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Legacies of Master Musicians, Tradition Bearers and Custodians of Culture: Rethinking Indigenous Musical Knowledge, Cultural Continuity, and Heritage Preservation in Nigeria

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Abstract

This is maintained in Nigeria by the living archives of master musicians, tradition bearers, cultural custodians who carry out their own repertoire, technique, memories, instruments, ritual, and pedagogies as their living archive of community. This is a positional paper, which proposes that the conservation of heritage in Nigeria should be expanded to include the identification and support of individuals who embody, interpret, teach and continue indigenous music. The article draws upon recent literature in the field of Nigerian traditional music, African indigenous knowledge systems, de-colonial music education, oral transmission, intangible cultural heritage, and digital preservation, as well as cultural tourism, to consider the role of master artists as cultural educators, historical sources, performers, innovators, and the custodians of memory. It also examines the challenges to cultural continuity such as older custodians, urbanization, religious shifts, westernized education, commercial dilution, poor documentation, and poor cultural policies. The author recommends a Living Heritage Transmission Framework for Indigenous Musical Knowledge in Nigeria, a model that is based on ethical relationships between knowledge bearers, communities and educational institutions; cultural agencies and digital platforms, current and younger generations.

Keywords: *cultural continuity; heritage preservation; oral tradition; intangible cultural heritage; decolonial music education; living archives*

Introduction

These are not the only aspects of indigenous music in Nigeria that are organized sound. It's a repository of memory, identity, history, spirituality, moral training, social order, community and art knowledge. In Nigeria, music is found in every community for birth, initiation, marriage, farming, healing, worship, masquerade, coronation, praise, protest, storytelling, death and festivals. Music is the means by which communities remember their ancestors, their migration stories, values are transferred, social change is understood and philosophies of culture are passed on. In this context, master musicians, tradition bearers, drummers, praise singers, women song leaders, instrumental specialists, dancers, ritual performers, and instrument makers have a central role as the keepers of the inherited knowledge. Recent research into Nigerian and African music indicates that indigenous music is still a significant source of cultural identity, continuity and knowledge creation. Akanbi (2021) discusses the archival processes of ethics and identity in the music of the Yoruba àgídígbo, whereas Oludare (2021, 2024) shows how the practice of the àgídígbo and Yoruba instrumental ensembles reflect indigenous knowledge systems and African pianism. Idamoyibo (2021) highlights the significance of the dùndún drummers in the development of the traditional music of South-West Nigeria and Nwokolo and Efurhievwe (2025) discuss Ekobe music and the art of masterful singing in Enuani culture. Overall, these works suggest that indigenous music is not only sustained by the presence of songs, but by people who carry, interpret and transmit them.

The issue is that many of these custodians are old, poorly recorded, not economically viable and are marginalized in formal cultural policy and education. This knowledge is frequently passed on from person to person, not in books, but in experience, and is lost when apprenticeships are not in force, ceremonies within the communities are not held, or younger generations move to towns and cities or to digital worlds. This is exacerbated by the westernized nature of education, the suspicion of some indigenous practices by religious groups, the failure to archive and the commercialization of traditional forms. In view of this article, master musicians and tradition bearers deserve to be considered as cultural institutions in and of themselves. Preserving indigenous musical heritage is not something that can only be achieved through a museum, recordings, written notation, or festivals. It needs to be maintained by living custodians, intergenerational transmission, ethical documentation, curriculum change and community based cultural policy.

Conceptual Clarification

Master Musicians are highly skilled practitioners, with very broad, comprehensive knowledge of repertoire, performance and interpretation, history, aesthetics, symbolism and cultural function. They are not just performers; they are specialists who acquire their authority through repetition, recognition, apprenticeship, memory and mastery of musical codes. All master musicians, including drummers, singers, instrumentalists, composers, ritual specialists, praise poets, dance leaders and ensemble directors can be considered in many Nigerian contexts. Tradition bearers are people or communities that keep, perform, pass on and teach what they have inherited over the years. They can be musical, ritual, linguistic, historical, spiritual or artistic. Tradition bearers in indigenous music bear the songs, the rhythms, the instruments, the dances, the proverbs, the praise names, oral history, and ceremonial procedures. Musical tradition can be a means of knowledge and skills transfer as illustrated by Walubo et al., (2025) for Amayebe musical tradition among Busoga people.

Custodians of culture are individuals, families, guilds, lineages, communities or institutions that have a responsibility for the protection and perpetuation of cultural practices. Custodianship is an idea that involves responsibility, memory, authority and continuity. Indigenous musical knowledge is the embodied, oral, practical, spiritual, historical, and place-based knowledges expressed through sound, movement, language, instruments, ritual and performance. Does not mean it's less because it's oral, it's a different epistemology. Cultural continuity is the process of transmission and renewal of inherited practices continuous over time and heritage preservation is the process of deliberate action to prevent the disappearance, distortion, neglect or exploitation of a culture's knowledge. The term 'preservation' in this article is not interpreted as freezing tradition, but as supporting living cultural systems.

Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations

This article is based on the oral tradition theory, cultural memory theory, indigenous knowledge systems, decolonial theory and intangible cultural heritage perspectives. Oral tradition theory is helpful because lots of Nigerian music is passed on by memory, imitation, repetition, apprenticeship, performance, storytelling, praise poetry, drumming, chanting and mass involvement. Gathogo (2021) states that oral techniques continue to play a significant role in the memory and historical narration in East Africa, which is relevant to the Nigerian music cultures, where performance is also an archive of community life. Master musicians can be considered living archives, and cultural memory theory serves to explain how they function as such. They are the keepers of genealogies, heroic stories, moral values, migration

memories, religious beliefs and communal identities through performance. Akanbi (2021) demonstrates how àgídígbo music archives ethics and identity through the music's composition and performance, and Ekpo (2022) demonstrates how music composition and performance can help preserve cultural and natural heritage of the Jukun people. These examples indicate the existence of kinds of memory that music can evoke which may not be fully addressed by written documents.

Another foundation is provided by indigenous knowledge systems. African knowledge of their music is at times expressed, collective, aural, enactable and spiritually grounded. Oludare (2021) conceptualizes the Yoruba traditional instrumental ensembles as indigenous knowledge systems and Kirui et al., (2025) speaks of African music performance as a space where knowledge, tradition, and digital frontiers converge. These studies call into question the notion of academic legitimacy of only the written or Western-certified knowledge.

Also important is the decolonial theory. Western music theory, notation, examination systems and institutional certification were privileged and indigenous knowledge of performance was marginalized in many colonial and postcolonial education contexts. Adeogun (2021) calls for decolonizing University Music Education in Nigeria and Ekpo (2023) decolonizes African musical language and identity by researching the composition of music. Lump (2024) also examined the effects of urbanization on real estate value and rental rates in the cities of Nairobi, Nakuru, and Kajiado respectively. African-centred pedagogical approaches and approaches that are grounded in sound is called for (2025).

The conception of intangible cultural heritage, which further reinforces the article's argument. Gwervevende and Mthombeni (2023) demonstrate that protection of intangible cultural heritage must include protection of indigenous language, dance and music practices. Heritage is not just material, it is also alive, incarnated and relational. Hence, the preservation of indigenous music in Nigeria should be in favour of the practitioners/communities who give it meaning.

As a strategic context, Nigerian Indigenous Musical Heritage is discussed. Nigeria has hundreds of ethnic, linguistic and regional communities, and is one of the most culturally diverse societies in Africa. It is a diversity that is also seen in its traditional music such as the Yoruba drumming and àgídígbo practices, Igbo vocal and instrumental traditions, Hausa praise singing, Efik and Ibibio performance forms, Jukun music, Annang music, Tiv, Nupe, Edo, Ijaw, Urhobo, Itsekiri, Kanuri, Idoma, Igala and many other local music traditions. Thus, Nigerian indigenous music is not one tradition, but a wide landscape of sound worlds, instruments, languages, ritualities, histories and systems of performance.

Music is a social institution in the Nigerian societies. It is for praising, correcting, mourning, celebrating, worshiping, initiating, healing, mobilizing and remembering. Ekpo (2022) shows the ability of music composition and performance to sustain the cultural heritage of the Jukun people, Orga and Adahos, (2024) reveal the influence of music as a tool for sustaining cultural heritage of the Jukun people, and Authority, (2025) focuses on the role of music as a medium for sustaining cultural heritage of the Jukun people. Uche (2025) considers the Oshimili cultural identity in the era of the influence of modern music, as well as Annang and other Nigerian traditional music examined in contemporary context (Udoh 2025a, 2025b). As seen in these studies, the indigenous music continues to live in the midst of social life, despite the challenges of modernity.

Historically, master musicians played a range of roles as teachers, historians, ritual specialists, artistic innovators, moral commentators and community intellectuals. For instance, the *dùndún* drummer in Yoruba society can perform tonal language in drum speech, maintain praise poetry, and convey social meaning by using drum rhythms and metaphors. Idamoyibo (2021) emphasizes the role of the *dùndún* drummers in the development of the traditional music of South-West Nigeria, and Oludare (2024) demonstrates how the *àgídígbo* practice exemplifies unique Yoruba technique and aesthetics in the music. Also, the Nigerian indigenous music has relevance in the present day popular culture. Traditional rhythm, call and response, praise singing, dance, costume, language and instrumental colour are still key elements influencing gospel music, hip-hop and Afrobeats, film music, festival performance and cultural tourism. Ojebuyi and Fafowora (2021) illustrate how Nigerian hip-hop hybrid culture values of indigenous people and Aruku et al. (2025) talk about Nigerian music in the context of cultural imperialism. Indigenous music, in other words, is not historical heritage, but living heritage for creativity and identity.

Drumming and the Music of the Plains Cree People

Six contributions—preservation of repertoire, transmission of technique, custodianship of memory, moral education, innovation within tradition, and identity formation—can be discerned in the legacies of master musicians. First, master musicians maintain live repertoire which may not be accessible in writing. These comprise songs, rhythms, chants, praise names, instrumental patterns, dance sequences, ritual cues and performance conventions. Nevertheless, Nwokolo and Efurhievwe (2025) have surveyed Ekobe music and the masterful singing as a form of sustaining the Enuani cultural expression which demonstrates the critical role of vocal skill in sustaining Enuani cultural expression. In the same way, Akanbi (2021) shows how *àgídígbo* music preserves the ethics and identity of the Yoruba.

Secondly, master musicians pass on technique. The learning of indigenous musical knowledge may be acquired through apprenticeship, observation, imitation, repetition, correction and participation in performance. This could involve carrying instruments, observing rehearsals, clapping rhythms, singing answers, dancing, etc., progressing to increasingly complex roles. Idamoyibo (2021) in his research on *dùndún* drummers identifies an embedded technical sophistication in the traditional drumming practice and Oludare (2024), identifies the practices and techniques of the Yoruba box piano.

Thirdly, tradition bearers carry cultural memory. They preserve histories of families, rulers, wars, migrations and deities, heroes, occupations and communal values through their songs and performances. Ekpo (2022) demonstrates the protective role of music in conservation of culture and nature in communities; Uche and Igbi (2025) describe the Traditional Music, Cultural values, belief system, and manifestation of spirits among the Oshimili people.

Fourthly, indigenous music is a means for moral and social education. As stated by Mdhluli and Masipa (2025), indigenous music in South African folklore can be termed as moral pedagogy because in many instances of indigenous music in Nigeria, songs depict and encourage respect, discipline, hospitality, courage, gender roles, spirituality and communal responsibility. The teaching in music is not only through the lyrics, but also by participation, body discipline, listening and social belonging.

Fifthly, master musicians are innovators in tradition. They do not merely conserve a set past. They adjust their repertoire, performance style, instrumentation and context to the changing social realities. Ibekwe (2025) explores the repositioning of traditional music in the modern

Nigeria with Egwu Umu-Obiligbo and Òjọ (2023) analyse gospel Àpàlà in African Christian worship. These examples illustrate the ways in which tradition is not left behind but renewed.

Lastly, the transmission of master musicians is a factor contributing to the formation of identity. They link people to words, land, culture, spirit and community. Through their work they enable people to acquire an understanding of who they are and where they belong.

Indigenous Musical Knowledge and Modes of Transmission

The transfer of Indigenous musical knowledge in Nigeria is done in a variety of ways. One of the most important of these is apprenticeship. It enables students learn from watching master instructors, practicing for long periods of time, imitating their instructors, receiving criticism, engaging in practice, and assuming responsibility. Apprenticeship, as opposed to classroom learning, weaves performance, ethics, memory, discipline and social function. Transmission through families and lineages is also of great importance. The family, compound guild, royal court, ritual lineages, religious community and specialist groups are all means of preserving some musical traditions. While knowledge can be passed on, that doesn't necessarily mean the learner has mastered it; they still need to be trained, practice, and pass their knowledge along to others in a publicly validated way.

Community-based learning is another pathway. Festivals, ceremonies, funerals, worship services, market activities, age-grade activities, and masquerade performances function as informal schools. Young people learn through watching, dancing responses, singing and carrying instruments and through the social significance conveyed in performances. As studied by Agbenyo et al. (2025) in the case of Nnwomkoro, cultural values and pedagogical approaches are implicit in African performance traditions. It is important to note that the embodied learning is integral to indigenous music. The body is a repository of knowledge, held in rhythm, gesture, movement, breath, voice, touch and memory. Hence the need to give oral-aural pedagogy a proper due. Kirui et al. (2025) and U. (2025) highlight the importance of African knowledge that is based on sound. While written notation can be helpful, there are aspects of timbre, gesture, the spirit of the music and improvisation, audience reaction, and ritual timing that cannot be notated and conveyed in a score.

Digital platforms are also becoming spaces for transmission. Indigenous music can be heard by youths through YouTube, social media, podcasts, and digital archives. But, as Kigozi (2025) proposes, technology needs to complement community-based pedagogy.

Threats to Cultural Continuity

Many factors pose a threat to the continuity of Nigerian indigenous musical heritage. The major threat is custodians' ageing. There are lots of master musicians who have extensive repertoires and performance histories that have not yet been documented. Such custodians, who lack apprentices or recordings, may be the source of loss for communities of songs, meanings, techniques, ritual procedures and interpretive authority. Traditional transmission is also weaker as a result of urbanisation and migration. Youth tend to migrate to urban areas for education, jobs or out of necessity. Such movements can sever their ties with festivals, family lineages, local languages and community-based musical practices. Urban places help to develop new hybrid forms while they can also diminish long-term apprenticeship to older people.

Another challenge is the western education systems. Many formal music education institutions continue to favour the western music notation, theory, instruments, and examination systems. Adeogun (2021) calls for the decolonization of university music

education in Nigeria and Dzakey et al. (2024), Ngoma and Fikelepi-Twani (2024) and Yende and Xulu (2024) reveal similar issues in African contexts. If local music is not presented as the main part, rather as a supporting part, students might end up with an attitude that local knowledge is not as important.

There are also changes in religion and culture that impact continuity. Some of the indigenous musical practices have been disapproved or reinterpreted due to their connection with ritual, spirit manifestation, masquerade or pre-Christian and pre-Islamic belief systems. However, the belief systems are still very much linked to traditional music in the Oshimili communities, thus preservation which must be sensitive to religious change must also be sensitive to cultural meaning as demonstrated by Uche and Igbi (2025).

Tradition can also be diffused by commercialisation. Indigenous forms might be popularized in the tourism, festival, media and entertainment markets. Although music-based cultural tourism can aid in development, it can be problematic to disassociate music from the deeper context without involving the communities in control and benefit-sharing (Brooks et al., 2023; Madandola & Boussaa, 2023; Mazlan et al., 2025). Lastly, inadequate policy and documentation are significant issues. The situation of the tradition bearers is precarious if there is no funding, no archives, and no legal protection and institutional recognition.

Transforming Master Musicians into Living Archives

One of the key points made in this article is that master musicians can be considered as living archives. An archive is usually thought of as a building, library, museum, database or a collection of recordings. These are vitally necessary, but without the people who have the contextual and interpretive knowledge, they are incomplete. A recording can capture the sound of a song, but not the when, who, what, and how of when a song ought to be performed, who is allowed to perform it, what gestures mean, which names are sacred, or how rhythm relates to language and ritual.

In the case of the revitalization and repatriation of isiXhosa music recordings archived at the International Library of African Music, Madiba (2021) demonstrates the significance of bringing archived materials back to the communities. Balogun (2023) also notes the digitization of indigenous knowledge systems in Africa while Lian and Xie (2024) provide an overview of the key trends and challenges of digital cultural heritage research. These studies indicate that community-centred, relational and ethical archiving are essential.

The role of master musicians as living archives is identified, profiled, recorded and supported. It also means letting them read or view their traditions without altering them to provide "data" for researchers, tourists or media producers. Interviews, performances, biographies, instrument-making processes, teaching methods, translations of traditional texts, community histories and explanations of cultural context.

Preservation by the community is a key element. Traditional music should not be picked-up from its context and deposited without permission. Communities should participate in decision-making on what can be captured, who it is accessible to, how it can be utilized and how it can be shared. Consent, sacred knowledge, IP, attribution, cultural ownership are all ethical issues that must be addressed with heritage practice. Otherwise, preservation might be a form of cultural appropriation.

The paper addresses the issues of indigenous musical knowledge and Nigerian music education.

The indigenous music knowledge needs to be better appreciated in the education of music in Nigeria. Decolonization of music education is not about doing away with Western knowledge; it is about redressing the imbalance whereby what is Western is accepted as

universal and African music is referred to as folklore or extracurricular music. Decolonizing University music education in Nigeria is advocated directly by Adeogun (2021) and also by Ekpo (2023) seeking to decolonize African musical language and identity in the act of composing.

Indigenous instruments, oral traditions, local repertoires, field learning, community performance, dancing, instrument building and apprenticeship are all important elements that should be integrated into any curriculum reform. The students should be given opportunity to learn traditional music, through those who bear the tradition. Master Musicians can be artists-in-residence, adjunct instructors, community lecturers, ensemble directors and cultural consultants. You don't need to discount their authority because they don't have certificates from private schools. To learn indigenous music, one must do it and hence practical pedagogy is needed. The ability to perform, listen, imitate, repeat and take part as a group should be valued as educational approaches. Ngoma and Fikelepi-Twani (2024) call for the decolonization of the pedagogy of indigenous Nguni music instruments in higher education and Yende and Xulu (2024) argue for rethinking sound education for the twenty-first century music student. The arguments are to support strengthening the linkage between the University and the community in Nigeria.

Certification systems need to be changed as well! Honorary fellowships, practice-based certification, community knowledge partnerships and appointments as a heritage instructor are possible for an institution to establish for recognized master musicians. Such recognition would help to redress the dignity of indigenous knowledge and provide opportunities for the transfer of knowledge from one generation to the next. Decolonized music education requires to be grounded thus, in scholarship and practice, archive performance, in community and classroom.

Heritage Preservation, Technology, Digital Archiving

As long as properly used, technology can aid in the preservation of heritage. Endangered musical knowledge may be preserved using audio recordings, video documentation, photography, digital cataloguing, translation, transcription, metadata creation, and by using online repositories. Akpakpan and Ukpanah (2022) call for the anthology and archiving of indigenous Nigerian Catholic liturgical songs, Akanbi (2021) sees the music of àgídìgbò as an archive of ethics and identity. Through these works, the importance of documentation as a tool to hold onto musical memory become apparent. Digital preservation does not mean just putting songs on the Web. There is need to document indigenous music in its context. Performer biographies, community ownership information, language translations, performance occasions, instrument descriptions, ethical restrictions, and explanations of cultural meaning should be considered for inclusion in a digital archive. The works of Lian and Xie (2024) and Bačanin and Almutairi (2025) outline the difficulties in digital cultural heritage research and communication strategies in the protection of intangible musical heritage, respectively. These studies highlight the importance of proper planning.

Community archives, in particular, are important. Nigeria should not concentrate all the materials in national institutions but should encourage institutions that are community owned and managed by communities, cultural institutions, universities and heritage centres. These archives can be used to retain recordings whilst maintaining the knowledge close to its source. Short videos, podcasts, virtual exhibitions, online tutorials, documentary clips and digital storytelling are also ways to draw youths into indigenous music through digital platforms. Kitata (2021) demonstrates the potential of using YouTube to facilitate musical re-narration of the East African coast, Chirima (2025) explores ways of utilizing digital

technologies to maintain and promote indigenous knowledge systems in Africa. However, digital visibility needs to be in parallel with cultural protection. Information that is under the control of the community or sacred songs or songs of restricted performances should not be disseminated without permission. Thus, technology is beneficial if it supplements, not supplants, living transmission.

Positional Argument

As a result, this piece suggests that master musicians, tradition bearers, and custodians of culture be considered cultural institutions. They are not simply entertainers called in to the festivals, state ceremonies or tourist events. They are teachers, historians, keepers of memory, philosophers, composers, archivists and interpreters of indigenous knowledge. Ignoring them is to undermine the bases of cultural continuity. So, Nigeria's heritage policy should transit from conserving artefacts to conserving individuals. Important as instruments, costumes, recordings, manuscripts and museums are, they cannot replace those living custodians who have knowledge of the context, meaning, ethics and transmission of the performing art. In Heritage Preservation, it is not only those who showcase knowledge who should be supported.

In addition, the article calls for an opposition to tokenism. Tradition bearers are frequently celebrated “symbolically” but not “materialistically. They can be asked to entertain at official occasions and are not given long term support, health care, pensions, teaching positions, intellectual property protection, and documentation assistance. This diminishes the role of cultural custodians to mere decoration and not as knowledge holders. Cultural sustainability is the direction to follow. Indigenous music is not to be dismissed as the “music of the past that is disappearing”. It is a living educational, identity, creative, tourism, national branding, cultural diplomacy and community development resource. When meaningfully engaged, cultural heritage and tourism can help communities develop as demonstrated by Brooks et al. (2023), Madandola and Boussaa (2023), Jelinčić (2021) and Mazlan et al. (2025).

Nigeria is a country with a developmental opportunity. The nation can boost cultural confidence, decolonize education, empower communities, enrich creative industries and pass on knowledge to future generations by investing in master musicians and tradition bearers. The aim is not to end tradition; rather to establish circumstances for respectful continuity and ethical innovation.

Proposed Conceptual Framework

In this article, a Living Heritage Transmission Framework for Indigenous Musical Knowledge in Nigeria is proposed. The elements of the framework, namely master musicians and tradition bearers, indigenous musical knowledge, transmission pathways, institutional supports, preservation and innovation activities, cultural and development results, are described to illustrate how indigenous musical heritage continues to survive through the interplay of these elements.

The first elements are master musicians and tradition bearers. These people are the custodians of repertoire, technique, memory, history, performance ethics, language, instrumental knowledge and cultural meaning. They are the living pillar of musical heritage.

The second theme is native music knowledge. This encompasses songs, rhythms, instruments, dances, oral histories, ritual practices, performance aesthetics, praise poetry, language, symbolism and spirituality and social values. It is not only art knowledge, but historical, moral, educative and communal knowledge.

The third are the means of transmission. These are related to apprenticeship, family lineage, festivals, ceremonies, community participation, schools, universities, cultural centres, religious places, media and digital platforms. The transmission must be plural; nobody can have the responsibility to maintain the cultural continuity.

The fourth is institutional support. Indigenous music needs cultural policy, heritage agencies, universities, archives, museums, funding, copyright systems, community organizations, and local governments to stabilize the situation in which indigenous music can survive. Tradition bearers are vulnerable if there is no support.

The fifth is processes of preservation and innovation. These include documentation, digital archiving, performance, reinterpretation, the incorporation in curricula, intergenerational mentorship, ethical adaptation and community-controlled dissemination. The preservation process shouldn't stifle innovation, it should lead to a responsible innovation process.

The sixth component is Cultural and Development Outcomes. These are cultural continuity, youth identity, heritage sustainability, creative economy growth, cultural tourism, national branding, community cohesion, inter-generational respect and decolonized education. Community ownership, ethical documentation, funding, youth participation, cultural policy, religious attitudes, digital access, language preservation and intellectual property protection are the types of moderators that govern the framework. Its central message is that this knowledge of indigenous musical heritage lives on when there are respectful, supported and ethically managed connection and transmission of knowledge holders, communities, institutions and younger generations.

Policy and Practical Implications

The article can be interpreted for government, educational institutions, cultural agencies, communities, researchers and actors of the creative industry. Government should identify master musicians and tradition bearers as country's national cultural assets. Such recognition should manifest itself in cultural policy, education, tourism, creative economy planning and funding of heritage. Master musicians are to be seen together with educational institutions, not just studied from afar. Tradition bearers can be invited to teach, serve as artists-in-residence, consultants, and/or fieldwork partners in universities, colleges, and schools. This would increase the quality of the learning and help to make music education less colonial. Cultural agencies need to document, support, collect and promote indigenous music and to safeguard community ownership and sacred knowledge. Documentation needs to be ethical, participatory and beneficial to communities. Archives should not be 'extractive' places.

There are responsibilities at the community level too. They should include youth mentorship, festivals, family-based transmission, local archives and apprenticeship systems. Cultural continuity must be maintained internally, it cannot be imposed from outside. Researchers should exercise ethical fieldwork and consent, attribution, benefit sharing, and respect for restricted knowledge. In addition, indigenous traditions should also be responsibly engaged by creative industry actors. Musicians, producers, film makers and tourism promoters should not exploitatively appropriate the use of cultural materials, but make sure communities benefit from their use.

Contribution, Limitations, and Future Research

This article makes its contribution by repositioning master musicians as living archives and cultural institutions that play an important role in heritage sustainability in Nigeria. It also

offers a Living Heritage Transmission Framework, which links custodians, community, institutions, technology and the younger generations.

The article is of an "in place" and "in place" kind. Does not provide primary field data from interviews, ethnography, participant observation or performance analysis. It is rather, a construct of the existing literature and conceptual reasoning.

Specific master musicians, endangered musical traditions, women tradition bearers, youth apprenticeship systems and indigenous instruments, sacred performance practices, digital archiving ethics and community-controlled heritage preservation should all be explored in the future. A comparative study of these across African countries would also enrich the knowledge of indigenous musical knowledge preservation in the changing social and technological environment.

Recommendations

- The government should establish a national register of master musicians and tradition bearers from all the communities in Nigeria and indigenous music custodians. Preservation of music, apprenticeship programmes and local cultural centres should be supported by federal and state culture agencies.
- Master Musicians should be hired by universities or departments of music as artists in residence, adjunct teachers/lecturers, and community knowledge partners. The use of indigenous instruments, indigenous oral tradition, indigenous repertoire, field work, dance, storytelling and community performance should be incorporated in Nigerian music education programmes through the agency of the curriculum planner.
- Creation of digital archives of indigenous music by cultural agencies and universities is necessary but these must be done ethnically with community consent and cultural ownership protections. Grants, awards, healthcare support and pensions should be provided for the ageing master musicians by the government, the cultural organizations and private foundations.
- Youth mentorship should be encouraged by organizing music programmes within communities to enable intergenerational learning. The researchers, media practitioners and creative entrepreneurs are urged to do ethical documenting which safeguards sacred knowledge, honours intellectual property and provides benefit-sharing.

Conclusion

Nigeria's musical heritage could not be sustained without the recognition and support of the master musicians, tradition bearers and custodians of culture who embody the knowledge. Archives, museums, festivals, recordings and digital technologies are good, but they can't replace living custodians who understand meaning, context, performance ethics, and transmission.

This article has argued that master musicians are not relics of the past, but should be considered as cultural thinkers, educators, historians, and heritage leaders. The construction of respectful bridges between the elders and the youth, communities and institutions, oral knowledge and digital preservation and tradition and innovation is Nigeria's cultural future. The preservation of indigenous musical knowledge needs to be supportive of both the music and the people who make the music meaningful.

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