays a crucial role by fostering empathy, creating shared emotional experiences, and promoting mutual understanding among divided communities. Music's ability to heal emotional wounds and bridge divides has been documented across various conflict zones, with notable examples including its therapeutic use in post-apartheid South Africa. Here, music therapy helped individuals process deep-seated trauma and contributed to the reconciliation process (Sloboda, 2010). Similarly, in Northern Ireland, music played a pivotal role in bridging the divide between Protestant and Catholic communities, helping to heal historical wounds and promote dialogue. These examples highlight music's capacity to mediate conflict and promote social change. According to Hargreaves and North (2010), "Music serves as a cultural

bridge, facilitating healing by addressing emotional needs that traditional conflict resolution methods fail to meet” (p. 72).

While music has long been a vital part of Nigerian culture, its potential as a tool for conflict resolution remains underexplored, particularly within the context of ethnic and religious tensions. Nigeria’s political and social landscape, marked by violence between different ethnic groups, including the Berom, Afizere, and Anaguta indigenous communities, and the Hausa/Fulani settlers in Plateau State, provides fertile ground for applying music as a peacebuilding mechanism. *Blood on Our Hands* represents a pioneering example of how musical theatre can serve as a powerful means of addressing the root causes of these conflicts. By blending music and drama, *Blood on Our Hands* explores ethnic and religious divisions in Plateau State while offering a hopeful message of reconciliation and unity through musical expression.

Musical theatre, as a medium, has evolved significantly since its inception in ancient Greece, combining music, dance, drama, and dialogue to tell compelling stories that engage audiences emotionally. In the 20th century, musical theatre became a dominant form of entertainment in Europe and America, with iconic productions such as *Oklahoma!* (1943), *West Side Story* (1957), and *Rent* (1996) address significant social issues such as race relations, poverty, and social justice (Lawrence, 2017). These productions not only entertained but also raised awareness and inspired social change, proving the potential of musical theatre to address societal problems.

In Nigeria, musical theatre has a rich history rooted in indigenous performance traditions, heavily influenced by both Western theatre and African cultural forms. Hubert Ogunde, often referred to as the father of Nigerian theatre, integrated traditional music, dance, and drama to address social issues, marking a turning point in the development of Nigerian musical theatre (Ngobili, 2016). Ogunde’s work established musical theatre as a significant platform for social commentary and

cultural expression, laying the foundation for contemporary Nigerian musicals like *Blood on Our Hands*. By incorporating Nigerian cultural practices, *Blood on Our Hands* presents a unique fusion of Western musical-theatre techniques and African storytelling, making it culturally relevant and emotionally resonant for local audiences while also promoting peace and reconciliation.

African musical theatre is intrinsically connected to cultural identity and serves as a vehicle for social change. In African societies, music and performance reflect the social and political realities that communities face, using performance to communicate societal values and address communal struggles. *Blood on Our Hands* embodies this tradition by integrating African music with Western musical-theatre techniques. The fusion of indigenous instruments, rhythms, and melodies creates a soundscape that reflects Nigeria's rich cultural heritage. As one scholar notes, "Music and performance are integral to African societies, where they have long been used to communicate social values and foster unity" (Davis, 2008, p. 45). In this way, *Blood on Our Hands* functions not only as an artistic expression but also as a medium to promote peace, unity, and understanding among Nigeria's diverse ethnic and religious groups.

Violent ethnic and religious conflicts define the socio-political context in Nigeria, particularly in Plateau State. The long-standing violence between the Berom, Afizere, and Anaguta ethnic groups and the Hausa/Fulani settlers has been exacerbated by religious extremism, making the region a volatile space for sectarian violence. This violence has not only caused physical harm but has also left deep emotional and psychological scars within communities. In this context, *Blood on Our Hands* uses music and theatre to portray the emotional impact of these divisions. The musical goes beyond the narrative of conflict to foster empathy among the audience, encouraging them to consider the human cost of violence and the importance of understanding and reconciliation.

By depicting the emotional experiences of both victims and perpetrators, *Blood on Our Hands* encourages interfaith dialogue and mutual understanding. The musical underscores the potential for reconciliation through dialogue and underscores the need for collective efforts to achieve lasting peace. As noted by Davis (2005), "In conflict resolution, dialogue serves as the cornerstone for rebuilding relationships and fostering trust between divided groups" (p. 98). The message of *Blood on Our Hands* aligns with this view, illustrating how dialogue mediated by music and performance can heal the wounds of conflict and promote social cohesion.

Furthermore, *Blood on Our Hands* underscores the importance of interfaith dialogue in conflict resolution. Nigeria's religious extremism, particularly in the ongoing violence between Christians and Muslims, underscores the need for religious leaders to serve as mediators of peace. By focusing on the role of religious leaders in mediating conflict, *Blood on Our Hands* presents a hopeful vision of a Nigeria in which faith-based organisations facilitate dialogue and serve as peacebuilders, bridging divides among religious groups.

In conclusion, integrating musical theatre into Nigeria's peacebuilding process holds significant potential. As illustrated in *Blood on Our Hands*, music and drama can serve as powerful tools for addressing both the emotional and social dimensions of conflict. The musical's fusion of traditional African music and Western theatre techniques offers a unique model for peacebuilding that is culturally relevant, emotionally engaging, and socially impactful. This study advocates using musical theatre in Nigeria's peacebuilding initiatives, particularly in regions affected by ethnic and religious violence, to foster a more unified and peaceful society.

African proverbs often emphasise that peace is not merely the absence of war but a deliberate, collective, and valuable choice. For instance, one Ugandan/Tanzanian proverb suggests, "When there is peace in the country, the chief does not carry a shield," underscoring the tranquillity that

allows leadership to focus on constructive efforts. Similarly, the Somali saying, "If you can't resolve your problems in peace, you can't solve war," reflects the wisdom that peace is foundational to resolving conflicts. These sayings emphasise that true harmony comes from inner and communal peace rather than from force. Proverbs like "Peace is costly but it is worth the price" and "Where there is peace, a billhook (sickle) can be used to shave your beard or cut your hair" (Rundi, Burundi), which imply using tools for creation rather than destruction, further highlight the value of peace. Another proverb, "When a man chooses peace, it doesn't mean they are not capable of war," acknowledges that peace is a conscious decision, not a sign of weakness. The Igbo proverb, "Peace and joy are better in this world," and the African saying, "If there is no enemy within, the enemy outside can do no harm," emphasise the importance of internal peace as the basis for external harmony. The Kongo (DR Congo) proverb, "It is impossible to make peace with a sword," and the Mongo (DR Congo) saying, "War is not the resolution to any problem," remind us that true peace cannot be achieved through violence. These proverbs collectively reinforce the idea that peace is a conscious effort, aligning with the transformative power of musical theatre to foster peace in Nigerian society.

Review of Relevant Literature

Music, universally regarded as a potent tool for communication, has long been acknowledged for its ability to bridge cultural and societal divides. In conflict resolution, music plays a crucial role by fostering empathy, creating shared emotional experiences, and promoting mutual understanding among communities in conflict. Research has demonstrated that music can serve as a therapeutic tool in post-conflict societies, aiding emotional healing and facilitating the reconciliation of divided groups (Hargreaves & North, 2010). By addressing the psychological aspects of conflict, music helps to create a sense of solidarity and empathy, thus contributing to sustainable

peacebuilding efforts. As noted by Sloboda (2010), music therapy has been successfully utilised in post-apartheid South Africa, helping individuals process trauma and reintegrate into society. In Northern Ireland, music has played a similar role in fostering dialogue between Protestant and Catholic communities, demonstrating its potential to bridge divided groups (Sloboda, 2010). These examples exemplify the power of music to facilitate conflict resolution, heal emotional trauma, and encourage dialogue between opposing communities.

Despite music's rich cultural significance in Nigeria, its potential as a tool for peacebuilding remains underutilised, particularly within the context of ethnic and religious conflict. Nigeria's political landscape, marred by persistent ethnic and religious violence, provides a unique opportunity to explore the potential of musical theatre as a conflict resolution tool. *Blood on Our Hands*, an Afro-musical by Davou et al. (2022), pioneers the use of musical theatre to address the root causes of conflict, specifically ethnic and religious tensions in Nigeria. Set against the backdrop of the Plateau State crisis, the musical highlights how music can mediate these conflicts by offering an emotional release for both the audience and the characters, creating a pathway for reconciliation and understanding.

Musical theatre, as an art form, has evolved significantly from its origins in ancient Greece, where it was used for social commentary and to explore the human condition. By the 20th century, musical theatre had become a dominant form of entertainment in Europe and America, with productions like *Oklahoma!* (1943), *West Side Story* (1957), and *Rent* (1996), addressing social issues ranging from racial inequality to urban poverty and social justice (Lawrence, 2017). These musicals not only provided entertainment but also raised awareness of societal challenges, inspiring dialogue and social change. The tradition of musical theatre as a medium for social

advocacy offers valuable lessons in conflict resolution, particularly in the African context, where it can be adapted to address local social and political realities.

In Nigeria, musical theatre has a long history, influenced by both indigenous performance traditions and Western theatrical forms. Pioneers like Hubert Ogunde, often referred to as the father of Nigerian theatre, integrated traditional music, dance, and drama into performances that addressed social issues, such as colonialism, political injustice, and cultural identity (Ngobili, 2016). Ogunde's work laid the foundation for Nigerian musical theatre, which continues to serve as a platform for cultural expression and social commentary. *Blood on Our Hands* draws on this tradition, combining Nigerian cultural practices with Western musical-theatre techniques to address ethnic and religious conflict. By integrating Nigerian musical elements, *Blood on Our Hands* resonates with local audiences, offering a culturally relevant and emotionally engaging form of peacebuilding.

African musical theatre, deeply intertwined with the continent's cultural identity, serves as a medium for addressing social issues and facilitating change. In African societies, music and performance are not merely entertainment but tools for communicating societal values, addressing communal struggles, and fostering unity. In *Blood on Our Hands*, the fusion of traditional African music with Western musical theatre highlights Nigeria's rich cultural heritage, celebrating the country's diversity while promoting unity. As Davis (2008) notes, "Music in African societies carries the weight of cultural identity, and when used in performance, it acts as both a reflection and a catalyst for social change" (p. 45). This cultural integration is central to the musical's role in promoting peace and unity, as it invites audiences to embrace their shared identity and work toward collective healing.

The application of music and theatre in addressing ethnic and religious conflict in Nigeria is particularly relevant given the country's history of division. Plateau State, in particular, has witnessed extensive violence between ethnic groups such as the Berom, Afizere, and Anaguta, and the Hausa/Fulani settlers. These conflicts, fuelled by political power struggles and exacerbated by religious extremism, have led to widespread destruction and deep-seated hatred among communities. *Blood on Our Hands* confronts these issues directly by using music and theatre to portray the emotional impact of these divisions. The musical serves as a platform for fostering empathy, encouraging the audience to understand the experiences of those affected by the violence and to consider the human cost of ongoing conflict.

The musical's use of interfaith dialogue is a crucial aspect of its conflict resolution strategy. In Nigeria, where religious extremism has often been a catalyst for violence, *Blood on Our Hands* emphasises the importance of dialogue between religious groups. By highlighting the role of religious leaders in mediating conflict, the musical presents a vision of Nigeria where faith-based organisations act as facilitators of peace. Through its narrative, the musical suggests that lasting peace in Nigeria can be achieved through mutual understanding and reconciliation, particularly between the Christian and Muslim communities that have long been at odds.

In conclusion, musical theatre offers significant potential as a tool for conflict resolution, particularly in regions like Plateau State, Nigeria, where ethnic and religious divisions continue to fuel violence. By drawing on the rich tradition of African musical theatre and integrating elements of Western theatrical techniques, *Blood on Our Hands* demonstrates how music can bridge divides, foster dialogue, and promote social cohesion. Through its exploration of ethnic and religious conflicts and its focus on reconciliation, the musical provides a compelling example of how the arts can contribute to peacebuilding. The integration of musical theatre into Nigeria's

peacebuilding initiatives offers a culturally relevant and emotionally powerful way to address conflict and foster unity among divided communities.

Presentation

Music as a Narrative Tool

In *Blood on Our Hands*, music serves as a powerful narrative tool, deepening the audience's emotional engagement with the story and its characters. The musical score blends traditional African rhythms with contemporary Western musical styles, creating a unique and culturally resonant soundscape that reflects Nigeria's diverse ethnic and religious landscape. This fusion of musical traditions mirrors the complexity of Plateau State, where multiple ethnic groups, including Berom, Afizere, and Anaguta, coexist with the Hausa/Fulani settlers amid ongoing tensions. The strategic placement of music throughout the performance amplifies key moments, especially during times of conflict. When the violence escalates between the ethnic groups, the music intensifies, mirroring the rising tension and chaos within the community. In contrast, during moments of reconciliation and hope, the melodies soften, symbolising healing and a renewed sense of peace.

This use of music allows the audience to experience the emotional highs and lows of the characters' journeys, aligning their emotional responses with the unfolding narrative. The shift from dissonance to harmony in the music mirrors the characters' internal shifts as they navigate their struggles. These musical transitions not only highlight the emotional depth of the conflict but also underscore the narrative's central thematic exploration of peace, healing, and reconciliation.

Music, therefore, does more than accompany the scenes; it becomes an integral part of the storytelling, enhancing the narrative's impact.

Synopsis of the Play *Blood on Our Hands* by Samuel Yohanna Davou

Blood on Our Hands is set against the backdrop of ongoing religious and ethnic violence in Plateau State, Nigeria. The play examines the communal crises affecting the region, focusing on the long-standing struggles between ethnic groups and religious communities. The musical traces the historical roots of these conflicts, identifying colonial-era divisions over land and religious conversion as key drivers of the violence. These tensions have worsened over time, fueling cycles of revenge, hatred, and division that continue to affect communities in Plateau State. The narrative offers a profound reflection on these issues as the characters grapple with personal and collective pain.

At the core of the story is the theme of interfaith and inter-ethnic dialogue. The play focuses on the journey of characters from different religious backgrounds, mainly Christians and Muslims, who come together to reconcile their differences and seek a path toward peace. The Gbong Gwom Jos, a traditional figure in Plateau State, plays a key role in mediating the conflict, symbolising the potential for traditional leaders to guide their communities toward peace. This emphasis on traditional leadership highlights the importance of cultural institutions in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, providing a grounding for the play's exploration of unity.

The musical delves into several sub-themes, including love, forgiveness, and the importance of unity in diversity. These themes unfold as the characters grapple with past trauma and seek a way forward in a divided society. Throughout the musical, characters overcome hatred and embrace the possibility of reconciliation. The musical conveys that peace is not merely the cessation of violence but the healing of emotional and psychological wounds, a process that requires empathy,

understanding, and forgiveness. By depicting a gradual reconciliation process, *Blood on Our Hands* advocates for peaceful coexistence among Nigeria's diverse communities, particularly those torn apart by religious and ethnic violence.

Thematic Exploration of Peace and Unity

The themes of peace, unity, and reconciliation take centre stage in *Blood on Our Hands*. The musical underscores the idea that lasting peace can be achieved only through mutual understanding, forgiveness, and open dialogue. It shows that peacebuilding is not a passive endeavour but an active process that requires concerted efforts from all members of society. In a country like Nigeria, where ethnic and religious violence has been persistent, *Blood on Our Hands* emphasises that reconciliation between communities can occur only if the individuals involved are willing to engage in dialogue and acknowledge each other's humanity.

The exploration of interfaith dialogue is particularly pertinent in Nigeria, where religious extremism has significantly contributed to violence. The musical conveys a compelling message that religion, when approached with an emphasis on understanding rather than division, can serve as a vital instrument in peacebuilding. Through the characters' journey, *Blood on Our Hands* underscores the essential role of religious leaders in bridging divides and fostering national unity. By engaging in dialogue and advocating for peace, these leaders can help mediate conflicts and guide their communities toward mutual respect and understanding.

The play's exploration of unity in diversity is vital in the Nigerian context. It calls for accepting differences and underscores the importance of cultural and religious tolerance. *Blood on Our Hands* suggests that embracing diversity is not a threat to unity but an opportunity to strengthen society. By focusing on personal and collective struggles for peace, the musical presents a compelling case for the role of music, theatre, and dialogue in overcoming division and promoting

national healing. Ultimately, the musical paints a hopeful picture of a united Nigeria where peace can be achieved through understanding, forgiveness, and ongoing dialogue.

Findings

Here are six key findings based on the thematic exploration and analysis of *Blood on Our Hands*:
Music as an Emotional Outlet: The musical uses music as a powerful emotional outlet for the characters, allowing them to express their pain, grief, and trauma resulting from the ongoing ethnic and religious conflicts in Plateau State. This emotional expression facilitates the cathartic process necessary for healing.

Promotion of Cultural Diversity: *Blood on Our Hands* celebrates Nigeria's rich cultural diversity by incorporating traditional music, songs, instruments, and dances from various ethnic groups, particularly from Plateau State. This approach promotes cultural pride and helps the audience embrace differences while advocating for unity.

Use of Music for Reconciliation: The musical emphasises how music can be a medium for reconciliation. Through the integration of cultural songs and performances, it fosters dialogue and understanding between communities with long-standing ethnic and religious divisions, encouraging collaboration toward peace.

Role of Interfaith Dialogue: The play highlights the importance of interfaith dialogue in healing religious divisions. By bringing together characters from different religious backgrounds (primarily Christians and Muslims), it promotes mutual understanding and reconciliation, illustrating how religion can serve as a bridge to peace when approached with tolerance.

Psychological Healing Through Music: Music in *Blood on Our Hands* is used to process emotional trauma and facilitate healing. The score's emotional depth reflects the psychological impact of

violence on the characters and promotes the idea of healing both individual and collective wounds caused by conflict.

Message of Unity and Forgiveness: At its core, the musical advocates for unity and forgiveness. The characters' journey toward reconciliation reflects the broader societal need for mutual understanding, empathy, and forgiveness, ultimately showing that peace can be achieved through these principles.

These findings highlight the transformative potential of music and musical theatre as tools for conflict resolution and peacebuilding, both emotionally and socially, in conflict-ridden regions like Plateau State.

Summary and Conclusion

This study demonstrates that musical theatre, particularly *Blood on Our Hands*, can serve as a powerful and effective tool for conflict resolution. By integrating music, drama, and cultural narratives, the musical provides a platform for peace, unity, and dialogue among communities deeply divided along ethnic and religious lines. The findings highlight the potential of musical theatre to address both the emotional and psychological aspects of conflict, offering a creative and culturally relevant alternative to traditional conflict resolution methods. The musical's incorporation of traditional music and performance allows it to resonate with local audiences, facilitating empathy and understanding while fostering a sense of shared cultural identity.

The themes of reconciliation, forgiveness, and unity in *Blood on Our Hands* offer hope to societies affected by long-standing conflict, illustrating that peace can be achieved through mutual understanding and a willingness to engage in dialogue. Through emotional expression and interfaith dialogue, the musical encourages a collective healing process, offering not just

entertainment but a means for communities to begin to mend the deep wounds caused by years of division.

Based on the findings, it is recommended that musical theatre be integrated into Nigeria's broader peacebuilding strategies, particularly in regions affected by ethnic and religious violence. Musical theatre can play a vital role in addressing the emotional trauma of communities, acting as a tool for social change and reconciliation. Further research is needed to explore the application of musical theatre in other conflict zones, and more artistic productions are needed that address societal issues and foster peace through cultural expression and artistic collaboration.

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