

IGBO TRADITIONAL MUSIC AND CULTURAL IDENTITY: CONTEMPORARY INFLUENCES AND TRANSFORMATIONS IN IGBO SOCIETY

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Abstract

Music is widely recognized as an integral component of culture because it embodies and communicates the values, beliefs, and practices of a people. Among the Igbo of Nigeria, music occupies a central place in social, religious, and ceremonial activities, serving as a medium through which cultural identity is expressed and preserved. This study examines the various aspects of Igbo culture reflected in traditional music and explores the contemporary influences, both internal and external, that have shaped traditional musical forms and practices. The research adopted a qualitative approach, utilizing bibliographic sources and participant observation as methods of data collection. The study is anchored in Reflection Theory and Cultural Change Theory, which provide a framework for understanding the relationship between music, culture, and social transformation. The study concludes that although contemporary influences have transformed the modes of transmission, performance contexts, and stylistic features of Igbo traditional music, its core cultural values and identity-bearing functions remain largely intact.

Keywords: Igbo traditional music, cultural identity, cultural transformation, indigenous music, globalization, Igbo culture.

Introduction

Culture represents the total way of life of a people, transmitted from one generation to another through learning, observation, and social interaction. The process through which individuals acquire and internalize the norms, values, beliefs, and practices of their society is known as socialization (Umeugochukwu & Okafor, 2024). Culture encompasses a wide range of elements, including language, beliefs, values, symbols, customs, and artefacts, which collectively define the identity of a people. These elements are broadly categorized into material and non-material culture. Non-material culture encompasses intangible aspects such as language, beliefs, values, and social norms, whereas material culture comprises tangible objects and technologies created and utilised by a society, including tools, musical instruments, clothing, utensils, and means of transportation.

Culture is not static; rather, it is dynamic and continuously evolves in response to internal and external influences. Cultural change may result from interactions between different societies through trade, migration, intermarriage, globalization, technological advancement, and the widespread use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) (Umeugochukwu & Okafor, 2024). Despite such transformations, culture remains a vital marker of identity, enabling people to distinguish themselves through their language, dress, food, religious practices, and artistic expressions.

Among the various forms of cultural expression, music occupies a prominent position as a powerful medium through which the values, beliefs, history, and worldview of a people are communicated and preserved. Beyond its entertainment function, music serves as a repository of collective memory, a vehicle for socialization, and a means of reinforcing cultural identity. Through song texts, performance practices, musical instruments, and associated rituals, music reflects the social realities and cultural experiences of the communities that create and sustain it.

This study seeks to examine the role of Igbo traditional music in expressing and preserving cultural identity and to investigate the contemporary influences that have transformed traditional musical practices in Igbo society.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach. Data were obtained through participant observation and documentary sources, including books, journal articles, conference papers, and other relevant scholarly materials. Data were analyzed descriptively within the framework of Reflection Theory and Cultural Change Theory.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Reflection Theory and Cultural Change Theory.

Reflection Theory: This theory posits that artistic expressions, including music, reflect the social realities, values, norms and beliefs of a people. Applied to the study, it explains how Igbo traditional music serves as a representation of Igbo culture. Through song texts, rhythms, dances, performance practices, and musical

instruments, traditional music communicates the values, beliefs, customs, occupations, leadership structures, religious practices, and communal philosophy of the Igbo people.

Cultural Change Theory: The theory explains the influences a culture experiences as a result of cultural contact, modernization and globalization. Within the context of this study, Cultural Change Theory helps explain the transformations that have occurred in Igbo traditional music. Contemporary influences such as Christianity, Western education, migration, urbanization, popular music, and digital technology have altered the modes of transmission, performance contexts, instrumentation, and audience reception of traditional music. While some traditional practices have declined, others have adapted to changing social realities, resulting in new musical forms that combine indigenous and foreign elements. The theory, therefore, provides a framework for understanding both continuity and transformations in Igbo traditional music.

Concept of Music/Traditional Music

Music is often regarded as a universal language because it forms part of virtually every culture in the world. It is commonly defined as organized sound that pleases the ear. Ekwueme (2008) defines music as "a phenomenon using the medium of sound which is organized and manipulated into socially accepted patterns that communicate intelligibly and meaningfully, verbally or non-verbally, ideas, feelings, emotions and events to people" (p. 1). Every culture has different ways of organizing music to suit its environment, occupation, and experiences. In his discussion on the concept of music, Okafor (2005) explains:

It is essentially a human activity denoting or expressing human emotions and the relationship of the emotions to the environment... In its truest sense, it cannot exist without man... Since each culture has its own collective or individual experiences, ideas, outlook and environment, the organization of sounds into music does vary from culture to culture. (pp. 383 & 384)

Okafor (2019) further explains that this, by implication, is that what seems to be organized sounds in one culture might be regarded as unorganized sounds by another culture. In other words, what is music in one culture might not be regarded as music in another culture. On this premise, one can say that no music is superior to the other because appreciation of music varies from one culture to another, one group to another and one individual to another. The music characteristic of a culture is known as folk, traditional or indigenous music of that culture. Traditional music evolves as a communal experience and derives its origin and versatility from oral traditions or folklore of a people or ethnic group (Agu, 1990 & Okwilagwe, 2002 as cited in Ibekwe, 2011). Onuora-Oguno (2006) adds thus, "the traditional music of a people is to a great extent, a mirror of their culture" (p. 90). Okunade (2011) further explains that if these indigenous musics are not sermonizing, they are talking about history, events, and subjects in the present modern educational system. Because they are rendered in indigenous languages, when they are used as instructional materials to teach the children, it makes them understand, appreciate and promote their cultural heritage.

Classification of Traditional Music

According to Agu (2024), the Igbo traditional music is classified under three categories: recreational music, occasional music and incidental music.

Recreational Music: This includes all types of music that are not religiously, ceremoniously and culturally bound. That is, all music meant for relaxation and entertainment purposes. They include music organized and performed by adolescents/youths, peer groups/age grades and social groups. (Ibekwe, 2017 & Agu, 2024)

Occasional Music: All traditional music associated with rites and ceremonies such as festivals, religious worship, kingship, initiation or rites of passage such as birth, puberty, marriage, burial and funeral. This genre is more frequently used among African communities since activities of different types and varied purposes occur all year round. It is really in occasional music that the musical idiom of any African community is preserved. (Agu, 2024)

Incidental Music: Incidental music is associated with non-ritual activities. They are music simply applied or introduced to enhance the successful execution of a project or introduced to induce commitment and steadfastness to work. They include war songs and occupational music types such as songs of the labourers, blacksmiths, canoe paddlers and so forth. (Ibekwe, 2017 & Agu, 2024)

The Igbo People of Nigeria

The Igbo are one of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. The others are the Hausa and the Yoruba. The Igbo occupy the South-eastern area of Nigeria, which comprises the following States: Anambra, Imo, Enugu, Abia and Ebonyi. They are also found in the neighbouring States such as Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Delta and Rivers. The Igbo homeland, however, is the forest region of South-eastern Nigeria with outcropping to the West, and lying between longitudes 6° and 8° East and latitudes 5° and 7° North. They live mainly to the east of the lower Niger with a small extension on the West Bank (Okafor, 2013).

The main occupation of the Igbo is farming (cropping, fishing, hunting and animal husbandry) and trading. They also engage in some traditional technologies such as wood carving, pottery, blacksmithing, bronze and metal artistry (Agu, 2011). They always acknowledge that a bountiful harvest is proof that the gods are pleased with the people, whereas a poor harvest is a sign that the gods are not happy, maybe as a result of sacrilege committed by the community or some individuals within the community. This, therefore, compelled them to regularly offer sacrifices to the gods either in appreciation for the records of progress made or appeasement to avert impending danger or in making a special request.

Pertinently, group responsibility is emphasized in Igbo society over individual activities. This Igbo philosophy of existing as a group or community is expressed in some Igbo idiomatic and figurative statements like *umunna bu ike* (kindred is strength); *ofu osisi adighi eme ofia* (a tree does not make a forest); *ofu nkụ anaghị eye ite* (a log of wood does not make a pot of food), *igwe bu ike* (unity is strength), and so forth. For example, when a child is born, its upbringing becomes a communal responsibility to ensure that the child becomes an active participant of his/her society in adulthood, hence the statement, *ofu onye a naghi azu nwa* (one person does not train a child). Also, funerals and marriages are community affairs and not a nuclear family activity. The high premium placed on group activity is evident in the practices of extended family structure, which involves individuals who are either of the same patrilineage or matrilineage descent, an age grade system, village/community decision making, council of elders and so on. This consequently results in the decentralization of power in Igbo society because each group at its various levels takes its own decisions and settles disputes that arise among them. Discussing the political system of the Igbo, Okafor (2013) expatiates that the Igbo never had empires of the size and status like the Oyo, Benin, Fulani and Hausa Empires. The basic political organization is centred around *umunna* (kindred) and title system, such as *ichi ozọ* (taking of *ozọ* title), *ima mmụọ* (initiation into spirit manifest/masquerade cult), *ichi eze* (coronation of a king), et cetera. Political power is diffused and democratized, and encourages political dialogue, equality, communalism and egalitarianism at all levels of lineage segments.

Igbo Traditional Music

Music and dance accompany virtually all the events and activities in Igbo culture. The music that is associated with various events or activities is not merely for entertainment but is functional, that is, it is contextual with the particular event(s) they are meant for. That is why there are songs peculiarly meant for birth, works, funerals, marriages, worship, periodic and non-periodic festivals and so forth. These songs are mostly accompanied by Igbo musical instruments. The Igbo traditional music portrays the Igbo worldview, philosophy, ideology and history. The texts, sounds and rhythms combine to depict the mood of the event (Okafor, 2024). According to Nzewi in Ibekwe (2019), "the themes of songs tend to centre on events and matters of common interest and concern to the members of a community or social groups within it, they may deal with everyday life or with the traditions, beliefs and customs of the society" (p. 1). Echezona (1964) notes that life, to every Igbo, has a melodic and rhythmic orientation, and again, no event happens that is not associated with music.

Nwamara (2011) illustrates the musical life stages of an average Igbo with what he calls the THREE Es.

E1 - stands for Entrance and Early Life stage, which comprises the period from birth to adolescence. This stage and its associated activities have their corresponding songs, which include, in a sequential order, birth announcement songs, naming/outing ceremony songs, lullabies, plaintive songs, cradle songs, games/play songs, folktale songs, peer groups songs and dances, and songs for social control.

E2 – This stage represents life in adulthood and the activities that are associated with it. Such activities include initiation into the spirit manifest (*mmannwu*) cult, wars, age grade system, festival and feasts, marriages and title taking. These activities are enhanced with various music that is contextual with them.

E3: This represents the Exit and Funeral Rites stage. The songs that are associated with death and funeral rites vary in their emotional expression depending on the age of the deceased. The death of an individual at a very old age calls for celebration, whereas the death of a young person is accompanied by sorrowful songs.

Traditional Igbo music often features voice and indigenous musical instruments. These instruments are, however, used to create rhythms, melorhythms and melodies that evoke and convey different emotions and messages respectively (Umeugochukwu & Okafor, 2024). Pertinently, the variety of Igbo musical instruments is produced with materials sourced from the Igbo society. Examples of such materials include grass, gourd, clay, wood, metal, animal skin and so forth. Some of the Igbo musical instruments. Include *Igba* (drums of different sizes and shapes), *ekwe* (slit drums of varied sizes), *ogene* (small metal gong), *alo* (long metal gong), *ekpili* (shakers), *okpoko* (woodblock), *udu* (pot drum), *ngede egwu* (indigenous xylophone), *oja* (Igbo flute) and many others.

Dimensions of Igbo Culture that are Portrayed through Igbo Traditional Music

The mere translation of the texts of Igbo songs into other languages, or discussions of the roles of Igbo musical instruments in an ensemble, is not sufficient to fully understand the true meaning of Igbo traditional music or to make an aesthetic judgment about it, especially by someone who is not an indigene of the culture. For a clearer

understanding of Igbo traditional music, there is a need to understand Igbo culture itself. Therefore, this section examines the various dimensions of Igbo culture portrayed through Igbo traditional music. These include social life and communal values, religious and spiritual beliefs, language and oral tradition, moral and educational functions, political and leadership structures, as well as occupational and economic life.

Social Life and Communal Values

Igbo traditional music reflects the social life and communal values of the Igbo, which place group responsibility over individuality. Traditional music is often performed in a call-and-response style, showing that meaning is created collectively rather than individually. For instance, when a lead singer or master drummer initiates a call, the community responds through chorus, clapping, dancing or instruments.

Social values like unity and shared responsibility are also embedded in performance contexts. For example, during festivals, title-taking ceremonies, marriages, or communal labour, music helps synchronize group action and emotion. Dance and drumming affirm that joy is a communal experience, not an individual one. A work song can set a rhythm for collective farming or building, reducing fatigue and reinforcing the idea that hard tasks are easier when shared.

Below is an example of a work song:

Igbo Text	English Translation
<i>Na-alụnụ ọlụ,</i>	Keep working,
<i>Anyị ga-enwe mmeri</i>	Victory is ours,
<i>Na-alụnụ ọlụ,</i>	Keep working,
<i>Anyị ga-enwe mmeri</i>	Victory is ours,
<i>Jisiike n'ọlụ</i>	Be courageous
<i>Anyị ga-enwe mmeri</i>	Victory is ours,

Religious and Spiritual Belief

Traditional Igbo music is deeply connected to spirituality, religion, and communication with the ancestors. In Igbo traditional belief systems, music is not merely for entertainment; it serves as a sacred medium through which humans communicate with spiritual forces, ancestors, and deities. Songs, chants, drumming, and instrumental performances are important parts of rituals, sacrifices, prayers, festivals, and divination ceremonies.

Musical instruments such as the Ekwe and the Ogene are commonly used by traditional priests and native doctors during divination and ritual practices because they are believed to attract or resonate with spirits and ancestral beings. Different masquerade spirits (*mmanwu*) are also associated with particular instruments, including the Oja, the ogene, and the ekwe. These instruments help create the sacred atmosphere needed for spiritual manifestation and communal worship.

An example of a traditional Igbo prayer expressed through song is:

Igbo Text	English Translation
<i>Ndị ichie anyị bjanu nū,</i>	Our ancestors, come and hear us,
<i>Bjanu nọdunyere umu unu,</i>	Come and stay with your children,
<i>Nye anyị udo na ngozi</i>	Grant us peace and blessings.

This prayer-song reflects the Igbo worldview that ancestors remain spiritually present in the lives of their descendants. Through music, the community seeks guidance, protection, peace, and blessings from those who have passed on but are still respected as guardians of the family and society.

Language and Oral Tradition

The myths, legends, folktales, history, language, and ideology of a people are communicated or transmitted orally from one generation to another, often using music as a vehicle. These stories contain Igbo proverbs and idiomatic expressions. Music may serve to tell complete stories or accompany storytelling in order to enhance the narration, sustain interest, and aid memory retention. Through folktales and accompanying songs, children learn the dos and don'ts of their communities. They also learn about human and animal behaviour, as well as proverbs, moral codes, and maxims (Okafor, 2017).

Examples of Igbo proverbs and idiomatic expressions.

Igbo Proverbs	Translation
<i>Onye buru chi ya ụzọ,</i>	He who runs ahead of his guardian spirit
<i>Ogbagbue onwe ya n'osọ</i>	May destroy himself through haste.

Meaning: This proverb teaches patience and humility. It warns against trying to force success or acting faster than one's destiny permits. The proverb encourages individuals to trust the proper timing of life and avoid unnecessary haste that may lead to failure or destruction.

Moral and Education Functions

The Igbo place a high premium on children. This is evident in some of the names given to them. Examples include *Nwakaego* (a child is greater than money), *Nwabuaku* (a child is wealth), *Nwamaka* (a child is beautiful/endearing), *Nwabueze* (a child is king), *Nwabundo* (a child is shelter), and *Nwadimma* (a child is good), among others (Umeugochukwu & Okafor, 2024).

The importance attached to children in Igbo society calls for proper training and moral education so that they can become active participants in their various communities. Fafunwa, as cited in Akumah (2013), outlines the goals of traditional education as follows:

- i. To develop the child's latent physical skills.
- ii. To develop character.
- iii. To inculcate respect for elders and those in positions of authority.
- iv. To develop intellectual skills.
- v. To acquire specific vocational training and develop a healthy attitude toward honest labour.
- vi. To develop a sense of belonging and encourage active participation in community affairs.
- vii. To understand, appreciate, and promote the cultural heritage of the community at large (p. 258).

Igbo traditional music plays a significant role in instilling societal norms and values in children during their formative years. Children learn folk songs based on themes such as honesty, love, diligence, obedience, and hard work. Furthermore, according to Umeugochukwu and Achikeh (2021), child upbringing is regarded as a communal responsibility, which explains why a child may bear the name *Nwaorah*, meaning "child of the community."

Through folk tales and accompanying songs, children learn the dos and don'ts of their communities. They also learn about the character traits of humans and animals, proverbs, moral codes, and maxims, as well as how to produce some of the tools and musical instruments common in their communities (Okafor, 2017).

An example of such educative songs is:

Igbo Text

Gaara nne gi ozi
Gaara nna gi ozi
Agarala agbala ozi
Agbala bu onye ugha

English Translation

Be helpful to your mother
Be helpful to your father
Do not help a ghost
For a ghost is a liar.

Political and Leadership Structure

In traditional Igbo society, music plays a vital role in political organization and leadership. Since authority in Igbo communities is decentralized rather than concentrated in a single ruler, different social and religious institutions use music to communicate their responsibilities, values, and influence within the community. Leadership groups such as *ndi ichie* (elders), *nze na ozọ* (title holders), *otu ogbo* (age grades), *umuada* (daughters of the lineage), *ndi nwunye di* or *inyom di* (wives or co-wives), *umunna* (kindred), *eze mmuo* (chief priest), and *mmanwu* (masquerade spirits) employ songs, chants, drumming, and other musical performances in carrying out their social and political functions.

Music serves several important purposes within Igbo political leadership. It is used to announce public meetings and communal events, praise respected leaders and title holders, preserve history and cultural values, enforce social control, unite members of the community during festivals and ceremonies, and strengthen the connection between leadership and spirituality. Through music, leaders communicate authority, inspire respect, and reinforce communal identity.

The praise song below celebrates the *Nze na Ozọ* title holders, who are regarded as custodians of tradition and honourable members of society.

Igbo Text

Nze na Ozọ,
Ndi ugwu obodo,
Ndi na-che omenala,
Unu diri anyi mma.

English Translation

Nze and Ozọ title holders,
Honourable people of the community,
Custodians of tradition,
You are good to us.

Occupational and Economic Life

Agriculture occupied a central place in Igbo life and served as the backbone of the economy. In addition to farming, the Igbo engaged in several other occupations such as hunting, fishing, trading, blacksmithing, carving, weaving, pottery, and palm wine tapping. These occupations contributed greatly to the economic development of society and encouraged self-reliance within communities. Trade was mainly conducted in local markets where goods were exchanged through barter before the introduction of modern currency.

These occupations are vividly reflected in Igbo traditional music and cultural performances. For instance, the *igba* (drums) are made from animal skins such as those of antelopes and other animals obtained through hunting or animal rearing. The *ogene* and *alo* (small and long metal gongs) are produced by blacksmiths, while the *ekwe* (wooden slit drum), *ojà* (Igbo flute), and the wooden parts of drums are crafted by skilled wood carvers. In the same way, traditional dance styles often symbolize the occupations and lifestyles of different communities.

There are also occupational songs that emphasize the dignity and importance of labour in society. Furthermore, dance troupes and instrumental ensembles generate income through performances, thereby contributing to the local economy. Below is an example of an occupational song:

Igbo text

*Orụ ugbo bụ orụ obodo anyị
Ọ bụrụ na irughị orụ ugbo
Ị nwere ike izu ochi
Ihe ọbụla ị mụtara na-ejighi ọgụ
na mma ezughị oke.*

English Translation

Farm work is our traditional industry
If you do not farm
You could steal
Whatever without using the hoe
and machete is not complete.

Contemporary influences on Igbo Traditional Music

This section examines how various contemporary factors have influenced Igbo traditional music. The factors considered include Christianity and Western education, migration and urbanization, popular music influence and technology and mass media.

Christianity and Western Education

The introduction of Christianity into Igboland in the mid-nineteenth century marked the beginning of Western music education among the Igbo people. Early Christian missionaries regarded many aspects of Igbo cultural expression, including traditional music and musical instruments, as pagan or fetish practices. As a result, they promoted Western hymns and chants, accompanied by the harmonium or reed organ, as the appropriate form of music for Christian worship (Ekwueme, 2004; Umezina, 2012). Although these musical forms were embraced by early converts, they did not fully satisfy indigenous musical preferences because they lacked the rhythmic vitality and bodily engagement characteristic of traditional Igbo music, which naturally encourages coordinated movement and participation. (Agu, 2012; Okafor, 2024)

To bridge the gap between Christian worship and indigenous musical sensibilities, some musically gifted converts who had acquired skills in tonic sol-fa notation and hymn performance through church choirs and mission schools began to compose music that reflected local cultural elements. These compositions, popularly referred to as “native airs,” initially took the form of a cappella renditions but were later accompanied by indigenous musical instruments, thereby creating a distinctive blend of Christian and Igbo musical traditions (Agu, 2002). Subsequently, other indigenous Christian songs like youth songs, short choruses, *nkwa* group and others emerged. These were either accompanied by purely indigenous musical instruments, band instruments or a fusion of both. The development of formal music education in Nigeria during the 1960s further transformed the musical landscape of Igboland. The establishment of the Department of Music at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, in 1961, along with similar programmes in other tertiary institutions, provided opportunities for Nigerians to pursue professional music training within the country. Through these institutions, students were exposed to Western musical theories and practices alongside systematic studies of African music conducted by both foreign and locally trained scholars. Consequently, formally trained Igbo composers began integrating indigenous musical elements with Western compositional techniques, giving rise to what is now widely recognized as Igbo art music. These compositions employed indigenous instruments, the piano, or a combination of both. In addition, efforts were made to modify and standardize certain indigenous instruments, such as arranging different sizes of the *ogene* and adapting the xylophone to the equal-temperament system and other scale structures to facilitate broader compositional possibilities.

Beyond composition, Igbo traditional music has served as a major source of inspiration for scholarly and creative exploration. Folk songs have been arranged and transformed into various art music forms, including solo, duet, and choral works, accompanied by indigenous instruments, the piano, or ensembles that combine African and Western instruments. Similarly, traditional melodies and instrumental music have been adapted for performance on the piano and by Western orchestras. These innovations have contributed significantly to the emergence of theoretical frameworks and compositional philosophies developed by prominent Igbo scholars and composers such as Meki Nzewi, Richard Okafor, Dan Agu, Christian Onyeji, Agatha Onwuekwe, Alvan-Ikoku Nwamara and others. Their collective efforts have advanced the preservation, adaptation, and global promotion of Igbo musical heritage through a process that Nwamara (2024) describes as ‘Igbonization’, aimed at enhancing the international relevance and recognition of Igbo music.

Migration and Urbanization

Rural–urban migration has significantly influenced the transmission, performance, and preservation of Igbo traditional music. Many young people leave their villages to learn trades, acquire vocational skills, or pursue tertiary education. After completing their training or studies, most settle permanently in urban areas and return to their villages only occasionally. Consequently, traditional avenues for cultural and musical transmission, such as moonlight plays, storytelling sessions led by elders, and communal music-making activities, have gradually declined within Igbo society. Furthermore, the construction of traditional musical instruments is increasingly left in the hands of elderly craftsmen and a small number of youths who remain in rural communities.

Despite these challenges, Igbo traditional music has also found its way into urban centres. Indigenous people from various Igbo communities living in cities often form town unions and cultural associations through which they perform traditional music and dance. In addition, traditional musical and dance forms are incorporated into educational institutions at various levels as a means of preserving cultural heritage. However, performances that were originally held in village squares and closely associated with rituals, ceremonies, and communal events are now frequently staged for entertainment purposes, thereby altering their original cultural significance and context. Urbanization has also influenced music education. Many schools in urban areas, particularly private institutions, adopt British and American curricula. In these schools, English serves as the primary language of communication, while Western folk songs are often preferred over Igbo folk songs in music instruction. Consequently, students are more frequently exposed to Western musical instruments such as the flute, keyboard, violin, trumpet, and brass instruments, with little or no emphasis placed on indigenous Igbo musical instruments (Okafor, 2016).

Furthermore, increased cultural interaction resulting from migration and urbanization has encouraged the exchange of musical practices among different ethnic groups. Some Igbo traditional musical instruments have been incorporated into the ensembles of other cultures, while instruments from other cultures have found their way into Igbo traditional ensembles. For example, some contemporary Igbo instrumental ensembles now include the bongo, even though it is not traditionally an Igbo musical instrument.

Overall, migration and urbanization have had both positive and negative effects on Igbo traditional music. While they have contributed to the erosion of traditional modes of transmission and performance, they have also facilitated the preservation, adaptation, and wider dissemination of Igbo musical traditions in urban environments.

Popular Music Influence

Popular music has significantly influenced Igbo traditional music in terms of instrumentation, performance style, and audience appeal. Minstrelsy, which was traditionally performed by an individual or a few persons accompanied by the *ekpili* (shakers) or *igba* (drum), has evolved into live band performances. Similarly, indigenous musical instruments are now often combined with Western and electronic instruments, creating hybrid musical styles.

Many popular musicians like Oliver De Coque, Chief Stephen Osita Osadebe, Onyeka Owenu, Nelly Uhendu, Celestine Ukwu, Theresa Onuora and, more recently, Flavour, Umu Obiligbo and others incorporate traditional Igbo melodies, rhythms, proverbs, and song texts into popular music genres such as highlife, gospel, and Afrobeat, thereby promoting Igbo musical heritage to wider audiences. However, commercial demands have also led to the modification of some traditional performance practices and the replacement of certain indigenous instruments with electronic alternatives. Despite these changes, popular music has contributed greatly to the preservation, adaptation, and wider dissemination of Igbo traditional music in contemporary society.

Technology and Mass Media

Sound technology and electronic media have significantly revolutionized the performance, transmission, and reception of Igbo traditional music in contemporary society. Through sound technology, traditional music can now be amplified effectively. With the use of microphones, for example, vocalists are no longer overpowered by the percussive sounds of accompanying instruments, especially during performances in large venues.

Furthermore, traditional music can be documented through audio and video recordings and stored on media such as Compact Discs (CDs), Video Compact Discs (VCDs), and Digital Versatile Discs (DVDs). This development has enabled music researchers and analysts to transcribe, study, and preserve instrumental rhythms and songs using music notation software such as Sibelius, Finale, Muse Score, and Noteworthy Composer.

In digital recording, the sounds of traditional musical instruments can be sampled and stored on computers. These sound samples can later be utilized by sound engineers to recreate authentic traditional instrumental lines in

various musical genres while retaining the original timbre of the instruments. Similarly, folk songs can be recorded in studios by individuals capable of performing them.

Moreover, recorded audio and video materials can now be distributed widely through various social media platforms, thereby increasing accessibility and audience reach. In addition, live performances can be attended virtually through live-streaming technologies and platforms such as Facebook, Zoom, and Google Meet. These technological advancements have greatly contributed to the preservation, promotion, and global dissemination of Igbo traditional music.

Conclusion

Music is the intentional organization of sound into meaningful patterns for various communicative, expressive, and social purposes. It is acknowledged as an integral part of virtually all cultures of the world, although the organization of sound varies across cultures. Each culture manipulates sound to suit its environment, occupation, and experiences. In Igbo traditional society, music is not an isolated art form but encompasses sound, drama, dance, artistic designs, and oral literature. It is also not merely for entertainment; rather, it reflects Igbo history, philosophy, values, beliefs, and worldview. These are expressed through song texts, dance styles, instrumentation, and performance styles and contexts. However, as Igbo society continues to evolve, various internal and external factors, facilitated by technological advancements, have reshaped the modes of transmission, reception, performance, and preservation of Igbo traditional music. Nevertheless, the Igbo language and traditional musical instruments have been sustained. In conclusion, although Igbo traditional music has been influenced by contemporary factors, its essence remains unchanged.

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