

# GUIDED SYNCRETISM: REPACKAGING BADAGRY-OGU MUSIC IN THE CONTEXT OF LAGOS' POSTCOLONIAL MODERNITY

*by*

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**Abstract:** At the Congress of Berlin (1884–85), the colonial governments created and imposed boundaries on the people of the continent, thereby fragmenting, for example, *Gbe* ethnolinguistic groups into different west-African countries, under the administrations of Britain, France and Germany. The Badagry-Ogu ethnic group, being the only *Gbe* ethnolinguistic group in Nigeria, which was colonised by the British government, was marginalized due to its positionality. Badagry-Ogu musical practices experienced the same situation and they have consistently waned over the years. These days, due to the effects of a postcolonial modernity in Lagos the indigenous is perceived as inferior, resulting in the condescending attitude of Badagry-Ogu youth towards their heritage. This paper describes the process of creating an experimental musical style, which syncretises Badagry-Ogu music and American jazz. This process involves the collection of music, engagement with performers, analysis and arranging of music and music making, with the thought of revitalising the interest of the youth trained in western music to engage more with their heritage, while making Ogu music more widely accessible in the global context. Supporting the argument for composition as a living archive, this paper features a new approach to musical conservation in Badagry Lagos.

**Keywords:** Badagry, Ogu, guided syncretism, hybridity, jazz, repackaging, postcolonial, modernity.

## **My return to Badagry as a researcher**

In December 2013, I returned to Badagry, a southwest Nigerian border town in Lagos State, after twenty years of having relocated to inland Lagos.<sup>1</sup> One reason for my visit was to commence with my fieldwork on the Badagry-Ogu people's traditional music within its context, to arrange Ogu songs for small jazz ensembles and to compose

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<sup>1</sup> This research, conducted under the supervision of Dr Sylvia Bruinders, was funded by the University of Cape Town and the NRF. Mrs. Comfort Tanpinnu (Mama Sejlo) and Mr. Jacob Avoseh (Baba Avoseh) were collaborators in this research. Mr. Sola Bankole was my field assistant while Dr Pius Fasinu and Mr. Folabi Hunkanlin were informants. The accompanying audio examples were recorded at the SAE studio, Cape Town with Cameron Claasen (drums), Blake Hellaby (piano), Graham Strickland (bass), Keketso Bolofo (percussion), Tokunbo Odubanjo (percussion), Keenan Ahrends (guitar), Keegan Steenkamp (flugelhorn), Tristan Weitkamp (tenor sax), Georgie Jones (baritone sax), and Zoe Modiga (vocals). Brade Opubo was the sound engineer.

contemporary Ogu songs while giving credence to the traditional style.<sup>2</sup> The main reason for the visit was to explore the potential in Muller's argument that composition may be seen as a living archive (2002). Muller (*ibid.*) argued for an expansion of the conventional definition of the archive to encompass the realm of song composition, which serves to preserve musical characteristics and aesthetics in the context of immanent loss. I approached the field with the fore knowledge, from my childhood, of Ogu melodies featuring the minor-seventh pentatonic scale. I grew up listening to the performing groups made up of women, most of whom were married into the extended family. Having originated from and having spent my formative years in Badagry would inform my standpoint for the research. The degree to which I am an insider to Ogu culture is minimal. As a son of an Anglican cleric, I was 'shielded' from the 'profanities' embedded in traditional rituals. My status is not unique; indeed, it is the reality of many middle class Ogu youths in the twenty-first century (*cf* Capo 1990: 112).

My position was advantageous to my research. My father was one of the prominent Anglican clerics in Lagos from the 1980s until his demise in 2002, having pastored at some of the foremost Anglican churches in Lagos. On his demise, he had the rare honour of being interred in the cemetery which until then was exclusively used for missionaries and clerics from Europe who had missionized Badagry. Due to the respect he had earned during his lifetime, I easily gained the trust of my respondents and they were, in most of the cases, willing to offer the information I required. In other words, I occupied a position which the term 'native ethnographer' may not fully describe, as I had more privileges in the field than the typical native ethnographer (*cf* Kusow 2003). This unique status and its accompanying privileges facilitated my research, which was conducted through participation, observation, and interviews. While Willig (2013: 139) emphasizes the need for a balance between 'empathy' and 'suspicion' in ethnographies, I had to be more empathetic than suspicious. A reason for skewing this research towards 'empathy' rather than 'suspicion' was that it focused on amplifying the voice of the subjects, while excavating a less represented music culture in Lagos (Johnson *et al* 2004: 215). Therefore, the dread of conducting research, as expressed by Winter (2013: 258), namely that of facing the difficulty of gaining the confidence of the informants, as they could perceive themselves as objects of academic research whose results could be used against them, was not a concern for me. Indeed, respondents readily gave their consent to my arrangement of the songs I learned from them.

Seyon Akran facilitated my entry into the field. 'Akran' is the title by which the paramount ruler of Badagry is known. Each Akran is identified by the number following the title. For instance, the current Akran of Badagry is Akran XV. My interactions with Seyon, a friend from primary school and a son of the current Akran of Badagry, on the day of my arrival, was a confirmation of my premonition about the waning strength of Ogu culture and by extension, its language and music. His role in my fieldwork was to introduce me to a potential informant, Mr Folabi Hunkanlin. On meeting Seyon at

<sup>2</sup> My use of 'Badagry-Ogu' in this article is to distinguish between my research community and the Ogu communities in Ipokia Local Government, Ogun State Nigeria.

the Sato-drummer statue, we decided to chat over a drink while he made contact with Folabi.<sup>3</sup> I observed numerous physical changes in Badagry; several of the buildings in the Badagry I knew were no longer there but I was not as interested in these physical changes as I was in the musical changes. While we were waiting I began paying attention to the music in the background as it was an Ogu piece recorded in a studio. As the music played, I asked Seyon about the details of the piece, played by an unidentified musician. After answering a few of my questions, Seyon responded in Yoruba, “brother, I really don’t understand this language” (referring to *Gungbe*, the Ogu language), because he anticipated more questions typical of a researcher conducting fieldwork. His response was surprising to me but I did not show this overtly. Indeed, I was experiencing the contradictory reality of a Badagry prince not being able to speak his mother tongue. Seyon and I went to Folabi’s house after having confirmed our visit with the latter. I was on my way to experiencing the *mase* genre of Ogu music for the first time.

### **The *Mase* genre of Ogu music**

On meeting Folabi, he invited me to witness a *mase* performance (which has become a rarity in Badagry) the following Sunday afternoon. The *mase* genre of Ogu music, which is performed solely for entertainment, features praise singing and communal dancing. The lead instrument of *mase* is a wooden box drum known as *masepotin* (literally, *mase* box). *Masepotin* is also called *agbale* or *agbalepotin*. On Sunday afternoon, I arrived at Agankameh, a suburb in Ahovikoh, the Prince’s ward, which was the venue of the performance. Folabi introduced me to the band leader of the 16 piece *mase* band, Oyono, while they were setting up the band stand in preparation for their performance. It would be an open-air performance. Oyono had organised it to celebrate the beginning of the year and relaunch his *mase* band in Badagry. Admission is free at such performances. Bands earn money from people ‘spraying’ them. The term ‘spray’ is used in Lagos to describe the common practice of putting Naira notes on the forehead of performers to express one’s gratitude for the music. The audience would give amounts of money based on affordability and there is no social disapproval for not giving anything at all.

Soon the performance was underway. Most of the attendees were middle aged and I became curious about the near absence of young people. The few young people in attendance were either part of the band or in the team concerned with the sound system. Oyono and two female backing vocalists were seated in the front row with the *masepotin* player. The three male backing vocalists and the other instrumentalists sat in an arc formation behind the front row. The instruments include the typical Ogu percussion, namely a pair of *pli* (slim conical drum played in pairs, each tuned differently), *aya* (beaded rattle) and *ogan* or *gunkeke* (high-pitched bell). The band played with much dexterity and energy. The performers on the *ogan*, *aya* and a pair of *pli*, all non-tonal percussion instruments, played interlocking rhythms upon which the

<sup>3</sup> The Sato-drummer statue is a significant monument situated at the entrance to Badagry town. It is an important landmark.

*masepotin* played a leading part. It is usual for the *masepotin* to be silent momentarily but it is always played at the climax of each piece; whereas the *ogan*, *aya* and the *pli* drums are played from one piece to the next without stopping. The *masepotin* is improvised intermittently, varying its rhythmic pattern from time to time. Males are dominant in *mase* with the females being part of the chorus section. *Mase* is the most popular, secular Ogu genre, characterised by medium speed, compound-quadruple time (12/8) and improvised lyrics and melodies in praise singing. At the culmination of a session of praise singing, the singer returns either to a previously-sung theme or introduces a new one. Below is an ostinato pattern typical of a *mase* band. In this transcription in Figure 1, the *ogan*, *aya*, and pair of *pli* players play individual parts, which sound as an interlocking whole over which the *masepotin* player improvises:

The figure shows a musical score for five instruments in 12/8 time. The staves are labeled Ogan, Aya, Pli 1, Pli 2, and Masepotin. Each staff contains a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes with rests, creating an interlocking texture. The Masepotin part is more complex, featuring a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes with rests.

Figure 1. A typical *mase* ostinato pattern. Transcription by author.

Oyono executed the improvised praise singing seamlessly while attendees danced vigorously. Despite his musical proficiency, Oyono is a barber by occupation as he would not earn enough money out of performing Ogu music.<sup>4</sup> The performance began at about 2pm and surprisingly, continued without a break beyond 7:30pm, when I departed for my base in Ikorodu, nearly 200km away. The transition from one song to the next was executed in such a way that there was no break in the groove. New songs were sometimes introduced after an improvisatory section on the *masepotin*. Although the music never stopped, the musicians relieved one another by taking turns on the instruments. One who initially played a *pli* would later take over from the *masepotin* player who wanted to have a break. While my field assistant recorded the performance, I interviewed selected performers during their breaks, particularly the ones who played the dominant parts in the band. The interview questions probed into the origin of the performers, how they acquired their Ogu musical skills, genres of Ogu music and the reason(s) for the waning of Ogu music in Badagry. Notably, out of five respondents, only

<sup>4</sup> My interviews and group discussions revealed that Badagry musicians preferred to perform popular music genres rather than Ogu indigenous music for economic reasons. Those who perform Ogu indigenous music have other sources of livelihood.

one was from Badagry: Oyono had invited three from Porto Novo in Benin Republic and one from Ipokia, an Ogu community in the Ogun State of Nigeria, to perform with his band. These performers began playing Ogu music at home, where they were instructed by either their parents, grandparents, uncles or aunts.

My interviews revealed the existence of other Ogu genres such as *adjahoui*, *agbadja*, *agome*, *ajogan*, *hungan*, *jegbe*, *jeke*, *kaka*, *kpacha*, *pakre*, *sato*, *toba* and *zenli*. The general characteristics of these Ogu genres include quadruple compound time (12/8), the minor or major pentatonic scales, rhythmic handclapping, vocal call-and-response and vocalised rhythmic motifs. Cyclical forms and monophonic singing are other major characteristics of Ogu music. A few of these Ogu genres are named after their lead percussion instruments; the naming of Ogu musical genres is sometimes onomatopoeic.

In 'modern' Badagry, some elements and percussion instruments in different genres are combined to form a 'hybrid' genre for Christian worship, particularly for the mass in Catholic churches. Moreover, percussion instruments that are not indigenous to Ogu culture are sometimes used in the performance of the 'hybrid' genre. These genres may not be as clearly distinguishable in Badagry today. It is for this reason that I advocate, in this article, for a process that I call 'guided syncretism', which I will discuss later, as a method of archiving Ogu songs, through composition and their arrangements, in the context of Lagos' modernity (Muller 2002: 409).

Since the 'hybrid' genre of Ogu music is more accessible and available in religious institutions, Badagry-Ogu youth are more familiar with the melodies of the 'hybrid' genre.<sup>5</sup> This is because Christianity is the dominant religion in Badagry. Thus, my arrangements and compositions at this stage utilise the melodic and rhythmic materials from the 'hybrid' genre, which will be a point of departure for future explorations of *mase* and the above-listed genres. I will return to this point in the section on 'guided syncretism'.

### **A musical appraisal of Badagry**

Badagry was initially known as 'Gbagli', meaning swampy land. Due to the passage of time over centuries, Ogu people, whose economic activities revolved around bodies of water, expanded their territory along the Atlantic coast in West Africa from present day Ghana to Togo, to the Republic of Benin and eventually to Badagry in contemporary Nigeria (Capo 1990: 111; P. Fasinu pers. comm. 10 May 2017). With a strategic location at the north bank of the coastal lagoon in south-western Nigeria, Badagry was one of the major trade ports for Afro-European trade in pre-colonial days. Being a smaller settlement with resources for economic prosperity and a doorway to opportunities in commerce, Badagry became a pawn in the struggle among pre-colonial, west African monarchs of the Oyo, Lagos and Dahomey kingdoms (Law 1994).

The trans-Atlantic slave trade began in the 16th century and continued until the

<sup>5</sup> Christianity is the dominant religion in Badagry and the average Ogu youth grows up attending church.

mid-19th century (Law 1995). With the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, many slaves were repatriated to Lagos. At the time, the colonial processes of delineation in the late 19th century imposed international boundaries between *Gbe* cultures.<sup>6</sup> Badagry Ogu became the only *Gbe* culture in Lagos (Ofulue 2013: 4). The same delineation processes created a political centre in Lagos Island, thus relegating Badagry Ogu culture to the periphery. Postcolonial Nigeria, as developed within a European paradigm (*cf* Nzewi 1980), inherited this arrangement with Lagos Island as the regional political, economic and cultural metropole. The increasing centrality of Lagos Island led to the weakening of Badagry Ogu traditional structures and its marginalization.

The events of the late 1800s to the mid 1900s, including but not limited to the repatriation of slaves to Lagos, the establishment of churches and the introduction of a western system of education, brought about musical transformation with Western classical music, Latin American music and early American jazz music influencing the music scene in Lagos more than ever before (Agawu 2003: 12–13). Two major groups of slaves were repatriated to Lagos; one group from Latin America and the other from Freetown in Sierra Leone, where the British Government had accommodated the slaves who were in transit at the time of the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. While the group from Latin America, referred to as the *Amaro*, brought with them Latin-American music and musical instruments, including the *tres*, the group from Sierra Leone, referred to as the *Saro*, favoured Western classical music (*cf* Waterman 1990: 31–36).

The *Saro* on Lagos Island, who were comprised of many families with British surnames, were considered suitable for involvement in local administration as they were formally educated by the British administration in Sierra Leone and subsequently repatriated to Lagos. They were at the forefront of the nationalist movements that negotiated for the independence of Nigeria in the late 1950s. They and their offspring emerged as the ruling and middle classes after the independence of Nigeria in 1960. Their lifestyle and musical consumption was modelled on that of the European colonizers (*ibid.*). Their pattern of settlement and inevitably, the pattern of urbanization in Lagos became skewed in favour of the centre, maintaining the *status quo* with Badagry on the periphery, right up until the present day. In Badagry it became the pattern for those who had received formal education to seek economic prosperity on Lagos island, which is host to transnational corporations. These and other concerns, which I discuss below, are what motivated my interest in beginning to revitalise interest in Ogu music.

### **Motivations for the living archive**

Following the colonial legacies, Euro-American ways became the model both in the corporate and social spheres in Lagos (Weredu 1992). The privileged reinforced Euro-American ways through their conspicuous consumption (Klein 1994, Nwafor 2011). In view of the axiom, ‘be Western or uncool’, societal forces such as the media portrayed

<sup>6</sup> *Gbe* is an ethnolinguistic cluster within the Kwa family of west African languages to which Ogu belongs. Ogu people in Badagry and in different parts of west Africa speak different dialects of *Gungbe*– Ogu language.

local culture as inferior. One cause of the neglect of indigenous cultures is economic subservience to the West (Norberg-Hodge 2015). Adopting Euro-American music, fashion and education, among other factors, has resulted in a massive flight of capital from Nigeria to Europe and America, which invariably perpetuates the subservience of its people (Yesufu 1996, Biersteker 2014). This trend raises the question of the economic viability of indigenous art forms in postcolonial Lagos and in the global context. One way of addressing these challenges enumerated above would be to revitalise an interest in Badagry Ogu music and to package it in an accessible and desirable form.

A musicological motivation for this research is my interest in creating a contemporary Ogu style which will include young Ogu musicians who are proficient with Western musical instruments and who are interested in performing their indigenous music. One caution in fulfilling this mission is that an overly conservative insistence on the exclusivity of indigenous musical instruments could restrict access and reinforce the relegation of Ogu music to the status of the 'other' in the context of Lagos' postcolonial 'modernity' (Agawu 2003: 22, Irigaray 2008: 11). Besides, with the reality of acculturation in postcolonial Badagry, the preservation of Ogu music in its precolonial form may be essentialist, restrictive and exclusionary to contemporary Badagry musicians (*cf* Sanga 2013: 135–136), hence my argument for guided syncretism which would serve as a basis for the conservation rather than preservation of Ogu music. In this context conservation suggests the retention of traditional elements in new musical forms while preservation suggests something fixed in time and place.<sup>7</sup>

### **Guided syncretism: My musical response**

I define guided syncretism as the intentional creation of a syncretic musical style that aims to conserve the indigenous elements of a music culture, while making the experimental style widely accessible. Guided syncretism, as used here, is in contrast to a term like 'hybridity' (Young 1995). Guided syncretism specifies the dominant component (Ogu traditional music), in the experimental style and it is more deliberately and consciously facilitated. While 'hybridity' is invoked broadly to suggest the production of an artefact or practice which emerges as a result of the contact between two or more distinct cultures or musics (Appert 2016: 279), guided syncretism, as used here, specifies the prioritization of Ogu music. Also, in a comparative context 'hybrid' may suggest that an artefact is less valuable than the 'authentic' (Weiss 2014: 507), which is not my

<sup>7</sup> The question as to whether a music in decline could be conserved or preserved is one that requires more attention. While most research particularly related to archives talks of the preservation of music, it is worth considering the difference between the two. Morin and Orsini's description of this difference in relation to the environment have implications for a possible answer for music scholars. In their view, "proponents of a conservationist approach argue that humans have to intervene on the environment to actively favour sustainable development... In contrast, advocates of a preservationist approach consider that humans should shy away as much as possible from nature (2014, 40)." Taking their view into account, and although this article seems to propose a direction which vacillates between the preservation and conservation of music, it is intended that the technique of 'guided syncretism' proposes one beginning towards a model for the conservation of music.

aim in this article. In guided syncretism, I promote the dominance of the Ogu music component through a deliberate process that gradually incorporates Ogu indigenous percussion and explores Ogu musical idioms in instrumental improvisations. As such, the kind of guided syncretism I describe in this article is only the first of several on the path to the revival of Badagry's Ogu music culture.<sup>8</sup>

In my application of guided syncretism to Ogu music, I intentionally conserve the aspects my respondents consider most valuable and irreplaceable. These are the melodies and the quadruple-compound time (12/8). The main components of Ogu music, as earlier mentioned, are the melody and rhythm; the melody being in unison or in octaves. The explanation of guided syncretism in this section is based on my arrangements of two popular religious songs, *Wayi jegba* (Come and take the golden crown, sung by Mama Sejlo [CD track 2], and *Dagbe dagbe*, (Wonderful and marvellous, sung by Joseph Kunnuji [CD track 3]. The near absence of Badagry youth at the *mase* performance I witnessed suggests the association of this genre, which makes it more appealing to the older generation of Badagry people. In view of this situation, my choice of songs at this stage of experimenting with guided syncretism is primarily based on the popularity of the songs in Badagry. *Wayi jegba* is a regular feature at funerals while *Dagbe dagbe* is prominent in naming ceremonies, and thanksgiving services in churches in Badagry. I classify these songs as hybrid genres, which combine instruments and the aesthetics of different genres of Ogu music. In Figure 2 is the lead sheet showing the transcribed melody of *Wayi jegba*. Section A shows my chord assignment to the entire melody of *Wayi jegba* while section B is a contrasting section.

In arranging *Wayi jegba*, the melody as sung by Mama Sejlo is retained, in addition to the composition of a contrasting B section. For the A section of *Wayi jegba*, the diatonic chords of E $\flat$  major, apart from the A7 $\text{alt}$  and B $\flat$ 7 $\text{sus}$  chords, which are introduced in a descending root progression towards the cadence, are employed. The B $\flat$  chord has a suspended 4th as the prevailing major pentatonic scale is without a leading note, D, the 3rd of the B $\flat$  chord. The interval of a perfect 4th between the melody note of the first beat of each bar and the root of the chord is maintained to create a modal sound. Such cadential clichés as, iim7 – V7 – I and iim7 $\flat$ 5 – V7 $\flat$ 9 – i, are absent in the arrangements. Instead, other options such as iim7 – V $\text{sus}$ 7 – I (i),  $\flat$ vii – I (i) and ivm7 – I (i), are explored at the cadences.

In the composed B section of *Wayi jegba*, non-diatonic chords are used to create contrast between the two sections of the piece. The choice of non-diatonic chords is based on what sounds good and it affirms my personal preference for descending chords. Apart from the use of non-diatonic chords, this section is moved one octave higher, which permits an open voicing of the horn parts and suggests the climax of the

<sup>8</sup> In future, I aim to compose music based on Ogu musical idioms for Western musical instruments. These instruments will be combined with Ogu indigenous percussion instruments in a contemporary Ogu ensemble.

The lead sheet for 'Wayi jegba' is written in 12/8 time and B-flat major. It is divided into two sections, A and B. Section A (measures 1-10) begins with a melodic line in the key of B-flat major. The chords are: Gm11 (measures 1-2), Cm7 (measures 3-4), Fm11 (measures 5-6), Gm11 (measures 7-8), Cm7 (measures 9-10), Fm11 (measure 11), Bb7(sus4) (measures 12-13), and A7alt (measures 14-15). Section B (measures 16-17) continues the melodic line. The chords are: Dbmaj7 (measures 16-17), Bmaj7 (measures 18-19), Dbmaj7 (measures 20-21), Bmaj7 (measures 22-23), Bb7(sus4) (measures 24-25), A7alt (measures 26-27), Ab6 (measures 28-29), Fm7 (measures 30-31), Bb7(sus4) (measures 32-33), and Eb6(add9) (measures 34-35).

Figure 2. Lead sheet of the arrangement of *Wayi jegba*. Composed by the author.

song. As the B section approaches the cadence, a melodic fragment from section A and its chords are introduced, which serves as an abridged recapitulation of the A section before the instrumental improvisation.

Instead of the cyclical and medley forms typical of Ogu music, Western forms such as AABB (*Wayi jegba*) and ABC (*Dagbe dagbe*) are employed. This route is followed in a bid to create shorter pieces, suitable for 'modern' concert settings, which is in line with the suggestions of respondents about how the music should be 'packaged'. In the opinion of Folabi, an informant in this research:

The packaging is one reason why it [Ogu music] is less attractive to the youths. Change is inevitable therefore we must combine the use of Western musical instruments with indigenous ones in packaging our heritage. (F. Hunkanlin interview 7 January 2014)

On the issue of packaging Ogu music in the context of a postcolonial Lagos, Patrick Koshoni, an entrepreneur and a music promoter from Badagry, explained:

Fusing Badagry music and Jazz creates a familiar conduit for people to relate to jazz and it also does the reverse. It creates a conduit for me to relate with Ogu music through jazz. I think it's a symbiotic relationship. More importantly, I think that if there is one additional way of bringing Ogu music out to people who don't listen to it, and jazz is going to be the medium, then I think it's a good thing. Because you're saying, 'here is Ogu music in a familiar musical setting'. They did it with rap. Quite a few American artists have infused

hip hop into jazz and jazz into hip hop. It created a bit of a cross fertilization. I think that's the same thing that will happen with the fusion of jazz and Ogu music. People will be able to relate with the one they are not familiar with through a familiar music setting. It will help to promote Ogu music through the familiarity of jazz and the music instruments. It's a win-win for jazz and Ogu music. (P. Koshoni interview 3 February 2014)

American jazz embodies a wide variety of musical styles with roots in the urban music of black origin and urban, western-influenced music created by black and creole musicians near the beginning of the twentieth century (Porter 2009: 596). The major element of American jazz I use is extended harmony, because, being harmonically novel, the application of extended harmony would add to rather than take away from the qualities of Ogu music. My musical arrangements of Ogu songs for jazz ensembles constitute a point of departure initially aimed at revitalising the interest of Badagry youths trained in western music (*cf* Dobbins 2005).

The arrangements are for a dectet comprising a rhythm section (piano, drum kit, guitar, double/electric bass and percussion), a horn section (two trumpets, tenor and baritone saxophones), and solo voice. Whereas the voice retains the role of the canto in the traditional form, I assign the responsorial role of the chorus to the horn section in harmony rather than using the monophony of the traditional Ogu choruses. The rhythmic base is transferred from the indigenous percussion to the drum kit and percussion set, while the piano and double or electric bass play the underlying harmonic progression in the tunes. The extensions to the chords are implied in the harmony of the horn section (listen to the audio samples of arrangements of *Wayi jegba* [CD track 4] and *Dagbe dagbe* [CD track 5]).

An Ogu song based on the minor pentatonic scale is receptive to the minor 11th chord. For instance, the C minor pentatonic scale is made up of the notes; C, Eb, F, G and Bb. The C minor 11th chord comprises the same notes of the C minor pentatonic scale, with the addition of the 9th; C, Eb, G, Bb, D and F. The C minor 11th chord thus becomes very useful in harmonizing melody notes from the C minor pentatonic scale. To avoid the monotony of using the same chord for notes of a certain scale, the same formula applied in *Wayi jegba*, as discussed earlier, is used. That is, the interval of a perfect 4th between the melody note and the root of the chord is maintained. Suitable cadences could also be predetermined, while ensuring a flow in the chord progression, working backwards from the cadence (see Figure 3). For the B section of *Dagbe dagbe* the metric technique of double-time in the melodic line and in the change from minor pentatonic to major, to create a contrast between the C section and the first two sections, is employed.

A significant departure from the traditional Ogu style in guided syncretism is in the nature of improvisation. While Ogu vocalists explore the scale in their improvisations, creating melodies sung to improvised lyrics, a chord-based improvisational style is adopted as it is the most easily accessible option for this research; performers are more familiar with this style through their studies in jazz improvisation. As chords change, different chord scales are implied, and this technique provides musicians the opportunity to explore these chord scales in their improvisation. They are not doing so

**A**

Gm<sup>11</sup> Am<sup>11</sup> Dm<sup>11</sup> Eb<sup>7</sup> Gm<sup>11</sup>

**B**

4 Dm<sup>11</sup> Gm<sup>11</sup> Dm<sup>11</sup>

7 Gm<sup>11</sup> Dm<sup>11</sup> Cm<sup>11</sup>

10 F<sup>7</sup> Em<sup>11</sup>(b9) Eb<sup>7</sup>(b9) Dm<sup>11</sup>

**C**

13 G<sup>7</sup>(sus4) Dm<sup>11</sup> Bb<sup>7</sup> C(sus4) D(sus4) Am<sup>11</sup>

16 Fmaj7 G(sus4) C(sus4)

18 G(sus4) F/A Gm/Bb C(sus4) Dm<sup>11</sup>

Figure 3. Lead sheet of *Dagbe dagbe*. Composed by the author.

from the same starting point that Ogu vocalists would use to explore the scale. While I have been experimenting with the melodies of the hybrid genre, I hope to apply the principles of guided syncretism to the other genres of Ogu music with the goal of revitalising these genres in Badagry.

### **Performances and other research outputs**

Since July 2014, beginning with my college recital examinations, I have been performing my repackaged Ogu music to a variety of audiences within and outside South Africa, with a band made up of colleagues at the South African College of Music (SACM), University of Cape Town. We have recorded 20 pieces in a studio under the project named, Jo Kunnuji Experiment. The live and internet audiences range from music scholars at the International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM), African Study Group (ASG); Cultural Calabash at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal 2015; jazz enthusiasts at various venues, including The Orbit (Johannesburg), The Chairman (Durban), The Nassau Centre (Cape Town), The Crypt (Cape Town), Miliki Jazz Lounge (Lagos), among others; Badagry-Ogu indigenes at The MUSON Festival 2016 (Lagos) and the Online Forum for Ogu People (a *Facebook* group).

These audiences have been approving of the music with individuals coming to speak about their perception of this form of syncretism as a way of opening Ogu music to wider accessibility. Shiba Mazaza, a journalist for Design Ndaba, wrote about the Jo Kunnuji Experiment's compositional style as one that "the older generation of Ogu people would easily recognise and younger generations would find new pride in" (<http://www.designindaba.com/articles/creative-work/mau-vivi-jo-kunnuji>). Engela Britz, in the Varsity News Paper, wrote about "the remarkable potential [of the Jo Kunnuji Experiment] to educate and to encourage the transmission of traditional knowledge into contemporary ears, which may even serve as a model for similar projects in the near future" (Varsity 25 Aug. 2015: 12). Other journalists who have written on the Jo Kunnuji Experiment and its potential of revitalising Ogu music include Carol Martin for All Jazz radio (<http://www.alljazzradio.co.za/2014/11/10/carol-martin-interviews-nigerian-jazz-trumpeter-jo-lanre-kunnuji/>) and Bruno Marino (<http://www.harlemrhythms.com/musica-africana-musica-tribale-jazz>). Bruno Marino, an Italian radio presenter and trumpet player, listened to our live performance at the Crypt, while he was on vacation in Cape Town, in December 2016. On returning to Italy, he listed five of our recorded tracks, alongside the music of Dizzy Gillespie and Pat Metheny, on his Radio Boonzo jazz programme (podcast available on Radio Boonzo website) broadcast on 16 January, 2017.

Among the initial responses, those from The Online Forum for Ogu People, with a membership of over 2,700 Badagry-Ogu youths as of May 2017, spoke about the positive perception of Jo Kunnuji Experiment's guided syncretism. The administrators of this group have posted the band's live performances on YouTube as well as studio recordings from Soundcloud and excerpts from my Master's degree thesis. The responses of members have always been positive, encouraging Jo Kunnuji Experiment's kind of innovation with Ogu music. The encouragement and varied set of responses to guided

syncretism have me conclude that through live performances and the publishing of recorded arrangements of Ogu songs, guided syncretism can lead to revival, if managed in such a way as to protect what is meaningful to a people like the Badagry Ogu, some of whom yearn for the retention of their cultural heritage.

This project may not be entirely unique. In Lagos, Fela Kuti carried out a similar project using Yoruba music (Veal 2000), but this is the first of its kind with Badagry-Ogu music. A follow-up study in Badagry is necessary to help determine the nuances in the perspectives of Ogu people on the potency of this form of syncretism in reviving Ogu music, particularly among the youth.

### Conclusion

The delineation of Badagry-Ogu culture as a minority culture in Nigeria positioned it for marginalization, thereby causing its decline. The weakening of traditional Ogu structures in Badagry, which is compounded by the uncertainty of postcolonial Lagos, raises the question of the future of Ogu music in the hands of Badagry youth, most of whom are condescending towards their heritage. I have argued that a point of departure through which Badagry-Ogu music could be revived in postcolonial Lagos could be its syncretism with a genre like American jazz, which is venerated among the youth educated in western music. I decided on guided syncretism as a compositional technique with the aim of conserving Ogu music in the creation of a neo-traditional music. Guided syncretism is thus deemed potent in establishing a living archive of Ogu music through the composition and arrangement of Ogu pieces. The power to delay or prevent the further decay of Ogu music lies precisely in this form of careful packaging, management, distribution, conservation and investment, which is partly based on the counsel of respondents and pursued in a manner that encourages the youths to engage with it.

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**Interviews by author**

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