

"PRESERVING THE YORUBA APALA MUSIC GENRE THROUGH CHORAL PLATFORMS ON THE INTERNET"

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Abstract

Apala music holds a special place in the cultural practices of the Yoruba people of Nigeria. Rooted in history and tradition, *Apala* music is timeless, with unique rhythms, music and lyrical stories. As the world goes digital, the question of how to preserve this precious heritage in cyberspace arises. Preserving the Yoruba *Apala* music genre in cyberspace is confronted with substantial challenges due to the lack of extensive digital recordings, limited online access, and the risk of misrepresentation due to the potential loss of heritage and history. This study prescribes the strategies to effectively maintain, protect, reproduce and sustain *Apala* music culture in cyberspace. This article highlights the concept of the *Apala* music genre of the Yoruba, describes the musical performance and the potential of choral platforms for preserving *Apala* music, discusses the challenges of preserving *Apala* music, and discusses strategies to protect this genre. The methodology for this study is qualitative, and data were elicited through observation, oral interviews, biography and other bibliographical evidence. The conceptual framework for this study is based on the concept of cultural hybridity and globalisation. The paper argues that choral platforms offer a promising way to preserve *Apala* music in the digital economy. However, the paper also acknowledges some challenges associated with using choral platforms. These challenges include developing new digital tools for preserving *Apala* music, training choral conductors to use choral platforms, and raising awareness of *Apala* music among younger generations. The paper concludes by proposing some ways choral platforms can be used to preserve *Apala* music. The study recommends, among others, a collaborative effort between choral conductors, musicians, and scholars.

Keywords: Preservation, *Apala*, Choral Platform, Cyberspace.

Introduction

Apala music emerged in the 1930s within Yoruba Muslim communities in Nigeria (Rahman, 2010). Characterised by its use of Islamic praise poetry (*qasida*) set to melodious chanting, drumming patterns, and occasional melodic instruments like the hourglass drum (*gangan*) and the oboe-like make, *Apala* serves as a vehicle for religious expression, storytelling, and social commentary (Babalola, 1986). *Apala* performances typically feature a lead vocalist (*qasida* reader) backed by a chorus of singers and instrumentalists (Euba, 1990). Thematic elements in *Apala* encompass Islamic topics, including praises for Prophet Muhammad, tributes to Sufi saints, and reflections on religious teachings and morality (Peek, 2008). *Apala* music plays a significant role in Islamic rituals and celebrations, particularly during Ramadan and the Islamic New Year (Sallah). *Apala* music is a traditional musical genre of the Yoruba community in Nigeria. It is a unique musical genre of the Yoruba that expresses the cultural concepts of her society (Aromire, 1991). *Apala* music is a unique blend of communication, speech, and thought, and it is used for various purposes, including entertainment, storytelling, and propaganda. Often accompanied by instruments such as the talking drum, tambourine and *Agidigbo*, *Apala* music conveys the cultural history and values of the Yoruba people. Oludare (2018) asserts that *Àpàlà*, an Islam-influenced genre uniquely performed by the Yoruba people in Southwest Nigeria, is a significant part of their indigenous musical heritage. It is passed down through generations, continually performed, reinterpreted, and promoted by musicians, helping to preserve the Yoruba people's cultural history and identity. This is true for other traditional Yoruba music as well, which, like the music of other African ethnic groups, plays a vital role in shaping and reinforcing identity while also fostering social and spiritual connections among the people.

Agawu (2016: 27) emphasises that music is an intrinsic and defining element of nearly all human societies, reflecting its universal role in human culture. In the context of African music, this is particularly significant, as the music is primarily traditional and deeply rooted in the cultural practices of various African communities. The performance of African music is not just an art form in the conventional sense but also a creative process that extends beyond the musical realm. It involves extra-musical elements such as dance, ritual, and storytelling, which are integral to the experience. These elements combine to form a holistic practice transcending mere sound, encapsulating the community's values, beliefs, and histories. As Agawu suggests, African music is a multifaceted art form where music, culture, and performance converge, making it a form of artistic expression and a tool for social cohesion, communication, and identity preservation. This dual aspect of African music—musical and extra-musical—underscores its deep connection to the community's life, where each performance becomes a living expression of individual creativity and collective heritage.

According to Ossaiga (2015:61), music is a rich tapestry of cultural expression that intertwines sound, movement, and visual elements to create a holistic sensory experience. This "trilogy" of sonic, dramatic, and kinetic components ensures that music is an auditory delight and a medium of communal participation and enjoyment. Music transcends mere sound by engaging the audience and performers, becoming a dynamic art form that unites people through shared emotions and cultural narratives. This perspective highlights music's role as a multifaceted expression of identity and connection, allowing individuals to connect across time and space through rhythmic movement, vocal harmony, and the visual aesthetics of performance. Whether through traditional or contemporary forms, music fosters an interactive environment where performers and listeners contribute to the collective creation of meaning. In this way, it becomes a cultural force, strengthening community ties, preserving heritage, and facilitating emotional expression. Even though the composition is simple but well performed and interpreted correctly, the audience reacts on the spur of the moment immediately and spontaneously to Music they consider good to them. Such is the experience that evolved while listening to the performing of *the Apala* musical genre of the Yoruba. Despite the current trend in Nigeria by modern-day *Àpàlà* musicians to modify the genre with Western musical instruments, Ayinla Omo Alayan maintains the indigenous *Àpàlà* instruments in his Music, such as *Àgídígbo*, *Ìyáílù*, *Omele*, *Àkúbà*, *Şèkèrè*, and the Lead and Chorus voices. The instrumentation conforms to those found in Abibu Oluwa, Haruna Ishola, and Ayinla Omowura's Music.

The Melo-rhythmic instruments (*Ìyá Ilu*) serve as melodic accompaniment while also interjecting with good surrogates of folksongs and ethical anecdotes at interludes. The other rhythmic instruments play simple ostinatos and hocket patterns. Oluwaseyi (2012), quoting Nketia, noted:

The musical heritage of contemporary Africa is the music associated with traditional African institutions of the pre-colonial era. It is Music that has survived the impact of the forces of Western forms of acculturation and is, therefore, quite distinct in idiom and orientation from contemporary popular and art music (p. 56).

In quoting Nketia (2012), the researcher underscores the resilience of traditional African music in the face of Western acculturation. The view suggests that the musical heritage of contemporary Africa is deeply rooted in the music of pre-colonial African institutions, which have managed to preserve their distinctive idioms and cultural significance despite the influence of colonial and Western musical forms. This form of music is seen as a cultural anchor, remaining distinct from contemporary popular and Western art music. The researcher emphasises that this preservation of traditional African music is not merely a passive survival but an active resistance to external cultural forces, highlighting the continued relevance of indigenous music in the modern African context. This view reflects a broader understanding of how traditional African music continues to evolve while maintaining its unique identity in the face of globalisation and cultural exchange.

Nketia (2004) further posits that the aesthetics of the Yoruba indigenous choral styles are multifarious, multilateral and cosmological. Firstly, the aesthetic principles are not primarily based on beauty or "music for art's sake" but on functionality and "music for life's sake". Adedeji (2006) further buttresses that the choral groups must be organised according to musical values. Instead, their organisation is based on activities and functions, which are considered primary. Some of these functions, which permeate the entire life of the Yoruba, include religion, social activities, politics, protests and rites of passage. This does not mean that the Yoruba have no concept of artistic beauty. For instance, when they say *orin naa dun*, it means the song is "sweet" or beautiful; when they say *orin naa ko dun*, it means the opposite. *Mo gbadun orin naa* means "I enjoyed the music", indicating emotive responses. However, preserving the Music and cultural values of the *Apala* music faces challenges today. The possibilities of utilising the online choir platform to support and maintain *Apala* music—the preservation of traditional Yoruba drumming—in the Yoruba community and beyond are examined in this article.

The influence of media technology on the development of traditional Yoruba drumming has been discussed in previous studies (Adedokun, 2023, Oral Interview). Social media platforms, one of the transmission agents in the global village, can help stimulate local drumming and make it accessible globally. Using choral platforms in cyberspace, *Apala* music can be preserved and shared outside traditional venues, thereby gaining its importance and appreciation. *Apala* is a traditional Yoruba music genre that originated in Nigeria during the colonial era. It is characterised by its slow tempo, heavy use of percussion, and socially conscious lyrics. *Apala* music has declined in popularity in recent years due to the rise of other genres, such as hip-hop and Afrobeat. One way to preserve *Apala* music is to use choral platforms in cyberspace. Choral platforms allow people to sing together online, regardless of their location. This can create a sense of community around *Apala* music and encourage new musicians to learn and perform it. However, there are challenges to using choral platforms to preserve *Apala* music. One challenge is that *Apala* music is often performed in a call-and-response style, which can be difficult to replicate online. Another challenge is that *Apala* music is often accompanied by traditional

Yoruba instruments, which may only be available to some who want to sing it online. Despite these challenges, choral platforms can be valuable for preserving *Apala* music. By providing a way for people to connect and learn about the genre, choral platforms can help to keep *Apala* music alive in the digital age.

Concept of *Apala* Music of the Yoruba

Nigerian popular or *apala* Music started in Lagos in the 1950s. It is distinguished by using a talking drum and lyrics that frequently deal with satire and social criticism. *Apala* music has been vital to the development of Nigerian Music and is integral to Nigerian culture. However, the genre faces many challenges, including the decline of traditional *Apala* music performances, the need for more interest in *Apala* music among younger generations, and the challenges of using digital technology to preserve *Apala* music. In an interview, Olabisi (2023) submitted that a small group of musicians typically perform *Apala* music, often in informal settings. The talking drum is the most essential instrument in *Apala* music, and it is used to set the rhythm and provide the melody. The banjo and the guitar are also used to add harmony and texture. The lyrics of *Apala* songs often deal with social commentary and satire. *Apala* musicians often use their Music to criticise social ills, such as corruption and injustice. They also use their Music to celebrate the lives of ordinary people. *Apala* music is a vibrant and dynamic genre that has played an essential role in the advancements of Nigerian Music. The genre faces several challenges but is also being adapted to new forms and styles. This suggests that *Apala* music will remain essential to Nigerian culture for many years. *Apala* music is an integral part of Nigerian culture and has played a critical positive role in developing Nigerian Music. *Apala* music can help us understand the history and culture of Nigeria, and it can also help us appreciate the diversity of Nigerian society. As a vibrant and dynamic genre, *Apala* music has been adapting to new forms and styles for many years and continues to evolve. This suggests that Music is a living tradition relevant to people's lives today. *Apala* music is a source of enjoyment and entertainment. Ogunleye (2023), in an interview, also reports:

Apala music is a fun and exciting genre that people of all ages can enjoy. It can be a great way to de-stress and relax, and it can also be a great way to celebrate special occasions. Apala music is a source of identity and pride. Apala music is an integral part of the identity of many Nigerians, and it can be a source of pride for the country. It can help unite people from different backgrounds, and it can also help promote Nigerian culture to the world. Apala music is integral to Nigerian culture and worth preserving for many reasons. (Ogunleye, 2023, Oral Interview).

The report of Ogunleye (2023) corroborates Olabisi's view, highlighting the cultural and social significance of *Apala* music, emphasising its role as both a source of entertainment and a unifying force in Nigeria. Described as a fun and relaxing genre suitable for all ages, *Apala* music offers a means to de-stress and celebrate special occasions while fostering a sense of identity and pride. Ogunleye underscores its importance in representing Nigerian culture, uniting diverse communities, and promoting the nation's heritage globally. Consequently, preserving *Apala* music is essential to maintaining and celebrating Nigeria's rich cultural legacy. It is, therefore, imperative to ensure that this unique and vibrant genre (*Apala* music) continues to be enjoyed by people for many years through digital preservation.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this research is grounded in the interplay between cultural hybridity and globalisation, two pivotal concepts that elucidate the dynamic cultural transformations occurring in the contemporary world. As Kraidy (2006) articulated, cultural hybridity emerges as a conceptual inevitability in the face of global cultural exchanges. Kraidy's theory of inter-contextual hybridity integrates the dynamics of hybridity with hegemonic influences, proposing a robust theoretical basis for understanding critical cultural transnationalism. This theory underscores the intricate power relations that shape cultural synthesis, highlighting how dominant global cultures and local traditions interact, resist, and merge to create innovative cultural expressions.

Hybridity transcends the blending of cultural elements, representing a process where disparate cultural practices and forms combine to produce entirely new cultural constructs. This framework offers a lens through which to examine how traditional and modern elements interact within specific cultural contexts, often under the influence of globalisation. Globalisation accelerates cultural flows, fostering interactions that reshape traditional practices and infuse them with contemporary, global influences.

In the context of *Apala* music, cultural hybridity manifests as a fusion of traditional *Apala* techniques, deeply rooted in Yoruba cultural heritage, with the innovative possibilities afforded by modern digital technologies. *Apala*, traditionally characterised by its use of talking drums, *sekere*, and indigenous rhythms, has historically served as a medium of cultural storytelling, spiritual expression, and communal identity. However, the genre is undergoing significant transformation in the era of globalisation and digital innovation.

Digital techniques, including electronic beats, digital sound processing, and global distribution platforms, reshape Apala music's form and reach. This process modernises its sound and extends its appeal to a broader, more diverse audience. By blending traditional Apala's rhythmic patterns, tonalities, and themes with contemporary production methods and international musical influences, artists create a hybrid cultural product that resonates with local and global audiences. Thus, this research situates Apala music as a case study within the broader framework of cultural hybridity, demonstrating how local traditions evolve and sustain themselves in the face of globalisation. By exploring this fusion, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how cultural heritage can adapt and thrive in a rapidly changing global cultural landscape.

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative research approach to examine how the Apala music genre of the Yoruba people is preserved through choral platforms in cyberspace. The researcher employed interviews and observations to collect data. Key informants, including musicians, digital music producers, and cultural historians, were interviewed about the integration of digital technology in preserving Apala music. These interviews focused on the methods and tools used to adapt the music for digital platforms, the challenges faced, and the potential benefits of cyberspace in sustaining the genre.

The researcher also observed live and recorded Apala performances, both traditional and digital, to understand how the music's structural and stylistic elements are preserved or altered in cyberspace. These observations highlighted the role of choral arrangements in broadening the genre's appeal. The collected data was analysed thematically, identifying trends, challenges, and opportunities for preserving Apala music. The analysis also explored how digital platforms can bridge traditional and contemporary music practices and serve as a cultural archive to promote the global recognition of Yoruba music.

The Musical performance of Apala music in Yoruba Land

The performance of Apala music in Yoruba serves primarily as entertainment while also reflecting the cultural activities and values of the people. It is an indigenous genre of music that plays a crucial role in religious worship and various social events, symbolising the Yoruba people's cultural identity and way of life. It helps to instil moral values and preserve historical narratives (Waterman, 1990). The Yoruba music tradition includes genres such as Àgídígbo, Àwùrèbe, Wéré, Àdàmò, Ìjálá, Orin arò, Gúmbe, and Kókómà. Over time, these genres evolved into neo-traditional forms, influenced by Arabic and European cultures (Vidal, 2012). New forms of music, including Àpàlà, Sákàrà, Wákà, Fújì, Jùjú, and Highlife, emerged, maintaining and passing down the core musical and performance practices from one generation to the next (Omojola, 2012).

Apala music, alongside Sákàrà, Wákà, and Fújì, is a genre influenced by Islam, making it a neo-traditional style within the Yoruba community of Southwest Nigeria (Omibiyi, 1979). Omolaye (2014:38) categorised Christian-influenced music as Juju and Highlife, while Islamic influences shaped genres such as Àpàlà, Sákàrà, Wákà, Bàalùù, Sélí, Dàadà kuàdà, Àdàmò, and Fújì. Originally, Apala was a traditional, Islam-influenced genre that has since evolved into a more modernised and commercial form to celebrate various occasions such as naming ceremonies, weddings, birthdays, and funerals.

Many scholars have extensively studied Apala music and its influential musicians. Key scholars such as 1 Mustapha (1975), Waterman (1990), Ajirire and Alabi (1992), Olusoji (2008), Ajetunmobi et al. (2009), Omojola (2012), Lasisi (2012), Vidal (2012), and Ajetunmobi and Adepoju (2013) have delved into the genre's origins and the figures who shaped its development. Prominent musicians associated with Apala include Muraina, Alao, Ayan, Ligali Mukaiba, Ajadi Ilorin, Adisa Aniyameta, Raimi Dogo, Lasisi Layemi, Aminu Olaribigbe, Lasisi Onipede, Kasunmu Adio, Raji Owonikoko, Haruna Ishola, and Ayinla Omowura. Notably, Haruna Ishola and Ayinla Omowura are recognised as the iconic figures of Apala music. However, the name Ayinla Omo Alayan is rarely mentioned in the literature, possibly due to his lack of commercial album releases, which limited his market exposure and media presence. Despite this, Ayinla is highly regarded within the indigenous Yoruba community, revered like Ishola and Omowura for his genuine Apala music.

The typical structure used in most indigenous Yoruba music, including Apala, is the call-and-response form. In this structure, the lead voice initiates a song, and the accompanying voices respond, similar to the Western "solo and tutti" format, with the music performed in either a strophic or through-composed form.

Omolaye (2014:48) highlighted the distinct musical instruments used in Apala performances, which set it apart from other Islamized music genres. The instruments include the dùndún ensemble, composed of the Iya-ilu (mother drum), gangan, kerikeri, Omeleako (male drum), Omele abo (female drum), and akúbà. The gúdúgúdú drum is typically excluded from the ensemble in Apala music, making it unique. The dùndún ensemble, featuring drums with parchment heads, dominates Apala performances.



Plate 1. Diagram of musical instrument engaged in the accompaniments of *Apala* Music Performance

The instrumentation and performance techniques of *Àpàlà* music are distinctive, with vocal forms that include solo, call-and-response, and chorused refrain patterns. In a typical *Àpàlà* performance, the hierarchy of musical instruments is as follows:

- i) *Gángan*: Lead talking drum, a double membrane drum
- ii) *Àdàmò*: Backup talking drum, also a double membrane drum
- iii) *OmeleAko*: Double membrane drum
- iv) *OmeleAbo*: Double membrane drum
- v) *Àgbámólè*: Single membrane drum
- vi) *Àkúbà*
- vii) *Àgídígbo*: Slit drum or thumb piano
- viii) *Sèkèrè*: Gourd rattle (calabash played with the ring finger)
- ix) Five backup singers

Omolaye (2014) noted that contemporary *Àpàlà* musicians, such as Musiliu Ishola and Olabode Davies, have moved away from traditional styles, incorporating Western choral and harmonic influences instead. In contrast, Ayinla Omo Alayan has stayed true to the original call-and-response structure in his music, preserving the authenticity of *Àpàlà*. While the inclusion of Western melodic and harmonic elements, along with the use of English, has diluted the originality in Ishola and Davies' music, Alayan's work maintains the traditional core of the genre.

A closer examination of Ayinla Omo Alayan's lyrics reveals his commitment to preserving the tonal nuances of the Yoruba language. In Yoruba music, the speech melody follows three phonemic tones—Low (L), Mid (M), and High (H)—which are essential for conveying the correct meaning of words. Ayinla's adherence to these tonal patterns ensures that the meaning of his lyrics remains accurate and that the Yoruba language is both understandable and preserved in his music.

Preservative Methods of *Apala* Music

Oral Tradition: *Apala* music has traditionally been transmitted through oral tradition, where songs, lyrics, and performance techniques are memorised and shared from one generation to the next. This method ensures that the essence and authenticity of the music are preserved, maintaining its connection to its cultural roots. Oral transmission fosters personal interaction and mentorship between older and younger generations, enriching the learning process with contextual and historical nuances that cannot be fully captured through written records.

Live Performances: Live performances are crucial in preserving and promoting *Apala* music. Concerts, cultural events, and festivals offer a platform for musicians to showcase the genre's vibrancy in its authentic form. These events create an immersive experience where audiences can engage with the music's rhythm, instruments, and storytelling elements. Additionally, live performances inspire aspiring musicians, allowing them to observe, learn, and eventually contribute to the continuation of *Apala* music traditions.

Recordings: The recording and release of *Apala* music in formats like albums, singles, and compilations have made the genre more accessible to a broader audience. These recordings allow people to enjoy *Apala* music in their time and space and serve as a critical archival resource. Collecting lyrics, documenting sheet music, and analysing the musical techniques in recorded pieces contribute to preserving the genre for academic study and future generations. Recordings ensure that the original compositions remain available for reference and enjoyment even as oral traditions evolve.

Education: Introducing *Apala* music into educational curricula at schools, colleges, and cultural institutions helps broaden understanding and appreciation of the genre. Structured programs can explore *Apala*'s historical, cultural, and technical aspects, offering a deeper insight into its significance within Nigerian heritage. Workshops and lectures can engage students in interactive learning, teaching them to play traditional instruments, interpret lyrics,

and understand the genre's distinctive rhythms and themes. Integrating Apala music into formal education, its legacy is preserved and revitalised, fostering a new generation of enthusiasts and practitioners.

Digital platforms: Digital platforms like YouTube and SoundCloud provide innovative avenues for sharing and preserving Apala music, making it accessible to a global audience. These platforms enable the creation of engaging content, such as online Apala music festivals, competitions, and interactive learning tools. To substantiate this approach, online resources could include tutorials on Apala's history, lyrics, and distinctive musical styles, fostering cultural appreciation and education. Additionally, digital platforms can support the creation of simplified choral arrangements of Apala songs to encourage community participation. Furthermore, virtual access to traditional Yoruba instruments, such as the talking drum and agogo, can bridge geographical gaps, allowing enthusiasts worldwide to learn and appreciate the unique sounds of Apala. By integrating these strategies, digital platforms can serve as powerful tools for sustaining and evolving the legacy of Apala music in the digital age.

Opportunities in Cyberspace

The *Apala* musical genre holds a special place within the rich cultural tapestry of the Yoruba people of Nigeria (Aromire, 1991). Rooted in history and tradition, *Apala* music has endured the test of time with its distinct rhythms, melodies, and lyrical storytelling. As the world becomes increasingly digital, How can this treasured cultural heritage be preserved in cyberspace? In this article, we delve into the significance of the *Apala* musical genre, explore the challenges and opportunities of preserving it online, and discuss strategies for its continued conservation. The digital age presents challenges but also unprecedented opportunities to preserve *Apala* music. The Internet provides a global platform to showcase and share this cultural gem (Olaniyan, 2004). The online platform allows enthusiasts and researchers to collaborate, share resources, and discuss *Apala* music's history, meaning, and technology. Videos, audio recordings and written documents can be easily stored and accessed by people worldwide. Privacy Policy. Digital Archive and Repository: Establish an online archive of biographies, photos, interviews, and written material related to *Apala* music. Become a volunteer and help researchers, musicians, and enthusiasts.

Educational Initiatives and Development of New Digital Tools for Preserving of A.M

There is a need for the development of new digital tools to preserve *Apala* music. These tools should be easy to use, affordable, and designed to preserve traditional techniques. This can be achieved through *Apala* Music's online courses, workshops, and educational developments that teach people the skills to play and enjoy this musical genre. Engaging social media platforms like YouTube, Instagram and TikTok to share short videos, performances and information can also engage younger audiences and increase interest in *Apala* music (Adedokun, 2023, Oral Interview).

Collaboration

A collaborative effort between *Apala* artists, choral conductors, and scholars can now help bridge generational gaps and bring the genre together. Contents Preserving the Yoruba *Apala* music genre in cyberspace is a collective effort that requires the integration of digital initiatives, education, and the sharing of *Apala* music, its rich history, and valuable assets that must be preserved for future generations. By leveraging the power of the Internet, we can ensure that this ancient art continues to evolve in today's music world. Musicians can experiment with new musical styles and create new *Apala* music compositions. Scholars can research the history and techniques of *Apala* music and create educational resources about this genre. The preservation of *Apala* music requires a collaborative effort, thus serving as a platform to promote *Apala* music and to encourage people to listen to and support this genre.

Recruiting and Retaining Male Singers

Recruiting and retaining male singers is a long-standing challenge in choral music, primarily due to a noticeable gender imbalance. Elpus (2014) identifies this as a pervasive issue in music education, where women dominate participation and teaching roles. This gender disparity is not limited to any specific genre but reflects a broader trend in the field, raising important questions about the barriers preventing male engagement. A lack of male participation in choral music may stem from social perceptions, limited role models, and a curriculum that often fails to resonate with male interests and experiences. Addressing this issue requires innovative strategies to make choral music more appealing to men. Targeted recruitment campaigns emphasising the unique value of male voices in choral ensembles can help break down stereotypes. Mentorship programs led by experienced male singers can provide role models and foster a supportive environment for aspiring male participants. Additionally, incorporating a diverse repertoire that aligns with the interests of male singers can enhance engagement, offering musical experiences that resonate on a personal level.

Traditional music, such as Apala, can also play a role in addressing this challenge. Apala music, deeply rooted in Yoruba cosmology, provides a cultural and historical connection that can attract a broader audience, including

men. As Alayande (2021) highlights, traditional music is a repository of cultural values, offering insights into identity and heritage. Integrating Apala into choral programs preserves this rich tradition and creates an avenue for engaging male singers who might be drawn to its authenticity and cultural significance. Moreover, modern digital platforms, such as the Cyber Choir, present an innovative solution to address gender disparities and broader challenges in choral education. Freer (2006) criticises traditional choral teaching methods for overlooking the unique experiences of boys, leading to low participation rates. Cyber platforms can bridge this gap by amplifying youth voices and creating interactive and inclusive spaces integrating diverse perspectives. These platforms allow male singers, especially younger ones, to share their stories, connect with peers, and access various musical resources engagingly. By leveraging these strategies—targeted recruitment, mentorship, culturally rich traditional music, and innovative digital platforms—choral music education can evolve into a more inclusive and dynamic space. These efforts not only address the gender imbalance but also ensure the preservation of cultural heritage while meeting the diverse needs of participants. This holistic approach fosters a vibrant and sustainable future for choral music, where male singers feel valued and inspired to contribute.

The Challenges of Preserving *Apala* Music

Preserving Apala music in the digital age comes with its own set of challenges. Oral traditions have been a primary medium for transmitting this musical heritage. As the older generation of musicians and storytellers pass away, there is a risk of losing authentic renditions and intricate nuances that define *Apala* music. Despite its lengthy history and cultural relevance, *Apala* music still confronts challenges in the twenty-first century. The transmission of *Apala* to newer generations is challenged by the impact of Western pop culture and the predominance of secular media (Abdulraheem, 2017). The traditional methods of learning *Apala*, often through oral transmission within family lineages or through informal apprenticeships with established musicians, are becoming less prevalent due to urbanisation and changing social dynamics (Sodeinde, 2019).

Furthermore, the economic realities of professional *Apala* musicians can be precarious. Performances are often limited to religious ceremonies and social gatherings, making it difficult for *Apala* artists to earn a sustainable living (Tijani, 2016). This lack of financial viability discourages younger generations from pursuing *Apala* music as a career path.

Additionally, the influence of modern music trends may overshadow traditional genres, making it harder for *Apala* to find a place in the contemporary music scene. However, the number of traditional *Apala* music performances has declined in recent years due to several factors, including the increasing popularity of other genres of music, the lack of opportunities for traditional *Apala* musicians to perform, and the death of many leading *Apala* musicians possess a challenge to the preservation of the *Apala* genre of the Yoruba.

Furthermore, younger generations need to develop an interest in *Apala* music. *Apala* music is a traditional genre that needs to be updated by some younger people. Additionally, *Apala* music is often performed in the Yoruba language, making it inaccessible to people who do not speak Yoruba. The challenges of using digital technology to preserve *Apala* music is another area of concern in preserving the genre.

- The lack of interest in *Apala* music among younger generations: *Apala* music is a traditional genre of music, and it can be seen as needing to be updated by some younger people. Additionally, *Apala* music is often performed in the Yoruba language, making it inaccessible to people who do not speak Yoruba.
- The challenges of using digital technology to preserve *Apala* music: Digital technology can be used to preserve *Apala* music in several ways, such as by recording and distributing *Apala* music performances and by creating educational resources about *Apala* music. However, some challenges are associated with using digital technology to preserve *Apala* music. For example, digital technology can be expensive and challenging to learn how to use it. Additionally, using digital technology can sometimes lead to the loss of traditional *Apala* techniques.
- Oral tradition (Orature) is the vehicle for transmitting this musical heritage. With older generations of musicians and storytellers, *Apala* music's original interpretations and complex nuances will be lost. In addition, the influence of modern music can destroy the traditional system, making it difficult for *Apala* to take a place in modern music. However, the decline of traditional *Apala* music performances of the genre calls for immediate rescue from obscurity.

The Potential of Choral Platforms for Preserving *Apala* Music

Choral platforms offer a promising solution for safeguarding *Apala* music in the digital age. These platforms, online communities, social media groups, or dedicated websites provide a space for *Apala* enthusiasts to connect, share knowledge, and collaborate on performances. Choral platforms can facilitate the digital documentation of *Apala* music. Recordings of performances, instructional videos, and historical information about *Apala* traditions can be archived and shared online, creating a valuable resource for future generations (Alabi, 2018). This digital repository can ensure the accessibility of *Apala* music beyond geographical limitations and promote its wider appreciation.

Innovation and audience engagement: Choral platforms can be a breeding ground for innovation in *Apala* music. By incorporating new technologies and creative approaches to composition and arrangement, choral groups can broaden the appeal of *Apala* music to contemporary audiences. Social media engagement strategies can raise awareness about *Apala* music and attract new listeners. Olabisi, A. (2023, Oral interview), an *Apala* gospel musician, also observed that choral platforms could experiment with new musical styles, such as by combining *Apala* music with other genres of music. This can help to revitalise *Apala* music and make it more accessible to a broader audience.

Collaborative learning and performance: Choral platforms can foster collaboration among *Apala* musicians of different ages and backgrounds. Experienced performers can mentor younger generations, ensuring the transmission of *Apala* techniques and knowledge. Online forums and virtual performance spaces can enable geographically dispersed *Apala* artists to connect and create music. Ogunleye (2023, Oral Interview) also noted that choral platforms can be used to create educational resources about *Apala* music, such as videos and articles about the history of *Apala* music, the techniques of *Apala* music, and the lyrics of *Apala* songs. This can teach people about *Apala* music and encourage them to learn more about this genre.

Monetisation and sustainability: Choral platforms can explore avenues for monetisation to support *Apala* musicians. Online performances with virtual ticketing systems, merchandise sales, and crowdfunding campaigns can generate revenue to sustain *Apala* artists and encourage continued engagement with the tradition. Adedokun (2023, Oral Interview) also buttresses that choral platforms can reach a wider audience. He further submits that using the choral platforms, *Apala* music performances can be distributed to a broader audience, including people who live in remote areas or do not have access to traditional *Apala* music performances. Choral platforms like YouTube and SoundCloud can distribute *Apala* music performances to a broader audience. This can raise awareness of *Apala* music and encourage people to listen to and support this genre.

Conclusion

Apala music, a dynamic and centuries-old tradition rooted in the Islamic devotional practices of Yoruba culture, faces significant challenges in adapting to the modern era. Globalisation and the dominance of secular media have contributed to a decline in its prominence and preservation. Moreover, the rise of digital technology and cyberspace has profoundly influenced the performance techniques of *Apala* music, presenting both opportunities and obstacles. As online spaces for creating, sharing, and experiencing music, choral platforms hold promise for preserving and revitalising *Apala* music. These platforms can expand *Apala*'s reach to global audiences, provide avenues for experimenting with innovative musical styles, and serve as educational tools to engage younger generations. By leveraging these digital platforms, *Apala* Music can maintain its relevance and adapt to contemporary tastes while preserving its rich heritage.

The study explores this potential by outlining the history and challenges of *Apala* music and then examining how choral platforms could function as preservation instruments. While these platforms present exciting opportunities, challenges such as developing specialised digital tools, training conductors in digital music facilitation, and raising awareness among the youth about *Apala* music must be addressed. To substantiate this approach, future studies can focus on case studies of successful cultural preservation through digital platforms, experimental collaborations between traditional *Apala* musicians and digital innovators, and surveys assessing young audiences' reception of *Apala* music on choral platforms. Ultimately, harnessing the potential of choral platforms can lead to a broader audience, new creative expressions, and robust educational initiatives, ensuring *Apala* music's continued relevance and vitality in the digital age.

Recommendations

The study recommends collaborating with choral conductors, musicians, and scholars. Preserving *Apala* music requires collaboration between choral conductors, musicians, and scholars. Choral conductors can use their platforms to promote *Apala* music and encourage people to listen to and support it. Musicians can experiment with new musical styles and create new *Apala* music compositions. Scholars can research the history and techniques of *Apala* music and create educational resources about this genre. It also recommends developing new digital tools for preserving *Apala* music: There is a need to develop new digital tools for preserving *Apala* music. These tools should be easy to use, affordable, and designed to preserve traditional techniques.

Oral Interview

Olabisi, O. (*Apala* Gospel musician, Ogbomoso), August 15, 2023.

Adedokun, A. (ICT, Manager, The Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso), August 08, 2023

Ogunleye, A. (Music Minister, Surulere Baptist Church, Lagos), August 13, 2023.

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