HYBRIDITY IN MODERN NIGERIAN MUSIC: THE CASE OF IGBO CHORAL ART MUSIC

CHIDI OBIJIAKU

Abstract: Igbo choral art music is a Nigerian genre that exhibits interesting musical hybridity as it combines a notated choral part with an un-notated orchestral part into a final musical artwork. The notated choral part is produced by the composer through a synthesis of Igbo traditional music and European classical music, while the orchestral part, based on Igbo traditional music practices, is produced by the choral director. For over five decades, scholarly discussions on Igbo choral art music have focused on the notated choral part and how composers blend European classical music and Igbo traditional music principles. Although the choral part is significant, my more than two decades of participation in the genre as well as interviews with leading practitioners reveal that without the orchestral part, a composition is considered incomplete by both the practitioners and the audience. Such a critical aspect of the genre has received little to no academic attention. This article is an autoethnographic report on the orchestration principles of Igbo choral art music, its relationship with Igbo traditional music, and how such orchestration contributes to hybridity as a fundamental resource in the genre's development.

Keywords: artwork, composition, hybridity, Igbo choral art music, non-notated, orchestration

Introduction

Igbo choral art music is a Nigerian music genre that foregrounds hybridity as a fundamental resource to the creation and presentation of musical artworks. Artworks in the genre are created through a blend of Igbo traditional music and European art music principles as well as the artistic abilities of the composer, the choral director, and the instrumentalists. Igbo choral art music consists of a notated chorus part and an un-notated orchestral part which blends into a final musical artwork. The choral part is created by the composer who synthesises European classical music and Igbo traditional music, while the orchestral part is created by the choral director and the instrumentalists using Igbo traditional music and instruments. The notated choral part adheres to the principles of European harmonic progressions and SATB (soprano, alto, tenor, and bass) choral structure, while the orchestral part adheres to the principles of Igbo music such as the relationship between timeline and pulse, and the alternation of "light and heavy sounds." Both parts interact continuously, resulting in a musical artwork that projects both Nigerian and European musical values (Olwage 2006; Sadoh 2010).[1] In the last fifty years, writings have presented the orchestral part of Igbo

[1] Although Olwage focuses on South African black hymnody and John Knox Bokwe's compositions, similar situations are present in the Nigerian music scene, particularly in Igbo choral art music.

https://doi.org/10.21504/amj.v11i4.2456

choral art music as an embellishment (accompaniment) of the choral part and not as a foundational structure of the genre (Agu 2012; Nwamara 2008). In focusing on the choral part of the genre, scholars have disregarded the un-notated orchestration that completes the choral part. In employing the term, "artwork", in this article, I explore the significance of un-notated orchestration in Igbo choral art music and discuss how the creativity of the composer, choral director, and instrumentalists interact during the presentation of the genre.

Igbo choral art music has existed for close to one hundred years. My first encounter with the genre was as a choir boy at Onitsha during the Anglican Diocese on the Niger Biannual Music Festival in 2001. Five songs formed the festival syllabus for Grade One choirs: two hymns, Psalm 148 (to be chanted), the Lord is Great (from Haydn's Creation), and *n'ihi na onu* [You will go out in joy][2] by Sam Ojukwu. I sang with the choir in the first four items above and played the xylophone in Ojukwu's work. During the rehearsals for the orchestration of Ojukwu's work, two remarkable phenomena occurred which aroused my desire to understand the underlying structures of Igbo choral art music and how the structures interact with one another. The first discovery was that the xylophone lines I played, unlike the chorus I had learnt with fellow choristers, were not written down by the composer; they were written in tonic-solfa by the choirmaster for me to play. The choirmaster encouraged me to create more lines for the xylophone at any point I deemed necessary. Whatever additions I had decided upon were scrutinised and approved by him. This development was entirely contrary to the structure of the other works in the syllabus – the hymns, psalms, and Haydn's chorus – which were performed exactly as set with the accompaniment.

The second discovery was when the choirmaster yelled at the log drummer: "Did you not play some music in your village before coming to town? Why are these rhythms so difficult for you?" I asked myself: "What does playing traditional music have to do with church choirs?"

In another festival a few years later as a choral director, I had to orchestrate another of Ojukwu's compositions and realised that the practice of un-notated orchestration in Igbo choral art music was still in place. My task was to organise the orchestral part of the work, select the orchestral instruments, and structure the motifs and sequences for the selected instruments. In 2008, when I started composing in the genre, I found myself following the existing tradition (mostly out of convenience) of notating only the choral part while expecting the presentation of the work to be completed with an orchestral part which I did not notate.

In December 2013, Ifeanyi Ikegwuonu's choir won the main prize in the Anglican Diocese on the Niger Special Choir Competition. Ojukwu composed the work, *okwu Gi bu oriona* [Your word is a lamp for my feet], for the competition and he was also one of the adjudicators. In his final remarks, Ojukwu acknowledged that although

[2] The lyrics are from Isaiah 55 verse 12: You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills will burst into song before you and all the trees of the field will clap their hands.

the competition had been keenly contested, it was Ikegwuonu's interpretation and orchestration of the composition that gave his choir an advantage.

Ojukwu's remarks on Ikegwuonu's orchestration motivated this research. I interviewed three leading practitioners, namely Ikegwuonu, Ugochukwu Onwuka, and Ojukwu. I also participated in the orchestration of Igbo choral art music to investigate the principles and processes of the genre's orchestration. The responses of the above interlocutors and reflections on my participation in Igbo choral art music over the last two decades have resulted in this article which is focused on the role of Igbo traditional music in Igbo choral art music orchestration and how the orchestration supports the idea of musical hybridity.

A synopsis of Igbo choral art music

The origins of Igbo choral art music date back to the early twentieth century when Igbo composers in eastern Nigeria started composing choral music by blending the principles of Igbo traditional music and European classical music. According to Ekwueme, when the Church Missionary Society (Anglican, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches) arrived in Igbo land in 1857, they introduced strategies to ensure that Igbo people embraced Christianity. One of the strategies was to describe Igbo cultural practices such as *ilo mmuo* (homage to the ancestors), *iti mmanwu* (masquerades), and *ofala* (new yam festival) as paganism, and to present Christianity as divine. Although Igbo people embraced Christianity, they found it difficult to understand the modes of Christian worship, and from the early 1900s, Igbo converts searched for a more satisfying mode of Christian worship (Ekwueme 1973, 16–28).

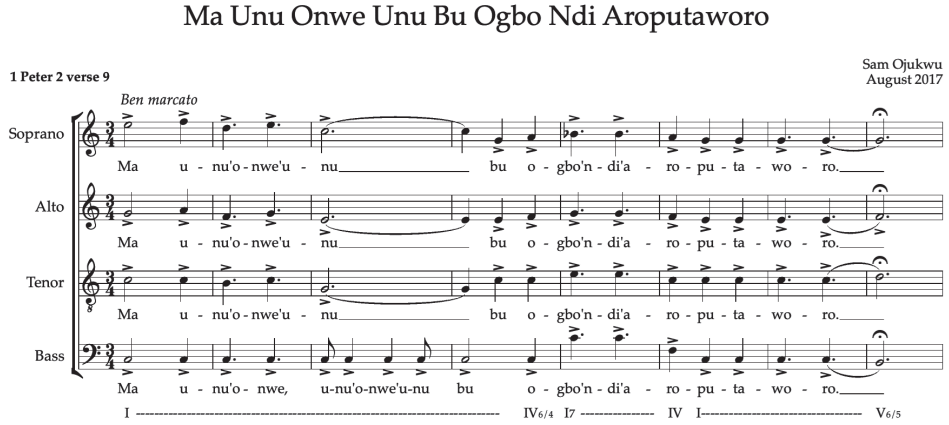
Around 1930, Ikoli Harcourt Whyte and other Igbo composers initiated the idea of combining the diatonic, triadic structures they learnt from the Christian missionaries with Igbo folk tales, melodies, idiomatic expressions, and untranslatable words, to produce choral music that projects both Nigerian and European cultures (Achinivu 1979; Okigbo 2010; Olwage 2006). As a means of testing their ideas, the composers composed sacred choral music that was performed unaccompanied by the Anglican, Methodist, and Presbyterian Church choirs across Igbo land.

The performances increased the status of the composers among Igbo Christians because the compositions provided a culturally based medium of Christian worship for Igbo people who until then had been singing only European hymns and chants in the churches (Agu 1984; Ekwueme 1973). Before his death in 1977, Whyte travelled to many parts of Igbo land, performing with his choir in Protestant churches across the region. Whyte came to stand as a symbol of culture-based, sacred choral music in eastern Nigeria during the 1960s and 1970s (Achinivu 1979, 54–61).

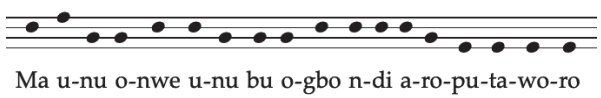
Although the choral compositions of Whyte and his contemporaries in the 1930s were based on Christian teachings, the works provided the foundation for further experiments by Igbo composers such as WWC Echezona, Laz Ekwueme, and Sam Ojukwu, who emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. This group of formally trained Igbo composers expanded the foundational structure of the pioneer composers by

synthesising other aspects of Igbo music such as rhythm and instrumental techniques with extended chords, counterpoint, and other European music practices. These experiments consolidated hybridity as a fundamental resource in Igbo choral art music from the 1960s onward and resulted in the emergence of the orchestral structure by which the genre is known today (Agu 2012, 30–34).

Characteristically, the melody of the choral part is influenced by the tonal inflections and speech rhythms of the underlying Igbo lyrics, while the harmony follows European harmonic progressions. In the excerpts below, Ojukwu, like other Igbo choral art music composers, ensures that the melody in the soprano part adheres to the speech inflections of the lyrics, while the harmony follows European triadic harmony principles. Transcription 1 shows the harmonic progression of Ojukwu's composition, while Transcription 2 shows the tonal inflections of the underlying Igbo lyrics.

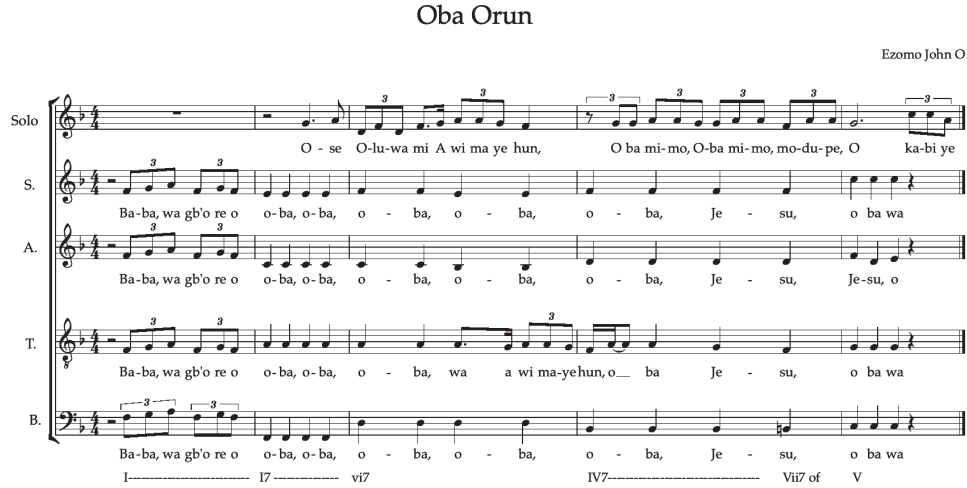


Transcription 1. The influence of Igbo speech inflections and European tonal harmony on Igbo choral art music. Transcription by Author.

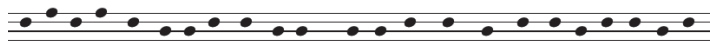


Transcription 2. The tonal inflections of the lyrics of Ojukwu's composition. Transcription by Author.

The above structure is not restricted to Igbo choral art music; it is also present in choral compositions in other regions of Nigeria, such as Yoruba, Ibibio, and Hausa. *Oba orun* (King of heaven) by John Ezomo, in Transcription 3, is a Yoruba choral composition in which the harmony follows a European harmonic progression, while the melody is structured according to the speech inflections of the underlying Yoruba lyrics to achieve the intended meaning of the text (see Transcription 4).

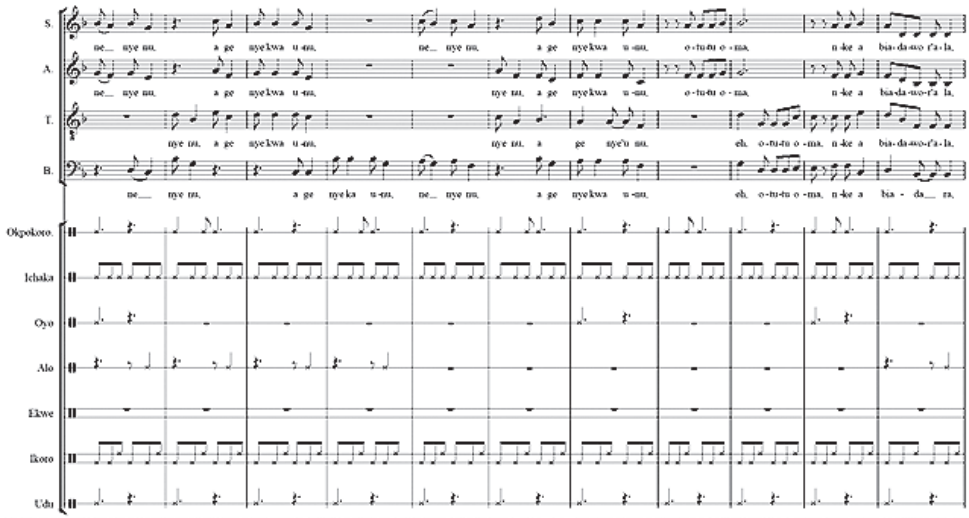


Transcription 3. Yoruba choral music showing the influence of speech tones and European tonal harmony. Transcription by Author.



Transcription 4. The tonal inflections of the lyrics of John Ezomo's composition. Transcription by Author.

On completion of the choral part, the composer provides the score to the choral director who then collaborates with the instrumentalists to produce an un-notated orchestral part that blends and completes the composer's score. The excerpt below in Transcription 5 is from my performance of Onwuka's *nenye-nu* in 2017. It illustrates a blend of Onwuka's choral score and my un-notated orchestration.



Transcription 5. The final artwork of Onwuka's *nenye-nu*. Transcription by Author.

The structures outlined above not only dominate Onwuka's and Ojukwu's compositions but continue to shape contemporary forms of Igbo choral art music and its practice by prominent composers and choral directors.

After the choir competition in 2013, I collaborated with Ikegwuonu to explore the principles, processes and strategies he employs in his orchestration. He emphasised that his vast experience in Igbo traditional music provided the creative resources for his orchestration. He also discussed the relationship between "playing music in the village and church choral music performance." Interactions with Ikegwuonu, and later, Ojukwu and Onwuka, revealed the significance of non-notated orchestration in Igbo choral art music. In the words of Ojukwu, "orchestration is the beauty of every Igbo choral art music composition, and without it, the composition sounds bare and incomplete" (Interview 6 December 2020). Ikegwuonu likens a performance of Igbo choral art music without orchestration to "a meal prepared without essential condiments" and argues that when an Igbo choral art music composition is performed without instruments, "it is always not rich enough. However, once the instruments begin to play along with the singing voices, the artistic beauty of the work comes out in full" (Interview 2 March 2021). Onwuka believes that the un-notated orchestration is "the binding force that holds every Igbo choral art music artwork together" and ensures that the full artistry of the composition is heard by the audience (Interview 12 January 2021).

Apart from the significance of the orchestral part, the above interlocutors acknowledge that the choral director must be knowledgeable in Igbo musical practices to correctly orchestrate Igbo choral art music works. Such knowledge is a prerequisite in the selection of the orchestral instruments, which play similar roles in both Igbo choral art music and Igbo traditional music (Ekwueme 2004; Lo-Bamijoko 1984). The

choral director is also required to adhere to the acoustic principles of Igbo traditional music, such as the relationship between the timeline and the pulse while selecting the motifs and sequences for the orchestral instruments. She or he has to ensure that the orchestral part blends perfectly with the choral part.

Musical hybridity and Igbo choral art music practices

Musical hybridity involves the creation of new music through the combination of different musical cultures and styles (Kim 2017; Rycroft 1959; Sadoh 2004; Slobin 2007). Hybridity not only provides an opportunity for music practitioners to explore creative material from different musical cultures and styles, it also enables the practitioners to engage with the socio-cultural and ideological developments within and outside their geographical locations (Allen 2003; Coplan 2001; Omojola 2001; Sanga 2010). Sanga observes two types of hybridity: intentional and natural (Sanga 2010, 145). Intentional hybridity involves a fusion or juxtaposition of two or more musical cultures, which are acknowledged and projected as an essential aspect of a musical genre by the practitioners of that genre; natural hybridity is a situation where the practitioners of a musical culture extract and blend aspects of other musical cultures to a point where it is impossible to identify the core elements of the combining cultures (Ibid.).

Hybridity can also occur in three directions; namely, temporal (involving different musical eras), spatial (involving different geographical locations), and genre-defined (involving different genres). It provides a platform for African musicians to carefully and strategically appropriate elements of Western and African cultures into a new musical brand that is neither hegemonic nor nativist (Ibid.). Furthermore, hybridity provides African music creators with an opportunity to assimilate external influences and adapt indigenous traditions to a constantly changing world (Allen 2003, 232–240; Coplan 2001).

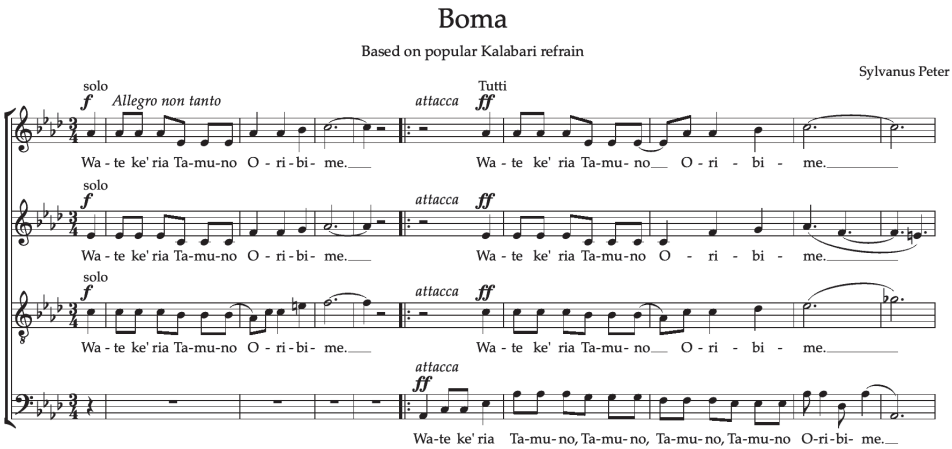
In Ghana, hybridity emerged in choral compositions owing to the inability of translated European hymns to reflect the integrity of Ghanaian languages. To address this challenge, a composer such as Ephraim Amu developed a strategy of combining Ghanaian traditional music practices such as tone-tune principle and parallelism (also present in other African cultures) with European chord progression and tonality (Agawu 1984; Dor 2005; Omojola 1995). Elsewhere on the continent, Olwage observes that black South African choral composers, such as John Knox Bokwe, employed hybridity to resist European colonialism. He explains that the combination of the above musical cultures is evidence that South African colonial black hymnody is a hybrid music that fuses cultures and, at the same time, refuses the domination of any of the cultures (2006, 17–32).

Bokwe's choral music embodies similar characteristics to Uzoigwe's compositions. Uzoigwe is from Nigeria. Sadoh notes that Uzoigwe's compositions embody three levels of hybridity: thematic, domicile, and performance. These levels of hybridity are evidenced in the composer's incorporation of indigenous music scales, dance-

oriented rhythms (from Igbo dances such as the *atilogwu, ese, mgba*[3] and *akwuechenyi*), polyrhythm, syncopations, and interlocking rhythms with European music practices (Sadoh 2004, 636–638). Much like Amu, Bokwe, and Uzoigwe's music, Igbo choral art music foregrounds hybridity in the creation and presentation of musical compositions with the choral part following the principles of staff and (or) tonic-solfa notation, and the orchestral part un-notated.

My experience with Igbo choral art music as a singer, choral director, and later, composer, has shown that the un-notated orchestration provides an opportunity for performers to contribute to its final production. As Ojukwu discloses, in its final state, Igbo choral art music is not a product of only the composer, the choral director, and the instrumentalists' ingenuity, but also a strong representation of the traditional musical practices found in Nigeria (Interview 9 December 2020). The un-notated orchestral structure is not due to the composers' inability to notate music; rather, it is a strategy that allows performers to contribute to the final artwork and to make each presentation a fresh "composition" (or re-composition) of an existing work (Nzewi, Anyahuru and Ohiaraumunna, 2009).

The presentation in Igbo choral art music changes with different choral directors, the context of performance, performers, and audience. A similar phenomenon is present in Yoruba, Hausa, Efik, and Kalabari choral compositions. In the following excerpt of a Kalabari composition, Sylvanus Peter notated only the choral part whereas the presentation is always completed with an orchestral part that is not notated.



Transcription 6. An excerpt from Kalabari choral work with only the choral part notated. Transcription by Author.

[3] Nzewi, Anyahuru, and Ohiaraumunna (2009) provide an elaborate discussion on *ese* and *mgba* music. The authors observe that the membrane drums in *ese* are tuned according to the tonal inflections of the Igbo language; the tuning changes depending on the context of the performance, and, sometimes, the song being performed.

From the above expositions, it is evident that the non-notated orchestration in Igbo choral art music and many choral compositions from Nigeria is a strategy that enables the performers to further enrich the compositions with Nigerian traditional music practices.

Functions of Igbo choral art music orchestral instruments

My engagement with Igbo choral art music has shown that an accurate orchestration is determined by the choral director's knowledge of Igbo traditional music and Igbo choral art music orchestration principles. However, the success of the compositions is determined by how well the choral and the orchestral parts blend. In an Igbo choral art music training session in 2017, Ikegwuonu first made a list of all the instruments necessary for the orchestration, all of which, except for the xylophone, were rhythmic instruments. He scrutinised the instruments by briefly playing each of them to determine their condition and how their sounds blended.

As the rehearsals progressed, Ikegwuonu instructed the performers to wave white handkerchiefs at specific points during the performance. Although handkerchiefs are not orchestral instruments, they have a role in an Igbo choral art music performance (I explain this phenomenon later in the article). Ikegwuonu's choice of orchestral instruments was not motivated by personal aesthetic preferences; deeper engagement revealed that he considered the rhythm-pattern, phrasing-referent, pulse-marking, tonal enrichment, melodic idiophones, and props, functions of Igbo choral art music instruments (Ekwueme 2004[4]; Lo-Bamijoko 1984).

Rhythm-pattern instruments are mostly struck idiophones such as the log drum (*ekwe, ikoro*), woodblock (*okpokolo*), gong (*ogene, ubom*), rattles, shakers (*oyo, ichaka*), and the large gong (*alo*). The instruments in this category may function either as phrasing-referent, pulse-marking, or bass instruments. Phrasing-referent instruments play the fundamental rhythmic structure or the timeline of the orchestral piece.[5] In Igbo (and many African) traditional music, a fixed musical motif acts as a reference or a guide to all the instrumentalists in an ensemble (Nketia 1974, 131). The motif controls the variations of the instrumentalists and maintains the rhythm of the music during the performance. Due to its significance in African ensembles, the timeline is assigned to a melodically neutral instrument such as woodblock and gong and is repeated without variation for the duration of the performance (Ekwueme 2004, 265; Nzewi, Anyahuru and Ohiaraumunna 2009, 193).

Pulse-marking instruments serve to articulate the pulse of the music that is being performed. The two prominent instruments in this sub-category are the large musical pot (*udu*) and the membrane drum (*igba*). Of the two instruments, the large musical

[4] Ekwueme categorises Igbo musical instruments as rhythm-pattern, phrasing-referent, pulse-marking, bass, and props (2004, 260–268).

[5] Both Nketia (1974) and Agawu (2006) acknowledge the presence of the basic rhythm pattern which serves as a guide to instrumentalists in many African ensembles. This basic pattern is always externalised either by hand clapping or the use of high-pitched idiophones.

pot is most conventionally used as a pulse-marking instrument in Igbo choral art music orchestration. Apart from the instruments already mentioned, the e*kwe* (small log drum) and *ikoro* (large log drum) are also conventional instruments in Igbo choral art music orchestration. While the *ekwe* has a higher pitch, the *ikoro* is larger in size and deeper in tone. The size of *ikoro* used in Igbo choral art music orchestration and Igbo traditional music allows for easy mobility. In contrast, there are very large log drums stationed at selected positions in Igbo communities, either for the dissemination of public information or for the worship of specific deities (Nzewi 1984, 324–331).

Other rhythmic instruments such as the *oyo*, *idu* and *ichaka* (rattles and shakers) function for variety, textural changes, and ornamentation. Bass instruments include some of the rhythmic instruments already discussed, such as *udu-aka* (small musical pot), *udu* (large musical pot), *ikoro* (large log drum) and *igba* or *bongo* (membrane drum). Although these instruments play the rhythms in the orchestra, they perform the additional function of providing resonance to the orchestra due to their deep tones (Ekwueme 2004, 267).

Melodic idiophones used in Igbo choral art music orchestras include the *ubo-aka* (*mbira)*, the xylophone (*ngedelegwu, ngelenge or ikwemgbo*) and the *ogenephone*.[6] The primary function of this category of instruments is to supply the tonal context of the choral work, which enables the singers to maintain the prescribed tonality during the performance. Occasionally, composers notate the lines played either by the xylophone, the *ogenephone,* or *ubo-aka*, as part of the choral score. However, when the lines for the above instruments are not notated, the choral director and the instrumentalists take the responsibility of structuring the melodic (and melo-rhythmic) motifs to be played by the instruments.

In Ekwueme's classification of Igbo musical instruments, the category of instruments for tonal enrichment is classified as aerophones. Although the above classification is correct, it only considers the mode of sound production of the instruments, the vibration of the air column, and not their orchestral function. The classification as instruments for tonal enrichment in this discussion recognises the complementary roles of the instruments in the Igbo choral art music orchestra. Instruments for enriching the tone include the *oja* (end-blown flute) and the *opi* (horn).[7] While the *oja* is employed at specific sections in performance to further elaborate the melody of the choral part, the *opi* (which produces only one tone) is primarily for tonal enrichment.[8] Props such as handkerchiefs, scarves, fly whisks made from the tails of horses, and leather fans

[6] *Ogenephone* consists of a series of gongs suspended on a metal or wooden stand and graduated according to the diatonic scale of a particular key.

[7] Lo-bamijoko (1987) provides an in-depth discussion on the classification of Igbo traditional instruments, their mode of sound production, and orchestral functions. In another publication, she notes that although variation is a critical aspect of Igbo traditional music, where the musical performance changes according to time, context, and audience, the foundational structure of the music remains intact (Lo-Bamijoko 1984, 3).

[8] A combination of more than one Igbo horn (*opi*) can produce melody using the hocket technique as heard in Sam Ojukwu's *Tonu Jah*, *Gozie Jehova* and other Igbo choral art music compositions.

can sometimes be employed for special effects. In the same way, expressions such as dancing, clapping, stomping, and ululation can be incorporated to further interpret and enrich a composition as in Igbo traditional music (Ekwueme 2004, 268).

The above categories of instruments have significant roles in orchestration but not all of them are necessary for every Igbo choral art music performance. Choral directors only select orchestral instruments that best serve the peculiarities of a composition within the categories discussed. They consider the context of the performance, the audience, and the principles of orchestration before selecting and applying the instruments.

Locating Igbo traditional music within the orchestration

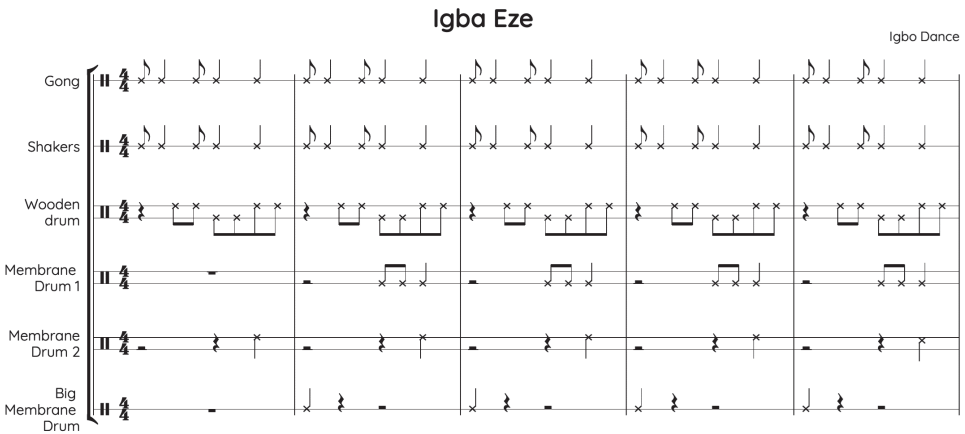
The following section explores the influence of Igbo traditional music in Igbo choral art music orchestration and how the orchestral structure contributes to its hybridity. The responses of the three interlocutors reveal that although the orchestration is not notated, it is guided by established principles to which the choral director must adhere. Such a structure is true of Igbo traditional music in general (Ekwueme 2004; Nketia 1974; Nzewi, Anyahuru, and Ohiaraumunna, 2009). The orchestration principles are not written down in texts, but following Ojukwu, Onwuka, and Ikegwuonu's explanations, the principles for orchestration can be summarised as basic representation, set motifs, acoustic sequence and harmony, aesthetics, and special effects.

The principle of basic representation

The basic representation rule in Igbo choral art music orchestration is that the phrasing-referent, pulse-marking, bass, and melodic idiophone instruments must be represented in the orchestra. Ikegwuonu did not directly comment on the rule of basic representation while explaining his strategies for selecting instruments; rather, he enumerated the basic instruments for his orchestra. The following eight instruments are fundamental to his orchestration: the *alo,* (large gong) *udu* (large musical pot)*, udu-aka* (small pot)*, ekwe* (small log-drum)*, okpokolo* (woodblock)*, ikoro* (large log drum)*, ichaka* (maracas)*, ngedelegwu* (xylophone) and metallophone or *ognenephone* (Interview 6 December 2020). In his selection of the fundamental instruments for his orchestration, Ikegwuonu underscores "basic representation" as a guiding principle.

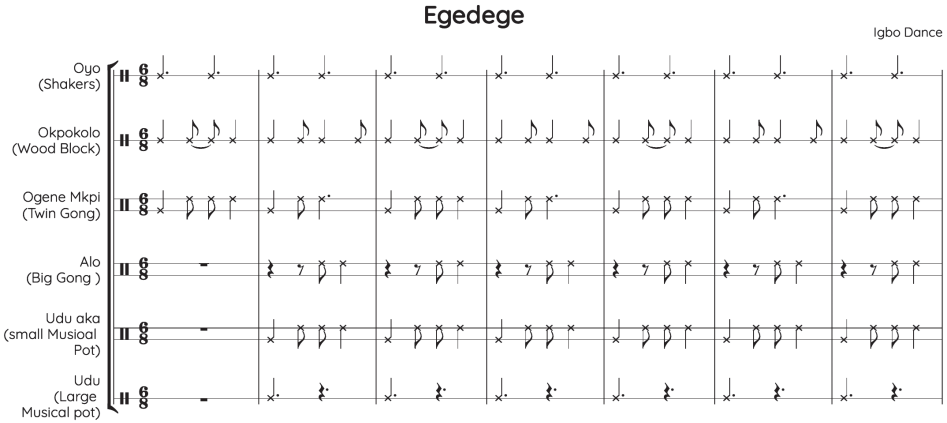
He further opines that the above instruments should be present in any choral director's orchestration, "if he or she intends to get the orchestration right." With this foundation, the choral director could incorporate other instruments to achieve as many special effects, variety, and textural changes as he or she desires. Ikegwuonu's selection ensures that the phrasing-referent (*okpokolo, ichaka*), pulse-marking (*udu*), bass *(ikoro, udu-aka*), and melodic idiophone (*ngedelegwu,* metallophone, *ogenephone*) instruments are represented in the orchestra. In response to a question about what inspires such choices, he said: "If you listened to traditional music often you would know that these instruments are in one way or the other the foundation of the music" (Interview 2 March 2021).

Ikegwuonu's explanation of the orchestral practices in Igbo choral art music recalled the *Igba-eze* royal ensemble I watched regularly as a teenager. The *Igba-eze* is predominantly made up of membrane drums and a few other rhythmic instruments such as the shakers, log drum, and gong, as shown in Transcription 5 below. Apart from the melodic idiophones, each of the above categories is represented in the ensemble where the largest drum is the pulse-making instrument, the shakers and the gong play the timeline and the other membrane and log drums serve as the bass instruments.



Transcription 7. An excerpt from *igba eze* royal music. Transcription by Author.

The principle of basic representation also ensures that the two essential aspects of Igbo traditional music, namely, the timeline and pulse, are represented in the orchestra (Nzewi, Anyahuru and Ohiaraumunna 2009, 67). In *egedege* music, in Transcription 6, the woodblock (*okpokolo*) and the twin gong (*ogene mkpi*) play the timeline while the large musical pot (*udu*) provides the pulse which guides the steps of the dancers.



Transcription 8. An excerpt from *egedege* showing the functions of Igbo instruments. Transcription by Author.

In this excerpt, the large musical pot, which has a deep tone, plays at the first beat of every bar; the deeper tone of the *udu-aka* (small musical pot) is also played on the first beat to emphasize the pulse of the music.

The principle of set motifs

Each of the three interlocutors provided strong evidence as to why the un-notated orchestration should not be misconstrued as unstructured improvisation. They postulate that it is a prerequisite for the choral director to carefully structure all the motifs and sequences of each of the orchestral instruments. She or he has to ensure that the instrumentalists play the set motifs accurately since they serve as a reference to other instrumentalists whom the choral director may permit to vary their motifs. Ikegwuonu cites an example of his orchestral practices:

> I do not accept anything short of the rhythms I have structured for my instrumentalists. However, I allow a little freedom to some instrumentalists who I believe are knowledgeable about their instruments to elaborate the rhythms I have structured for them. They are not allowed to play entirely different rhythms from the ones I have given. It takes a lot of time for the instrumentalists to get acquainted with the rhythms I have set. But with hard work, patience, and dedication, the orchestration emerges the way I want it (Interview 6 December 2020).

Onwuka explains that he "works out and teaches every instrumentalist" in his orchestra:

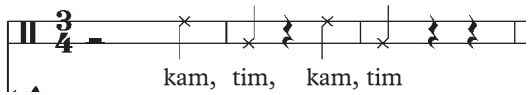
> The instrumentalists strictly adhere to the motifs I have taught them. However, there are two or three instrumentalists, such as the players of *ichaka* (maracas) and *ikoro* (log drum), who I allow the freedom to vary and elaborate the basic motifs I have provided for them. Otherwise, every instrumentalist adheres to the set rhythms during the performance; with no mistakes (Interview 12 January 2021).

The principle of acoustic sequence and harmony

Ikegwuonu points out that the rhythmic instruments in the orchestras are not selected at random but that the choral director considers the acoustic properties of each instrument and how the sounds of the instruments blend when played together in the orchestra. One of the challenges is to select instruments with good sound production quality and the ability to blend with other instruments in the orchestra. Since most Igbo rhythmic instruments are not tuned to definite pitches or the diatonic scale, "the choral director must carefully select instruments that, when played together, are concordant in sound and related to some notes of the diatonic scale of the choral work" (Interview 2 March 2020).

When the choral director has selected instruments that are concordant in sounds, he or she organises the rhythmic motifs according to the acoustics of the instruments. In the orchestration, there are instruments which complement each other and they must be played in a certain order within the rhythmic framework. The *alo* (large gong which has a lighter sound) must play before the *udu* (large musical pot, which has a heavy tone and marks the pulse) within every bar of the orchestration: "It is a rule that both instruments must be in dialogue – a call and answer pattern with the *alo* calling and the *udu* answering – they are always in conversation" (U. Onwuka, Interview

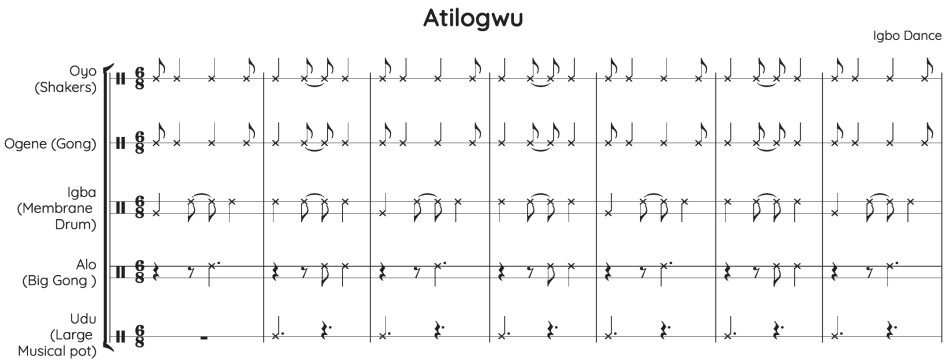
12 January 2021). Ikegwuonu offered a further explanation by singing the rhythmic example in Transcription 7.



Transcription 7: Translation of Ikegwuonu's illustration. Transcription by the Author.

The "*kam*" rhythm represents the *alo* (big gong) sound while the "*tim*" represents the *udu* (large musical pot) sound on the third and first beats of the bar respectively.

In Ikegwuonu's illustration, the light (*alo*) sound corresponds to the weak (third) beat of the bar while the heavy (*udu*) sound falls on the strong (first) beat of the bar. Such principles are also present in Igbo traditional music ensembles such as *ese, mgba,* and *atilogwu*, where, as shown in Transcription 8, a light sound must precede a heavy sound in a rhythmic phrase, bar, or sequence (Nzewi, Anyahuru and Ohiaraumunna 2009, 147–160).



Transcription 8: An excerpt from *atilogwu* dance showing the alternation of light and heavy sounds. Transcription by Author.

In the above transcription, the sound is heaviest on the first beat of each bar where the *udu* (large musical pot) plays. The *udu*, which is the most resonant instrument in the ensemble, does not play in the second and third beats of the bar, resulting in lighter sounds when compared to the first beat.

Aesthetics

The aesthetics in the orchestration focuses on the overall structure of the final artwork, namely how the instrumentalists engage with the singing voices and how the orchestration blends with the choral part. Ikegwuonu explains that although the principle of aesthetics is more individual than collective, it determines the points of entry and exit of some or all the instrumentalists during a performance. In their musical choices, the ingenuity of choral directors is further tested because "each choral director

regulates the intensity of the sounds and the articulation of the instrumentalists based on his or her preferences, musical taste and interpretation of the choral part" (Interview 2 March 2021).

Ikegwuonu maintains that although the choice of orchestration varies according to choral directors, it is a rule that the orchestration contributes extensively to the effectiveness of the climaxes set in the choral part. The choral director must consider the climatic points in the choral part, and express those points using strong and exciting rhythms that build the necessary tension towards a musical climax. As such, "instruments such as the *ekwe, ikoro* and *igba* have critical roles in achieving effective climaxes in Igbo choral art music orchestration. The choral director must ensure that the rhythms of these instruments are articulate and complex enough at every climatic point in the choral part" (Interview 2 March 2021). Onwuka articulates that although aesthetics vary according to individuals, it is stylistically wrong for instrumentalists to play throughout a performance: "There are always points in the choral part which must be sung *acappella* to allow the voices to give out their timbre." There are also points in the choral part where instrumental interludes are expected, to allow the instrumentalists to express their creativity and understanding of the music (Interview 12 January 2021).

Special effects

There are sections in a performance where the choral director may decide to employ certain instruments or props, either to express peculiar ideas in the choral part or to achieve a more colourful presentation of the composition. Instruments such as the *oja* (flute) and *opi* (horn), and props such as handkerchiefs, hand-held fans, and fly-whisks are employed for special effects. Apart from handkerchiefs and hand-held fans, dancing and clapping can also be employed. However, Ikegwuonu warns that such instruments or props "must align with the lyrics, context, and idea of the choral work, otherwise the beauty of the artwork is likely to be impaired." The use of props is also present in Igbo dances such as *nkpokiti, nkwa nwugo,* and *ejemmiri*, where hand-held fans, fly-whisks, and white handkerchiefs are employed for artistic effect.[9]

Conclusion

The interviews with three Igbo choral art music practitioners reveal that the non-notated orchestral structure is not beyond the composers' ability to create orchestra scores; it is a deliberate strategy through which composers utilise the musical resources in Igbo culture to continuously enrich Igbo choral art music. Such a strategy is also present in choral compositions from other parts of Nigeria such as Yoruba, Hausa, Efik, and Ibibio. The non-notated orchestral structure that exists does not imply that the orchestration is unorganised and randomly produced. Instead, all motifs and sequences are carefully structured, planned, and executed.

[9] Ekwueme (2004) presents an in-depth discussion on the use of props in Igbo traditional music ensembles. He observes that props such as fly-whisks and hand-held fans are mostly employed in Igbo music to symbolise aspects of Igbo culture or for artistic expression.

Considering the above, if the orchestral part of Igbo choral art music is structured and pre-planned, why do the composers not write such ideas using music notation? Ikegwuonu, Onwuka, and Ojukwu explained that the orchestral part continues in an un-notated format even in the twenty-first century because the un-notated orchestration provides an opportunity for the performers to constantly draw resources from Igbo traditional music, and to maintain the combination of two musical cultures which form the foundation of the genre. Such a structure enables performers to re-organise the extracted musical resources in new and different ways as required by the audience, time, and context of performance. Thus, the artworks are always a re-composition of the composers' existing choral scores made possible by the creativity of the choral director and the instrumentalists.

Furthermore, considering that hybridity is employed as a fundamental creative resource, the blend of the un-notated orchestral and the notated choral parts further reinforces the synthesis of European and African musical cultures already established in the choral part. While the chorus, although with melody influenced by tonal inflections of Igbo words, projects European musical structures through staff or tonic solfa notation, tonal harmony, and SATB voice arrangement, the orchestra foregrounds Igbo traditional music principles. The hybridity ensures that the two musical cultures merge into a single medium of expression in which none of the music cultures operates independently.

References

Achinivu, Kanu. 1979. *Ikoli Harcourt Whyte, The Man and his Music: A Case of Musical Acculturation in Nigeria*. Hamburg: Verlag der Musikalienhandlung Wagner.

Agawu, Kofi. 1984. "The Impact of Language on Musical Composition in Ghana: An Introduction to the Musical Style of Ephraim Amu." *Ethnomusicology* 28 (1): 37–73. https://doi.org/10.2307/851431.

Agu, Dan. 2012. "Acceptability of Contemporary Choral Music in Christian Worship: The Igbo Experiences." *Nsukka Journal of Musical Arts Research* 1: 29–36.

Agu, Dan. 1984. "The Vocal-Music Composer in a Nigerian Traditional Society and His Compositional Techniques." *Pacific Review of Ethnomusicology* 1: 13–28.

Agu, Dan. 1983. "Youth Songs: A Type of Igbo Choral Music in Igbo Christian Worship." *African Music* 6 (3): 13–22.

Allen, Lara. 2003. "Commerce, Politics, and Musical Hybridity: Vocalizing Urban Black South African Identity during the 1950s." *Ethnomusicology* 47 (2): 228–49. https://doi.org/10.2307/3113919.

Coplan, David. 2001. "Sounds of the 'Third Way': Identity and the African Renaissance in Contemporary South African Popular Traditional Music." *Black Music Research Journal* 21 (1): 107–24. https://doi.org/10.2307/3181595.

Dor, Godwin. 2005. "Uses of Indigenous Music Genres in Ghanaian Choral Art Music: Perspectives from the Works of Amu, Blege, and Dor." *Ethnomusicology* 49 (3): 441–75.

Ekwueme, Laz. 1973. "African Music in Christian Liturgy: The Igbo Experiment." *African Music* 5 (3): 12–33. https://doi.org/10.21504/amj.v5i3.1655.

Ekwueme, Laz. 1993. *Choir Training and Choral Conducting for Africans*. Lagos: Lenaus Advertising and Publishing Ltd.

Ekwueme, Laz. 2004. *Essays on the Theory of African Music*. Lagos: Lenaus Advertising and Publishing.

Euba, Akin. 2001. "Text Setting in African Composition." *Research in African Literatures* 32 (2): 119–32. https://doi.org/10.2979/RAL.2001.32.2.119.

Kim, Joan. 2017. "Cross-Cultural Music Making: Concepts, Conditions and Perspectives." *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 48 (1): 19–32.

Kiwan, Nadia. 2014. "Multiplicité marocaine : la performance du transnationalisme et du nationalisme alternatif dans la scène contemporaine des musiques urbaines [Moroccan Multiplicities: Performing Transnationalism and Alternative Nationalism in the Contemporary Urban Music Scene]." *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 54 (216): 975–97. https://doi.org/10.4000/etudesafricaines.17905.

Lo-Bamijoko, Joy. 1987. "Classification of Igbo Musical Instruments, Nigeria." *African Music* 6 (4): 19–41. https://doi.org/10.21504/amj.v6i4.1259.

Lo-Bamijoko, Joy. 1984. "Performance Practice in Nigerian Music." *Black Perspective in Music* 12 (1): 3–20. https://doi.org/10.2307/1214966.

Locke, David. 1980. "Improvisation in West African Music." *Music Educators Journal* 66 (5): 125–33. https://doi.org/10.2307/3395790.

Nketia, Kwabena. 1974. *The Music of Africa*. London: Mgbo Publications.

Nwamara, A. 2008. "African Orchestration – Towards Developing Basic Indigenous Accompaniment Patterns for Contemporary Igbo Art Songs." *Awka Journal of Research in Music and Arts* 5: 225–33.

Nzewi, Mekki. 1997. *African Music: Theoretical Content and Creative Continuum, The Culture – Exponent's Definitions.* Oldershausen: Institut fur DidaktikpopularerMusik.

Nzewi, Mekki. 1974. "Melo-rhythm Essence and Hot Rhythm in Nigerian Folk Music." *Black Perspective in Music* 2 (1): 23–28. https://doi.org/10.2307/1214145.

Nzewi, Mekki. 1984. "Traditional Strategies for Mass Communication: The Centrality of Igbo Music". In *Selected Reports in Ethnomusicology, Volume 5: Studies in African Music,* edited by Julius H K Nketia and Jacqueline C Djedje, 319–338. Los Angeles: University of California.

Nzewi, Mekki, Israel Anyahuru, and Tom Ohiaraumunna. 2009. *Musical Sense and Meaning – An Indigenous African Perception*. Pretoria: UNISA Press.

Obijiaku, Chidi. 2019. "Comprovisation in Igbo Choral Art Music: An Introduction." *Journal of the Musical Arts in Africa* 16 (1-2): 127–42. https://doi.org/10.2989/18121004.2019.1700619.

Okigbo, Austin. 2010. "Musical Inculturation, Theological Transformation, and the Construction of Black Nationalism in Early South African Choral Music Tradition." *Africa Today* 57 (2): 42–65. https://doi.org/10.2979/africatoday.57.2.42.

Okonkwo, Vera, and Victor Agu. 2019. *A Concise Music Book for Nigerian Church and School Choirs.* Onitsha: Jenison Publishing Company.

Olwage, Grant. 2006. "John Knox Bokwe, Colonial Composer: Tales about Race and Music." *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 131 (1): 1–37. https://doi.org/10.1093/jrma/fki010.

Omojola, Bode. 1995. *Nigerian Art Music.* Ibadan: Institut Francais de Recherche enAfrique. https://doi.org/10.4000/books.ifra.598.

Omojola, Bode. 2001. "African Pianism as an Intercultural Compositional Framework: A Study of the Piano Works of Akin Euba." *Research in African Literatures* 32 (2): 153–74. https://doi.org/10.2979/RAL.2001.32.2.153.

Omojola, Bode, and Fela Sowande. 1998. "Style in Modern Nigerian Art Music: The Pioneering Works of Fela Sowande." *Africa* 68 (4): 455–83. https://doi.org/10.2307/1161162.

Onyeji, Christian. 2015. "Composing Art Music Based on African Indigenous Musical Paradigms." Inaugural lecture. Nsukka: University of Nigeria. https://www.unn.edu.ng/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/102nd-Inaugural-Lecture-Professor-Christian-Uzoma-Onyeji.pdf.

Rycroft, David. 1959. "African Music in Johannesburg: African and Non-African Features." *Journal of the International Folk Music Council* 11: 25–30. https://doi.org/10.2307/834851.

Sadoh, Godwin. 2004. "Intercultural Creativity in Joshua Uzoigwe's Music." *Africa* 74 (4): 633–61. https://doi.org/10.3366/afr.2004.74.4.633.

Sadoh, Godwin. 2010. "African Musicology: A Bibliographical Guide to Nigerian Art Music (1927-2009)." *Notes* 66 (3): 485–502. https://doi.org/10.1353/not.0.0299.

Sanga, Imani. 2010. "'The Practice and Politics of Hybrid Soundscapes in 'Muziki wa Injili' in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania." *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 22 (2): 145–56. https://doi.org/10.1080/13696815.2010.491329.

Interviews by Author

Ikegwuonu, Ifeanyi. Onitsha, Nigeria, 2 March 2021.

Ojukwu, Sam. Owerri, Nigeria, 6 December 2020.

Onwuka, Ugochukwu. Awka, Nigeria, 12 January 2021.