

Cultural Synergy in Music: The Pioneering Role of Yorùbá Music Educators and Practitioners in Blending African and Western Traditions

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Article History	Abstract
Original Research Article	<p><i>This study explores the cultural synergy forged by pioneering Yorùbá music educators and practitioners who engaged with Western musical traditions and skillfully fused them with indigenous musical elements. Focusing on the evolution of intercultural expressions within Nigerian music, the research investigates the early moves made by these cultural trailblazers to blend Western techniques with Yorùbá musical identity. Through documentary evidence, it was discovered that missionary churches played a significant role in shaping this intercultural process, particularly by influencing local composers and educators to incorporate Yorùbá music idioms into choral compositions suitable for the modern concert stage. Additionally, many of these pioneers concentrated on arranging traditional folk tunes using Western instruments and performance frameworks. This study investigates these efforts with a view to distilling valuable lessons for the ongoing development of intercultural approaches to music education in Nigeria. It concludes that the legacy of these early innovators offers a rich model for balancing cultural preservation with musical innovation in contemporary practice.</i></p> <p>Keywords: Cultural synergy, Music, Music Educator, African and Western Tradition, Yoruba Musical Identity.</p>
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Introduction

Cultural synergy refers to the process through which distinct cultural elements interact, blend, and evolve to produce new, enriched outcomes that reflect the strengths of each original tradition (Adedeji, 2010; Nketia, 1982). In the context of music, cultural synergy manifests when musicians, educators, or communities intentionally merge diverse musical heritages and cultures to create a new and innovative forms of expression. This phenomenon is not really about placing two traditions side-by-side, but rather about weaving them into a cohesive and an unbreakable whole bond that resonates with shared humanitarian culture, yet honors the uniqueness of its constituents. (Agawu, 2003).

The word is indeed developing as we now people of different races and cultures moves in with each other, live and share the same environment therefore leading to exchange of cultural habits among themselves, the blending of African and Western musical traditions shows a great example of cultural synergy at work. This interaction has

been particularly vibrant in Nigeria or let me say to Nigerians who move abroad. Saying has it that Nigerians can be found anywhere in the world and we tend to survive under any condition, not only that, we also tend to influence people faster by our ways and attitudes. In a country like Nigeria where indigenous music practices have encountered the Western musical structures over centuries. The Yorùbá culture which I regard as one of the most culturally expressive and musically rich ethnic groups in West Africa practiced by the Yorùbá people have played a significant role in this process. Through their musical practices, particularly in sacred and educational contexts, Yorùbá musicians and scholars have shaped a musical atmosphere that bridges traditional African aesthetics with European classical techniques.

This coming together of the Yoruba cultural and musical culture and the western musical style did not occur but it arose through deliberate creative, pedagogical, and ideological choices by African musicians and music

educators who sought to preserve their heritage while engaging with global paradigms after carefully learning the western musical styles and gained sufficient knowledge, they integrated it into their African culture which has been a globally recognized musical practice as of today. As Omojola (2016) notes, many African composers consciously appropriate Western forms such as the oratorio, mass, and anthem, infusing them with indigenous tonalities, languages, rhythmic patterns, and performance practices. The result is a genre that is simultaneously rooted in African culture and at the same time open to external influence. A musical dialogue that is both reflective and transformative.

Central to this intercultural evolution is the notion that music can serve as a site for identity negotiation, cultural resistance, and re-imagination. African music practitioners, especially those of Yorùbá origin, have not merely adopted Western music totally but they have redefined it through indigenous and local lenses. This process of reinterpretation underscores the agency of African musicians in shaping the direction of musical modernity on their own terms (Euba, 1990). The synergy created is thus a dynamic and ongoing one, situated at the intersection of tradition, innovation, and education.

It is important that we understand the historical background of both Western and African music, tracing the pathways through which their interaction has given rise to a unique blend in the Nigerian music scene.

Historical Background of both musical genre

Western music in Nigeria started from the liturgical and secular traditions of the Europeans which went through a series of stylistic revolutions over centuries from Gregorian chant and polyphonic Renaissance counterpoint to the grandeur of Baroque orchestration, Classical balance, Romantic emotionalism, and the experimentalism of the 20th century. Characterized by a codified system of notation, harmony, and structured forms, Western art music developed an extensive theoretical and pedagogical tradition that was institutionalized through conservatories and churches (Agawu, 2003, Omojola, 2012).

Western music was introduced to Nigeria mainly through Christian missionary activities in the mid-19th century, marking the beginning of a new musical epoch in the region. Missionary societies such as the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the Wesleyan Methodist Mission brought hymns, canticles, and other liturgical music forms into Nigerian churches and schools, particularly in the Yorùbá-speaking southwest. These missionaries viewed music as a vital tool for religious conversion and a tool to attract people who didn't understand their language or lifestyle, but they also imposed certain restrictions. Indigenous musical instruments were often banned from

worship, perceived as being linked to "pagan" rituals, thereby elevating European musical forms and instrumentation as standards of spiritual and aesthetic refinement (Vidal, 2012, Chukwu & Unaegbu, 2014).

As Christianity spread, Nigerians began participating actively in church music. A few distinguished themselves and received professional musical training abroad. Notably, Robert Coker became the first Nigerian to study music in Britain in 1871, later serving as the first organist and choirmaster of the Cathedral Church of Christ, Lagos (Chukwu & Unaegbu, 2014, p. 40). Another pioneer, Rev. Thomas King Ekundayo Phillips, who was a key figure and instrumental in introducing Yorùbá tonal characteristics into Anglican worship. He composed a lot of liturgical works that respected the tonal inflections of the Yorùbá language while using Western harmonic frameworks (SATB + Organ) thus initiating the process of cultural fusion in sacred music (Omojola, 2016).

Through missionary schools created by the mission and church choirs in various parishes across the country, Western music theory and notation were taught side by side with religious instruction. Institutions such as CMS Grammar School and King's College Lagos became breeding grounds for musically literate Nigerians. Over time, the exposure to tonic sol-fa, hymnody, and choral techniques laid a solid foundation for the development of Western music literacy among Nigerian youths, many of whom later became composers, educators, and performers. (Internet source).

By the 1940s and 1950s, Nigerian musicians began moving beyond church settings to creatively blend African and Western traditions. A prominent example is Fela Sowande, often regarded as the father of modern Nigerian art music. Having trained in both Europe and Nigeria, Sowande composed works that fused Yorùbá folk melodies with European classical idioms. His African Suite and organ pieces like Obangiji reflected a deep engagement with both cultural heritages and a mission to create a unique Nigerian sound within the Western classical framework (Omojola, 2009, Sadoh, 2010).

This continued with composers such as Ayo Bankole, Akin Euba, and Sam Akpabot, who expanded the fusion trend. Euba, for instance, developed the concept of "African pianism," composing works like Igi Nla So that integrated Yorùbá drumming aesthetics with Western piano techniques (Euba, 1977). These composers were not merely merging or blending styles but they were asserting an artistic identity that challenged colonial cultural dominance and affirmed African musical value on the global stage.

The institutionalization of Western music took a significant leap with the establishment of formal music departments in

Nigerian universities. The University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), inaugurated its Department of Music in 1961, followed by the University of Ibadan and Obafemi Awolowo University. These departments, initially modeled after British conservatories, gradually incorporated African musicology and performance practices. Key figures such as W.W.C. Echezona and Laz Ekwueme contributed to shaping the curriculum to reflect the realities of Nigerian music and society (Chukwu & Unaegbu, 2014).

On the other hand, African music, particularly that of sub-Saharan cultures like the Yorùbá has historically thrived on oral transmission, communal participation, and a profound integration with daily life and ritual. Rhythmic complexity, polyrhythmic layering, call-and-response, improvisation, and the use of tonal languages are key hallmarks of African musical expression. Musical practices in African societies were not merely aesthetic but also functional, carrying religious, political, and social meanings (Nketia, 1982; Euba, 1977).

The meeting of these two worlds began in earnest during the colonial and missionary periods of the 19th century, when Western music was introduced to Africa through religious, military, and educational institutions. In Nigeria, missionary activities, particularly in Yorùbá-speaking regions, played a central role in disseminating European hymns and choral traditions. However, these were initially imposed with little accommodation for indigenous musical values. Traditional instruments were discouraged or banned in Christian worship, and European musical standards were upheld as superior (Vidal, 2012).

Over time, African musicians and educators who have a lot of regard and respect for the African culture began to talk about this imbalance which rate the European culture over the African culture in an African land. It sound so unappealing to them but rather than rejecting Western music, they sought to blending it with African idioms. This gave rise to a generation of composers and educators who initiated a cultural synthesis between the two traditions. As Chukwu and Unaegbu (2014) observe, this process was not merely artistic but deeply educational and ideological, aimed at preserving African musical identity while engaging with global aesthetics.

In particular, early Yorùbá and Nigerian composers were instrumental in redefining sacred and secular music through this intercultural lens. Figures such as Thomas Ekundayo Phillips and Fela Sowande received professional musical training in Europe at the Trinity College of Music, London but returned to Nigeria with a vision to combine their Western knowledge with indigenous musical traditions. Sowande, often hailed as the father of modern Nigerian art music, composed organ works that incorporated Yorùbá folk melodies and tonal structures within the framework of

European liturgical forms (Omojola, 2009, p. 39; Sadoh, 2010). Similarly, Thomas King Ekundayo Phillips, one of the earliest church organists in Lagos, actively advocated for the use of Yorùbá musical elements in Christian worship and composed pieces that married Western harmony with indigenous tonality. (Chukwu & Unaegbu, 2014, p. 40). One of his move that led to the writing of the Yoruba hymn book chant book which incorporated the "*Orin ni ede and ile wa*" and other indigenous books used in the Anglican communion today instead of the Church Hymnal, Irish chant book and so on brought by missionaries.

This movement expanded throughout the 20th century with contributions from composers such as Ayo Bankole, Akin Euba, and Sam Akpabot, who experimented with integrating African rhythmic patterns, folk melodies, and language into symphonic, choral, and operatic works. Akin Euba, for instance, coined the concept of "African pianism" and was known for combining Yorùbá drums with Western piano techniques in compositions like *Abiku No. 1* and *Olurounbi* (Euba, 1977). Their pioneering efforts were shown in other ethnic traditions, as noted by Chukwu and Unaegbu (2014), who documented how Igbo music educators like W.W.C. Echezona and Laz Ekwueme contributed to a broader national movement of fusion and syncing.

By the late 20th century, this intercultural tradition had become a hallmark of Nigerian art music, with composers such as Femi Adedeji, Ayo Oluranti, Bode Omojola e.t.c continuing the legacy. Their works exemplify cultural synergy not as a passive coexistence but as an active, creative transformation. In this context, music became a space for negotiating identity, reimagining heritage, and resisting cultural extinction (Agawu, 2003, Omojola, 2016).

Thus, the historical backdrop of Western and African musical traditions in which one is rooted in codification and formalism, the other in oral dynamism and community has given rise to a rich intercultural fusion through the visionary efforts of Nigerian pioneers. These early composers and educators, such as T.K. Ekundayo Phillips, Robert Coker, Fela Sowande, Ayo Bankole, Akin Euba, and Sam Akpabot, drew directly from Western sources during their training abroad and returned home with a mission to integrate this knowledge into the pulse of African cultural life, forging a distinctive Nigerian art music tradition.

A Brief Historical Overview of Nigerian Composers: From the First to the Contemporary Generation

Knowledge will be gained into evolution of Nigerian art music through a broaden analysis of the generational framework, beginning with the early pioneers who learned from, Western musical systems during the colonial and

missionary periods and extending to the contemporary composers who continue to redefine and enrich the genre today. Across each generation, Nigerian composers especially those of Yorùbá heritage have demonstrated a deep commitment to cultural synergy, blending African traditions with Western forms to create a genre that is both rooted in indigenous identity and open to global musical discourse. Their contributions represent a sustained, intentional effort to bridge two rich musical worlds which creates a unique Nigerian musical language.

First Generation

The first generation of Nigerian composers emerged between the late 19th and mid-20th centuries, a period which was dominated by missionary influence and colonial education. These composers were introduced to music through the church and often received formal musical training from European institutions. One of the earliest among them, Robert Coker, traveled to Britain in the 1870s to study music, later serving as the first Nigerian organist and choirmaster of the Cathedral Church of Christ in Lagos. His return marked the beginning of a localized approach to church music in Nigeria. A more influential figure of this generation was Rev. Thomas King Ekundayo Phillips, who studied organ and theory at Trinity College of Music, London. He played a critical role in contextualizing Western music for African liturgical use, especially in the Yorùbá speaking areas. He developed and create choral and organ music that reflected the tonal nature of the Yorùbá language, adapting melodies to match the inflections of the text while maintaining Western harmonic structures. His theoretical text, *Yorùbá Music* (1953), was a landmark publication that advocated for the recognition and use of indigenous musical resources in Christian worship (Omojola, 2009; Chukwu & Unaegbu, 2014).

Another important contributor from this generation was Ikoli Harcourt Whyte, a largely self-taught composer who composed over 200 sacred choral pieces in Igbo. Despite having no formal Western education abroad, Whyte effectively utilized tonic sol-fa notation and simple harmonic progressions to set Igbo texts to music. His work, particularly in leprosy colonies, demonstrated the adaptability of African languages and tonal structures to Western forms. Collectively, these first-generation composers initiated what would become a long tradition of cultural reinterpretation. They laid the foundation for Nigerian art music by integrating African tonal speech, textual content, and rhythmic intuition into Western liturgical and concert settings. (Internet source)

Second Generation

The second generation of composers, active from the 1950s through the 1970s, further developed this art by exploring

Western classical genres more deeply and incorporating African elements into them more deliberately. These composers were mostly trained abroad and returned to Nigeria with refined compositional techniques and a philosophical commitment to developing African classical music. Among them was Fela Sowande, who is widely known as the father of modern Nigerian art music. Sowande's academic and professional journey took him through London, where he trained at the Royal College of Organists and the University of London. His compositions including *Obangiji*, *Kyrie*, and *African Suite* married Yorùbá folk melodies with European classical orchestration and organ textures, creating a synthesis that was both innovative and culturally resonant (Omojola, 2009, Sadoh, 2010).

Other people likes Ayo Bankole, Sam Akpabot, and Adam Fiberesima. Ayo Bankole's works, such as his *Piano Sonata No. 2* and *Yoruba Lament*, demonstrated a mastery of classical forms infused with Nigerian themes. Sam Akpabot, who also trained at the Royal College of Music, explored orchestral writing that bring outs the musical tone of Nigeria by using indigenous instruments alongside Western ones. These composers did not just adapt African melodies into existing Western forms they actively constructed a new genre of African art music, characterized by bilingual musical grammar African in content, but universal in structure.

Third Generation

The third generation of Nigerian composers, active from the 1970s through the 1990s, shifted focus from performance and composition alone to pedagogy, research, and theoretical development. These composers were not only creators but also educators, researchers, and institution-builders. Akin Euba, a leading figure of this generation, coined the term "African pianism" to describe his stylistic approach, which merged traditional rhythmic and melodic elements with Western piano technique. His compositions, such as *Abiku No. 1* and *Igi Nla So*, served as practical demonstrations of this theory. Euba received his education at Trinity College of Music and later earned a Ph.D. in ethnomusicology from the University of California, Los Angeles. Through his writings and teachings, he provided a conceptual framework for the integration of African music into Western idioms (Chukwu & Unaegbu, 2014).

Others in this generation included Joshua Uzoigwe, Laz Ekwueme, and W.W.C. Echezona. Uzoigwe developed a body of piano and choral music based on Igbo rhythms and dance traditions. Ekwueme was instrumental in developing choral music and African musical theory, particularly in aligning tonal languages with melodic construction. W.W.C. Echezona conducted extensive research on indigenous musical instruments and was pivotal in

documenting and systematizing African music theory for academic use. These composers were deeply involved in university music programs and helped to institutionalize African music within the Nigerian higher education system. Their legacy includes not only compositions but also curriculums, textbooks, and a new generation of trained scholars.

Fourth Generation

The fourth and contemporary generation, spanning from the 1990s to the present day, has continued this trajectory with increased access to digital tools, broader global exposure, and a more experimental attitude. Composers such as Femi Adedeji, Ayo Oluranti, Bidemi Oyesanya, Christian Onyeji, and Godwin Sadoh exemplify this generation's engagement with both local and international musical traditions. Many of these composers have received training in both Nigerian and foreign institutions and have produced works that are deeply reflective of cultural synergy. Femi Adedeji, for example, is widely respected for his educational and compositional output. His *Twenty African Folk Tunes for Piano* is a major contribution to piano pedagogy that prioritizes cultural authenticity while adhering to global performance standards. His choral compositions, sacred works, and folk tune arrangements reflect a deep awareness of Yorùbá musical spirituality and modern music theory (Adedeji, 2010).

Ayo Oluranti has composed works such as *Ina Ràn*, an African ensemble piece, a piece which incorporated African drumming rhythm into Western instruments like the piano, violin and other. His choral work *Messiah Baba Mi*, a sacred choral composition with piano accompaniment that draws stylistic parallels with J.S. Bach's *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring* (Osunniyi 2014 M.A Thesis). His music is an example of how traditional African themes can be expressed through Western formalism without losing their identity. Bidemi Oyesanya's anthem *Ladugbo, Ayo ayole e.t.c* is another example of contemporary synthesis, combining Western harmonic language with Yorùbá melodic contour and textual delivery. These composers represent a generation that is both rooted in tradition. They are educators, performers, and cultural archivists who continue to shape the future of African art music through their commitment to teaching, research, composition, and performance.

Through this generational progression, Nigerian composers have constructed a distinct genre of African art music that is shaped by both Western and indigenous influences. They have preserved African identity while embracing global systems, ensuring that music remains not only a site of cultural memory but also a tool for artistic reinvention and intellectual engagement. The synergy they have achieved is not accidental but deliberate, pedagogical, and visionary

proof that African musical traditions can evolve without erasure, thrive through adaptation, and speak powerfully to contemporary realities.

Generational Development of Nigerian Composers

Curriculum Development and the Teaching of Fused Music to the Upcoming Generation

One of the most enduring legacies of Nigerian composers who engage in intercultural musical practice is their contribution to the development of music curricula that combine African indigenous music with Western classical structures. This cultural fusion has found expression in education systems ranging from primary schools to universities, particularly in Southwestern Nigeria where Yorùbá musical traditions are prominent. These composers have not only created a body of work that serves as pedagogical material but have also influenced the philosophy and design of music education in Nigeria.

Through their compositions, curriculum development, and scholarly engagement, figures like Joshua Uzoigwe, Akin Euba, Lazarus Ekwueme, Fela Sowande, and more recently Femi Adedeji and Ayo Oluranti, have expanded the possibilities for formal music instruction. Their works often incorporate African folk idioms, drumming patterns, call-and-response textures, and tonal languages, skillfully woven into Western compositional forms such as sonatas, fugues, and oratorios. These intercultural works have been integrated into classroom instruction, music examinations, and academic recitals, thereby legitimizing African musical expressions within formal educational frameworks.

Moreover, these composers often advocate for a music education model that reflects local realities and cultural identity. For instance, Euba (1989) argued for an "African pianism" that does not merely imitate Western models but reinterprets piano music through the lens of African rhythmic structures and melodic contours. Similarly, Adedeji (2001) emphasized the need for a curriculum that enables students to analyze, perform, and create music that resonates with their heritage while remaining conversant with global music practices.

This integrated approach equips students with both technical proficiency and cultural literacy, fostering a generation of musicians who are grounded in African traditions but capable of engaging with the global music community. It also helps to decolonize music education by challenging the dominance of Western paradigms and restoring pride in indigenous knowledge systems. As such, the intercultural work of Nigerian composers remains not only a creative endeavor but also a transformative force in the reshaping of music education in Africa.

Professor Femi Adedeji exemplifies this intercultural pedagogical approach. His work, *Twenty African Folk Tunes for Piano* which is yet to be published is widely utilized in music departments across Nigeria to teach both foundational piano technique and cultural identity. Each composition in the collection draws from Yorùbá folk idioms featuring proverbs, praise songs, and communal melodies but is structured with formal pedagogical intent. The harmonies, phrasing, and rhythmic nuances are crafted to develop finger independence, phrasing sensitivity, and interpretive depth, while simultaneously affirming indigenous sonic aesthetics and modes of expression. Adedeji's broader work on gospel music and language dynamics (Adedeji, 2010) further reflects his commitment to embedding cultural relevance in the curriculum without sacrificing artistic or academic rigor examples are his solo pieces "*Adura eni t.oun fayo*" which reflect and preserve the African sacred music tradition while considering the tonality of the Yoruba language.

Dr. Ayo Oluranti, both a composer and educator, has likewise played a significant role in shaping Nigerian music curricula. With formal training in both Nigeria and Germany, Oluranti bridges analytical discipline with cultural intuition. His work *Messiah Baba Mi*, often performed by student ensembles, introduces learners to contrapuntal layering, harmonic progression, and rhythmic complexity through an Africanized Baroque lens. The piece maintains Yorùbá textual themes and motivic development within a polyphonic Western structure, illustrating the pedagogical potential of intercultural music in training analytical listening and ensemble coordination. His recent African ensemble arrangement for western instrument titled *Ina ran* is a testament to his deep understanding in African music at large.

Similarly, Bidemi Oyesanya contributes to curriculum enrichment through his choral arrangements and anthem compositions. His widely taught piece *Grateful* serves as an accessible model for youth choirs to engage with African-Christian musical hybridity. While the harmonic motion and voice leading follow Western conventions, although written in English, yet, the melodic gestures, rhythmic drive, and lyrical content are deeply rooted in Yorùbá praise tradition. Oyesanya also leads workshops and training camps where students are taught to explore both traditional call-and-response formats and formal choral techniques. His pedagogical style emphasizes improvisation, cultural storytelling, and embodied musical experience, thus reinforcing a holistic model of learning.

As a result of these composers' efforts, music curricula in Nigerian tertiary institutions have evolved significantly. Formerly shaped by colonial paradigms focused exclusively on European art music, the current frameworks

are now dynamic and culturally inclusive. Universities and conservatories offer modules such as African Music Theory, Composition with Indigenous Materials, African Piano Literature, and Drummistic Performance Practice, alongside standard courses in harmony, counterpoint, orchestration, and analysis. This curricular integration empowers students to compose, analyze, and perform within a bilingual musical ecosystem where African heritage and Western techniques co-exist and enrich one another.

Research and Collation of Indigenous Musical Instruments

A defining feature of Nigeria's cultural music synergy lies in the conscious efforts by some composers and scholars to research, document, and revive indigenous musical instruments. These efforts have reinforced the value of African instrumentation in both scholarly and performance contexts. One key figure in this regard is Osunniyi J.A., a composer and ethnomusicologist from Ekiti State. His pioneering research focused on the revival of indigenous instruments in Ogotun Ekiti, where he worked to document and restore traditional sound practices that had declined due to Western influence and modernization. His work represents a significant scholarly and cultural intervention that bridges ethnomusicology and compositional practice.

Other scholars such as W.W.C. Echezona and Akin Euba have also contributed to the research and classification of traditional African instruments. Echezona developed a system for categorizing Nigerian instruments and advocated for their inclusion in academic curricula, while Euba applied rhythmic features of African drums to the piano, showing that indigenous music could inform Western instrumental practices. These efforts have inspired a new generation of Nigerian musicologists and composers to draw on local instrumental resources as the basis for contemporary works, concert programming, and ensemble design.

Practical Music and Performance Contributions

The practical musical contributions of Nigerian composers reveal their ability to perform, direct, and teach within both church and academic settings. Many of the composers discussed were active not only as theorists and writers but also as performers and conductors. Femi Adedeji, for example, is known for his direction of sacred choral ensembles and his arrangements for academic concerts and festivals. A testament of the recently concluded Mid semester concert at the music department of the Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology Ikere Ekiti. His works are regularly performed in liturgical spaces and academic stages alike. Ayo Oluranti also participates in performance and curation, presenting his

own chorale compositions such as 'Messiah Baba mi and Ensemble compositions like 'Ina Ràn' in concerts and collaborating with African instrument performers. Bidemi Oyesanya's practical legacy lies in his church music leadership and anthem recordings, which have set benchmarks for African sacred fusion.

Sacred/Folk Tune Compositions Incorporating Western and African Styles

Contemporary composers have embraced the rich oral traditions of Nigerian folk music as foundational material for hybrid compositions. Ayo Oluranti's 'Messiah Baba Mi' is a compelling example of this fusion. While the piano part harmonically reminiscent of Western works like J.S. Bach's 'Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring,' (Osuniyi 2014, M.A thesis), the piece remains grounded in Yorùbá linguistic rhythms and spiritual language. Similarly, Bidemi Oyesanya's 'Grateful' uses sacred melodic patterns and refrains in a choral structure that reflects both African call-response and Western harmonic tradition. Femi Adedeji's 'Twenty African Folk Tunes for Piano' is another major contribution, providing pianists with technically graded, culturally relevant repertoire that honors indigenous songs while using Western piano idioms.

Syncretism in Compositional Technique

Syncretism is the blending of different cultural traditions into a coherent new form is at the heart of modern Nigerian compositional practice. The integration of Western tonal harmony, contrapuntal techniques, and classical structures with African rhythmic logic, languages, and performance aesthetics is evident in the works of many 21st-century Nigerian composers. These composers demonstrate that cultural hybridity can be technically rigorous and deeply expressive. Oluranti's fusion of polyphony with Yorùbá vocal delivery and his marriage of four-part harmony with indigenous dance rhythms are clear examples of this stylistic convergence. This syncretism is not merely aesthetic but ideological, reflecting a belief in the coexistence and co-evolution of African and Western musical philosophies.

Transcription and Composition for Western Piano, Ensemble, and Choral Settings

In the pursuit of broader performance platforms and pedagogical tools, Nigerian composers have invested in transcribing indigenous music for Western instruments and ensembles. Ayo Oluranti's 'Ina Ràn' is scored for Western ensemble and uses indigenous instrumentation in formal concert language. Femi Adedeji's twenty piano pieces, meanwhile, are transcriptions of African folk tunes written for learners in conservatories also for a western instrument, the Piano. These works expand the global reach of African melodies by making them accessible to performers trained

in the Western tradition. Similarly, choral composers like Oyesanya and Ekwueme have adapted folk and sacred material for SATB choirs, thus preserving oral heritage in notated, performable form. This process has been instrumental in positioning Nigerian music within international repertoire frameworks.

Conclusion

The exploration of cultural synergy in Nigerian music composition and education reveals a deliberate and dynamic effort by contemporary composers and scholars to harmonize African indigenous traditions with Western classical frameworks. This intercultural approach practiced by people like Professor Femi Adedeji, Dr. Ayo Oluranti, and Bidemi Oyesanya and so on has not only enriched the creative repertoire of Nigerian art music but has also significantly influenced curriculum design at multiple levels of music education. Their works serve as bridges between local heritage and global musical standards, helping students develop technical proficiency while remaining rooted in their cultural identity.

These efforts demonstrate that intercultural music practice is more than stylistic fusion; it is a transformative pedagogical strategy that challenges colonial legacies, affirms indigenous knowledge systems, and prepares learners to navigate both African and global music spaces. Through composition, teaching, and curriculum development, Nigerian composers continue to shape a music education system that is reflective, inclusive, and future-facing. The study underscores the importance of sustaining such intercultural initiatives, particularly for nurturing generations of musicians who are both culturally aware and globally competent.

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