

PERSPECTIVES OF NIGERIAN WOMEN COMPOSERS

by

QUINTINA OBIANUJU CARTER-ENYI

(Under the Direction of Jean Kidula)

ABSTRACT

Women in Nigeria offer new perspectives on the who, what, how, and why of musical composition. This is predicated on the thesis that women have been keepers of human stories and songs since the pre-colony in West African cultures as exemplified by the Igbo of southeastern Nigeria (Onyeji 2004). The introduction of Western education disrupted this role by centering musical creation around European male figures with little consideration on the labor of women composers. An ethnographic approach was employed beginning in March 2021 to solicit the perspectives of Women composers about music, composition, and their positioning in the modern music academy. The findings suggest that there is need to dismantle the patriarchy inherited from a colonial curriculum that still regulates the Nigerian educational system. This understanding will further contribute to more inclusive academic environments not just in Nigeria but in music studies worldwide.

INDEX WORDS: Women in Music; Afropolitanism; Ethnography; Composition; Nigerian studies; Igbo studies

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BA, Lagos State University, Nigeria, 2014

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2023

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mother whose love for music inspired me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This work was supported by a Dean's Award from the University of Georgia Franklin College of Arts and Sciences. The award specifically resulted in a short documentary "Keepers of the Songs" (2021, 29 min, https://youtu.be/n_ZNPxdjvoo) presented to the Society for Music Theory in 2021 (it was also accepted for presentation by the Society for Ethnomusicology). This work was also supported through a grant by the National Endowment for the Humanities to Morehouse College.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, I discuss perspectives of women composers in Nigeria to broaden the discussion on how people outside Europe and North America think about music in general and how they engage with western music in the academy. As a woman, a musician, and member of the Igbo ethnicity in Nigeria, I have an insider perspective of the musical communities studied in this thesis. My musical experiences in the United States have also inspired this project and shaped my analysis. I aim to discuss whether the understanding of the term “composer”, and what composers do, in Nigeria may differ from understandings of the term elsewhere.

Nigeria is a multi-cultural nation whose boundaries were established in the Berlin Conference of 1884-5. The boundaries drawn by the European colonial powers created a sometimes uncomfortable mix of over 250 ethnic groups and 500 languages (SIL 2023). With the introduction of medicine and other aspects of modernity, Nigeria now has over 200 million people with the third largest youth population in the world (Kallon 2021). Igbo is one of the three largest ethnic groups and languages along with Hausa and Yoruba. Igboland is situated in southeastern Nigeria, while Yoruba land is in the west and Hausa land is in the north. Many, many smaller ethnic groups, ranging from thousands to millions of members exist around these major ethnic groups.

The act of creating music in Nigeria is not restricted to those who are formally trained in modern schools to be composers. As Kofi Agawu explains:

What is the secret of African music? Some say it is communal and inviting, drawing in a range of consumers young and old, skilled, and unskilled. It allows for the spontaneous and authentic expression of emotion. It is integrated

with social life rather than set apart, natural rather than artificial, and deeply human in its material significance (Agawu 2003: xi).

The focus of my study is composition. To some extent, the idea of sole authorship and by extension individual ownership of a piece of music is a rather new concept, but it is one that inspires people, much like authoring novels and writing poetry.

This thesis examines concepts of musical creativity among contemporary, cosmopolitan women in Nigeria. Reconceptualizing composition and who may be recognized as a composer is essential for both music education and the music industry. Of the two primary pursuits in music within the higher institution, the other being performance, composition is the most exclusive. Why are some accepted into study of composition and others rejected? What makes for a successful career in composition? The exclusivity of composition in music education also impacts the industry, because while trends come and go in the music industry, the academy endures. Because of several factors, some of which are explored in this thesis, the study of composition in the Nigerian music academy is pursued by men much more often than women.

Women having a role in creating and transmitting music in Nigeria is not new and to some extent parallels composing and notating (communicating) music. The role of women in traditional music was profound in pre-colonial African contexts. Music was created for performance by the community, and because the individual creator was not emphasized in the process, it is more difficult to view it as composition in the western academic sense. However, Merriam (1964) and Onyeji (2004) suggest the act of creating new music was a recognized skill.

The seed of a musical work often starts with an individual but once it is communicated to others, its elaboration and performance becomes communal. In Nigeria, interpretation of European classical music often includes an adaptation of this process. This suggests that the experiential knowledge of European classical music for Nigerians that have experienced

European classical music in Nigeria is a qualitatively different experience, even though much of the repertoire is the same and western instruments (especially keyboards and horns) are widely available. For instance, hymns in churches are often accompanied with percussion or a highlife feel to make them more “danceable” (Emielu and Donkor 2019). In 2013, the Musical Society of Nigeria staged Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte* (*The Magic Flute*) with African nativist costumes. Hymns, operas, and other forms of European music are adapted to be more culturally relevant. The incorporation of indigenous instruments with hymn singing enables participation by musicians that do not play western instruments and provides the community with recognizable rhythmic patterns to which they can move and clap. Vocal harmonization are often added that are not part of the notated hymn. Although those educated in the west, most frequently at UK Conservatories, have a more conventional approach and are often aggravated by syncretic approaches, most Nigerians perform and consume western music in a communalistic way.

This thesis aims to understand how women, who traditionally played a significant role in musical creation, are channeling their creativity in contemporary Nigerian society. Many Nigerians are reconciling the organic processes that exist in parts of Africa with the Eurocentric practices that dominate institutions such as churches, schools, and universities. The idealized practice of musical creation presented in post-colonial music education from primary to university-levels is “composition” modeled by European composers, like Händel. Composition is not usually considered to be inclusive of the processes typically employed in traditional or vernacular music found in Africa or elsewhere, but the act of creating new music is not unique to Europeans or men. People around the world create music that did not exist before. To broaden our understanding of musical composition, this thesis follows the creative practices of Nigerian

women drawing on practices that seem to be rooted in pre-colonial society based on my observations in the cosmopolitan present.

Key Terms and Concepts

It is necessary to define some key terms to clarify how they are employed in my discussion. *Igbo women* are a group of people frequently mentioned in this project. Consideration must be given to how the identity of being an Igbo woman is understood today and what is attached to it. Igbo refers to a language, an ethnic group, a people, and a geographic location with southeastern Nigeria, called Igboland in English. The southeastern region is also referred to as Biafra, a secessionist movement for independence from Nigeria carried on by the Igbo and some related ethnic groups.



Figure 1.1: Map of region identified as Biafra by secessionist movement¹

¹ Milenioscuro, CC BY-SA 4.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons

Identifying as an Igbo has strong ethnic, political, and nationalistic implications. For example, Nwando Achebe feels a stronger tie to being Igbo than to being Nigerian. Prof. Nwando Achebe is the daughter of a famed novelist, Chinua Achebe, whose novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958) is an iconic literary response to colonialism. While Chinua Achebe is referenced globally as Nigerian, locally he is recognized as an Igbo man. His daughter, Nwando, is an Igbo woman. Nwando Achebe describes the components of her identity in this way:

When I think of my identity, a number of questions immediately come to mind. First, what does it mean to be African? Second, what does Africa (and especially Nigeria) mean to me? And third, how do I choose to locate and name myself? The issue of how I choose to name myself informs my very identity. I am first and foremost Igbo, then I am a woman, and third I am African. Only last do I name myself Nigerian. Being black does not even enter into the equation. Since race has never been a distinguishing category in Africa. We are simply people, nations of different ethnicities, language groups, and culture. Therefore, Igbo is who I am, it is my culture, it is my worldview, it is the way I think, the way I speak, the way I write, and the way I dream. But a big part of my Igbo identity is also shaped by being a woman. For an Igbo woman's world is vastly different from an Igbo man's... (Achebe & Teboh 2007: 63-4).

Nwando Achebe's reluctant association with Nigeria is understandable because very few, if any, people *chose* to be Nigerian; it was imposed as part of the European colonial enterprise. During the colonial era, Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, and people of many other ethnicities were informed that they were now Nigerian. Even after independence, this nomination persisted whether we liked it or not. Many people are still reluctant to adopt this national identity recognized by the international community, hence my earlier reference to the Biafran War. Nwando Achebe further indicates that belonging to the peoples of the African continent, or being African, is more central to her identity than being Nigerian. This might be because Africa is a long-standing geographic area (a continent) housing many groups of people, some more closely related than others. It is through being an African and of African descent, in contrast to being a European of European descent, or an African of European descent that the politics of racial identity emerge. In my

discussion, being Igbo is related to both being African and being Nigerian but being Nigerian is a recent construction by Europeans and Nigerian identity is still forming. Therefore, I represent Nigerian identity with a dashed line in Figure 1.2, while the more established African and Igbo identities are represented by a solid line.

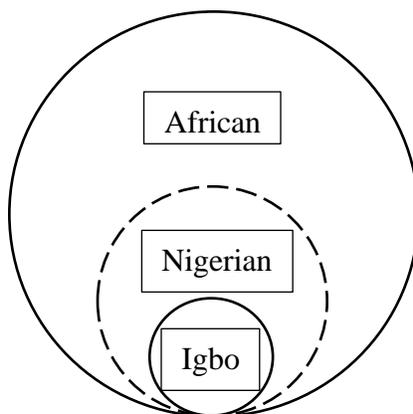


Figure 1.2: Levels of identity formation based on Achebe & Teboh (2007)

For better or worse, being Nigerian, as in being a Nigerian citizen, is a part of how Nigerians reference themselves today. Being a Nigerian citizen includes signifiers such as speaking the English language (particularly in the southern portion of the country), which is how we conduct official business, like banking and governance.

An ethnographic map of Nigeria (showing the dominant languages) is provided as Figure 1.3. A little to the west and one would be a Beninoise and a little to the east and you would be a Cameroonian, and in either case, likely speak French (a small southwest portion of Cameroon bordering Nigeria is Anglophone). Another part of the artificially constructed Nigerian identity is the phrase “unity through diversity.” Being Nigerian is characterized by both interethnic cooperation and conflict. Schools, banks, and government offices are often deliberately multi-ethnic. Being Nigerian also includes frequent news about ethnic conflict, which is also a theme in the citizens’ daily lives, usually on a micro-aggressive level. In northern Nigeria, Hausa is often used as a bridge language instead of English.

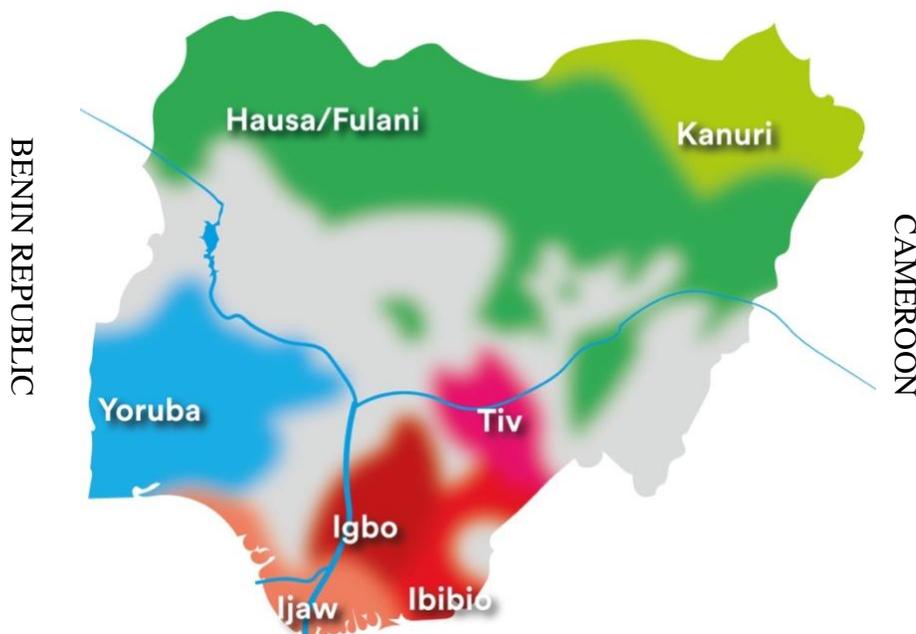


Figure 1.3: A map of seven major ethnic groups in Nigeria (FrankvEck, CC BY-SA 4.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons)

Nwando Achebe also elaborates the difference of being an Igbo man versus being an Igbo woman. Being an Igbo woman is the intersection of being Igbo and being a woman. She emphasizes the importance of femininity in Igbo culture. Igbo femininity includes motherhood and unique beauty practices in hairstyles, clothing, and body painting (especially for dancers). In this thesis, I refer to the role of women in Igbo music traditions, which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

It is also important to define some categories of music-making within Nigeria. In 1976, Euba established five broad categories: traditional music, church music, concert music, music theatre, and modern popular music (Euba 1976:27). Nearly fifty years later, these categories still exist but have been expanded. Most notably, the popular music Euba wrote about in 1976 was juju and highlife, while today popular music is dominated by forms of electronic dance music, especially Naija Hip Hop known outside of Nigeria as “Afrobeats” (with an “s” in contrast to

Fela Kuti's Afrobeat without an "s"). Older forms of popular music, like juju and highlife, are now categorized as traditional music.

Traditional music, more generally, refers to long-standing practices which are based on indigenous languages and instruments. This category has the most continuity with pre-colonial life and remains prominent in rituals and events such as naming ceremonies, weddings, burials and festival days. The concept of concert music has not changed between 1976 and 2023. The term refers to European-style classical music that is formally transcribed by composers who have undergone western-style music education. The repertoire in Nigeria includes works by European classical composers such as Mozart as well as Nigerian and sometimes Ghanaian composers, with the largest output in choral music, apart from a few orchestral and chamber works. These works are usually referred to as art music in scholarly literature. Much of the scholarship of Nigerian art music is by composers such as Akin Euba (2014), Olabode Omojola (1994, 2001) and Christian Onyeji (2019). All these scholars are male and have concentrated on male composers.

Church music might best be described today as a type of sacred music, because in Nigeria, Muslims compose and perform religious praise and worship music, which is an example of how this category has expanded. Within Nigeria, sacred popular music employs nearly identical styles to secular popular music, with innovations in musical style crossing from the secular to the sacred and vice-versa. Sacred music can also adapt concert music and traditional music. So sacred music does not denote style of music, or even so much a context (because the modes of worship are very diverse) so much as having a devotional or praise of the Abrahamic God, with either Christian or Muslim variations. The sacred music indigenous religions also exists and will be further referenced in Chapter 2.

Music theatre including Nigerian dance-drama, which draws more on traditional music, while operas, operettas, and musicals in western styles like “Pirates of Penzance” are staged. There seems to be less public interest in dance-drama, with the decline of the national theatre, but they are still performed in university theatre departments. There is considerable literature on indigenous and syncretic theatre in Nigeria (e.g., Amankulor 1968).

In Nigeria, the term composer is widely known, introduced in childhood education including primary and secondary school music classes (Adeogun 2007). The most common examples of composers as creators of music are European composers, especially Händel. The term is conventionally associated with concert and church music. However, because of the ways in which music crosses the broad categories listed above, it is difficult to firmly state that the act of composing is restricted to these domains. Therefore, the term composer may not be understood or used in the same way in Nigeria as it has been used in Euba’s categories, or as it is used in Europe or North America. The related term songwriter is not widely used in Nigeria with the possible exception of upper-class populations resident in the Lagos Islands where the urban culture is heavily influenced by western trends.

A key concept used to understand these musical categories is the term *Afropolitanism*. Although it is often referred to as an “ism” the concept centers around people as Afropolitans. According to Abebe (2015), an Afropolitan is someone defined “by his/her routes through Africa (be they physical or ideological), more so than roots.” Balakrishnan explains Afropolitanism as “a way of being African in the world—of being African and cosmopolitan, and of observing African cultures themselves as hybridity formed from many different influences and roots” (Mbembe & Balakrishnan 2016). This description suggests that Afropolitanism is a subset of cosmopolitanism with a specific link to Africa. Ghanaian-British philosopher Appiah argues in

Cosmopolitanism (2010) that all cultures are contaminated. Even indigenous traditions reflect interactions between ethnic groups. While popular music (like Afrobeat) and art music (like the music of Ayo Bankole) are commonly acknowledged to be creolized or “hybridized,” traditional music too reflects cultural borrowings on different timescales. Notions of cosmopolitanism and Afropolitanism suggest that none of the musics Nigerians engage are fully indigenous or fully imported.

The final key term is *autoethnography* which was first used by Heider to connect personal experiences to shared cultural beliefs and traditions (1975). More recently, *autoethnography* refers to the work of cultural insiders (Adams et al. 2011). I conducted my research as a cultural insider, and my personal experiences and positions factor into the analysis presented here. Self-reflection is often a part of autoethnographic research (Bochner & Ellis 2016). Although I am from Nigeria where this project was researched, my perspective is not the primary focus of this thesis. For this reason, autoethnography may not apply. I will use the term *cultural insider* for a more accurate description of my participation.

Problem Statement

Women were the keepers of stories and songs in some pre-colonial West African cultures including the Igbo of southeastern Nigeria (Onyeji 2004). The introduction of Western education disrupted this role by centering musical creation around great compositions by European male figures. Although post-colonial music education and scholarship does not emphasize it, women still carry music with them and create it. There are studies on indigenous traditions, popular music, and art music, but very few of these focus on women as composers. The literature on African art music has advocated that composition be a form of research (e.g., Euba 2014, Onyeji

2019), but this aim is not necessarily shared by all with the desire to create new music. This thesis shares the perspectives of contemporary women composers with cosmopolitan experiences to broaden the literature on both Nigerian music and women in music.

Scope of Study

While there may be similar issues regarding women and musicianship elsewhere, this project focuses on women composers fusing traditional and art music in Nigeria. I will further narrow the study to women with formal academic training in music. The work focuses more on composition than performance. Though the two practices are related, composition is broadly conceived to include a wide variety of creative practices including performance in both traditional and art music.

Traditional and art music is emphasized more than contemporary popular music because these are the musics that are studied formally as objects of practice in the educational system. Art music in this thesis mostly refers works composed by Nigerians. However, it is common to find George Frederic Händel (a German-British composer) and Lazarus Ekwueme (a Nigerian composer trained in the UK and US) on the same concert program. Traditional music, as it is taught in universities, includes both indigenous ethnic music and older forms of urban popular music (like Palmwine, Juju and Highlife). There is an economic and educational overlap with traditional and art music, whereas the most current popular trends like Afrobeats are separate in the economy and usually ignored by Academia. Once a popular music age it is incorporated into the educational sector as “traditional” music, as has happened with highlife.

The work is more focused on gender than race. While these women might not reject being called black women, from my experience, it is not forefront in their minds as Nigerian women as it is for black women in America.

Research Objectives and Questions

This thesis has three main objectives:

- Understand why and how women in Nigeria compose
- Explore musical thought in a post-colonial and cosmopolitan context
- Deconstruct the Eurocentric view of composition as a profession (including as an academic position)

Research questions that arise from these objectives are presented in the following sections.

The following questions were raised in order to understand why and how women in Nigeria compose. How do women in Nigeria who compose music visualize themselves in the world of institutionalized (academic) music learning? How has the Nigerian education system contributed to the formation of their musicianship? To what extent do these women composers have autonomy and control over their education, career, and musical aspirations? What are the determining factors? How did music training improve or impede their musical careers; is there a difference in career growth and autonomy in music when women receive western music training within the university system, the conservatory, or the church? The restrictions associated with the use of the term “composer” brings to the question: what makes for the attribution “composer” versus, say “songwriter” to a music creator? How does gender play a role if any, in the career of women composers in Nigeria? Did socio-cultural and economic factors contributed?

My second research objective was to explore musical thought in a post-colonial and cosmopolitan context. Many queries along this line overlapped with the first objective. What is the impact of colonialism, westernization, and globalization? How has western classical training, music literacy and exposure to western music impacted this? Scholars such as Obijiaku (2022) have talked about hybridity. Does one stylistic influence dominate the others in the women's compositional process, or do they work together? If the stylistic influences are fused, how successful is this combination? How are multicultural musical experiences incorporated into formal music training based on Western music histories, theories, and curriculum? How do African elements factor into art music in the western model?

Finally, I addressed questions aimed at deconstructing the Eurocentric view of composition as a profession, to composers supported through academic positions or formal publishing and commissions. Does the term composition need to be redefined? Should we avoid words like composer when discussing women creators in very different contexts from western art music? Or should we openly apply the term composer to everyone?

The questions I have outlined were predicated on assumptions about the role of the colonial enterprise, missionization and the introduction of western education, in addition to national, social, and economic restructuring in comparison to prior experience and observation about women musicians in ethnic and educational spaces.

Methodology

I combined ethnographic methods such as interviews and participant-observation with autoethnographic reflection. Data was compiled using audiovisual recordings and notes. Two data set types were employed: recordings of performances of traditional music with brief

interviews of performers; long form interviews of women with formal music training and who to some extent identify as composers. The latter were semi-structured interviews conducted in both the eastern and western regions of Nigeria from March through July 2021. Interviews were recorded with a camera (Canon 5D) and audio recorder (Zoom H4N). The audio was transcribed using the REV transcription service.

Women composers were sought out in the communities of the University of Lagos, University of Nigeria and Musical Society of Nigeria. The participants were identified through the snowball technique of informants leading to other informants and so on. Participants were selected based on their training in western music and theories. They included music professors, music students and musicians who have received formal musical training from school such as the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), or from music conservatories such as the Musical Society of Nigeria (MUSON). Nine participants were consulted. Their ages ranged from approximately 25 years old to 60 years old.

In a semi-structured interview format, participants discussed their musical background, experiences as musicians, their compositions, and identities as composers. We also discussed their take on music theory and music education in institutions where they received their training, and gendered experiences in music and in the Nigerian society. My line of questions may be considered prompts to encourage discussion as much as questions, because these were not designed to elicit binary responses, like yes or no. The extent to which the interview followed my script largely depended on the participant. In my discussion with participants, I did not want to be too leading, so I asked very simple questions to start and then some follow-up questions to encourage them to elaborate (see Appendix 1 for interview questions and links to full transcripts). All interviews were one-on-one and were conducted by the researcher.

Analysis of the data in Chapter 4 focuses on the interview transcripts. However, I believe it is also important to have a visual and aural representation of the music and people, so I have provided links to the videos that were recorded from the interviews in Appendix 1. The sound of their voice, their appearance, and environment all help to provide a better understanding of these women and their perspectives, telling a more comprehensive story.²

Sampling and Participant Description

The nine participants interviewed in Nigeria between March and July 2021 included Esther Eboka, Elizabeth Ekaette, Monica Enyi, Ijeoma Forchu, Grace Oforka, Genevieve Ogu, Elizabeth Oluwade, Agatha Onwuekwe, and Mary Umosoh. They are all musicians familiar with the western concept of being a composer and, to a greater or lesser extent, considered themselves composers or, at least, people who “compose” music. Some of these women might be considered performers as much or more than composers, but they were interviewed based on their compositional practice not on performance questions. Interviews were conducted in two areas: Lagos State (in the southwest), and Enugu/Anambra States (in the southeast). The participants came from three ethnicities Igbo (6), Efik (2) and Yoruba (1). All are ethnicities of southern Nigeria which was largely Christianized in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Christian communities in Nigeria tend to be much more familiar with European classical music and composers.

The interviewees had received formal musical training at the post-secondary level. They are affiliated with higher education institutions such as the University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN) and the Musical Society of Nigeria (MUSON). UNN is a federal university with the oldest music

² These audiovisual recordings and transcripts have been stored as part of the Africana Digital Ethnography Project (ADEPt) collections of the Atlanta University Center Woodruff Library (radar.auctr.edu/adept).

department in the country, founded in 1961. MUSON is a European-style conservatory which prepares students to take accredited exams of the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM), UK.

I focused on Nigerian women with western training because of the uniqueness of their perspectives on music and music composition. The wide exposure of the average Nigerian to European, American, and multiple Nigerian cultures yields a diverse appreciation of music. For instance, in a typical Catholic mass in Nigeria, it is not uncommon to hear the choir sing in seven different languages (each with different repertoires) in one service. Therefore, some of the participants' musical interest and participation span from traditional music and dance to hymn singing and western composition. Despite their westernized training, some of the women composers interviewed have significant experience with traditional music usually related to their ethnic background. Early experiences with music in their ethnic communities formed the basis for how they think about and eventually create their own music.

Interviews were conducted in Enugu State (in March through May 2021) and Lagos State (in July 2021). Enugu State is in the southeastern region of Nigeria, and all participants interviewed in Enugu were Igbo. Lagos is a cosmopolitan megacity in southwestern Nigeria (see Figure 1.4). In Lagos, I found participants from these ethnicities: Efik-Ibibio,³ Igbo, and Yorùbá.

³ Efik-Ibibio is closely associated with Igbo.



Figure 1.4: Map of Nigeria (light yellow/beige) with state lines in grey. Lagos state is in red in the southwest and Enugu State is in red in the southeast portion of the country.

When searching for composers to interview for this study, I encountered many male composers from various ethnic groups, but this is not the case for women. Most of the women I interviewed (six out of nine) were Igbo women, women who have a hereditary connection to the Igbo culture of southeastern Nigeria. Although this was not my initial intention, I found that even in a cosmopolitan city like Lagos, the majority of women who considered themselves to be composers identified as Igbo. In contrast, there were relatively few Yoruba women that compose in the manner defined by the academy, and the one that I did interview could be classified as a singer-songwriter in the popular music sense since she composes and performs her own music with voice and guitar. In all, eight of nine participants belonged to ethnic groups of the southeast: Igbo and Efik-Ibibio.

Literature Review

It is important to share the perspectives of women because they differ from the existing literature on women in music, African/Nigerian Art Music, and African/Nigerian Traditional Music. The major categories and subcategories of literature relevant to this thesis therefore focus on writings about African traditional music (especially on women's practices), on music education in Nigeria and West Africa, on African Art Music especially in Nigeria, on women composers in the West, and on the concept of cosmopolitanism and Afropolitanism.

There is impressive literature on women's musical practices in West Africa (e.g., Hanna 1981, Onyeji 2004, Ampene 2005, Ozah 2010, Scharfenberger 2011, Amoah-Ramey 2018, Abah 2021). The literature focuses on indigenous practices with little input from westernization. This reflects a long-standing emphasis on studying African traditional music for western archival and historical documentation (Agawu 2011). Onyeji's work on rural women's creative practices (2004) is the most relevant to my project because it focuses on Igbo women (most of the women I interviewed are Igbo). The creative practices Onyeji describes are compared to composition. Notably, Van Allen (1972) and Agbasiere (2000) provide additional information on Igbo women. Although they do not address music specifically, they offer complementary views of an outsider and insider respectively. Nwando Achebe's biography of Ahebi Ugbabe (2011), the only female king within Nigeria during the colonial period, shows the wide variety of lived experiences of Igbo women. Ugbabe's life ranks among epic stories of brave women in West Africa, like Alpern's 1998 book on "Amazons", which was the inspiration for the 2022 film "The Woman King." For ethnographic fieldwork on Igbo traditional music, I drew on field research on Ikorodo starting with Ames (1968, 1986). Ames' work is compared with 2019 to 2020 resources on Ikorodo music by Jude Nwankwo, Aaron Carter-Enyi and myself for the Africana Digital

Ethnography Project (ADEPt) which includes nearly 100 individual videos.⁴ Recent research (e.g., Opara and Agbo 2022) demonstrates that traditional music continues to evolve, including women taking on new roles in conventionally male ensembles like Ikorodo. I have chosen to present this discussion as a chapter (2) as significant cultural backdrop for my study.

Many scholars have researched music education in Nigeria, contributing multiple publications on the subject. For this project, I focused on Okafor (1988, 1989), Kwami (1989, 1994), Lo-Bamijoko (1994, 2021), Adeogun (2007, 2018a, 2018b, 2021). Adeogun teaches at the University of Nigeria Nsukka where some interviews for this project were conducted. His articles focus specifically on music curricula in higher education (notably 2018a, 2018b, 2021). One of Adeogun's mentors, Meki Nzewi is well known for his advocacy of indigenous knowledge and musical systems in music education (1980, 1999). Nzewi writes about a "meaningful progression of tradition to modern[ity]" in which indigenous music can become part of the academy (1999). Ogunrinade (2015) makes a similar argument about the importance of indigenous musical cultures to primary and secondary school education. Finally, Adeogun (2021) shows that the "dominance of Euro-American classical musical practice" since 1961 has received little questioning. He advocates for decolonizing university music education through new paradigms including "indigenisation, Africanisation, Islamisation, Nigerianisation and globalisation" (2021:466). I have devoted the 3rd chapter of my thesis on these topics in order to better ground my data.

Related to music education in Nigeria is the literature on African Art Music. I have focused on Nigerian Art Music. This body of work includes contributions by senior scholars including Agawu (2011), Euba (2014) and Onyeji (2019), and emerging scholars like Ofuani

⁴ Stable URL Video Link to Ikorodo example: <http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12322/adept.unn:0013>

(2022). However, the literature focuses solely on men, and advocates for an experimental or research-based approach to developing art music from the models of traditional music (see Agawu 2011).

The body of literature on women composers in the west has developed for many decades (e.g., Drinker 1948, Jezic & Wood 1994, Pendle & Boyd 2015). Recent scholarship has emphasized Black women composers in the US (Boykin 2022), particularly the work of Florence Price who is a pianist and symphonic composer active in Chicago in the early twentieth century (Smith 2007, Marquese 2018, Hsieh 2019, Jobson 2019, Hill-Wells 2021, VanHandel 2022). However, this is not the case for women in Nigeria. To my knowledge there are only three works that address Nigerian women's creative practices in music, Onyeji (2004), Sadoh's biography of Lo-Bamijoko (in which she is called a songwriter, 2012), and a recent and unique contribution by Peter Sylvanus, "Women as Composers in Nollywood" (2021). The style of scoring for Nollywood films is very much rooted in indigenous sounds and neo-traditional music practices but uses contemporary recording and sequencing techniques.

Onyeji's work is the most relevant literature to my project (2004). The author is a (male) professor of composition at the University of Nigeria Nsukka whose work focuses on women's role in creating music (or composition) in a traditional African context. His case study is on the Igbo ethnic group of which I am a member as are most of the interview participants. The composers interviewed for my project are a different demographic (more urbanized or westernized) than the Igbo rural women Onyeji (2004) describes, but they share in the desire to create music.

To interpret the interviews and understand the participants' musical lives, I draw on the notion of Afropolitanism, which may be understood as an African form of cosmopolitanism

(Mbembe & Balakrishnan 2016). Cosmopolitanism, as a philosophical theory, was elaborately developed by British-Ghanaian philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah (2005, 2010). In Appiah's 2010 book, cosmopolitanism is a vision of an interconnected instead of divided world. More recently, the notion of Afropolitanism has been explored in popular and scholarly culture as an expression of cosmopolitanism with routes through Africa (Abebe 2015). Afropolitanism (specifically cosmopolitanism in the African context) provides one way of understanding how the women interviewed for this project navigate their musical identities. The importance of the Afropolitan ideal to this research aligns with Eze (2015), who argues that Afropolitanism describes the fluidity of identities in Africa in contrast to fixed identities often attributed to Africans. The term has received some criticism by Emma Dabiri (2016) who feels it has become synonymous with global consumerism, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie who notes (like Appiah) that cosmopolitanism is not a new thing in Africa (Juompan-Yakam 2020).⁵ Adichie, Dabiri and Eze all have Nigerian and Igbo roots, so the idea clearly has inspired thought that intersects with Igbo heritage, though all three are much more internationalized than the participants in this study.

Rationale and Disclosure

Even after selecting my research topic and confidently commencing interviews, I was very self-conscious about writing this work. I was concerned that a person writing about their own culture would not be taken seriously in the academy, even though African scholars have been doing so since the 1980s. I completed my bachelor's degree at Lagos State University in International History and Relations before proceeding to graduate study at the University of Georgia in the

⁵ <https://www.theafricareport.com/27060/nigerias-chimamanda-ngozi-adichie-talks-colonialism-politics-and-pop-culture/>

United States. How does studying at a foreign institution versus studying at an institution closer to home impact one's perspective? How do research participants react to it? These autoethnographic questions are not the work's main point, but they informed my positioning.

In her blog, "My People Tell Stories," Danielle Brown presents a different perspective on the role of BIPOC people in music academia. Regarding her first-time attending the Society for Ethnomusicology meeting, Brown writes: "What was strange and uncomfortable was the ways that predominantly white scholars in attendance presumed that they understood BIPOC and were authorities on cultures to which they did not belong." (Brown 2021). The dismissal of autoethnographic research and the work of cultural insiders was a means of marginalizing underrepresented minorities within western Academia. Brown suggests that the work of cultural insiders should be a norm in ethnomusicology, not an exception.

I am a woman and Nigerian citizen who received western-style education. The interview participants selected for this study are of similar demographics. My family is indigenous to present-day Enugu state, so I identify as Igbo. Some of the respondents identify as Igbo, and others do not. In addition to English, I speak multiple Nigerian languages, including standard Yorùbá, Nigerian Pidgin, and several dialects of the Igbo language. While all participants, and most Nigerians, are multilingual to some extent, it is relatively uncommon to be fluent in multiple indigenous languages in the country's southern portion. Although I have some experience with all three major languages of Nigeria (Hausa, Igbo, and Yorùbá), there are still hundreds of other languages indigenous to Nigeria that I do not speak. Nigeria's "megadiversity" of culture and language (Skutnabb-Kangas et al. 2003) means no one is a cultural insider in all contexts.

The ability to communicate with participants in indigenous languages is a great benefit to this research, and essential to communicating with people in rural areas, such as the Otu Umunwanyi groups (discussed in Chapter 2). However, there are challenges that come with being an insider, especially when one is also viewed as an outsider in the communities that are the focus of the research. Becoming more cosmopolitan may weaken one's competence and reception as a cultural insider in your home area. Participants may have much greater expectations if they know you have traveled outside of Nigeria (and therefore are perceived as wealthy) but also are familiar with local culture. Expectations might include bringing gifts. My participation in the Africana Digital Ethnography Project (ADEPt) was crucial since it enabled me to offer support (provided from grant funds) to community participants.

The greatest challenge of being an insider is not relating with participants but relaying their knowledge to those that are purely outsiders. While I acknowledge the impact of nationalized and globalized economies and education, I do not believe this diminishes the value of my perspective or the respondents' perspectives in this study. In the conclusion, I will argue for the importance of intercultural perspectives musically, culturally, and academically.

Overview and Outline

The rest of the chapters are outlined as follows:

- Chapter 2 focuses on the role of women in traditional music in Nigeria.
- Chapter 3 considers institutionalized music education and Nigerian art music.
- Chapter 4 is detailed analysis of my interviews with Nigerian women in 2021.
- Chapter 5 is a discussion of the findings and conclusion.

2. WOMEN AND TRADITIONAL MUSIC IN NIGERIA

Introduction

Women were the keepers of stories and songs in some pre-colonial West African cultures. According to Christian Onyeji, women were and are active as musical creators among the Igbo of eastern Nigeria (2004). Merriam (1964) and Onyeji both agree that there is something resembling composition among pre-colonial and/or rural Igbo people, though their works are not notated, and the people were pre-literate. Formal Western-style education introduced by the British was embraced in Nigeria (including by the Igbo communities) as a tool for personal and social advancement. It also led to the restructuring of gender roles in different regions of the country. The disadvantage of this restructuring is that men came to occupy newly created professional roles, including music professorships. European music history centered musical creation around European male figures such as George Frederic Händel. Music education in Nigerian schools and universities largely still follows Western curriculums introduced by British missionaries and later developed by British academics with the founding of branch universities like the University of Ibadan (formerly affiliated with the University College London). Most canonical model composers are European males, with the addition of some African males since independence.

This chapter introduces the ethnographic approach to considering musical creativity by examining the role of women in traditional music such as Ikorodo and Egwu Otu Umunwanyi. Appiah shrewdly points out that all cultures are contaminated to a greater or lesser extent (2010). Speculation is involved because we do not fully know how people created music in the absence

of what Appiah calls cultural “contamination.” This chapter combines my experiences of women’s music making in Igbo community gatherings in my youth with recent ethnographic field work (in 2020 and 21) and literature on Igbo women.

Before the colonial disruption, it was appropriate for women to lead music ensembles in some traditional societies, a case in point here being the Igbo. Women’s musical roles included creative activities including composition and arrangements. Women’s abilities in this regard were not questioned. Women still play a very active role in musical creativity in traditional music events, as observed in recordings made by the Africana Digital Ethnography Project provided with links in Appendix 3.



Figure 2.1: Circle dance by Otu Umunwanyi near Enugu-Ezike, Enugu State, Nigeria

In my experience, music in westernized social contexts like university music schools and urban night clubs tends to be male dominated. Choral works like Händel’s “Messiah” and the composer’s other oratorios are widely performed in churches and schools throughout Nigeria. Women commonly perform and conduct choirs in local Christian churches. However, the repertoire is composed or selected as appropriate by men at higher levels of administration (such

as the diocese or even international bodies). In Nigeria, it is not common for women to have organizational leadership roles in churches (Oyewole 2017).

Post-colonial contexts starkly contrast what I have observed and grew up experiencing in terms of indigenous music-making. Traditionally, Igbo women could undertake all aspects of music-making (including creating new music) for the benefit of the whole community. Western education (including musical performance practices) introduced new musical contexts that disrupted these cultural norms. While racial exclusion has since been challenged, especially after national independence in 1960, gender exclusion continued to be the norm. The new idea of male-centered musical creativity continued as many Nigerian men adopted identities as “composers,” including composers of sacred music such as Harcourt Whyte (1905–77) in Port Harcourt and T. K. E. Phillips (1884–1969) in Lagos (Sadoh 2009). These styles of musical composition have had a significant presence at some Nigerian universities since independence. Notable faculty composers in the late twentieth century have been male, such as Laz Ekwueme of the University of Lagos and Joshua Uzoigwe of the University of Nigeria Nsukka.

Although contemporary music education in Nigeria does not emphasize it, Igbo women still carry music with them and have a strong desire to create new music. They sing existing songs and compose new ones on the spot to achieve their goals. They teach their children moral lessons and pass on oral history through music. Igbo women have also become composers in the Western sense, studying at universities and, in some cases, becoming professors of composition, including Agatha Onwuekwe of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, who was interviewed for this project. Despite a strong association between maleness and composition in academic and Western classical music spheres, I found some Nigerian women who identify themselves as

composers. Through their daily work as educators, these women inspire the next generation with a more inclusive vision of musical creativity that resonates with pre-colonial traditions.

Cultural Continuity with Innovation

Colonialism and missionization were abrupt and disruptive cultural changes that significantly impacted how music was practiced. On the other hand, many precolonial traditions were retained. A prime example of cultural continuity is the Ikorodo music practiced by the Igbo of Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria. Over time, the purpose of Ikorodo music and dance has changed from being part of indigenous beliefs (about a maiden spirit named Ikorodo) to being a recreational activity for school children and church youth groups. The music was first recorded before the Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970) by an American anthropology student from Northwestern University. David Ames was a student of famed Africanist scholar Melville Herskovits. David Ames visited the people of Obimo in 1965, living on top of a hill in a remote area of Nsukka. The people of Obimo had been colonized and granted independence almost unbeknownst to them and without ever being missionized. In this remote and hilly area, the people were subsistence farmers yet to be missionized. Ames refers to them as Igbo people, but the Nsukka dialect is far enough away from central dialects of Igbo, such as Owerri and Onitsha, as to be barely intelligible to central Igbo speakers. Community members played music without concern about capitalizing on it. Their practice contrasted contemporary Hausa musicians in northern Nigeria who viewed music as a profession (Ames 1968). At the time, urbanized Igbo people already participated more fully in a post-colonial society. Igbo composer and scholar Laz Ekwueme was studying music at conservatories and universities in the UK and the US, preparing

to become Nigeria's first professor of music. But in the hills of Obimo, music was a pastime, not a profession.

Based on interviews conducted by Chinweike Eze for the Africana Digital Ethnography Project (ADEPt) in 2020, we know that the community remained essentially unaffected by colonization and missionization up until 1967. However, the Nigerian Civil War (also known as the Biafran War, 1967–70) soon changed things: the Nsukka area was a frontline of Biafra and soon fell, occupied by Nigerian forces from 1968 to 1970. Afterward, Catholic and Anglican missionaries came to places like Obimo. But these weren't white missionaries. They were African-born missionaries with funding from the west. And while they proselytized heavily, they were more open to the indigenous sounds than white missionaries. Over time, Ikorodo performance disassociated with the worship of its namesake, Ikorodo, the maiden spirit. Then, Ikorodo music and dance were welcomed and even championed by the Catholic church diocese in Nsukka, becoming a prime example of inculturation (a term for welcoming indigenous practices into the church since Vatican II).



Figure 2.2: Orba Ikorodo Ensemble performing in January 2019 near Nsukka (Credit: Nwankwo/Carter-Enyi)

Africana Digital Ethnography Project (ADEPt) recordings from 2019 to 2022 resemble recordings from the 1960s by Ames (1986), including some of the same chants and tunes,

specifically, “Egwu A Yara Ozo” (The Music Has Changed).⁶ The music is predominantly instrumental, characterized by side blown horns playing in hocket technique accompanied by light percussion. Occasionally, vocal chants by the same horn players interrupt the instrumental passages. The chants and horn parts mimic each other to some extent. Most of the auditory aspects are the same. The differences are in material practices and gender roles. The characteristic side-blown horns were fashioned from animal horns then but are now made of rolled and welded sheet metal. Most importantly, when Ames observed the Ikorodo in 1965, only men could play the instruments and wear the masquerade (1986). However, that is not the practice we encountered in 2019 to 2022 or described in a recent article by Opara and Agbo (2022). Over the past few decades, Ikorodo has been adapted to contemporary life by teaching it in schools. Now boys and girls dance to the music without masquerade. Even more recently, women have been incorporated into the instrumental ensemble.

There are other examples of traditional music coexisting and even thriving as much of the country shift its attention toward popular music, examples of resilient traditions come from many different ethnic groups in Nigeria. Anthropologist Roger Blench observes that near-dying practices in the middle belt have come back from near extinction (p.c. 2021). Blench invited Aaron Carter-Enyi and I to study the Boze peoples’ Unyampe music and dance in Plateau State in April 2021. We recorded Unyampe music twenty years after Blench had first witnessed the tradition in a state near extinction, with only elderly practitioners. In 2021, the performance was so energetic that one could scarcely imagine older people performing it.⁷

⁶ Stable URL Video Link: <http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12322/adept.unn:0013>

⁷ The Africana Digital Ethnography Project, which I have developed with Aaron Carter-Enyi since 2013, has recorded and made Ikorodo and Unyampe recordings available to the public.

Genre	Ethnicity	Location	Recording Date	Link
Ikorodo	Igbo	Enugu State	January 12, 2019	https://youtu.be/31Z2XhcA-ns
Unyampe	Boze	Plateau State	April 8, 2021	https://youtu.be/Z7Fj0sxv154

Table 2.1: Links to Video Examples Cultural Continuity

Gender and Music in Igboland

In Igboland, there are many challenges to gender binarity: specifically, boys and men who dress up and dance as beautiful maidens. Many Igbo deities are of feminine gender or no gender at all. Men often, sometimes exclusively, lead in religious rites, including animating deities through masquerades (see Kalu 1991, Asogwa, and Odoh 2022). While there is a widespread presence of gender fluidity in performance for otherwise cisgender males, cisgender females do not have the same performative license.

Essentially all Igbo performance culture is collected under the term *egwu*, we do not have a word for music alone. Our *egwu* has limitations about who plays certain kinds of music, wears masquerades, or plays specific instruments. *Egwu Ikorodo* was originally tied to the celebration of a maiden spirit (Ames 1986).⁸ It was only performed by men (both instruments, chant, and masquerade with dance) in the past. Sometime between 1965 when Ames observed *Ikorodo* and our recent fieldwork, men and women developed specific roles. Opara and Agbo (2022) observe that the typically performance practice is that men play the instruments and chant while maidens (unmarried women) dance. However, our 2020 to 2022 fieldwork suggests that gender roles are breaking down gradually for both the instrumental and dance sections of the ensemble. Young men are dancing *Ikorodo* again (as they did in 1965) along with young women but mostly

⁸ Ames' recordings were not released until 1986 though the recordings were made much earlier.

without the masquerade. Additionally, we have observed a young woman playing the characteristic side-blown horns.

The restrictions on women from performing certain roles in music and performance are mainly associated with African traditional religion (ATR). This is attested to by Ames' liner notes for Ikorodo (published in 1986) and by broader sources (e.g., Ezeanya 1976). The opening of gender roles within Ikorodo music represents its dissociation with ATR (very few are aware that Ikorodo was a revered deity in the past). The prohibition of women doing certain chants, wearing masquerades, and playing certain instruments is mostly fading. Women were indeed excluded from secret societies (clubs or pejoratively "cults" after Christianization) that produced masquerades, such as the Ikorodo or Adamma traditions, but as the connection between secret societies and performance culture weakens, the roles are changing. Women are now allowed to play in instrumental ensembles that were specifically only for men, and the role of women was restricted to dancing. In 2021, we observed two women playing in Ikorodo ensembles: a young woman playing the horn in a youth group and a middle-aged woman playing percussion in an established ensemble. The latter was in the long-established Agbani-Nguru Ikorodo Ensemble, a group which has been interviewed and several performances recorded by the Africana Digital Ethnography Project.⁹ When the chairman of the group (Raphael Okpatu) died in 2021, a woman stepped forth to fulfill his leadership. In comparison with Ames' fieldwork almost sixty years before (Ames 1968, 1986), this is a marked change. Throughout 2019 to 2022 fieldwork, we found in the semi-professional world of traditional music that it is common for women to be group managers, handling booking and negotiations, particularly in southeastern Nigeria. We

⁹Stable URL Video Link: <http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12322/adept.unn:0014>

saw this in two predominantly Igbo states (Enugu and Anambra) and a predominately Efik state (Cross Rivers).

Other cases exist of women entering formerly male-dominated genres, particularly among large, cosmopolitan ethnic groups like the Igbo and Yorùbá. In addition to the exciting example of young women joining the instrumental section of Ikorodo music, a former classmate of mine at Lagos State University is trailblazing in Yorùbá music. Yorùbá oriki artist Mayowa Adeyemo has been performing Oriki Ogun (praise of Ogun, the god of iron, hunting, and war) for over a decade (see Appendix 3 for video link). Oriki Ogun belongs to the Ijala genre of oriki, also known as the “hunter’s call” and primarily performed at meetings of hunter’s and festivals in honor of Ogun (Babalola 1963:4-5). Babalola’s work on Ijala presents a form of Oriki where men dominate. However, Barber (1990) presents Oriki with women at the center of practice and even alluding to Ogun in their chants. This shows that women have had and continue to have a major role in Yoruba traditional music.

Igbo Ikorodo and Yoruba Oriki are both examples of music associated with traditional religion(s). Restrictions on women’s participation in music affiliated with traditional religions seems to be fading. On the other hand, traditional religion(s) is(are) very localized practice(s), and it is difficult to speak of ATR as a collectivized whole. Each locality has practices that, to some extent, overlaps with adjacent localities. Localities often have a unique deity with its own shrine. Deities with similar domains (such as fertility or earth) may be called different names in different regions. Deities may be specific to a locality or not. Post-colonial conceptualizations of indigenous cultures and religions are consolidated forms (Waterman 1990). Yorùbá did not always have a single language and religion (sometimes collectively called Ifa divination). Before colonialism, there was a plurality of dialects (a dialect cluster) and a plurality of practices that

were not thought of as a unified whole. Cultural consolidation has not taken hold to the same extent among the Igbos (Clara 2013). While *odinaani* (or *odinala*) is gaining acceptance as the term for the collective practices of traditional religion among the Igbo, there remains considerable work to be done in cataloging the practices for a complete understanding of Igbo religion(s).

Like the plurality of Igbo religious practices, there may be a plurality of gender roles within Igboland. Gender roles in music have a lot to do with localized belief systems, so it is difficult to ascertain whether gender inclusion in traditional music is increasing everywhere, or just in isolated examples.

The Africana Digital Ethnography Project recorded *Egwu Otu Umunwanyi* (the music and dance of women's groups) in Awka in March 2020, in Enugu Ezike in June 2020, and in Nsukka in August 2020. We had previously recorded Igbo women's groups in Lagos (outside of Igboland) in 2013. We have also recorded many groups in the Middle Belt. Appendix 3 provides audiovisual examples of traditional music by women's groups from around Nigeria to study and enjoy. These videos show that gendered music making is a widespread practice throughout Nigeria, but language, instrumentation and movements vary significantly.

Otu Umunwanyi as Continuity in Creative Practice

A broader practice among the Igbo than Ikorodo (which is only found in the Nsukka area) is the music of *Otu Umunwanyi* (married women's organizations). Scholars outside of music have written about these organizations and their role in community decision-making and conflict resolution (e.g., Njoku 2014). Onyeji (2004) has written about their music. The music of *Otu Umunwanyi* cannot be considered a genre with specific stylistic features. Groups like *Otu*

Umunwanyi are defined by the fact that they are all women making music together, not by the specific sound or dance steps, as in a genre like Ikorodo. However, there are some commonalities in the practices of Otu Umunwanyi throughout Igboland. There is usually a lead singer and a lead dancer that directs the others in music and dance respectively. The singers also play instruments. The dancers also sing occasionally.

In many villages and city neighborhoods there are Otu Umunwanyi, but the instruments and musical textures vary significantly. Instruments that are usually included are the udu (pot drum) and ichaka (shakers). Clapping is almost always present. Because the music of Otu Umunwanyi is gender-based and not genre-based, it is not tied to specific instruments, and it is more difficult to assess how much their music has changed over time. It is also difficult to tell whether:

- (1) it has always been that there are women's groups, and they are not associated with a specific genre or indigenous devotional practice (cf. Ikorodo music just discussed),
- (2) that more stylistic specificity and possibly different types of women's groups existed in the past, but Christianization consolidated women's groups into the Otu Umunwanyi, or,
- (3) demand characteristics from scholarship (perhaps in concert with Catholic inculturation) saw women making music as gender-based music making and that was the source of consolidation.

We traveled around the southeast and middle belt regions in 2020 and 2021. There are many genre-specific (and aurally distinct) traditions where men play instruments and women dance (e.g., Ikorodo). The instruments and dance steps are often unique to the genre. Then, there are women's groups in which women perform the music and the dance. These groups are usually identified as women's groups and not by a genre or style played by other groups in the area. They are not called Otu Umunwanyi outside of Igbo land because it is an Igbo phrase, but there are similar organizations. The music of the Otu Umunwanyi remains tied to gender along with ethnicity, while many other traditional genres are becoming dissociated with secretive religious

practices and becoming more inclusive in terms of gender and even ethnicity. In an interview with Swange dancers in Makurdi in March 2020, the lead dancer noted that they would like everyone to learn to do perform Swange even though it is an ethnically Tiv dance.

We already have seen that Ikorodo has a strong penchant for continuity in terms of instrument inventory, chants, and similar ostinatos fifty years on. In contrast, the women's groups have incredible stylistic and performative variety. The women-only groups are defined not by the instruments or dance steps they use; these groups are characterized by who is playing the music. The fact that they have a stylistic plurality in terms of music and dance, as opposed to a narrowly defined practice (like Ikorodo), suggests there may be more room for innovation, including composition-like activities.

Today, the strongly gendered roles in music that remain belong to women's groups like the Otu Umunwanyi. Men are excluded from women's groups, while women take a more prominent role in genres like Ikorodo. Does the music of the Otu Umunwanyi reflect the music-making of the past? I can only bear witness as far back as my youth. I was born in 1984. I spent time in all three regions of Nigeria: the north, where I was born in Kaduna; the southwest, specifically Lagos, where my family moved when I was young; and the southeast, where I lived with my grandmother in a small village in Enugu state for several years. As someone familiar with the contemporary practice of traditional music for the past three decades, I am inclined to say that, at the very least, the framework of creative processes is largely preserved. Some characteristics correspond to Agawu's generalization about African music: the music is very "communal and inviting" (Agawu 2003). Other aspects are more culturally specific. Igbo is a tonal language, so language has some influence on melody and harmony in addition to rhythm (Ekwueme 1974). There are instruments indigenous to the southeast (like the Udu pot drum).

Dance formations and movements are often known more regionally, with a few that may be specific to a small area. Finally, lyrics, melodies, and ostinatos are often unique to a locality.

There is continuity in creating, teaching, learning, and preserving musical traditions, the equivalents of composition, music education, music theory, and music history. Christian Onyeji's article "Rural Igbo Women as creative personalities" (2004) considers the musical creation process. Onyeji's work affirms that Igbo women in rural areas (where indigenous cultural traditions are better maintained than in urban areas) have and continue to play an important role in musical life. Select women have intensely creative roles within the women's groups.

Onyeji's characterization of these women as "creative personalities" reflects hesitation to call them composers outright. Onyeji does not suggest the term composer should not be applied to women of the Otu Umunwanyi. He discusses it and situates the term composer within Merriam's thoughts from 1964. Merriam notes "a good deal of evidence to show that non-literate peoples know composition, recognize it as a distinct process and are in a number of cases quite able to discuss it" (1964:166). Merriam specifically cites the Igbo (Ibo) as an ethnic group in which "composition" is a known activity.

Onyeji states the Igbo have a word for composition, "Iro Egwu." However, I did not know that term meant composition and consulted others from Enugu state. Onyeji is from Abia, a different Igbo dialect than mine. This points out the challenge of consolidating Igbo culture. There is a lot of dialectical variation and diversity in concepts and thought. Onyeji does not mark the tone, but the only word I know with that specific combination of segmental phonemes [iro] means enmity, *író* (with high-high tones). "War Dances" (as multilingual Igbos describe them in English) are important among Ohafia people, and these traditions are well known throughout the

region of Igboland and even Nigeria. So, *iro egwu* in my dialect refers to war music/dance, but not as composition. It may be that people so associate music with waging war that war music and creating music are synonymous, but this may also be a vast oversimplification.

While the “*iro egwu*” is not standard throughout the Igbo, as stated at the beginning of the chapter, it is notable that both Merriam (1964) and Onyeji (2004) agree that the idea of composition, of creating new music, has long existed among Igbo people, though the music is not notated. The existence of orature (a concept that evades the literate–non–literate binary of Ong 1982) is attested to in a broader context than the Igbo by Thiong’o who developed a theory of orature for performance practices (2007). So, why does Onyeji refer to leading women within the Otu Umunwanyi as creative personalities, not composers, if he is unconcerned with the very exclusiveness of the concept in the way that it exists in the west? He does not directly tell us. It may be because of his western musical training and perspective on indigenous practices. Or it could be because what the women do (and collectively do as the Otu Umunwanyi) is larger than composition. Music is a means but not an end, as it serves in “processing social and economic solidarity” (2004:84). It is important to note that in many African languages, the closest equivalent words to music often do not mean only music (Agawu 2003). *Égwú* is the Igbo word that is used to translate the English word “music.” However, music in its conceptual base is not an accurate translation to cover the all-encompassing experience of what music means to the Igbo people as the term *égwú* does. *Égwú* refers to dancing, singing, clapping, humming, instrumental music, music festival, and performance (including masquerade shows). It encompasses many performative aspects of culture and, therefore, people’s way of life. However, there are other words for culture, like *Omenaani*, which encompasses all the cultural

traditions of the Igbo people, including Egwu. Egwu could also refer to non-Igbo performance, including music and dance, which Omenaani would not.

Conclusion

Women had an important role in music-making in some pre-colonial societies, reflected in the continuity of the Otu Umunwanyi in both rural areas and ethnically focused urban contexts.

These are women's social organizations in which music plays an important role. This music includes composing, arranging, performing, keeping, and conveying songs to future generations.

The groups include married women of all ages. Can the Otu Umunwanyi practices be generalized beyond Igboland or beyond Nigeria? Ethnically speaking, women of the southeastern region of Nigeria are more inclined towards creative activities like composition than women from other regions. This will become an important issue in Chapter 4 because I struggled to find women associated with southwestern (e.g., Yorùbá) or northern (e.g., Hausa) ethnic groups who identified as composers.

As noted in the first chapter, traditional music and art music are the categories of music I am addressing in this thesis. This chapter has summarized some relevant field research on Igbo and related ethnic groups spanning from the 1960s to 2022. In the next chapter, Nigerian music education and its relationship to western music, and specifically art music, is examined.

3. MUSIC EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Introduction

The nature and values of the Nigerian music academy are important to understanding the plight of women who aspire to be composers in the scholarly concept of the practice. Women played important roles in traditional music. However, they have not seemed to fare as well in music that was introduced or has developed since colonization and missionization. In Chapter 2, we saw that in traditional music women may manage groups or perform with the instrumental ensemble. Although it is often difficult to know who introduced, composed, or arranged the music, it is likely that if women may manage or perform instruments in a group, they may also compose for a group. Meanwhile, men have been foregrounded in commercial music and academic art music. It may be that men in music, just like in many other sectors, were given a foothold in the capitalistic and professional worlds of the post-colony. This chapter first examines why western music was used as a colonizing force and the impacts on how music is learned and practiced today with special attention to art music. The works of European male composers and their biographies are central to the music education curriculum introduced during the colonial era. The central position of composers like Händel persists to this day, on the walls of the lecture halls in the Musical Society of *Nigeria* for example. This is a stark contrast to the role of women as authorities on the musical canon in Igbo villages, in which members of the Otu Umunwanyi compose, arrange, and keep the music for future generations.

Music and the Civilizing Agenda

In the early 20th century, South African choirs were brought to perform in the UK. Erlmann (1999) describes a performance narrative in which, during the program's first half, the choir would wear South African garments and sing their traditional music, but in the second half, they would switch to European clothes and sing in English to demonstrate that they had been civilized. Although no Nigerian choirs toured the west during that period, western music and specifically the tonic-solfa system was used widely during missionization, and tonic-solfa has become the primary form of music literacy in southern Nigeria (Carter-Enyi 2018). The example below shows tonic-solfa and its equivalent in staff notation for a common Yorùbá praise song about a creator who is committed to their word (Awimayehun).

Doh is C

E-yin şa l'A-wi-ma-ye - hun, E-yin şa l'A-le-wi le şe, E-yin şa l'A s'q - rọ ma t'a - se, A s'q - rọ ma t'a - se, A - wi - ma - ye - hun.

Figure 3.1: A Yoruba-language chorus in western notation with tonic-solfa notation above (author's transcription)

To this day, western music is used to demonstrate sophistication and virtuosity in academic and some elite social settings. The most celebrated private institution for conservatory training and classical music performance in Nigeria is the Musical Society of Nigeria (MUSON). The MUSON Centre was opened in 1995 in the presence of Prince Charles (now King Charles). MUSON has a conservatory which prepares students for diplomas from the Associated Boards of the Royal Schools of Music (United Kingdom). It also has a professional orchestra and choir

which employs many of its best graduates. MUSON offers subscription concerts for its members featuring performances of western classical music from Mozart to Gilbert and Sullivan. Why does the Musical Society of Nigeria exist? The organization primarily entertains the elite of Saaros and Amaro¹⁰ and cosmopolitan Nigerians living in expensive parts of Lagos, especially the Lagos Islands and the Lekki peninsula. MUSON has an auditorium named after Shell Oil (a British-Dutch company) and a recital hall after Agip Oil (now Eni, an Italian company). MUSON's audience is predominantly fifty years old and above. Will the elite of the future still have a taste for western classical music? The survival of the organization would be very much in question if not for the support of transnational corporations.

A decade ago, I invited a Nigerian friend to a concert of European classical music featuring two of the best young graduates of MUSON, and the person was relatively unimpressed: "It was nice, but I can't hear anything they are saying." My friend was a tradesman from a rural area who had recently moved to Lagos. He did not see the value in appreciating western classical music. Despite its name, the Musical Society of Nigeria is an institution that promotes western classical music and more recently Nigerian art music modeled after western classical music, but not Nigerian traditional or popular music. The emphasis on celebrating and studying western classical music is made clear throughout the campus. The portraits of composers in the lecture hall are all European masters. The echoes of the civilizing agenda resound to this day.

¹⁰ Amaros and Saaros are the descendants of captives during the slave trade who returned to Lagos with European names and some European acculturation.

Music Education in Nigeria

The Musical Society of Nigeria has an esteemed position within music and music education in Nigeria but it is a relatively new organization and serves relatively few students. The vast majority of Nigerians study music in secondary schools, colleges of education and university music departments. When one studies music in Nigeria, it is mostly western music or based on western principles. Most formal study today is in the style imported from the west based on written notation. What does formal mean? Formal means going to school. English is considered a “formal” language, as opposed to “vernacular,” and vernacular has earned negative connotations. There is a song called “Because of English” by highlife singer Bright Chimezie¹¹: “My teacher punish me o, because of English.” To this day, some teachers punish students for speaking vernacular languages in class. But we also have informal study, informal learning, and informal musical exposure. Informal is like the “vernacular” language.

Arguably, the introduction of university music education with many faculty members that had gone to Europe or North America for conservatory training and returning changed music making in Nigeria more than anything else (Okafor 1989, Kwami 1994, Lo-Bamijoko 1994, Adeogun 2018). Higher education in music meant music became a profession whereas it was more of a pastime in some pre-colonial contexts. Ames (1968) compares Hausa and Igbo musicians. Among the Hausa he observed, music was clearly a profession, but among the Igbo he observed, it was a recreational activity. Higher education in Nigeria is based largely on UK models and to a lesser extent US models (Adeogun 2006). Nigeria has two types of public universities: those administered by state governments and those administered by the federal government. Many public universities offer music degrees, but most private universities do not,

¹¹ YouTube Link to Bright Chimezie’s “Because of English”: <https://youtu.be/K7mpvF5sTrA>

with the exception of Babcock University and Mountain Top University, both in Ogun State (Yoruba land). University music education emphasizes western literature and western instruments, including keyboards, guitars, drum sets, flutes, saxophones, and horns. Violins are less common and other instruments of the violin family, such as violas and cellos, are hardly present at all. European music theory is emphasized in the university music curriculum, and we widely use the tonic-solfa method in churches and secondary schools. Bach's music demonstrates his mastery of tonal harmony. Thus, music students like to perform this music because they can see this European music theory in practice. Music theory teaches how to put sound in words and writing. Instead of audio recording it, you can write it down in notation. They have a lot of respect for this. The use of Tonic solfa may be more developed in post-colonial societies than it is in its country of origin (the UK, Olwage 2010). One could go so far as to say that many contemporary Nigerian musicians believe in notation. However, that is weakening with the growing popularity of electronic dance music production and the recording industry.

Although people have embraced the English language and musical notation and western instruments, it is a colonial imposition. Fela Kuti (a well-known critic of the colonial system and its aftermath) called embracing the western and forsaking the indigenous a "Colonial Mentality" (on the album *Sorrow, Tears & Blood*, 1977). Yet, Kuti studied at a British conservatory and used western instruments (and no indigenous instruments) in his band. Fela was full of contradictions, picking and choosing what he liked and didn't like about the colonial introductions and impositions. The old ways of learning were family traditions passed down and apprenticeship. But today, people are learning vernacular traditions in untraditional ways. For example, Mayowa Adeyemo (discussed in Chapter 2) learned oriki from the internet. Churches

teach community youth Ikorodo music in Nsukka, facilitated by musician-priests like Father Emma Asogwa, who completed a master's degree in Ethnomusicology at University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Music is attached to a people's origin and culture and traditions. All these factors affect how people think about music, create, and even consume music. However, music curricular and pedagogical approaches fall short on incorporating Nigeria's indigenous heritage(s). In the University of Nigeria Nsukka, "African music" has been incorporated into the curriculum. However, the question of "what exactly is African music" in a post-colonial context is a source of scholarly debate. There are great sources describing how Africans think about and use music such as Kofi Agawu's "African Imagination of Music" (2016) and we need to continue to develop music education based on the best research.

When Kofi Agawu visited UGA in 2018, there was a discussion seminar. He shared the experience of visiting the University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN, where I spent 2019 to 2021). He gave the keynote address for the Association of Nigerian Musicologists, for which occasion they had prepared an orchestra to play Haydn. We discussed why the conference hosts would perform Haydn at a conference focused on African music. Was it to impress the guests? The primary reason is that UNN is a university institution modeled after a western university. The better question might be, why not? From the perspective of Nigerians who sincerely appreciate European classical music: we love Händel (especially), we love Mozart, and we love Beethoven, why shouldn't we perform their works? And we do it with or without the best training or instruments. Music education in Nigeria will likely continue to have a core of western instruments and notation, and now western developed software, but I also believe that indigenous elements will be incorporated more over time, as exemplified by African Art Music.

Art Music in Nigeria

According to Akin Euba in the *Negro History Bulletin* (1961), Nigeria had adopted the Western standard of judging what is good music even though the concept of music differs widely in both spaces. Eventually, people started understanding that the nature of Nigerian music cannot survive if not infused with what has now come to stay: “Western music” (1961). In 1976, Euba already noted that “considerable progress has been made towards the creation of an indigenous style of concert music, using elements derived from traditional music” (1976:27). More recently, Euba referred to creative musicology as the “transformational zone between research and composition” (2014:5). Euba was pioneering in terms of making ethnomusicological field research the basis for a new form of art music.

Much like art music in the west, African art music has less penetration within Nigerian society than other forms of music. Still, it holds a prominent place within academia because of its connection to musical experimentation. According to Agawu:

If African music includes traditional, popular and art music, then art music is the least prominent of the three. By this is meant art music’s relatively limited presence in village and city, whatever its symbolic potency. Whereas traditional music is tied to ritual, social and entertainment functions that form the fabric of daily musical life, and whereas popular music, given its media-aided mode of circulation, has become unavoidable in urban and increasingly rural locations, art music in its modern guise as the performance of composed (written) scores for non-participating audiences reaches only small audiences (Agawu 2011:50).

Ofuani argues that engaging local audiences is the aim of composers exploring traditional music: “modern composers’ creative quests for identity and relevance for a local audience have motivated their compositional experiments through intercultural creativity, which Euba... conceptualised as ‘creative musicology’ or ‘intercultural musicology’” (Ofuani 2022:2012).¹²

¹² By “modern composers” Ofuani is referring to living and recently deceased Nigerian composers.

But another reason may be to attract the attention of Africanists. Africanist ethnomusicologists from outside the continent have generally been less interested in art music, than in traditional and popular music. Many books have been written by outsiders on Nigeria's popular music, including Waterman's "Juju" (1990) and countless books on Fela Kuti (e.g., Veal 2000, Olaniyan 2004). In contrast to the work of foreign researchers on Nigeria, many Nigerian-born musicologists have emphasized the importance of African art music. Concepts like "Creative (Ethno)musicology" and "African Pianism" (Euba 2014) and "Research Composition" (Onyeji 2019) have been introduced. Scholarly writings by African composer-researchers have focused on how western and African idioms and principles factor into their thinking about music.¹³ An example is Uzoigwe's "Egwu Amala," a work of African Pianism based on an Igbo traditional genre. Ozah studied the indigenous music on which Uzoigwe's piece is based in her dissertation (2008) and analyzed the piece in an article (2013). I immediately recognized the indigenous genre that Uzoigwe had composed to represent when I heard the music, does this make the piece a success? Of the composers that have developed renown as art composers in Nigeria, Euba's music is perhaps the least understood by Nigerians because he incorporated many modernist and post-tonal techniques.

Education and Cosmopolitan Influences

Most Nigerian musicians today have a plurality of experiences and influences. Nigerian music education (in universities) has a curriculum centered on competencies in western classical training but is also trying to accommodate student interests in more contemporary styles, like gospel and Afrobeats. Can traditional, neotraditional, western classical, and globalized

¹³ For an example of hybridity, please listen to Berklee College of Music student, Kevin Madison, playing Uzoigwe's piano composition based on "Egwu Amala." YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/6iT9o6ZFbvU>

commercial music coexist? Young people are trying to see how they can use all their training and musical exposure to create music.

Multiethnic and international choirs may successfully perform choral music in indigenous languages. Instrumental music and music that requires further competencies in indigenous styles (like Ikorodo, see Chapter 2) has limited prospects for performance by cosmopolitan musicians. What is the post-colonial path? Continuity, revitalization, hybridity? There are countless expressions of creolization: traditional music incorporating western instruments, African interpretations of American popular styles (highlife, Afrobeat), African pianism, and indigenous language SATB choral music. The identities of many of these musicians often dwell in seeming contradictions: Fela Kuti, trained in UK conservatories but proclaiming nativist ideals. His identity is full of contradictions, but the music is very successful commercially (both domestically and internationally) and critically acclaimed (celebrated in books and documentaries). Laz Ekwueme studied at UK conservatories, and at Yale University, he sang with the Yale Glee Club. He became a traditional ruler in his ancestral village of Oko, Anambra State. It was clear in our 2020 interview with Ekwueme, that to him, knowing and valuing western culture and Igbo culture was entirely compatible.¹⁴ Women have similarly complex relationships with indigeneity and westernization.

The societal changes brought on by colonialism have left Nigerians in quandary about what to do with the indigenous parts of ourselves. Is there value in preserving the traces of indigenous music-making? Meki Nzewi (1999) argues that there is value in preserving our traditions and suggests indigenous music should have a greater role in university education. The incorporation of indigenous models (like the women's groups) into university education might

¹⁴ Ekwueme was interviewed for the 2020 Documentary "Musical Languages and Linguistic Melodies by Carter-Enyi & Carter-Enyi.

facilitate more participation from women in composition. If Nzewi's proposal were fully implemented, it would require more women in the faculty, including in composition.

Conclusion

I believe it is not fully good or bad that Nigerian music has been influenced by missionization and colonialism, it just is, and we cannot go back. In Nigeria, many people write music that is almost purely western sounding and perform with a western technique. An example is the location where I conducted interviews for this project in July 2021, Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church in Victoria Island, Lagos. The music director, Albert Adekunle Gomez, proudly cultivates western diction among his choristers and his choir sounds fundamentally different than most church choirs in Nigeria.

There are many situations which lead Nigerians to write and perform music in a western style. One may be working at a church with a multiethnic or international congregation. A student may be required to complete a counterpoint class assignment for their music degree at a conservatory or university. Both the church and the university are institutions introduced by colonialism, but they are institutions we have embraced.

The previous chapter and this chapter provided background on indigeneity and westernization in contemporary Nigerian music-making and intersections with gender identity. This information is necessary to understanding the subtle complexity of the perspectives shared in the next chapter. The participants all have experience with indigenous and western music, have all completed extensive formal education and are actively engaged with music as students, faculty members or independent professionals. I will analyze and discuss their comments in the next chapter.

The majority of Nigerians have come to value western education (though there are some notable groups that do not, such as Boko Haram). Because of institutionalized education's newfound value and music's ongoing value within our post-colonial society, understanding the intersection of these two human endeavors is essential to interpreting the interview excerpts and discussion presented in the next chapter.

4. PERSPECTIVES OF NIGERIAN WOMEN ON COMPOSITION

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the identities and perspectives of Nigerian women who create music in a transcultural milieu. Do they consider themselves to be composers? According to Oxford Languages, a composer is “a person who writes music, especially as a professional occupation” (Oxford Languages 2023), but there are other terms that can be used to denote one who creates music (e.g., songwriter or producer). In Nigeria, I find that the term composer is widely understood to be someone who creates music. The term producer is also widely employed in Nigeria because of the strong influence of hip hop and electronic dance music production techniques. Neither of the widely used terms, composer, and producer, is particularly associated with women.

My aim was to find out whether the participants identified with being composers. Can they be considered composers by western audiences? What is the yardstick for being a composer and can it even be applied to them? Who determines if they are composers? And, if they are composers, what happens, what do they get? Commissions, inclusion in western canons, global canons? In Kidula’s discussion of the academic music canon, she states that:

Music academies in Africa inherited these structures from the educational systems of their former colonial powers; however, little critical assessment exists on how ethnomusicology and its cousins outside Africa service the processes and intentions of music and its documentation for African continental scholars, educators, and performers (Kidula 2006:100).

I add to this list, composers. These have been issues in the reception of African and Diaspora composers in the past and now.

Apart from being women, the participants share one thing in common: exposure to Western academic music training. This is not uncommon. All the participants have some formal music training in European classical instruments and repertoires, most at the post-secondary level. However, that training does not represent the totality of their musical influences. Each participant has a range of experiences that reflect the diverse indigenous and post-colonial musical cultures in Nigeria. On the other hand, they are diverse in age, culture and religion which affect musical influences. Some are also more advanced in the career, becoming university professors of music.

Although women of a diverse range of ages are interested in composition, and one, Agatha Onwuekwe was a professor, it remains uncommon for women to study composition in music school. At UNN, there were seven total graduates in composition in 2022, one was a woman. At MUSON, there is no major in composition, but you can take composition in your second year of the two-year program. There are usually at least 10 out of approximately 50 students that take composition as a course each year. Most years no women take composition. The last that that the faculty member I spoke to could remember was in 2020.

To discuss the findings, responses were grouped based on thematic areas related to the questionnaire regiment. The thematic areas progress from musical background and experience to aspects of identities as composers and approach to composition. Discussion of their experiences confronts issues surrounding gender and whether women are included or not in the field of composition, in academia and in others music-making environments. Discussion of the role of indigeneity, especially language and musical instruments is included later in the chapter. This culminates with a brief

analysis of an instrumental work for western instruments based on a Yorùbá phrase, composed by Grace Oforika (one of the women who was interviewed).

Musical Background of Composers

Depending on where and when the participants grew up, they all had some exposure to music-making in their home communities. Primary and secondary schools and churches are now facilitating community music-making and because those leading these activities are not professors with extensive western education, the practices are more localized. The women interviewed were trained in western music theory and performance to a greater extent than most Nigerians. Their experiences in performance of western music training differ from music-making in their home communities and various social functions. These two realms of experience are reflected in my analysis of the piece featured towards the end of this chapter (“Oluwatunmise” by Grace Oforika). Grace Oforika is a composer and owner of a small music school in Lekki, Lagos state where she lives. She studied music education and musical social studies from the College of Education Abeokuta. She grew up in the Republic of Benin. In her earlier career, she taught as a music instructor. She has been commissioned by professors from the American universities to compose for instruments like the bassoon.

According to Dr. Ijeoma Forchu of the University of Nigeria Nsukka, her career started when she was “a little child” and led directly to studies of music at the university level.

As long as I can remember ... I would sing. I would even make up songs, and then teach ... my younger brothers and sisters. And then we would have mock performances for maybe my parents and my bigger siblings... I grew up in the church, and I would sing the hymns, the chants, the art music in the church. So, I just love music. And I know that in order to be happy, I must be involved in music all the time (Ijeoma Forchu, Interviewed March 10, 2021, Nsukka, Nigeria).

After completing studies Forchu began teaching in secondary schools and eventually became a university lecturer, primarily teaching ethnomusicology.

Prof. Agatha Onwuekwe is a faculty member at the Nnamdi Azikiwe University in Awka, Anambra State. Like Forchu, Onwuekwe grew up singing in the church choir. As early as secondary school she composed a vocal work that was performed publicly.

When I was still in the secondary school, the composition I really made was a dirge that I composed in honor of Chief M. C. Ogo. I will say that that was my first composition in school. I was not composing at home... but I used to join the choir, anywhere I was, I would join the choir (Agatha Onwuekwe, Interviewed March 4, 2021, Nsukka, Nigeria).

In our interview, it was clear that Onwuekwe saw her experience in church and early attempts at composing as occurring before her formal career. Onwuekwe's formal career in music began with matriculating into music study in higher education.

I began my career as a composer when I was in [the] College of Education. That is my first-year degree... So, I was very much interested even before coming [to UNN] from [the] College of Education... (Ibid.).

Many students complete a diploma (a junior post-secondary degree) at a College of Education or polytechnic institution before pursuing a bachelor's degree. This was the case for Dr. Onwuekwe. After the College of Education, she proceeded to the University of Nigeria Nsukka (where Dr. Forchu now teaches). The University of Nigeria Nsukka's Department of Music was established in 1961 and is the oldest and largest degree-granting program at a Nigerian federal university.

Onwuekwe, who teaches composition, strongly identifies with the concept of becoming a composer with formal musical training while at the College of Education. On the other hand, Forchu, who is teaching ethnomusicology has a more open definition of being a composer, which even includes creating music in a traditional style or without notating it. Other participants had

similar backgrounds to Onwuekwe with early church experiences leading to study of music at the college or university level. Forchu and Onwuekwe are senior music faculty.

My own mother, Monica Amaka Enyi, has been a choir mistress since before I was born. She is one of the women I interviewed. She gained her musical experiences from the church before eventually attending a private music school in Lagos where she lived. Ms. Enyi has taught ensemble singing to people ranging in age from preschool children to adult members churches. Choirs for churches are most often SATB (Soprano, Alto, Tenor and Bass), in four parts modeled after European hymnody and compositions. However, Nigerian “native airs” or choruses are often harmonized in three parts, similar to African American gospel music, with Soprano, Alto and Tenor (no bass). While some of the women knew they wanted to be musicians from their onset, Umossoh encountered a teacher who encouraged into pursuing music as a career. Mary Umossoh introduced herself as a music scholar, performer, singer, and song writer. She shared that she had wanted to be an accountant while her mother wanted her to be a nurse. Both parents eventually yielded to support her career pursuit in music. She attended MUSON.

Elizabeth Ekaette grew up in the church with her parents as music ministers. Her musical aspirations are strongly connected to the church. She was one that introduced herself as a gospel songwriter because she “writes songs”. She coaches students of grades one through five for music theory exam alongside her main job of 22-years in the corporate world.

Esther Eboka was a final year student majoring in voice at the University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN) when she was interviewed in 2021. She is interested in compositions with musical software like the FL studio which is commonly used in Nigeria. She offered perspectives how composition is taught in the University of Nigeria and female students participate in it.

I interviewed a classically trained guitarist in Lagos named Elizabeth Oluwade. She is a graduate of the Musical Society of Nigeria, which requires passing the diploma exam on your instrument. She also completed music theory exams. Of those I interviewed, Ms. Oluwade fit the American Interviewed July 26, 2021, Victoria Island, Nigeria).

singer-songwriter model, singing, and accompanying herself on the acoustic guitar. Oluwade is involved in musical workshops organized by foreigners and usually involving the guitar.

Genevieve Ogu is a singer, composer, a vocal coach, and church choir director. She graduated from the Musical Society of Nigeria and then pursued Bachelor of Arts in Music at the time of the interview. She composes skits about food and ordinary things of life. Crossover is not a genre that is commonly know around Nigeria. She got her compositional influences from listening to Crossovers and Broadway.

Crossover. I listen to crossover; I listen to world music. I particularly love Enya, a lot. And I have over 50 songs of hers on my phone. So I listen to her a lot. Then I love crossover and then, of course, classical and Broadway. (Genevieve Ogu Interviewed July 26, 2021, Victoria Island, Nigeria).

Composition as a Male-Dominated Professions

In Nigeria, men dominate “music composition” which is often thought of as notated music. Both men and women think of a “composer” as males. Euba refers to Nigerian composers as “he/him” (1976). This reflects default usage of male pronouns at the time he was writing, but also reflects an assumption that composers are male. Countless times in my early research on this topic, I asked male musicians if they knew women composers and frequently, they said “I can’t think of any woman composer.”

Nigerian women are very familiar with male-dominated professions and the concept of a “glass ceiling”. During our interview on July 26, 2021, Ms. Ogu suggested that women in the Nigerian music industry are prevented from reaching the “level” of men.

There are certain places a woman is not expected to get to a certain level ... For her to get to that level, she has to work twice as hard than a man would... So that also applies in the music industry... So, you're struggling to be recognized as a woman. You're struggling to be known. You're struggling to be heard... Being a woman sort of drags you down just by the virtue of you being a woman (Genevieve Ogu, July 26, 2021).

During the colonial period, commercial and bureaucratic professions were set up with Nigerian men in important roles. This disrupted important roles women had especially in commerce in the pre-colonial era (Agbasiere 2000). Dr. Ijeoma Forchu seemed to suggest that the plight of Nigerian women is unfortunately “normal” throughout the world.

It’s just a normal second-class status or the role that you assign to women, the societal roles. You know, certain jobs are strictly for men. Others are for women. People are sort of surprised when they see a woman composing, they don't associate composing art music with women (Forchu 2021).

Here, Forchu introduces a clear distinction between women creating music (like in traditional music) and composing art music. This distinction is clearly linked to western-style education.

Now, when you talk about composer, we tend to see Western art composing where you are composing in the style of Western art music. People don't yet see women as being composers of art music. There are some art female music composers, but they are usually relegated to the background because they feel that it’s the man’s job. Men are the ones that should do this. You know, even women themselves have these feelings. And sometimes, even when [women] come out to compose, they are discouraged... I believe that if females are encouraged, they will come out. Some of them that don't even realize that they can compose will be wonderful composers in art music (Ibid.).

Some of the respondents indicated that women were not welcome in the composition profession that was introduced in colonial and post-colonial institutions such as churches and universities. Six out of nine of the participants composed music for their local church communities, but none of these women had composed music that had been adopted regionally or nationally. To my

knowledge, there are no women composers that have been commissioned to write music for churches throughout the country like Jude Nnam and Sam Ojukwu. Based on audiovisual recordings of church choirs from 2013 to the present, I have found Jude Nnam is the most prominent Catholic composer and Sam Ojukwu is the most prominent Anglican composer. Both support themselves largely based on commissions by church choirs. Nnam, who is younger, has also branched into distributing recordings of his own choir.

Exclusion in Academia

When music became a formal western profession, which it was not in Igboland before, it became more attractive to men. In our interview, Dr. Ijeoma Forchu argued that anything that is westernized is going to be male dominated. So, when music went from being a community-based activity to a westernized profession, women lost influence within music. There are still women that are leaders within their communities in terms of music-making, but that did not necessarily make you wealthy or more powerful. So, when western-style academia was introduced, men who were at universities became professional musicians including what is considered the ultimate role within western music: being a composer.

Women's access to higher education is no longer as much of an issue. Indeed, university departments have become more equitable in terms of gender. However, examples within the curriculum of males as composers persist, even when other arts like literature (e.g., including writing novels, poetry, and plays) have seen women attain high status. According to Onwuekwe, women do not seem to be encouraged to pursue composition at the university level:

Female students don't come for composition. And it's a few male students that take up composition because we do it as a course. And after that, they now compose. I say, you have to compose. You don't wait for anybody. Find your own. Anything you compose, you play it, you sing it, it is composition. You

don't need to wait to be a Professor Agu or Dr. Alvan or professor Onwuekwe for you to [compose]. Any composition you make you must have to do. Because our teacher used to tell us... "What are you waiting for me to do? You want me to put composition into you? I'm helping you to bring out those things you have in you so that you'll be able to compose. You have them in you, my job is to help you bring them out." Because there are some lectures that say, "You have nothing to offer, what is that? You don't have anything to offer." So, you just feel shy. But when a lecturer says, "I want to bring out those things you have in you so that you can now bring them out and then compose. You can compose if you want to compose, but I will help you" (Onwuekwe 2021).

Why don't female students come for composition? Onwuekwe emphasizes that some faculty were encouraging to students, and others were not. It may be female student do not come for composition because faculty are particularly discouraging to female students about their compositions. The perspective of Esther Eboka also suggests that studying composition at university is not very conducive for women. Esther revealed that she began her musical career in composition since she was a child.

I have interest in composition. The school system am I going to say, then it was not favorable for me to embark in composition as a major instrument. Now composition is not the major area of concentration for some students, you know. Because some have musical instruments they rehearse with. Some want to go into music business. Some want to go into musicology and music theory, you know. Composition is a major course in the department. We all learn it. But then those that major in it are very few. So, females that major in it are just about three [out of over 100]. If I am... outside the university, I would definitely embark in composition. But presently now that I'm still in school I decided to just embark on voice... (Esther Eboka, Interviewed April 23, 2021, Nsukka, Nigeria).

UNN is the same institution where the previous respondent, Onwuekwe, studied. Although UNN has the largest Department of Music in Nigeria, there are not many women that elect to study music composition. This is unfortunate given the legacy of Edna Edet (a woman) who served as chair of the department in the early 1960s when it was founded (1964). Were they excluded or did they exclude themselves? The answer is both. While the participants did not indicate they were encouraged to pursue composition as a field of study, the majority of those interviewed did

not feel gender was an absolute barrier. In church music women have played a much more prominent role.

Inclusion in Church Music

In church, women are generally allowed to be choir leaders and music directors. Nigeria has the greatest number of Anglicans of any country in the world, so this relative level of inclusion is notable when there are barriers to gender diversity in Anglican music in the UK (Doyle 2020). Women's musical leadership role contrasts the lack of women in pastoral leadership in Nigerian churches. Denominations such as Anglican and Methodist are present and are frequently pastored by women outside of Nigeria. Although it is permissible outside of Nigeria, it is not common for women to provide pastoral leadership in Nigeria (Oyewole 2017). While there are a few women in pastoral leadership, being a pastor is such a lucrative career in Nigeria that men may continue to dominate.

Despite the international standard within the catholic church of male pastoral leadership, women are welcome and very commonly active as choir leaders, with roles including selecting and conducting the music. The position is often a volunteer position. Many church musicians believe the lack of remuneration in the catholic church in Nigeria is a Nigerian thing, but research reveals that amateur and volunteer musicianship has been emphasized in church doctrine since Vatican II (Agbo 2017).

Although church employment was not a direct question in the interviews, the majority of the participants mentioned serving in churches and writing music for worship. Esther Eboka, Elizabeth Ekaette, Monica Enyi, Genevieve Ogu, and Mary Umossoh all demonstrated their

voice and voice with piano songs for church. Dr. Ijeoma Forchu described her compositions for Ba’Hai worship.

I grew up having an understanding that musical selections must be made with representation of all ethnic groups present in the community. Ms. Enyi has mostly served churches in Lagos, Nigeria, which is a traditionally Yoruba area, so her selections emphasized the Yoruba language. English is the official language of the country so is also acceptable in Lagos. However, programming Igbo language music would not be acceptable in a multiethnic church in Lagos (a Yoruba area). In the Catholic church, Latin is also included. My mother more frequently arranges music than composes it. She often takes a melody and harmonizes it to teach to a school, church, or women’s group (Otu Umunwanyi). The teaching of the music often includes appropriate instrumental accompaniment and dance movements. Arranging existing music for a group is almost always more conducive for a performance in which audience participation is encouraged. However, when opportunities for non-participatory music arises, a less familiar or entirely new song may be used.

Why is it that there are fewer obstacles to women taking leadership roles in church? They certainly have the capabilities because of the similarity to musical roles in traditional societies. As discussed in Chapter 2, it is common for women to have a leadership role in traditional music-making practices. Thus, it seems that women are allowed to be choirmasters in churches for two reasons: it is like their pre-colonial roles and there is a lack of economic incentives for men to dominate. There is a less of a financial incentive in directing church choirs in contrast to being a professor.

Composition as Continuity of Indigenous Practices

Discussion of gender discrimination in new contexts like university music-making led to comparison with women's roles in indigenous music-making. Many women (including at least six of the participants) create new music for church choir members to sing, much like members of the Otu Umunwanyi create, share and preserve songs for the community. Is this "continuity" or "innovation" for women to create music in the context of the church? Dr. Ijeoma Forchu addressed this issue.

Traditionally women do most of the composing. In our traditional music, women dominate. And then we find most of the music being composed by women in traditional music where there are no restrictions on women not to compose. So that's an entirely different domain. So, I mean, there's really nothing in the constitution of women that will not make them to compose. Personally, I prefer traditional music and that is why I compose that up. Yeah, in the style of traditional music you know, I look at traditional songs I use the idioms, the melodic, rhythmic, and sometimes harmonic idioms to compose. You know, and then of course the language to compose whatever I want to compose. I am not an art music composer. I do a lot of composition in the style of traditional music. Well, in my younger days, I experimented with art music but then I discovered that's not what I love doing most in music. So, I let it go (Forchu 2021).

Dr. Forchu's response demonstrates that the question of "Are you a composer?" and "What does a composer do?" are almost inseparable. And her description of what a composer does was aligned with traditional music creative practices. Based on the responses of the participants, it is very important that the music they create has a connection with performers and the public. Unlike the definition from the Oxford Languages noted earlier, being paid to compose, composition being done in a professional capacity, was not emphasized. Only one of the participants had been paid for compositions (or commissioned), and that was Grace Oforka. For the others, creating something new and communicating that music performers and audiences indicated achievement or success in composition.

Compositional Style

In Nigeria, there is a distinction between art music, as practiced by composers affiliated with universities and conservatories, and other forms of music such as popular and traditional musics. The distinction between art music and other music is not always clear and consistent. According to Prof. Forchu there are three major genres of music in Nigeria: Art Music, Popular Music, and Traditional Music. Her use of the term “genre” differs from Euba (1976) which refers to these as categories. Forchu’s account includes two fewer categories than Euba because she does not separate musical theatre or sacred music. Sacred music is created using the style of any of the secular genres. Likewise, musical theatre often draws on traditional or popular styles, or classical or art music if it is opera.

Dr. Onwuekwe’s first composition was an Eulogy for a prominent man in her village, M. C. Ogwu, which she composed when she was in secondary school (ca. 1990). The indigenous praise-singing tradition in Igbo is called Egara. One of the functions of Egara is to eulogize celebrated individuals. She did not have a recording or score to share of this work, but I imagine that it combined her experiences in the church with the already existing tradition of Egara eulogies.

Dr. Forchu noted that she composes in a more purely traditional style and that women dominate in traditional music (e.g., Egwu Otu Umunwany), whereas there is more of a barrier to women being recognized as composers in academic art music.

[I compose] in the style of traditional music. I look at traditional songs. I use the idioms; the melodic, rhythmic, and sometimes harmonic idioms to compose. And then, of course, the language to compose whatever I want to compose (Forchu 2021).

Forchu revealed that she writes her songs for worship in the Baha’i faith, which is only recently introduced to Nigeria. Although Forchu’s songs for worship are newly composed, she

consciously associated her music with traditional music because it does not fit within the art music or popular music categories, which she clearly addressed in her interview.

A key difference between her and American singers is that she likes to sing in Yorùbá. In fact, all of the songs she shared were in Yorùbá. Because of the strong linguistic influence of Yorùbá speech tones on melody, even Yorùbá language songs with highly westernized accompaniment have a distinctive sound. An example is the internationally touring artist Aşa, who draws on folk and indie rock styles, who Ms. Oluwade mentioned. In contrast, Genevieve Ogu (of Igbo heritage) also a recent MUSON graduate interviewed in Lagos, seemed less connected to indigenous languages and associated melodic style. For her, to “bring it home” meant to incorporate West African popular styles.

I compose, I would say not very classical, more of crossover. Crossover, Broadway-ish. That’s my kind of composition. But of recent, I’ve been thinking of trying to infuse our traditional style into my compositions... You need to bring it home. So, I want to infuse what is known here into what I compose. Well, I was thinking of highlife then Afro pop... (Ogu 2021).

Highlife is an earlier form of West African popular music first developed in the 1950s and 1960s, most often employing English language (Emielu 2013). Afropop is a very broad concept (like African music) referring to popular music from anywhere in Africa. For example, the radio show “Afropop Worldwide” is “devoted to the music of Africa and the African diaspora... [bridging] continents and cultures through the power of pop” (Collinet 2023). Currently Naija (Nigerian) Hip-Hop and Ghanaian Hiplife, collectively termed “Afrobeats”, is growing in popularity particularly in the UK and US.

Compositional Process

As has been established, music is encompassed in many aspects of daily life in many parts of Africa. Is this reflected in the participants approach music composition? I asked participants

directly about their compositional process. How is their approach as composers different? And different from what?

Because Ms. Umossoh writes her songs for the church, it may be that vocal harmony is added in performance as many singers in Nigerian churches harmonize using similar and parallel motion.

[Mary Umossoh:] I can write the harmony, actually, but I don't really go for the harmony. I go for the melody. Why? Because it's just like a solo work, so the interest of writing for choir is not there.

When she demonstrated her songs, it was revealed that by harmony, she meant vocal harmony, because her pieces were accompanied by chords on the piano. Forchu also uses this approach:

[Forchu:] I don't even score them initially. The melody comes, maybe, I'm inspired as... I can hear certain intervals, or particular melodic movements in the tradition. And then especially in folk songs, I say, "Oh, this is really beautiful." And if you leave it, it's going to die and nobody's going to record it. It's not recorded, and it will die. So that sort of inspires me. And then I will try to put text into it, which is tricky, because our texts are tonal. The language is tonal, and if you're not careful and put the wrong inflection, it may lose the meaning. So, when I finish, I actually record it. And then from that point, I teach. In African composition, the composers are the performers, most of the time... (Forchu 2021).

While aware of the possibilities of computer-generated algorithmic sounds in the 21st century music composition (e.g., Diaz-Jerez 2011), no participants indicated that they use this method.

However, like many in the west, technology is playing an important role.

I compose for [virtual] instruments on FL Studio more, and I compose for voice more on the notation software... Sometimes I combine two parts, that's soprano and tenor, and sometimes I even combine the four parts (Eboka 2021).

As noted above, Dr. Forchu stated that "Music does not live on paper." After composing a worship song, she teaches it to others, and then the lyrics and melody may develop a life beyond the composer.

Language in the process

As noted, a few times, the languages of southern Nigeria tend to be tone languages. So, language plays an important role in the compositional process. If one writes a melody first, they are challenged to find words that fit that contour. Thus, many come up with texts which serve as a source for the melody. Elizabeth Oluwade shared the song “Ademola” in her interview.¹⁵

Afterwards, she spoke about her use of the Yoruba language including adages and metaphors.

The song is a love song. Ademola, is a name, the name of the guy. You can hear me mention “Queen Elion”, that is my stage name. Like “Mo mò pe mo ti sè ọ” that is, I know I have offended you please. “Jòwó, dárìjì mí” means, please forgive me. “Èkùró ọ́aa l’alabaku ẹ̀wà” means... I don't know how to put it. But it's just like two lovers that are meant to live together and die, you understand, together. So, I'm now using [Èkùró]...it's a fruit. So, I'm just using that word to describe our love. So, I'm here with you, to die with you, to stay with you forever (Elizabeth Oluwade, Interviewed July 22, 2023, Victoria Island, Nigeria).

Oluwade uses the palm kernel fruit as a love metaphor.



Figure 4.1: Fruit of palm kernel “Ekuro”¹⁶

The use of language is important in many kinds of music practiced by these women. Dr. Forchu noted that music can intensify the “impact” of words, particularly in religious contexts.

¹⁵ YouTube Link to Interview with Oluwade: <https://youtu.be/Q2XkF0YR8Js>

¹⁶ Palm oil fruit, mesokarp and kernel by Tommy Gustaviano Yeza, via Wikimedia Commons https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Palm_oil_fruit.jpg

It's usually religious principles, or moral ethics that moved me to compose. I realize that when you put words into music, it has more effect on the people. They are able to listen, and then the impact is greater. So, when I have those words, I would like to put them into music so that people can experience the joy, the depth of spirituality I gain from them as well (Forchu 2021).

As previously noted, many Nigerian languages are tone languages. The melodic contours of speech may also be represented in instrumental music, like the talking drum. Grace Oforika applies the contours of speech to a western instrument, the bassoon, in the piece "Oluwa tunmise." In the next section I analyze Oforika's bassoon piece to demonstrate the incorporation of language as a signifier of indigenous culture.

Oforika's "Oluwa Tunmise"

Grace Oforika was commissioned in December 2020 during the height of the COVID Pandemic by Prof. Terry Ewell of Towson University. The result was "Oluwa tunmise." According to Oforika: "I was commissioned by Prof. Terry Ewell to write Bassoon pieces 'for the Lord', at the time I submitted at least five pieces" (p.c. 2023). Oforika participated in a symposium for African Composers at the International Double Reed Society organized by Dr. Midori Samson. "[Prof. Ewell] loved the way I spoke about my "Chegharia" work and the uniqueness of the piece itself. Which led him to reach out to me and commission a work" (p.c. 2023).

The work highlights the intersection of language and compositional process. Oforika pointed out in her interview that she is not Yoruba and is not fluent in the language. Still, the sound and meaning of the phrase "Oluwa tunmise" inspired her. "Oluwa tunmise" is a religious phrase in Yorùbá meaning "Lord, Renew Me." The piece represents a unique dynamic of sound in terms of a Yorùbá language text represented instrumentally in an otherwise largely western Chamber music context. To some extent, Oforika had to cater to the music culture of the

commissioner (Dr. Terry Ewell, a Caucasian American) while balancing that with the requirements of composing a Yorùbá-inspired melody for a western instrument.

I found myself playing my recorder and singing a song in a language I don't really speak, but I could feel the meaning... sometimes it doesn't come like it's even a language, sometimes it just comes as a melody of a language. "Oluwa Tunmise" is one song like, ... I was hearing the notes in my head. Like I was feeling tin, tin, tin, tin, tin. Tin, tin, tin, tin, tin. So, the thing was just ringing in my head. And then I took my software, and I began to work on it (Oforka 2021).

Much of the piece is built on a musical motive based on the word "Olúwa" (meaning Lord in Yoruba, with speech tones mid-high-mid or re-mi-re) and rhythm long-short-long.

The image shows a musical score excerpt for Bassoon (Bsn.) and Piano (Pno.). The Bassoon part begins at measure 12 and features a rising sequence of notes: G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3. The dynamics are marked *p dolce*, *mf*, and *f*. The Piano accompaniment consists of a steady eighth-note melody in the right hand and block chords in the left hand.

Figure 4.2: Excerpt of Oforka's "Oluwa Tunmise" with "Olúwa" motive repeated in a rising sequence in the bassoon.

Regarding working on commissions, Oforka states:

Sometimes they'll tell you, "Okay for my instrumental, just compose a song for me. The theme is yours, whatever you want to [do] just be creative about it." And that's all. So, he gave me that opportunity to compose. And... I got that inspiration to write "Oluwa Tunmise." And then, I began to compose (Ibid.).

Oforka takes inspiration from around her and shapes it into music that she sends around the world.

One beautiful thing about it is once you have the inspiration and you begin to work on it, you start getting the idea clearer. ... Before you know it, you'll be done with a composition (Ibid.).

Oforika's narrative of this compositional process is representative of the many composers in Nigeria work with linguistic inspiration. It is similar to the way western composers work with musical motives.

Conclusion

Interviews with nine Nigerian women who create music suggest that there is little encouragement for women to compose in academia. However, there are various outlets for creating music, particularly within sacred music in which the community-based nature of music-making is similar to traditional music practices. One of the composers, Grace Oforika, had achieved professional recognition from outside Nigeria to the extent that she has received paid commissions from US faculty members (when she had not been commissioned inside Nigeria). Oforika's success was unique and reflects an entrepreneurial spirit. Of the different musical arenas, academia seemed to be the least welcoming of women creating new music. Dr. Forchu stated that in traditional music "women dominate". Colonialism has disrupted not only our ways of music-making but who gets to create music.

We see our own type of music as inferior. Because when you go to schools... when you talk about music, you're talking about the Western music... You go to the music studio in a secondary school, and you ask to see the musical instruments there, and all you see are the violins, the cellos, the pianos... Does it have to always be the Western instrument? No. I feel as a nation, we need to start appreciating our music... that is why I congratulate our Afro-pop artists... I feel we as music scholars we should try to do the same thing (Ogu 2021).

Our society and history are defined by the colonial period. We are constantly embracing or breaking away from colonialism. Kidula (2006) points out that many African scholars and creators are framing themselves in terms of western history, not our own. Suppose we framed music (whether indigenous or cosmopolitan) in terms of African history instead of European history (and the great composers like Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven). In that case, we might see

women's role in music very differently. In the next and final chapter, I discuss the data, situating within the context of Postcolonial and Decolonial theory.

5. COMMENTARY AND CONCLUSION

The music of the participants in this research varies and spans the divisions of traditional music, art/classical music, and popular music. All nine of the women understood composition as the art of creating music. Umossoh and Ekaette had used the term songwriter in defining themselves musically, however, no one suggested that a songwriter and composer are different. It just meant one who writes songs. As a cultural insider, I share this notion with the women. Because they have all been trained in music theory, they appreciate the ability to be able to write down music. However, this not perceived as the only way to compose. Notation is a tool that encourages a broader musical creative practice because it makes it possible to express the relationship between many parts of voices and instruments.

Forchu classifies her music as in the style of traditional music and not as art music. Ogu classifies her music as a crossover between European classical and Broadway musicals, and she would like to integrate more Afropop and Highlife influences. Oforka describes her music as having an African voice even though it is written for western instruments. These women do not fit the traditional music or popular music mold because they have western style and formal training. Formal training delegitimizes you in popular music. They also do not fit the art music mold fully, because they are not writing music as experimentation or research. They seem to hold on to the spirit of traditional music, which Agawu describes generally as “communal and inviting”, as opposed to Onyeji’s advocacy for “research-composition” (2006) or Euba’s “creative musicology” (2014) both of which seem to be aligned with Milton Babbitt’s advocacy for “advanced music” that is “withdraw[n] from the public world” (1958). Even when the participants described developing music based on traditional music, there was no indication that

the aim is research. I believe that there are many more women like this that are drawn to composing but do not easily find an outlet within academia.

Like many other works that seek to understand the identities and experiences of people in post-colonial contexts, this thesis reveals more contradictions than satisfying conclusions. Why does Elizabeth Oluwade identify as a songwriter while Esther Eboka identifies as a producer? What is the difference between composer and creative personality (as Onyeji describes women's roles in indigenous practices)? One of the participants (Monica Enyi, my mother) told the story of my younger sister who proudly said she "forged a song" when she was very young. My mother laughed and said, "You composed, you didn't forge." My sister's understanding of the word "forge" at the time (when she was very young) was to create and mold something, not to create a counterfeit as in the western sense. In Nigeria, welders and tradesmen are found in villages and townships, so "forging" still has a robust connection to honest trades. Another participant, Elizabeth Ekaette, compared composing to engineering. But when a Nigerian composes art music, is it a counterfeit? As in a mimicry? Not to the composer herself, but from the perspective of western academia (who seem to own art music)? If it is composed in a purely western style, like a counterpoint assignment or even a twelve-tone piece, and does not include any "Africanisms", a work is not likely to be seen as a worthwhile contribution to art music in Nigeria or the West.

In "The Challenge of African Art Music" (2011), Kofi Agawu notes that the "controllers of discourse on African music" have downplayed formal (notated) composition by Africans that have been produced since the nineteenth century (49).

The high value placed on African traditional music by ethnographers often overlooks the fact that its potentialities are best revealed not by gathering and confining samples of the music to sound archives and museums, but by probing the music compositionally, engaging it through creative violation. It is

impossible to overestimate the quality and quantity of the kinds of knowledge that are produced from self-conscious manipulation of traditional music's materials and procedures. Unfortunately, though perhaps not surprisingly, ethnomusicologists have shown little interest in such music-on-music exploration. This task has been left to African scholar-composers like Akin Euba and his followers (Agawu 2011:50-51).

Agawu's article celebrates the release of Nyaho's anthology *Piano Music of Africa and the African Diaspora* and expresses disappointment that Nyaho's volumes and African Art Music in general does not garner more recognition by mainstream academia. However, Agawu seems to feel, like the conference organizer who reacted to Sadoh's "Atilogwu", that African art music must have clear "Africanisms" in its composition. Agawu indicates that African art music explores the "potentialities" of African traditional music by "probing the music compositionally." Dr. Ijeoma Forchu also described African art music as a "hybrid" of African and Western music. This all suggests that African art music and music composed by Africans does not necessarily belong to the same category. If African Art Music composition has the almost scientific task of "probing" traditional music, many of the composers interviewed for this project may not be seen as African art music composers. Dr. Forchu claimed that she did not compose art music, she composed traditional music (not a hybrid form). Few other participants mentioned deliberate efforts to represent indigenous culture in works written for western instruments, as Uzoigwe and others have done with works termed "African Pianism." Several participants indicated that incorporating indigenous language lyrics was important and setting tone languages requires attention to melodic contour. Although Onwuekwe and Ogu stated that we should, as a society, value and explore our heritage, it did not seem to be central to their personal compositional styles.

Composition as research has been important in American universities, including Arnold Schoenberg at UCLA and Milton Babbitt at Princeton. The idea of composition as research has

been adopted by African scholar-composers, notably by Akin Euba and Christian Onyeji (Agawu 2011). Based on this small sample of women in Nigeria who identify as composers, women are indeed drawn to creating music, including in notated form, which we call composition. However, based on my nine interviews, they do not seem to be drawn to composition as research. This may be why they have received even less attention than African male composers who publish articles about their compositional approach (like Euba and Onyeji). Not one of the composers mentioned by Agawu in his 2011 article “The Challenge of African Art Music” is a woman. Sadoh has written a book on Joy Nwosu Lo-Bamijoko, who he identifies as a “professionally trained operatic soprano, music educator, music critic, African ethnomusicologist, broadcaster, skits writer, choral conductor, and songwriter” (2009). Although the word songwriter is not widely used in Nigeria, Sadoh, who completed his doctorate in the US is sensitive to the American distinction between composer and songwriter and selected the latter for his research subject.

If it is not for the sake of research, why do women in Nigeria create music? The women I interviewed did not state a goal of successfully combining African idioms with western instruments, as Agawu argues Joshua Uzoigwe has done with “African Pianism”. But the “how” and “why” of women’s composition does reflect indigeneity and globalization in other ways. As noted in the introduction, African music is “communal and inviting” (Agawu 2003). Although traditional music for traditional contexts was not “what” these women are composing, I believe all of the women interviewed would like their music to maintain the “communal and inviting” nature of African music. In the interviews, there was a common emphasis on inclusive performance, much more so than experimental research. Onwuekwe wanted her music, like works for saxophone and piano, to be performable by students. Oforika wanted her music to be approachable by performers around the world, including Bassoonists in the US! Forchu wanted

to adapt traditional musical styles to Ba’hai worship. The rest of the participants wanted to compose music that was singable in Christian contexts (whether a formal Catholic Mass or less formal praise and worship). The who, what, how, and why of the participants is that they are women in Nigeria composing music for contemporary contexts (school, church), often with notation and recording software, that maintains many of the aspects of African music in traditional contexts but in new contexts.

We know from Onyeji that in traditional contexts women created and transmitted music, especially songs and sung stories (2004) and we know that African music is broadly speaking “communal and inviting” according to Agawu (2003). In essence, the what and how has adapted to the participants’ contemporary lives as educators and students in a western-modeled system or worship leaders for globalized religions (like Ba’hai and Christianity). However, the who and why, has not changed. They are still women creating music for communal and inviting performance contexts. For reasons that are beyond the scope of this thesis, particularly the gendered difference in the thirst for status, these women are not drawn to composition as research as much as their male colleagues and peers have been.

I outlined three main objectives in Chapter 1, these were:

- Understand why and how women in Nigeria compose
- Explore musical thought in a post-colonial society
- Deconstruct the Eurocentric view of composition as a profession (including as an academic position)

The why and how women compose in Nigeria relates back to the model of the Otu Umunwanyi, representing a continuity with what we know of indigenous precolonial culture. Like the Otu Umunwanyi, the creative practices of Nigerian women trained in and practicing western music

emphasized community. With the exception of Elizabeth Oluwade, who wrote songs for herself to sing and accompany on guitar, all of the women wrote music as a way to build community. Dr. Onwuekwe wrote music that her students could play, providing literature that was fitting for the skills and interests. Many of these works were for saxophone because saxophone is popular with students in Nigeria. Dr. Forchu deliberately modeled traditional music creative practices in her creation of music for Ba’Hai Worship. All of the other participants frequently composed new music for Christian worship contexts. Grace Oforika wanted to find community through international avenues like opportunities afforded by the International Double Reed Society. This led her to make new contacts and compose for an instrument that is not common in Nigeria, the bassoon. This may also be viewed as reflecting a desire to create community through music.

None of them composed piano solos for contemplative listening and, therefore, none of them was associated with the oft-cited African art music movement called “African Pianism.” Their modeling of traditional music was in the use of languages and community-based goals, not in the mapping of traditional idioms to western instruments. Such experimental activities which positioned composition as a research enterprise were not sympathetic to the compositional identities of these women. In fact, Dr. Forchu, who teaches ethnomusicology at the University of Nigeria Nsukka, stated that she was not an “art music” composer.

Colonialism seems to have disrupted the role of women in music-making in ethnic contexts where women’s societies have had an important role for a long time. Otu Umunwanyi is frequently associated with churches now. On the other hand, women with very formal western-classical training may have doubts about their capabilities to compose. This suggests that it is not so much Christianization or Missionization but the introduction of western education, including European classical curriculums, that disrupted women’s musical creativity. In essence, musical

composition as we now know it is a colonial intervention resulting from western conventions of education. (Forchu makes that point). This contrasts the narrative that seems to be prevailing in the west: It's a new thing for women to write music, it's not something they normally do, but we are trying to diversify music so let's encourage women to be composers so we can be a more equal society. Versus, women had a primary role in creating and transmitting musical repertoires, but western education disrupted that.

In summary, my findings are that women in Nigeria have the desire to compose music that combines many experiences and influences. Their approach to composing Art Music does not necessarily place a high value on composition as research. Some women may want to pursue more experimental methods, but not all do. The academy must recognize this diversity of aims and embrace it for the creative practices of the women studied in this thesis to be fully supported by the academy. Although I did not directly pursue research on popular music, Elizabeth Oluwade demonstrated how formal training in music theory had informed her work as a composer, a word which she did identify with, though her career models (like Aşa) might be categorized as singer-songwriters. This demonstrates that formal training is relevant to popular music performance in the Nigerian context and that young musicians are applying knowledge and skills across boundaries developed through academic study.

Based on these findings, I recommend that the academy consider pre-colonial creative practices among the Igbo and other cultures, in Africa and worldwide, along with European contributions in conceiving of composition as a field of study. While composition studio seminars often encourage students to listen to and critique each other's works, other peer learning strategies might be developed based upon models like the Otu Umunwanyi. Simply by

acknowledging women's creative practices in non-western and pre-colonial indigenous contexts, the academy can expand the image and concept of who a composer is and what a composer does.

We have seen that urbanized and educated Nigerian women feel compelled to write music for community music making in much the way women in rural contexts do. Does the Otu Umunwanyi in rural Nigeria compose or arrange songs in a similar way to popular groups comprised of women? In future research, I plan to study how the creative practices of indigenous women's groups bear similarity to popular music practices in Nigeria and the United States. The Igbo were among the groups trafficked to the United States (Walsh 2001). Women of African descent have played a very prominent role in American music. Is it possible that there is some continuity with women's music making in the African Diaspora? Documenting, acknowledging and reconnecting traditions of women's musical creativity beyond the Eurocentric and male-dominated narrative will ensure that the field of composition has a more equitable and inclusive future.

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APPENDIX 1

Interview Outline

- What is your musical background?
- What were your early experiences with music/as a musician?
- How would you evaluate music education in Nigerian institutions (universities and conservatories)?
- Have you encountered gender discrimination?
- Did you study western music theory and did it help you as a musician?
- Who are examples of composers and are you a composer?
- What is your compositional process?
- What are your musical influences?

Interview Participants

Date	Name	Location	Link
March 4	Agatha Onwuekwe	Nsukka	https://youtu.be/kd6NNyBf2_g
March 10	Ijeoma Forchu	Nsukka	https://youtu.be/N-cQP9-2ilM
April 23	Esther Eboka	Nsukka	https://youtu.be/of530x3RH9Y
July 22	Grace Oforka	Lagos	https://youtu.be/0azGt8lJik4
July 22	Elizabeth Oluwade	Lagos	https://youtu.be/Q2XkF0YR8Js
July 24	Elizabeth Ekaette	Lagos	https://youtu.be/DzltjWujG6w
July 24	Mary Umossoh	Lagos	https://youtu.be/MukVTyrMLpI
July 26	Genevieve Ogu	Lagos	https://youtu.be/UpUEzOD56QY
July 27	Monica Enyi	Lagos	https://youtu.be/v9w9ukuj6j0

APPENDIX 2

The interviews were gathered under an MOU between the Africana Digital Ethnography Project and the University of Nigeria Office of International Collaboration, signed in 2019. This agreement includes a process for informed consent and the release form below.

UNN Digital Archive Photograph & Video Release Form



I hereby grant permission to the rights of my image, likeness and sound of my voice as recorded on audio or video tape. I understand that my image may be edited, copied, exhibited, published or distributed and waive the right to inspect or approve the finished product wherein my likeness appears. Additionally, I waive any right to royalties or other compensation arising or related to the use of my image or recording. I also understand that this material may be used in diverse educational settings within an unrestricted geographic area. Please request a copy of the grant for the right to use video for your own purposes.

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- informational presentations
- on-line educational courses
- educational videos

By signing this release, I understand this permission signifies that photographic or video recordings of me may be electronically displayed via the Internet or in the public educational setting.

- I will be consulted about the use of the photographs or video recording for any purpose other than those listed above.
- There is no time limit on the validity of this release nor is there any geographic limitation on where these materials may be distributed.
- This release applies to photographic, audio or video recordings collected as part of the sessions listed on this document only.

By signing this form, I acknowledge that I have completely read and fully understand the above release and agree to be bound thereby. I hereby release any and all claims against any person or organization utilizing this material for educational purposes.

Surname _____

Other Names _____

Organization _____

Address _____

Phone (Whatsapp) _____

Email Address _____

Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX 3

Audiovisual primary sources on women's music-making in Nigeria.

Genre	Ethnic Group	Location	Recording Date	Link
Oriki	Yorùbá	Lagos	July 26, 2013	https://youtu.be/-pvTKPRfbHk
Egara	Igbo	Enugu	October 4, 2020	https://youtu.be/2a6wkXgA5dw
Otu Umunwanyi	Igbo	Lagos	December 1, 2013	https://youtu.be/uffnzwrWw34
Obudiye	Igbo	Anambra	March 18, 2020	https://youtu.be/_O5OCU7b5H8
Otu Umunwanyi	Igbo	Enugu	June 27, 2020	https://youtu.be/woSv_3vrNSM
Ceer	Mwaghavul	Plateau	April 4, 2021	https://youtu.be/hGmcESKxIFc
Izalla	Boze	Plateau	April 8, 2021	https://youtu.be/L110rxTD3ss