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Thirteen Ways to “Hail, Mary”

A Case Study of the 2013 Forum for the Inculturation of Liturgical Music in Nigeria

Quintina Carter-Ényì and Aaron Carter-Ényì

As in many regions missionized during the colonial era, choosing a language and musical style for Christian worship has been and remains challenging in Nigerian churches. This is compounded by the diverse makeup of Nigerian society, which includes hundreds of ethnolinguistic cultures. Nineteenth-century missionaries used indigenous languages to evangelize but banned indigenous instruments and musical styles in churches. More recently, urbanization has created multi-ethnic cities, and in turn multi-ethnic churches, making English a logical bridge language for worship, as it is for business and education. However, our interviews with Christian musicians and worship leaders over the past decade consistently indicate that many feel they cannot express their faith as meaningfully in English.¹

Before colonialism and the introduction of Christianity, Nigeria was not a single nation. The coastal region from the Bight of Benin to the Bight of Biafra has long been densely populated and today is estimated to include between 200 and 500 languages, many of which are in rapid decline.² The region is thought to have been the starting point for the Bantu expansion some 2,000 years ago, and therefore a cultural motherland for much of sub-Saharan Africa. Because the territory now known as Nigeria was so densely populated, it drew the attention of slave traders for centuries, becoming known as the “Slave Coast.”³ Hundreds of thousands of enslaved Ìgbò people were transported to North America by the English from Calabar in the Bight of Biafra.⁴ Millions of enslaved Yorùbá

people were transported by the Spanish and Portuguese to the Caribbean and South America from Badagry and Ouidah in the Bight of Benin.⁵

It should be noted that even “Ìgbò” and “Yorùbá” – now known as the major ethnic groups of southern Nigeria – are, like the nation itself, constructs of colonial-era evangelism and nation building formed through active cultural consolidation.⁶ This started with the standardization of languages out of many dialects that were (and in some cases still are) spoken. The standard languages were selected by teams of missionaries and early converts and spread through dictionaries, Bible translations, and mission schools. For Yorùbá, the Ọyọ dialect became the standard.⁷ “Central Ìgbò” is based on several dialects of present-day Abia and Imo States, including Mbaise, Mbano, and Orlu.⁸ The Ìgbò and Yorùbá language clusters are large and have been a focus of evangelism since the mid-nineteenth century. However, because of the vast linguistic diversity in the region, not all languages could be joined with Ìgbò or Yorùbá for the purposes of evangelism or ethnic-identity formation in the southern Niger territory (now Nigeria). There are many other “minority” languages in Nigeria in the southern and “middle belt” regions, including Bini, Eşan, Efik, Ibibio, Igala, Itsekiri, Tiv, and Urhobo.

Every two years since 1997, the Forum for the Inculturation of Liturgical Music (FILM) has provided a platform for many ethnolinguistic cultures to contribute to the future direction of the Roman Catholic liturgy in Nigeria. This case study focuses

on the 2013 Biennial Choral Festival, which included a competitive award for motet settings – specifically, 13 settings of the “Ave Maria” text in seven of Nigeria’s hundreds of languages.⁹ Of these 13 settings, the Motet I award for a setting of the “Ave Maria” in an indigenous language went to a composition in Igala (a language of the middle belt) by Abel Ojaje of Kogi State University. The setting competed against four Yorùbá-language settings and two Ìgbò-language settings. Prior to that year, FILM had already introduced music with lyrics in minority languages into the Nigerian canon of choral music, extending beyond religious settings into public concerts in Nigeria and abroad.

A highlight of the festival is for all of the participants to join together in a mass choir of hundreds to sing winning compositions from past years. In 2013, this included *Osolobruvwe Do* (God, we thank You) in the Bini language of Edo State¹⁰ and *Yak Ikom Abasi* (Let us thank the Lord) in the Efik language of Cross River State.¹¹ The mass choir participants knew these polyphonic compositions so well that they could sing them from memory while dancing ecstatically. We have also heard these works performed by church, school, and professional choirs. Notably, *Yak Ikom Abasi* is standard repertoire for the renowned Lagos City Chorale, which has performed the work on tours in the United States and Europe. A sermon in a minority language like Bini or Efik is unlikely outside of the local area to which the language is indigenous. English is the preferred language for preaching in cosmopolitan areas such as Abuja, Lagos, and Port Harcourt, so that the message can be understood across ethnicities. However, singing music in multiple languages is a growing practice among musicians in

both traditional choral and contemporary praise settings, and it seems to appeal to many churchgoers, particularly in large and growing Pentecostal churches. Elsewhere, we have proposed that the phenomenon of multilingualism in popular music reflects an emerging Afropolitan outlook, in contrast to efforts at Pan-Africanism through monolingualism (e.g., Fela Kuti’s use of Pidgin English).¹²

The consistent success of choral music in minority languages at FILM is a hopeful indicator of the future direction of Nigerian society. The nation was marred by ethnic conflict soon after independence with the Civil War of 1967–70. Complex ethnic and religious tensions continue to this day. FILM offers an opportunity for Nigeria’s many cultures to be celebrated on a level playing field, distinct from most environments where one ethnolinguistic culture is favored over another or, alternatively, all are uniformly displaced by English. The conflict between cultural continuity and preservation of Nigeria’s many ethnolinguistic cultures on the one hand and national-identity formation on the other is persistent and hard to reconcile. Many choral competitions hosted by Anglican, Catholic, or Pentecostal organizations center around one ethnolinguistic culture. The ideal of unity in diversity is often emphasized by the federal government but is rarely realized through effective programs.

Learning about and appreciating ethnic and cultural diversity would seem to be an important goal of public education, but Nigeria’s public primary and secondary schools are barely functioning. In any case, they scarcely have the resources to teach the music or languages of a wide range of Nigeria’s cultures. Once-thriving

federal universities have been weakened by government divestment, resulting in frequent faculty strikes and decaying facilities. The mandatory Youth Service, which stations new college graduates in a different region for one year of service learning in either agriculture, education, health, or infrastructure, has the potential to – and occasionally does – make a significant impact on the attitudes of the young. However, the sons and daughters of the wealthy often manipulate the system to stay in their home state and the opportunity for exposure to another culture is lost. Festivals and events geared toward domestic tourism, such as the National Arts Festival and the Abuja Carnival, show promise within secular society. FILM is a unique multi-ethnic contribution to sacred music in Nigeria. Although Catholic in practice, the model will hopefully impact other sectors of Nigerian society because of the cross-fertilization of Muslim and Christian practices.¹³

The History of Inculturating Liturgical Practices in Nigeria

Inculturation may include many facets of cultural expression: language, music, dance, and indigenous modes of praise or devotion. In Nigeria, as in many other places, foreign missionaries and local converts evangelized in the language indigenous to the area in which they were working. However, indigenous musical practices were not welcome in churches during the missionary era. According to Yale-educated music theorist Laz Ekwueme:

Traditional Ìgbò music was one of these so-termed pagan practices which were not allowed to filter into Christian worship, much less challenge the pre-eminence of European tunes. Only the

organ or harmonium was allowed in Church. No indigenous instrument, however suitable its tone sound, could be used in Church.¹⁴

There was a problem with the prohibition of indigenous musical practices that had as much to do with language as with the music itself. The Niger-Congo family languages of southern Nigeria are *tonal*, wherein pitch contour often determines the meaning of words. European missionaries were not cognizant of this important feature of these languages. In translating hymn texts, they preserved the number of English syllables in order that the new words could be sung to existing hymn tunes. This process often deeply distorted the intended meaning.¹⁵ Sometimes the result was utter nonsense, like “Come to prayer, it’s crippled,” or humorous contortions like “Trees the hail the buttocks of Jesus” (from “All hail the power of Jesus’s name”).¹⁶ To explain the concept of lexical tone to foreigners and young students, Yorùbá people developed the do-re-mi heuristic, adapting the tonic sol-fa introduced by English missionaries as a model for understanding tone levels in Niger-Congo languages.¹⁷ This has been adopted by other ethnolinguistic cultures in Nigeria, including Ìgbò. The do-re-mi heuristic highlights the close relationship of music and language in Nigeria and much of Africa. As Kofi Agawu writes,

Like the spoken word, song lies at the heart of African musical expression and imagining. Without language, there would be no song; without song, African music would not exist. Language and music are thus tied, as if by an umbilical cord. No one who ignores its linguistic aspects can hope to reach a profound understanding of African music.¹⁸

Because of the link between lyrics and melody, one cannot be composed in isolation from the other. The first document (written hymns) to inculturate both music and language into the Christian church in Nigeria was created in 1923 by J. J. Ransome-Kuti, a Yorùbá Anglican priest in Abeokuta.¹⁹ A second effort was made by a Protestant Yorùbá clergyman in Abeokuta. Methodist minister Olajida Olude presented *Jesu, a fe pade* at a service for a meeting of clergy in 1949. The hymn was a translation and new melodic setting of Elizabeth Parson's *Jesus, We Love to Meet*. Because a new tune was composed for the translated text, the melody responded to the spoken contour of the Yorùbá text. Ironically, the hymn is more often sung in English today: the text was subsequently back-translated into English and the music adapted by Austin Lovelace for the United Methodist hymnal.²⁰ Perhaps the most lasting early contribution to Yorùbá inculturation was made by Anglican organist and composer Thomas Ekundayo Phillips, who published a treatise on the subject of text setting in 1952.²¹ The book was dismissed by the prominent ethnomusicologist Alan Merriam.²² However, many of Phillips's observations about the spacing of tone levels may be verified empirically, and his recommendations for text setting have since been adopted by Nigerian choral composers.²³ Phillips's compositions and arrangements are still sung frequently in Yorùbá churches in southwestern Nigeria today.

The "Youth Song" movement provides one narrative of Ìgbò inculturation. This started in 1953 in the Anglican Church but soon had an impact in many denominations, including Roman Catholicism. The movement started as part of a Youth

Fellowship led by W. R. G. Willet, an English clergyman working in the Niger Diocese. His leadership approach indicates that white clergy recognized the need for inculturation for effective evangelism. According to Daniel Agu, the Youth Fellowship was established with specific aims, including growing a "militant wing of the church to revamp, stabilize, solidify and ensure the growth of the church."²⁴ Although "militant" is a strong word, "youth song" groups are known in Ìgbò land for marching through villages singing and chanting at the top of their voices. Although inculturation was not a stated goal of the movement, it was the means. Many of the Ìgbò songs developed for the Anglican Youth Fellowship in the Niger Diocese are sung to this day, including *Onye ayi na-efe di nma* (He whom we worship is good), which Agu included in his article on the Youth Song movement written almost 40 years ago.²⁵ According to an alternative narrative, attempts at musical inculturation in the Catholic Church began as early as the early 1900s. Renewed attempts in the 1950s gained momentum in the 1960s thanks to the efforts of seminarians at Bigard Memorial Seminary Enugu, including Bede Onuoha, Albert Obiefuna, and Theophilus Okere.²⁶

In contrast to Ransome-Kuti's "native airs" from 1923, and Phillips's choral compositions of the 1940s and 1950s, the Ìgbò inculturation of the Youth Song movement existed in an oral tradition that remained mostly outside of the church in a paraliturgical context until the 1970s. This may be partially attributed to the predominance of Catholicism in the eastern states, as opposed to the predominance of Anglicanism in the western states. Each of these churches has a lot of influence on the

other's liturgy in Nigeria, as elsewhere, so the inculturation of Ìgbò Anglican churches may have been delayed (in comparison with Yorùbá Anglican churches) by the influence of Catholicism in the east.

With the pope's ratification of the Second Vatican Council in 1965, inculturation of music for the Catholic mass was actively encouraged throughout the world. Before this date, inculturated Christian music was practiced by Nigerian Catholics, but usually informally, outside of the church. This is quite similar to Yorùbá practices of Islam today, which include elaborate praise and worship music and even popular devotional music, called *Waka*, that is widely listened to and practiced but always outside of the mosque. Of course, the Islamic prohibition of music is fairly uniform (with the possible exception of Sufis), but the prohibition of indigenous instruments and styles in colonial-era churches reflected cultural bias and an effort to distance Christian practices from indigenous religious practices more than official doctrine. Today, Yorùbá praise songs that do not refer to either Jesus or Allah, but instead to the Lord (*Olúwa*), may be used by either Muslims or Christians.²⁷

Partly as a result of Vatican II, and also of the influence of important composers like Ayo Bankole and Laz Ekwueme, Christian choral music developed significantly in Nigeria starting in the 1970s.²⁸ In the east, choral competitions for either Anglican or Catholic church choirs are frequently held. In competitions, it is often the case that contesting choirs must present a new anthem or mass setting composed for the occasion. This has become a small industry for choral composers, with the wealthiest churches awarding handsome commissions to celebrities like Ìgbò composer Jude Nnam. Whichever choir hires the most

prominent composer (and presumably has the best material) has a serious advantage in the sometimes fierce competition. There is not always a clear line between whether the choir or the composition is being adjudicated; often both are.

In addition to writing about and composing secular music, Ìgbò composer Laz Ekwueme examined postcolonial identities in religion. In his article "African Music in Christian Liturgy: The Ìgbò Experiment" (cited above) he points out an apparent contradiction: the loss of language and culture through Christianization during colonization, contrasted with the continuing evolution of the Ìgbò language and musical practices in Christian services as an effort toward decolonization. For Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, a prominent Kenyan novelist who stopped writing in English to write exclusively in his native Kikuyu, Christianity and "decolonizing the mind" are irreconcilable, but for Ekwueme they are not.²⁹ He can acknowledge the disruption of Christianity while still embracing its merits, as well as the worth of his indigenous culture. This is also the position of FILM.

History of the Forum for Inculturation of Liturgical Music

FILM was established in Nigeria in 1995 to "harness university-based research minds towards providing well thought out music in our indigenous languages, based on the music styles of our indigenous cultures, to the Catholic church in Nigeria."³⁰ The wording of the mission statement is telling, as the organization was founded and continues to be steered by university music faculty and university chaplaincy priests (many of whom were once students in the universities that now participate). In

addition to cognizance of indigenous music and language, “well thought out” suggests that the music should follow the guidelines of the Catholic Church regarding sacred music for liturgical use, and that it be notated for SATB choir with instruments, all of which must be scored.

The Nigerian Federation of Catholic Students is instrumental in generating excitement among current students at federal, state, and private universities throughout the country. As noted above, FILM organizes a biennial festival in which new sacred compositions, including masses and motets, are premiered by student choirs from participating universities throughout Nigeria. By distributing the scores of these works in Western notation with tonic sol-fa, the festival immediately disseminates new music in many languages throughout the country. Participants and attendees may purchase the scores in print or digital format, and the most successful works immediately enter the repertoire of church, school, and professional choirs around the country, quickly spreading further through photocopying. The authors were familiar with many of the works composed and had encountered pirated scores with decayed image quality (copies of copies of copies). However, we did not know that FILM was the source of many of the most popular choral compositions before attending the 2013 festival, so it was truly an eye-opening experience.

According to festival organizer Anthony Okoro, FILM’s agenda includes:

1. Stimulation of research on the vocal and instrumental music of indigenous Nigerian cultures
2. Adapting the findings from such research in composition

of congregational music for Catholic liturgical worship

3. Propagation of Marian music
4. Reawakening cultural values and sensibilities
5. Promoting cultural/ethnic tolerance and unity³¹

The last goal specifically addresses the multi-ethnic makeup of Nigerian society. This is further reflected in the criteria for the compositions, which “must be composed in the indigenous language (or dialect) of the community where the institution (school) is geographically located.”³² Because many Nigerian languages are tonal in nature, for the lyrics to be intelligible to native speakers of a given language, the melody (and harmony) of a song must follow the tone of the language.³³ Furthermore, the FILM adjudicators expect each composition to reflect the musical styles and instrumentation of the ethnolinguistic culture represented. Because the aim is to inculturate the Catholic mass, songs must be liturgical and simple enough for easy learning and participation of worshipers. To facilitate this, songs are scored in both staff and sol-fa notations.

“Ave Maria” Settings at FILM 2013

In Nigeria, churches and mosques are allowed on university campuses. Although secularism is the official policy of the federal government, the line between church and state is not clearly drawn. Allowing churches and mosques to be situated on campus ostensibly increases security for students, so that they do not need to venture outside the gates for religious practice. Unlike most Christian choral competitions, for FILM, composers must be associated with each university’s chapel choir and cannot be hired from outside of the community. Of the 13

Title	Language	School	State	Composer	Permalink	Time
<i>A ki o, Iya mimo</i>	Yorùbá	University of Ibadan	Oyo	Ademola Adeosun	http://digitalcommons.auctr.edu/adept/107	5:32
<i>Abe o Iya olugbala</i>	Yorùbá	Ladoke Akintola University of Technology	Osun	Martin Badejo	http://digitalcommons.auctr.edu/adept/75	3:57
<i>Edima eka!</i>	Efik	University of Calabar	Cross River	Charles Mfon	http://digitalcommons.auctr.edu/adept/70	4:04
<i>Ekele Maria</i>	Ìgbò	Imo State University	Imo	Ifeanyi Augustine	http://digitalcommons.auctr.edu/adept/68	6:23
<i>Ekene Maria</i>	Ìgbò	Nnamdi Azikiwe University	Anambra	Dominic Igwe	http://digitalcommons.auctr.edu/adept/13	3:42
<i>Ewu ene eyiza oohe</i>	Igala	Kogi State University	Kogi	Abel Obaje	http://digitalcommons.auctr.edu/adept/67	5:11
<i>Iya mimo</i>	Yorùbá	University of Lagos	Lagos	Daniel Ebhomien	http://digitalcommons.auctr.edu/adept/69	3:39
<i>Iya t'obi Jesu</i>	Yorùbá	Federal University of Technology, Akure	Ondo	Benedict Oburota	http://digitalcommons.auctr.edu/adept/74	3:48
<i>Maria noen Yesu</i>	Goemai	University of Jos	Plateau	Tom Bot	http://digitalcommons.auctr.edu/adept/71	5:18
<i>Maria non huaren</i>	Edo	Igbinedion University	Edo	Not accredited in score	http://digitalcommons.auctr.edu/adept/72	4:21
<i>Mha tue Maria nine man</i>	Esan	Ambrose Alli University	Edo	Not credited in score	http://digitalcommons.auctr.edu/adept/65	6:59
<i>N'erhumwu n nima hia</i>	Bini	University of Benin	Edo	Matthew Okojie and John Ezomo	http://digitalcommons.auctr.edu/adept/66	3:15
<i>Oviere'ya</i>	Urhobo	Delta State University	Delta	Joseph Chaninomi and Edward Odum	http://digitalcommons.auctr.edu/adept/73	5:20

Table 1: “Ave Maria” Settings at FILM 2013

university chapel choirs represented in the 2013 competition, four were from Yorùbá-speaking areas, two from Ìgbò-speaking areas, and three from Edo State, The other four choirs sang in less-common languages from the Delta region (Urhobo, Delta State), the far southeast region (Efik, Cross River State), the middle belt (Igala, Kogi State), and the northern, predominantly Muslim part of the country (Goemai, Plateau State). All performed original settings of a creed and two motets. One of the motet categories was settings of “Ave Maria” (Hail, Mary); recordings of these works are available on YouTube at the links listed in Table 1.

We wish to highlight three settings in particular: Ekene Maria in Ìgbò by Dominic Igwe, MarianNoen Yesu in Goemai by Tom Bot, and Ewu ene eyiza oohe in Igala by Abel Obaje. The Ìgbò text (with Latin loan words) and English translation of Ekene Maria are given on the next page. Note that “Ekene” and “Ekele” are dialectical variations of the Ìgbò greeting from Anambra and Imo States, respectively (n and l are allophonic in the Ìgbò language cluster).

Igwe’s piece reflects the tunes and sounds (both vocal and instrumental) associated with Ìgbò traditional songs. Example 1 (m. 53) shows the start of a call-and-response

Ave, Ave, Ave, Ave
 Ave Maria
 I jupùtara n'àmara, Nne
 Èkené
 Èkené
 Èkené
 Èkené diri gi Maria (Nne)
 Nwanyì oma, ezìgbò nne
 Èkené Èkené Èkené diri gi,
 diri gi Maria (Nne)
 Nwanyì oma, ezìgbò nne
 N'etiti umunwanyì nìile
 I bù onye di ukwu
 I bù onye di ngozi
 Yòbara'nyi aririò eh
 Yòbara'nyi aririò eh
 dikà na Kana na Galili Ave
 O di ngozi, O di ngozi, O di ngozi
 O di ngozi
 Onye bu Mezaya
 bu Nwafò gi, Jesu
 Chukwu n'onweya
 bu Nwafò gi, Jesu
 Eze udo
 bu Nwafò gi, Jesu
 O g'achi
 chi chi chi chi chi chi
 chiwa chiwa chiwa
 chigide chigide chigide
 chie mbà nìile.

Hail, Hail, Hail, Hail
 Hail, Mary,
 You are full of grace, Mother
 Greetings
 Greetings
 Greetings
 Greetings to you Mary, Mother
 Beautiful woman, good mother
 Greetings, greetings, greetings to you
 to you, Mary, Mother
 Beautiful woman, good mother
 Among all women,
 you are the great one
 you are the blessed one
 Intercede for us
 Intercede for us
 As you did at Cana of Galilee
 He is blessed, He is blessed, He is blessed
 He is blessed
 He is the Messiah
 the son of your womb, Jesus
 God himself
 the son of your womb, Jesus
 King of peace
 the son of your womb, Jesus
 He will rule
 rule, rule, rule, rule, rule, rule
 rule, rule, rule
 rule, rule, rule continuously
 rule all kingdoms.

section, drawing on the widely used formal device in African music. However, call and response in a composed choral work does not have the same function as in indigenous performance practices. Traditionally in Ìgbò music making, a leader provides cues through call and response, letting others know when she or he is ready to move on (perhaps based on some nonmusical factor at an event), thereby structuring the music on the spot. It is a form of directing in participatory music, where there is usually not a divide between performers and audience. In choral composition, call and response is not a communication between leader and chorus, but a textural effect. It is also not usually iterated between a section of voices and the rest of the choir, as it is in Example 1. Presumably, the choir is

following the conductor and not the basses, and even if the basses did not sing the call (perhaps in error), the others might still come in at the scored entrance in measure 55 if cued by the conductor.

Another feature of Ìgbò music represented in this composition is the imitation of instrumental sounds by the voice. In Example 2, the tenor voice imitates the sound and rhythm of an *ogene* (metal bell), an instrument indigenous to Ìgbò culture. The repetition of a high tone in the tenor voice, arising out of an ostinato texture and gaining speed through rhythmic diminution, is reminiscent of the lead player in an *ogene* ensemble. *Ogene* may come with two lobes, as shown in Figure 1. The ensemble typically includes multiple *ogene*, a woodblock, and a gourd shaker.

52 *mf*

Example 1: Dominic Igwe, *Ekene Maria*, showing call and response and combination of standard and tonic sol-fa notation (FILM 2013, reprinted with permission)

Example 2: Dominic Igwe, *Ekene Maria*, excerpt in which the tenor voice imitates the sound of an ogene (metal bell) (FILM 2013, reprinted with permission)

One challenge for the adjudicators of FILM is that they do not speak all the languages or play all the instruments represented at the competition. Similarly, our (the authors') highest competence in terms of linguistic and musical analysis is with Ìgbò and Yorùbá cultures. We can only speculate about cultural authenticity and the accuracy of the setting of the speech tones in other languages, but we will venture some



Figure 1: Ogene being playing in Okigwe, Imo State, Nigeria (photo by authors)

observations about the Igala and Goemai compositions and performances, both of which were among the most interesting and well-received presentations.

It is important to note that the middle belt (including Kogi State) and northern Nigeria are quite distant from southern Nigeria, culturally and in terms of climate. The south is equatorial forest and the north an arid Sahel region. Goemai Christians in Plateau State, a mountainous region north of Abuja, have been the victim of attacks by Islamic fundamentalists in recent years. To attend the 2013 festival, students from the University of Jos (in Plateau State) had to travel over 700 kilometers on roads of variable quality (alternately new or riddled with potholes). In addition to the distinctive dress characteristic of northern Nigeria, they brought a very interesting instrument: a pitched wooden idiophone with cow horns for resonators, instead of the gourds that are often used (see Fig. 2).

Many ethnic groups in northern Nigeria, including the Goemai, raise cattle. The use of cow horns was distinctive both visually and in sound. The horns added a buzzy resonance to the timbre of the wooden bars of the instrument, which featured prominently throughout *Maria Noen Yesu* by Tom Bot.

Another interesting feature of the performance was the use of the pot drum (ùdù in Ìgbò), which is indigenous to southeastern Nigeria and southwestern Cameroon (not to northern Plateau State). In *Maria Noen Yesu*, the pitched idiophone took the lead and the pot drum followed. The voice parts were harmonically ambiguous, more pandiatonic or modal than major or minor, in contrast to the prominent use of the major mode in the other compositions. Bot's piece was the most unusual among the "Ave Maria" settings, distinct from the well-known choral styles of the Ìgbò, Yorùbá, and ethnic groups of Edo State. However,



Figure 2: University of Jos Chapel Choir accompanied by a wooden idiophone (center front) with cow-horn resonators from northern Nigeria (photo by authors)

the University of Jos Chapel Choir did not take the prize in the Motet I category.

Instead, the trophy went to the Kogi State University Choir, for their performance of Abel Obaje's Igala-language setting *Ewu ene Eyiza Oohe*. Igala, like Goemai, is a minority language from outside of the Christian-majority southern states—in this case, from the middle belt, a region that is neither fully northern nor southern in culture(s) or climate. Obaje's piece stood out for several reasons: it was completely unaccompanied, with no indigenous percussion; lengthy tenor and soprano solos were followed by a duet at the opening; and an infectious refrain dominated the choral section of the piece (see Ex. 3). Presumably, the setting of the text reflects the contours of the language. Igala is tonal and it is required that the text setting of speech tones be reviewed before submission to the festival. However, other than the language of the lyrics and the presumed tone-tune correspondence, Obaje's piece was not particularly indigenous in its harmony, but in a strongly diatonic G major. This was unlike many other pieces

that were modal or pentatonic. Along with the lack of indigenous instruments (the use of which is officially encouraged), the piece was among the most Westernized, and thus it was perhaps surprising that it was selected as the winner by the judges for an inculturation festival.

Obaje also directed the choir. When watching the video, one may notice a peculiarity of his conducting: the feel of the piece is often in 6/8 in terms of rhythm and emphasis, but he is conducting in 3/4. He is consistent throughout and the dynamics and rhythm are precise (likely part of the winning assessment), but the singing and conducting are incongruous except for alignment on the downbeat. The only metrical indication in the score is 3/4 at the beginning. Although no time signature appears in the excerpt shown in Example 3, one can see a metric division consistent with 6/8 in the even-numbered measures (50, 52, 54, and 56). The odd-numbered measures are more ambiguous. Nigerian music often features an alternation between compound two-beat and simple three-beat meters (6/8 and 3/4), with a constant eighth-note

Example 3: Abel Obaje, *Ewu ene Eyiza Oohe*, refrain, mm. 50–57 (FILM 2013, reprinted with permission)

pulse. However, given the clear emphasis on the first and fourth eighth notes in many measures, and the fact that an emphasis on the third and fifth eighth notes never surfaces, 6/8 is the most logical meter that is usually conducted (in the United States and Europe) with a two-beat pattern. One of the judges, Jude Nwankwo, a lecturer at the University of Nigeria, commented on the issue of meter in his address at the end of the three-day festival:

We should use time signatures that are found within the culture, which is what inculturation is about. If we are doing anything other than that, we are going out. 3/4—Most of the songs we sang here today are either in 6/8, 4/4, 2/4, or 12/8. All the things we did here, there was nothing like 3/4. And then we found it difficult to conduct even the wrong time.³⁴

These comments were general and not made directly to Obaje, though his conducting exemplified Nwankwo's point. It is likely that this was a teaching moment without consequences in terms of judging, either because it was common or because the other judges (who did not all have as much formal musical training as Nwankwo) did not appreciate the subtle discrepancy between the metrical implications of the music and Obaje's conducting (and the indicated meter). Nwankwo's training at the University of Nigeria, home to respected intercultural composers such as Felix Ndubuisi and Joshua Uzoigwe, has no doubt made him acutely aware of the representation of Ìgbò rhythms in notated meters. In the end, Obaje was commended for his conducting, along with the simplicity of the composition and the skilled performance of the choir.

The meter and conducting challenges raise a larger issue within FILM: reconciling indigenous culture with the

Western medium of SATB choral music in staff notation. The most likely explanation of the metrical discrepancy is that the 3/4 meter was selected in the notation software because it accommodated the total duration of the notes in each measure (three quarter notes) without allowing for its subdivision into two dotted quarter notes. Moreover, Obaje was compelled to follow the score because the judges were reading from it as well. As already mentioned, the traditional way of directing singing is by a lead vocalist in call and response. However, FILM requires a conductor and, in this way, does not reflect indigenous musical practices. This raises the issue of what is and what is not inculturated into Christian practice. In the case of FILM performances, the languages (including the lexical tones) and the instruments are inculturated, but that is the extent of it. Many aspects of traditional modes of performance—flexible structure, song leaders, a lack of separation between performers and audience (open participation)—are absent. As many important Nigerian musicologists have noted, inculturation does not necessitate complete reversion to precolonial tradition, which would scarcely be possible. Instead, inculturation is more of an intercultural dialogue between indigenous tradition and global modernity.³⁵

Because FILM is organized partially by university music faculty, adherence to Western musical notation and SATB choral practice is stronger than it is in Catholic and Protestant churches at large, where less formal methods like tonic sol-fa notation are preferred. If the FILM model were the only model for inculturation, SATB music composed with sensitivity to the tonal contours of indigenous languages and inclusive of the wonderful varieties

of pitched and nonpitched percussion instruments found in Nigeria would continue, but the more organic forms of inculturation in Aladura (*Aláduúra*)³⁶ and Pentecostal churches might not. However, there is little concern that might happen because most growth in Christianity in Nigeria is among Pentecostal organizations like the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG). The RCCG prayer camp outside of Lagos, which attracts hundreds of thousands on weekends, has been identified by *Al Jazeera* as the largest regular gathering of Christians in the world.³⁷ As Marloes Janson notes, and we have also observed, the RCCG prayer camp is so successful that many Christian and Muslim prayer camps on the same model have sprung up all along the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway, sometimes referred to as the “Spiritual Highway.”³⁸

Popular Pentecostal brands in Nigeria are now expanding to other countries, including the United States and Ghana. In the Nigerian Pentecostal movement, inculturation is just the way it is; it is not carefully curated by academics and priests like those at FILM. The authors have observed that choral singing in multiple languages remains a favored practice in RCCG and other Nigerian Pentecostal churches in Texas, Ohio, New York, and Georgia.³⁹ A tension is revealed in the FILM mission statement itself: “harness university-based research minds towards providing *well thought out* music” (emphasis added) is to some extent at odds with producing music in “indigenous languages, based on the music styles of our indigenous cultures.” In practice, “well thought out” means that every note is composed and formally scored and performed, including those written for indigenous instruments. This presumes that the Western model of composed (and

predetermined) music is better equipped for reaching FILM’s goals of more organic music making in Nigerian Catholicism than oral modes of transmission.

In a way, FILM is also promoting Western-style choral composition throughout the country. This might seem to reflect the negative attitudes of early missionaries toward indigenous music in the oral mode (though not toward indigenous instruments, which are incorporated in FILM’s activities). The detailed scores and video and audio recordings that are made and distributed at the biennial festival do make it more possible to replicate the performances. The most successful FILM compositions spread through both written and oral (and secondary oral, such as YouTube) transmission, showing that however inorganic the event itself is, much of the music becomes a highly organic “cultural fusion” of indigeneity and colonial encounter.⁴⁰ The festival continued to grow in 2015 and 2017 and has consistently made unusual achievements in “unity in diversity.” One is very unlikely to hear praise music in Goemai or Igala at the RCCG prayer camp. And a very special thing tends to happen with even stuffed-shirt formal compositions in Nigeria: they evolve. From Handel’s “Hallelujah Chorus” to the FILM composition *Yak Ikom Abasi*, as they are adopted, they are adapted: instruments are substituted or added, works are excerpted and form medleys, harmonies are replaced.

For some postcolonial African musicians, decolonization became an artistic imperative. Singing in one’s native language is no longer creative expression alone; it has taken on a more significant role in decolonizing the continent. Similarly, inculturation is not always a matter of preference. For

some, it is a mandate, expressing a deeper agenda of postcolonial reconstitution of African culture. FILM, as a national festival among university students, is one way of encouraging youth involvement and engagement with indigenous culture, preserving and hopefully even revitalizing Nigeria's many languages. The use of songs in contemporary religious practice may ensure the continued use of these languages. Catholic parishioners in Nigeria take pride in singing well-known texts such as the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer in indigenous languages, even when other parts of the mass are celebrated in English. For Nigerian Christians, the mass is a powerful vehicle to frame the language agenda in postcolonial African music.

Celebrating ethnic diversity in the context of a common religion represents progress, but for Nigeria to truly move toward cultural tolerance and national unity, such efforts must extend beyond Christianity because Muslims represent roughly half the population. Although FILM is a Catholic organization, its effect on language and music is not limited to Catholics, or even Christians alone. Higher-education

institutions in Nigeria usually consist of students from many ethnicities and religious practices, and despite international news reports, there is more interaction among them than one might assume. Students do not have to be affiliated to the Catholic faith in order to participate in FILM, and the festival often involves musicians from other branches of Christianity or other faiths. Furthermore, Marloes Janson observes that Christian liturgical practices influence Muslim practices in Nigeria and vice versa.⁴¹ In recognizing this trend, FILM implies that successful inculturation movements within a single religious sect can influence other sects, and even other faiths. Certainly, one can imagine that if Nigeria's Catholic university students are actively and deliberately practicing multiculturalism, then Anglicans or Pentecostals might do the same, and ultimately Muslims too. Music, particularly community music making (like choral music), often exposes people to multiple languages and cultures, and to some extent this must increase human understanding and appreciation of ethnic diversity.

NOTES

1 Aaron Carter-Enyi, "Lùlù Fún Wọ̀n': Oríki in Contemporary Culture," *Ethnomusicology* 62/1 (2018): 83–103.

2 M. Paul Lewis, Gary F. Simons, and Charles D. Fennig, eds., *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, 17th ed. (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2013). *Ethnologue* lists 521 languages for Nigeria; the Nigerian government recognizes approximately 250.

3 Robert Needham Cust, *A Sketch of the Modern Languages of Africa: Accompanied by a Language-Map*, Trübner's Oriental Series (London: Trübner, 1883).

4 Randy J. Sparks, "Two Princes of Calabar: An Atlantic Odyssey from Slavery to Freedom," *William and Mary Quarterly* 59/3 (2002): 555–84.

5 Stefania Capone, *Searching for Africa in Brazil: Power and Tradition in Candomblé* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

6 Christopher Alan Waterman, *Juju: A Social History and Ethnography of an African Popular Music*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); J. D. Y. Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).

7 Aaron Carter-Enyi, "Hooked on Sol-Fa: The Do-Re-Mi Heuristic for Yorùbá Speech Tones," *Africa* 88/2 (2018): 267–90.

8 Louis Nnamdi Oraka, *The Foundations of Igbo Studies: A Short History of the Study of Igbo Language and Culture* (Onitsha: University Publishing Co., 1983); Kay Williamson, *Igbò English Dictionary* (Benin City:

Ethiopia Publishing Corporation, 1972). Williamson was the first to create a dictionary of an alternative to “Central Ìgbò.” She based it on the Onicha dialect and included notes on the dialectical variation between the two. We acknowledge a reviewer for pointing out that Central Ìgbò is based on several dialects, not one.

9 There were also settings of the Apostles’ Creed and another motet, in addition to the settings of “Ave Maria.” The authors both attended the three-day festival at the University of Lagos and video- and audio-recorded the event with the organizers’ permission. All edited videos produced by the authors were made available to the participants and were recently posted (in 2018) to the institutional repository of Morehouse College, hosted by the Atlanta University Center Woodruff Library Digital Service Department.

10 Quintina Carter-Enyi, Aaron Carter-Enyi, and McDonald Nwandike, “Osolobruvwe Do’ by FILM Mass Choir in 2013,” *Africana Digital Ethnography Project* 106 (2013), <<http://digitalcommons.auctr.edu/adept/106>>.

11 Quintina Carter-Enyi and Aaron Carter-Enyi, “Yak Ikom Abasi’ by FILM Mass Choir 2013,” *Africana Digital Ethnography Project* 105 (2013), <<http://digitalcommons.auctr.edu/adept/105>>.

12 Quintina Carter-Enyi and Aaron Carter-Enyi, “Decolonizing the Mind through Song: From Makeba to the Afropolitan Present,” *Performance Research* 24/1 (2019): 58–65. Kuti advocated for the use of Pidgin English in popular music as a means of promoting Pan-Africanism. Although many singers use Pidgin to this day, it is also common to incorporate a variety of indigenous languages, and for artists to sing in languages from ethnic groups other than their own. This is more consistent with the theory of Afropolitansim, which suggests that African societies and arts tend to be cosmopolitan and multi-ethnic.

13 Marloes Janson, “Chrislam: Forging Ties in Nigeria’s Multi-Religious Society,” in *New Face of Islam in Eastern Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin*, ed. Egodi Uchendu (Makurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2012), 203–28.

14 Laz E. N. Ekwueme, “African Music in Christian Liturgy: The Ìgbò Experiment,” *African Music* 5/3 (1973): 12–33. Ekwueme was a Ph.D. student of Allen Forte and soon after graduating from Yale in 1972 became the first professor of music in Nigeria.

15 Laz E. N. Ekwueme, “Linguistic Determinants of Some Ìgbò Musical Properties,” *Journal of African Studies* 1/3 (1974): 335–53.

16 Aaron Carter-Enyi, “Melodic Language and Linguistic Melodies: Singing in Tone Languages,”

Africana Digital Ethnography Project 6 (2014) <<http://digitalcommons.auctr.edu/adept/6/>>.

17 Carter-Enyi, “Hooked on Sol-Fa.”

18 Kofi Agawu, *The African Imagination in Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 113.

19 Carter-Enyi, “Hooked on Sol-Fa.” This was already a trend among charismatic movements in both the Delta Region (e.g., Garrick Braide) and Yorùbá land (the *Aládùúrá* movement), but these compositions were not notated so it is difficult to consider them within the Nigerian music literature tradition of which FILM is intentionally a part.

20 John Richard Watson, Emma Hornby, Jeremy Dibble, Colin Gibson, Margaret Leask, and Carlton R. Young, *The Canterbury Dictionary of Hymnology* (Atlanta, GA: Canterbury Press, 2013).

21 Thomas Ekundayo Phillips, *Yorùbá Music (African): Fusion of Speech and Music* (Roodepoort, South Africa: African Music Society, 1952).

22 Alan P. Merriam, “Yorùbá Music (African): Fusion of Speech and Music by Ekundayo Phillips (Review),” *Notes* 13/2 (1956): 290–91.

23 Aaron Carter-Enyi, “Contour Levels: An Abstraction of Pitch Space Based on African Tone Systems” (Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 2016).

24 Daniel C. C. Agu, “Youth Songs: A Type of Ìgbò Choral Music in Ìgbò Christian Worship,” *African Music* 7/2 (1992): 17.

25 Agu’s article was originally submitted in 1983, but not published until 1992.

26 We thank an anonymous reviewer of this article for pointing out this alternative narrative history.

27 Carter-Enyi, “Lùlù Fún Wọ̀n.”

28 For more information, see Ogbu Kalu, “Holy Praiseco: Negotiating Sacred and Popular Music and Dance in African Pentecostalism,” *Pneuma* 32 (2009): 16–40.

29 Ngugi wa Thiong’o, *Decolonising the Mind* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1981).

30 Anthony Okoro (University of Port Harcourt Music Faculty and festival organizer from 2011 to 2017), personal e-mail correspondence, Dec. 8, 2017.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

33 Ekwueme, “Linguistic Determinants of Some Ìgbò Musical Properties.”

34 Authors’ transcription of recording of FILM 2013.

35 See Akin Euba, “Intercultural Expressions in Neo-African Art Music: Methods, Models and Means,” *Essays on Music in Africa* 2 (1999): 115–78; and Marie Agatha Ozah, “Building Bridges between African Traditional and Western Art Music: A Study of

Joshua Uzoigwe's Egwu Amala," *AAWM Journal* 3/1 (2013): 117-43.

36 An early charismatic movement in Yorùbá-speaking areas that started around 1918 and is still active. Aladura churches are also known as "white garment" churches.

37 Mohammed Adow, "Miracles Promised at Massive Nigeria Church," *Al Jazeera* <<https://www.aljazeera.com/video/africa/2013/04/2013413121750387870.html>>.

38 Janson, "Chrislam."

39 A reviewer of this article noted that this may not be the case when a Nigerian church in America is focused on "reverse mission" and may want to use English to more effectively evangelize Americans.

40 For example, see Kwame Nkrumah, *Consciencism* (New York: New York University Press, 1970).

41 Janson, "Chrislam."