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Nollywood Film Music: Shades of Identity

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PhD in Music

City, University of London, Department of Music

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p. 17, Map of Major Ethnic Groups in Nigeria

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Declaration

I hereby grant powers of discretion to the University Librarian to allow all or parts of this thesis to be copied without further reference to the author.

Abstract

Nollywood is the branded name of Nigeria's unique and globally recognised film industry. For over two decades (since 1992), the products of mainstream Nollywood film and music practitioners have been continually presented as a reflection and representation of the Nigerian society. Yet those creative and cultural underpinnings in Nollywood film music—processes, approach, symbology, commerce, and identity—have remained undocumented. This ethnomusicological research aims to establish verifiable evidence of Nigerian musical culture in the actions and inactions, assertions, and subversions within Nollywood film music practice. To do so, the study considers the industry from 1994 (the year of its first English-language film production) to 2016. Relying on an ethnographic study, this period provides the latitude for understanding Nigerian musical culture, and how the industry's musicians have transported, transformed, and re- or de-contextualised it in film. The methodology for this material is based, in part, on an approach akin to grounded theory wherein the data drives the theoretical outcomes. This is achieved through a critical examination of the socio-cultural, economic, and technological determinants of Nollywood soundtracks with emphasis on three Nollywood films, a text-tune correlation analysis of a transcribed videofilm song, publications on the subject, as well as data from studio observations and interviews/conversations with practitioners. Findings validate the argument that there are three Nollywood film music schools of thought; that identity is performed through three mutually exclusive contexts labelled 'Blocking', 'Blurring', and 'Acquiescing'; that there exists a Nollywood film music identity system (NoPIS); and that identity is a subtly packaged commodity that exists in 'shades' and is regulated by various elements including, but not limited to, politics, power, music and film genres, language, money, as well as localisation and deterritorialisation. To be clear, Nollywood film music draws heavily from Nigerian musical culture. And this is why the entire process (of film music production and the notion of identity) remains a socio-cultural construction that is plural—always in the process of becoming, and to some degree susceptible to re-signification.

First Words

This thesis offers my attempts at revealing how mainstream Nollywood film music works to both create its identity as well as shape the discourse on identity. In other words, this study is about the practice, processes, and aesthetics of film music in mainstream Nollywood and how its practitioners articulate identity in both local and international co-productions. To be clear, Nigeria is home to several film industries with movie themes and dialogues that are primarily expressed through the various ethnicities and local dialects. Hence, Jonathan Haynes is right to say that ‘the Nigerian film industry is not synonymous with Nollywood’ (Haynes 2016: xxiii). This thesis thus focuses on mainstream Nollywood, which herein refers to film and film music productions that are largely expressed in both Standard English and Nigerian Pidgin English languages. I have, in what follows, tried to explain the connection or lack of connection of cultural specificity, money, politics, power, social organisation, language, and the forces of resistance and complicity to Nollywood film music and the identity therein.

The aims for this study include, but are not limited to: (1) the provision of an ethnographic account, from fieldwork, of composers and film project owners detailing significant aspects of their creative and business thoughts, interactions, and decisions within mainstream Nollywood; (2) the need to demonstrate, through analyses, what I call the *shades of identity* of Nollywood film music, which in itself is a reflection of the varying degrees of practitioners’ engagement with the concept of (cultural) identity; (3) the notion of *identitarianism* (a set of ideas resulting from engaging and experimenting with issues of identity) as articulated via the Nollywood film music schools of thought, and promoted by those I have chosen to call Nollywood adherents; and (4) the understanding that there exists a Nollywood film music identity system sustained primarily by the power of texted music and the art of *prefiguring*. This fourth aim has, in part, been developed along Edward Spicer’s notion of *persistent identity systems*, which I explain later on in chapter 1. Prefiguring itself is a concept of major theoretical importance to this study because it is the single most palpable identity marker of most mainstream Nollywood film music. For this reason, I shall devote a few paragraphs to its contextualisation.

Prefiguring entails the use of music to negotiate and foretell dialogue and scenes in mainstream Nollywood. Historically, prefiguring signalled a new approach to film music practice in an age that I have called the Pragmatic-expressive Era (Sylvanus 2012). The significance of this approach is to ensure that the soundtrack is able to *seek* and *find* its audience with minimal critical engagement. Prefiguring draws from the art of storytelling in indigenous Nigeria. Contextually, prefiguring is somewhat similar to the widely-accepted technique of linking musical figures (leitmotif) to narrative outcomes in classic Hollywood (1920–1950) films. Theoretically, the concept of musical figures or leitmotif references the music dramas of Richard Wagner. The leitmotif, which is basically a short, distinctive, and recurrent musical theme, works to signal a specific character, image, or thought to the audience. The use of the leitmotif in classic Hollywood film music was promoted by prominent composers like Max Steiner and Erich Korngold (see Borchardt 1979; Kalinak 1990; Henzel 2004; Green 2010; Harworth 2012). By contrast, contemporary Hollywood appears to have evolved away from the use of the leitmotif. This evolution may be credited to the critique of Ardono and Eisler (1947), for whom the leitmotif and other approaches such as visual justification, clichés, and the demand for melody and euphony (the combination of pleasant sounds and words) were counter-productive to the manner in which music served Hollywood films. The inference from their argument is that the leitmotif is no longer relevant to the motion picture for technical, artistic, and aesthetic reasons. Technically, motion pictures thrive on continuity and reality – the very essence that denies the leitmotif room for expansion. Artistically, the inability to elaborate the leitmotif seriously restricts the composer, and ‘leads to extreme poverty of composition (Ardono and Eisler 1947: 6). Aesthetically, both scholars contend that the ‘conventional demand for melody and euphony is constantly in conflict with the objective requirements of the motion picture’ (ibid. 8). This simply implies that there is a need to free melody and euphony from the confines of lyricism, which is strongly tied to texted music (i.e. music with words). In effect, film music should be truly and fully sonic and devoid of textual limitations.

That said, prefiguring in Nigerian cinema is not exactly what I have described in classic Hollywood. There are fundamental differences. The first, and perhaps most important, is that prefiguring in Nigerian cinema implies and requires singing an entire film or its synopsis. This immediately suggests that the music would be longer and contain more

words than is the case with the leitmotif. This point is equally instructive as it underscores a related difference: the target (Nigerian) audience are often fully aware of the story of the film—sometimes even before the first images appear. Clearly, this ability is lost on the audience of classic Hollywood film music because of the leitmotif's brevity and focus. Second, prefiguring is seldom devoted to a particular character because the life and function of the music is inherently tied to the development of the entire storyline. In other words, as the dialogue and scenes shift from one idea or character to the next, so also does the texted music (and this is what veteran Nollywood composer Stanley Okorie implied when he told me that 'the music must follow the story'). Third, all musical compositions for prefiguring purposes in Nollywood often adhere to the call and response form. Here, the lead singer (who, unlike their classic Hollywood counterpart, is nearly always the composer) performs what is routinely the verses of the music while the backing up singers chorus the refrain. Ideologically, this musical form never changes even where a particular film has up to three or more songs. Culturally, I argue that this musical form is derived from and mimetic of the country's folk music practice in, for example, *Mbre offiong* (Moonlight plays/music) and *Onwuema* (Masquerade festival music) of the Ibibio and Abua people in the Niger Delta area, *Egwu Amala* (Paddle dance) of the Igbo in the southeast, as well as children's songs such as *L'abe igi orombo* (Under the orange tree) of the Yoruba in southwest Nigeria. Fourth, the notion of prefiguring shapes the industry's behaviour in terms of authorial autonomy and direction. This difference is instructive in the sense that the composer–film director relationship that Hollywood enjoys and exercises is non-existent in mainstream Nollywood (discussed in chapter 2). Simply put, prefiguring and other film music particularities including the choice of musical genre, style, vocal timbre, lyrics, dialect, sound effects, and spotting (i.e. where to place music in a film) are carried out without the inputs of film directors. This fourth point is also critical to the matter of agency and how the Nigerianness of film music is or might be shaped. While prefiguring existed in post-1980s Nigerian TV dramas, it has metamorphosed into a deliberate structural and functional art in many Nollywood productions (discussed further in chapter 2).

To fulfil the aforementioned aims, I have relied on a combination of research approaches, which are broadly stated in chapter 1. For the most part, I have worked to balance those approaches in order that the research outcome might reflect a genuine

intercourse of data organisation, film song analyses, results from conducting interviews and studio observations, literature review, as well as the industry's competing interests and thoughts. Overall, I note that the industry struggles with identity related issues that are historically, culturally, and socio-economically linked. For example, the fact that Nigerians had no say in the industry's name (Nollywood) suggests, in my view, an opening for exploring the different possibilities of *Self*. Evidence to support this view subsists in the form of existing and emerging ethnic film industries such as 'Yorubawood', 'Igbowood', 'Edowood', and 'Kano- (or Kany-) wood', which are, in part, an outcome of the historical and ethnic/cultural complexities of the Nigerian state. And so, throughout this research, the different possibilities of 'self' become apparent in both the arguments and works of mainstream Nollywood practitioners. To this end, while some voices maintain that Nollywood should reflect mainstream Hollywood approaches to film music; others hold a more conservative and localised (trans-ethnic) 'Nigerian' view. The positions and behaviour of Nollywood practitioners are understandably based on the need to develop and own an identity—a process that often begins with interrogating parts of the *Self*.

More specifically, I note that beyond the matter of label as well as the repetitive thematic issues found in mainstream Nollywood films are those subtle socio-cultural and processual practices, without which it is almost impossible to grasp the complexity of its soundtracks as artistic works that are simultaneously ethical and profit oriented. For example, Nollywood's approach to film music, particularly the use of prefiguring, is, by this research, an intentional choice to resist influences from, say, mainstream Hollywood productions. It is also the local film composers' way of expressing the meaning and value of music in Nigerian cinema. Furthermore, the notion of cross-ethnic musical and lingual inflections/negotiations in most Nollywood soundtracks, together with the art of prefiguring and a strong reliance on Nigerian popular music, represents the potentials of a Nigerian film music identity. These thoughts may appear problematic and arguably unmethodical to the industry outsider. Yet, this study shows that they are actually well conceived and articulated thoughts, which bear far less discrete underpinnings of the country's history, subcultures/cultural imaginary, and other socioeconomic perspectives.

It is my thesis that mainstream Nollywood film music possesses identities that morph into a continuum (hereafter referred to as ‘shades of identity’). The shades of identity, which the forces of resistance and complicity have enabled, are performed through three mutually exclusive contexts namely ‘Blocking’ (the conscious effort to draw only from Nigerian musical culture and those localised approaches to film music—specifically to prevent perceived forms of foreign cultural imperialism); ‘Blurring’ (the middle path which incorporates a careful choice of both local and foreign film music approaches and resources); and ‘Acquiescing’ (wherein the production process yields totally in favour of foreign film music resources/approaches). The following is therefore a documented account of a divergent film music industry with characteristic approaches to style, aesthetics, genre categorisation and labelling, as well as localised modes of contracting and producing film music; all of which channel much of the practitioners’ own conceptualisation and articulation of identity.

Chapter 1

Introduction

This study focuses on the identity of film music in mainstream Nollywood. Mainstream Nollywood is located in Nigeria, West Africa. Modern Nigeria is the outcome of centuries of internal and external historical processes: inter-tribal and civil wars, annexation, trade, cultural and religious resistance and assimilation, migration, amalgamation, and colonialism. These processes have worked to (re-)define the physical and cultural identity of pre-colonial (before 1885), colonial (1885-1960), and post-colonial (after 1960) Nigeria. Nigeria emerged as an independent nation on 01 October 1960.¹ With an estimated population of over 180 million people, Nigeria is home to some 300 languages, tribes, and quasi-heterogeneous cultures. Regionally, many of the spoken languages have similarities in dialect that broadly support three main groupings: Yoruba in the southwest, Igbo in the southeast, and Hausa-Fulani in the north (Figure 1.1). These and other Nigerian ethnic groups support an identity that is best understood from examining the interactions of sub-culture areas: of sameness and difference, which the forces of (cultural) assimilation, integration, and resistance have produced over time. Thus, tangible instances of internal culture borrowings across the country have persisted well into the 21st century. And the aftermath of such exchanges continually manifests in art forms that are common to Nigeria including, but not limited to, theatre, sculpture, dance, music, and film. In other words, Nigeria's cultural manifestations speak to both her conceptualisation and contextualisation of identity.

Accordingly, Nigeria's cultural identity is a product of coalescence and accommodation of many sub-cultures, which also possess unique individual identities. Culturally, the forces of localisation and syncretism have been active in shaping the 'Nigerianness' of

¹ Britain's formal colonisation of Nigeria lasted nearly eight decades (1885-1960). But the presence of Europe on the Nigerian coast dates back to the 15th Century following explorations and exploitations of land for advancing the South-Atlantic agricultural system, which, in turn, relied heavily on the Atlantic slave trade. Southern Nigeria was profoundly affected by this occupation, and consequently dubbed 'The Slave Coast'. For more, see Uya (1991) and Falola (1999).

productions from creative and cultural industries like Nollywood.² As a consequence of Nigeria's cultural synthesis, this study benefits from investigating the identity issues that arise in mainstream Nollywood film music—many of which take the form of questions. For example, is a homogenous Nollywood film music identity possible? If so, how can it be justified? Given that *functionality* appears as the main agent of cultural synthesis, how do the formalities and awareness of Nigerian popular music function to help rationalise identity in Nollywood film music? For to authoritatively say that Nollywood film music is ontologically 'ethnic', 'inter-ethnic', 'nationalistic', 'regional', or even 'sub-Saharan' is to foreground functionality. The issue of functionality is itself problematic, particularly when we consider, for instance, that some of the distinguishing markers of Nigerian popular music reveal changing degrees of negotiation, resistance, and complicity (discussed further in chapter 2). This, too, is what identity entails: a constantly changing phenomenon with relative consistency. As shown in later chapters, the degrees to which uniqueness, sameness, and diversity vary and interact in Nollywood film music productions encourage interpretations and effects, which ensure the fluidity of its identity.

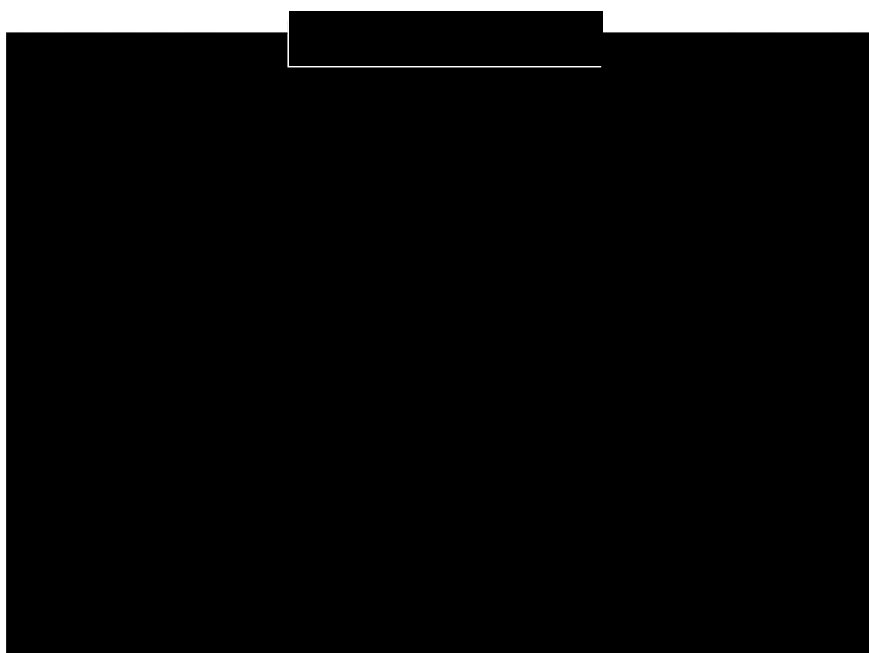


Figure 1.1. Map of Nigeria showing the major ethnic groups (source: Google)

² An original position on this 'Nigerianness' is given in chapters 2, 3, and 4, which, among other issues, problematises Nollywood film music identity by examining aspects of cultural portrayal and film music genre.

1. 1 Background to the study

Nigeria is an immensely active and somewhat complicated country. Although she remains one of Africa's largest economies, Nigeria is beleaguered with corruption, insecurity, a struggling infrastructure, and poor governance. Yet within these circumstances is an effervescence of creativity, hospitality, and liveliness. This outpouring of creativity is noticeable in the way Nigerians have approached film and film music practice. The people's interest in film production surged between the late 1980s and early 1990s. Densely populated commercial cities such as Lagos, Onitsha, and Kano were quickly becoming the key sites for executing film and film music projects (Ekwuazi 2008). This initial experiment by local practitioners encouraged a new medium called videofilms, which Jonathan Haynes says are 'something between television and cinema, and they do not fit comfortably within the North American structures of either.' (Haynes 2000:1). Haynes's remark seems to cast aspersions on the industry's approach to filmmaking. Of this, Onuzulike (2007:1) argues that the videofilm medium 'stands for an example of technology that can be used for cultural explorations and representations, mostly for the individuals or groups who cannot afford celluloid'. Onuzulike's assertion arguably explains how Nigerians evaluated the opportunity for indigenous cinematic productions, which has been continually aided by 'the power of consumer culture' (Ukah 2003). I note that this appetite for a 'new-found' art form was sustained, in part, by the fascinating craft of combining music with the moving image – one that reflected its televisual forerunner.³ As a result, Nollywood's initial efforts at composing for film involved a meaningful form of framing an entire film with 'appropriate' music for just the opening and closing credits (Sylvanus 2012).⁴ Within the film itself were opportunities to provide diegetic and/or non-diegetic music along with the periods of dialogue and silence, which Nollywood composers would passively explore many years later.⁵

³ I have already documented the history and function of music in Nigerian television from 1959 to 2016. The text also includes an overview of TV music dominance and influence on Nollywood. See Sylvanus (2018).

⁴ Many of these films were made between 1992 and 1997 (see filmography).

⁵ Music is diegetic when it seems to be coming from an on-screen source such as in film, videogames, and television. For more, see Gorbman (1987) and Cohen (2013).

1.1.1 Pathway to Nollywood

Historically, British colonialists first introduced film in both the Southern and Northern regions of Nigeria in 1903. However, it was not until the 1970s (a decade after independence from British rule) that Nigerians made their first feature film with contributions and support from Nigerian filmmakers like Ola Balogun, Francis Oladele, and Bankole Bello (Ukadike 1994). Unfortunately, this initial effort was not sustained because of the prominence and dominance of television at the time. By the late 1980s, and following the transition from stage to television, some of the theatre practitioners had grown in fame. TV stations, however, offered poor remuneration to both theatre ensembles and individual actors. Consequently, many of the theatre-turned-TV practitioners ‘resorted to using the cheaper medium of the videocassette to check [that is, make-up for] the spiralling turn of theatre patronage in the cities’ (Okome 2007:2). Videofilm production by theatre and TV practitioners eventually led to the disappearance of nearly 250 theatre groups (Amkpa 2004). The new medium attracted creative and business interests among Nigerians of different ethnic groups particularly the Igbo.

The involvement of the Igbo community was important because they would, by 1992, produce the first box office hit-film called *Living in Bondage*.⁶ *Living in Bondage* was directed by Chris Obi Rapu and produced by Kenneth Nnebue. The film ‘inaugurated the video boom [...] and established the first great Nollywood thematic complex—“get rich quick” —and its signature genre, the money ritual film’ (Haynes 2016: 18). The film’s success prompted the business interest of mainly Igbo (electronics) market traders in Idumota and Onitsha in Lagos and Anambra states, respectively. Some scholars argue that the marketable possibilities of videofilms (as opposed to TV dramas) as well as the declining Nigerian economy from the late 1980s were responsible for the surge in unregulated film productions (Adesanya 2000; Faris 2000; and Alabi 2013). My view, however, is that although commerce was a contributing factor, the filmmaking frenzy was fundamentally driven by the storylines of both *Living in Bondage* and successive film productions, which many Nigerians could identify with

⁶ The Igbo are mainly people who occupy southeastern Nigeria. There is a population of nearly thirty-five million persons who generally consider themselves descendants of the Jewish people. They have, over the years, become better known as the ethnic nation that attempted to secede from Nigeria. Isichei (1976) is a useful text that offers an extensive account of the history and evolution of the Igbo ethnic nationality of Nigeria.

and invest in.⁷ In many respects, this film was an ‘Igbo thing’: the cast and setting were Igbo, and the dialogue was entirely in the Igbo language. Thus, this and the films produced between 1992 and 1993 have been rightly tagged ‘Igbo-language films’, which the English-language films from 1994 would eventually overshadow. Haynes notes that the preference for English-language films ‘allowed people from many southern Nigerian cultures to enter the industry’ (2016: xxiii). Accordingly, the influx and roles of other Nigerians and professionals would transform what was initially an Igbo project into a national and transnational franchise. Mainstream Nollywood would eventually be launched without state or foreign government support to address interlocking issues such as the absence of infrastructure, proper training, film project funds, and state-of-the-art technology. Yet this handicap would not deter an industry, which ‘continues to resonate, finding new audiences via the Internet and other venues’ (Geiger 2012:60).

1.1.2 The birth of Nollywood

The Nollywood phenomenon owes its ascendancy to the business foresight of some Igbo speaking Nigerians who resided in Lagos between 1989 and 1991. The early 1990s thus signalled the birth of mainstream Nollywood, which, according to Alabi (2013:1), ‘metamorphosed from the existing traditions of dramatic presentations in festivals and rituals, the traveling theatre, television drama, etc.’ Although the history of mainstream Nollywood has been well established (for example, Okome 2000; Haynes 2005; Onuzulike 2009; Jedlowski 2011), the name itself remains contested because, to some, it overlooks the multiplicity of Nigerian ethnic cultures and their respective film industries by ‘homogenising the internal variety of the film industry,’ as well as reinforcing the notion of ‘cultural imperialism [arising] from naming a Nigerian product after Hollywood’ (McCain 2013: 31). Conversely, others think that the name itself ‘expresses the powerful aspirations by people in the videofilm industry and by their fans to have a big, glamorous entertainment industry that can take its place on the world scene and appeal to international audiences’ (Haynes 2005: 106). My position is that both contestations are valid and strongly tied to identity issues, which I experienced first-hand during my research. One example is the existence of opposing groups and

⁷ For more on *Living in Bondage*, see Haynes (2016: 18–58).

views regarding the Nigerianness of and approaches to Nollywood film and film music genres.

Beyond the name, scholars have argued that the Nollywood phenomenon rests on three main factors: Nigerian entrepreneurship, consumer culture, and digital technology (Haynes and Okome 1998; Owens-Ibie 1998; Haynes 2000; Ukah 2003; Onuzulike 2009). Currently, the industry boasts a sundry of homegrown actors, soundtrack composers and producers, three main distribution outlets (Lagos, Onitsha, and Kano), and no fewer than 500 professional and amateur executive producers who generate movies at an astonishing rate. The first films were produced using analogue video devices such as the BETACAM SP, and the final recording was rendered directly onto VHS tapes. As a trend, Nollywood film directors and producers adopted (and continue to adopt) new technologies as soon as they become affordable—technical innovation is thus a secondary consideration.

By the late 1990s, it became commonplace to find Nollywood film producers working with digital video technologies. Weighty videotape cameras were replaced with their celluloid descendants, which have now been set aside for high speed and quality HD cameras (Barrett-Gaines 2012; Akinola 2013). Editing, montage, music, and other post-production work were and still are done with simple computer-based systems and software, and the films are then delivered in VCD and DVD disk formats. The industry has since evolved its own machinery for marketing and distributing its cinematic productions (the publications of Larkin 1997, 2000, and 2004 are particularly instructive). Nollywood has also grown significantly into a 900 million US dollar-a-year industry, and it is responsible for the employment of thousands of people. With respect to personnel, Nollywood actors consist mainly of native Nigerians and a few in the diaspora, who together are popular names within Nigeria and overseas (Haynes and Okome 2000; Ukah 2003; Adejunmobi 2007; Onuzulike 2010).

1.1.3 Rationale

To date, mainstream Nollywood struggles with identity issues that can primarily be traced to its establishment, definition, and codification. This is so because there was no founding philosophy or body of filmmakers or bureaucratic process to fashion out its agenda and, ultimately, identity. As observed by Adesokan (2014: 118),

There is a connection between the cross-cultural aesthetics shaping [Nollywood] films [...] and an urban culture of commerce, image circulation, voluntary association, unstable or incomplete processes of class formation, and other factors in which a category such as 'Yoruba Nollywood' largely constitutes a consequence of historical and geopolitical accidents.

It is thus fair to say that Nollywood was barely an idea that would later become a cultural frame of reference, a geopolitical reality, and more recently, a self-conscious political tool. The success and identity of the industry would eventually be enmeshed in the configurations of power and sub-ethnic complexes within post-colonial Nigeria. This point is partly revealed in how industry stakeholders' thoughts about, and articulation of, identity move between different layers of sub-culture affiliations. Hence, mainstream Nollywood is a socio-culturally responsive phenomenon. This means that the customs, laws, values, and expectations of its host culture and people primarily dictate its cinematic contents and business strategies.⁸ Although ethnic identity continues to be *performed* in Nollywood film music (discussed in subsequent chapters), this study also argues for the existence of identities that transcend ethnicity. In essence, the host culture's internal and external forces of resistance and compromise sustain negotiations of identity at various levels of Nollywood film music practice.

To this end, the study of identity in Nollywood film music is rather problematic because film music itself is socio-culturally fluid. Apart from mutability in tonal and formal organisation, film music is capable of lending itself to crosscultural, inter-regional, and transnational contexts. In other words, a good number of soundtracks possess the ability to 'span contexts across time and space', whilst 'transcending boundaries of live performance' (Mera and Morcom 2009:6). In my opinion, this assertion is only possible because the properties of music—pitch, timbre, density, tonality, rhythm, harmony, and so on—are more aural (mental) than physical. Furthermore, Nollywood films and soundtracks are both cultural and economic products that are informed by consumer behaviour, as well as by other capitalist (market) concepts developed in Europe and America. Thus, the economic forces of demand and supply are not only critical to practitioners' and audiences' perspectives about Nollywood films and soundtracks, but also affect how identity is both articulated and de-/re-articulated. In this sense, and as both a central argument and part of the findings of this study, identity is shown to be a

⁸ This is evidenced in over 200 Nollywood films that I have watched, and the oral accounts of surveyed stakeholders.

subtly packaged/contested commodity that can tacitly provoke acceptance or resistance on the part of the consumer. In other words, although one might find mainstream Nollywood cinematic content both entertaining and educating, it does not follow that the underlying cultural identity, which the narrative and music evoke, are always acceptable to the viewer.

Having said that, this study also seeks to know whether or not Nollywood film music practice has a holistic system of thought. The existence of such a system could very well be the key to its identity. This is regardless of the divergent approaches that the industry's individual film music composers have either appropriated or advanced. Beyond the composers are other 'competing voices' on and around the processes and manner of application of music, which, in turn, shape the identity of the soundtrack. These persons include executive film producers and marketers (EPMs), sound editors/engineers, and even actors.⁹ For this reason, the identity of Nollywood film music is not straightforward. According to this study, there is an identity that is constructed, in part, as an adversarial reaction to the pressure of foreign film music principles. As such, the possibility and acceptance of a Nollywood centred ('Nollycentric') film music identity depends upon practitioners' ability to produce works that resonate with and conform to the marketable definitions of style and abstraction within the source culture. This suggests that there exist immutable ideas and ideals for that singular Nollycentric film music identity. However, it is not immediately evident that there are agreed ideas or ideals for the purpose of a collective film music identity. This research, in fact, reveals a number of divergent approaches that bestow Nollywood film music with its own inviolable 'spirit' and 'rules'. This, however, does not also presuppose that film music approaches, production, and application in Nollywood do not show some similarities with other (more established) global traditions. The point is that mainstream Nollywood film music conveys shades of identity that are, together, an expression of Nigeria's own cultural pluralism and free enterprise.

⁹ A very detailed account of these individuals and their roles in the film music production process is presented in chapter 2.

1.2 Research Objectives

The growth and diversification of Nollywood with its activities has attracted research and researchers from such related disciplines as Literary Studies, Linguistics, Film and Theatre Studies, and even Popular Culture. Within these, it is not uncommon to find occasional ‘outlying remarks’ about music in Nollywood films. These outlying remarks arguably happen when non-musicologists attempt to discuss Nollywood soundtracks using scholarly tools outside musicology. For instance, there are cases where such writers try to discuss the ‘appropriateness’ of a soundtrack by simply focusing on the music’s own spoken text rather than how such music functions within film (for example, Ugochukwu 2013:16). Consequently, the concern of this research is to thoroughly address and specifically establish the ethnomusicological discourse on mainstream Nollywood. That process requires a set of objectives, which are as follows:

- To determine how mainstream Nollywood approaches and articulates identity through film music.
- To establish whether or not the materiality of the industry (recording studios, and technologies such as sound and visual equipment, and software) influence identity formation and transmission in Nollywood film music.
- To investigate how Nigeria’s cultural diversity, the market, and popular music space influence thoughts and actions concerning identity in Nollywood film music.
- To ascertain the presence and degree of foreign influences on Nollywood film music identity. This knowledge will emerge from examining issues of resistance, compromise, and complicity in international co-productions between Nollywood and other film industries of the world.
- To identify and interact with some of the foremost Nollywood composers as well as existing schools of thought on and around ideologies and creative intentions that shape identity in their works.
- To contribute both substantially and distinctively to the global knowledge, perception, and understanding of Nollywood film music practice.

1.3 Research Questions

This study employs a strongly qualitative approach, which implies that there are general and specific questions about an unfolding inquiry. The three central research questions that drive the arguments of this thesis (alongside their respective sub-queries) are listed below.

1. How is identity in mainstream Nollywood film music conceptualised?

- What can we learn from examining aspects such as cultural homogeneity and heterogeneity, history, capitalism, genre labelling and categorisation within a film music practice that thrives in oral tradition?
- How do the forces of domestication (adaptation) and hybridisation (reinvention) interact within identity formation?
- What prerequisites combine to create a sense of sameness as well as distinction in Nollywood film music identity?
- What is the outcome of considering the dependence and application of variables (or elements) such as style, genre, language, musical form, and value within Nollywood film music?
- Is the film music identity motivated by a persistent and recognisable system of thought?

2. Who influences identity in mainstream Nollywood film music?

- Who are the major stakeholders in the film music industry and how do their roles and thoughts influence identity?
- Is there a ‘community’ of Nollywood film music practitioners? Or is identity solely driven by ‘individualism’?
- What tools and philosophy guide the enterprise of its film music composers?
- What correlation exists between the film music composer’s social identity and the identity of their creative work?
- Who regulates whom, and how do such activities impact on identity?
- Is there a history (oral and/or written) to Nollywood film music practice, collaborative processes, and artistic evolution? And if so, who are those responsible?

3. What influences identity in mainstream Nollywood film music?

- What constitute appeal and the creation of Nollywood film music identity from the practitioners' perspective?
- What are the specific identity issues?
- How has the popular culture been harnessed and deployed to create an identity or shades of identity?
- How much influence does Nigerian popular music exert on Nollywood film music identity?
- How does foreign influence from co-productions affect identity and cultural specificity in Nollywood film music?

In addition to the above are further carefully selected questions for the purpose of fieldwork (see Appendix A).

1.4 Methodology

The approach to this study is fundamentally ethnomusicological: going beyond the descriptive to embrace a more interpretive context of the music's own culture from which the essentials of Nollywood soundtracks are derived. For the most part, the methodology aims to account for, as well as link and contextualise broader social, economic, and cultural issues to, the phenomenon. The advantage of this approach is that it is capable of generating theory that can be useful for such future research directions as a comparative study between film music in mainstream Nollywood and New Nollywood (the parallel national industry).

The study population and sample

The population for this research remains broad and includes stakeholders, namely, Nollywood film music practitioners: composers, actors, executive film producers/marketers, distributors, and retailers. The principal criterion for deciding whom to interview mirrored the industry's own hierarchical structure, which favours the number of years in the practice over, say, a practitioner's socioeconomic status. In other words, the choice of interviewees prioritised the number of years of experience and knowledge of the industry over, say, technical know-how. For that selection, I undertook fieldwork within Lagos, Enugu, Asaba, Port Harcourt, Onitsha, and Umahia

where the concentration of Nollywood soundtrack experts is intense. Geographically, these cities provide a good representation for mapping Nollywood soundtrack activities across Nigeria. For logistical reasons the gathering of data for this purpose was strictly confined to the aforementioned cities. Apart from interviews and oral accounts, and observations of practical sessions, data was sourced from discussing the soundtracks of three Nollywood films, which have been chosen to highlight the undercurrents of identity formation in both local productions and (international) co-productions. The three films are *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2013) directed by Biyi Bandele, *Baby Oku in America* (2013) directed by Ikechukwu Onyeka, and *Ekaette Goes to School* (2014) directed by MacCollins Chidebe. In addition to granting interviews, some of the film composers allowed me to conduct some studio observations of their practice. Efforts were concentrated on an initial sample group of five (including those who worked on the soundtracks of the case-study films). As such, the core body of data, which in part drives the ethnographic and theoretical themes of this thesis, has come from interacting with these persons. For example, the notion of resistance and complicity as identity issues in international co-productions between Nollywood, Hollywood, and British cinema were not conceived prior to interviewing both Yemi Alade-Lawal and Stanley Okorie. However, some of the interview materials have been extracted to support preformed perspectives, including, for example, the notion and evidence of prefiguring as well as the widespread use of local languages in Nollywood film music. In essence, the thesis benefits from themes teased out of the ethnographic (interview) materials as well as those preformed notions which some of the interview transcripts support. Lastly, the methodology involves the identification and review of related articles from journals, newspapers, and magazines.

Data collection

This study was, in part, reliant on oral evidence from respondents. Therefore, the methods for gathering data included semi-structured interviews, as well as the examination/analysis of and conversations about case study films. All interviews were recorded and then transcribed in full (Appendix B). Using keyword analysis, data from fieldwork was meticulously documented to enable a progressive and more detailed post-fieldwork evaluation. The result shows how, for example, the prevalent musical taste and creative intentions of practitioners combine to articulate identity in

mainstream Nollywood film music. Specifically, five established Nollywood film music practitioners were interviewed. Of the five, three are important for their works in the already mentioned case study films. They are:

- Yemi Alade-Lawal (music supervisor for the film, *Half of a Yellow Sun*)
- Maxwell C. Leonard (composed music for the film, *Ekaette Goes to School*)
- Stanley Okorie (composed music for the film, *Baby Oku in America*)
- Austin Erowele (foremost Nollywood soundtrack composer/producer)
- Shadrach John (singer/songwriter/film music producer).

The differences in designation (that is ‘composer’, ‘singer/songwriter’, ‘producer’) literally suggest the existence of a hierarchy. But this is not the case in Nollywood because hierarchy is determined by number of years of practice rather than the individually appropriated titles. And so, with the exception of Maxwell Chidiebere Leonard, all others are ‘senior’ practitioners with about 20 years of industry experience. Additional notes about these and other stakeholders, the selected works, and their thoughts on identity formation are presented in chapter 2.

1.5 Relevance

This research provides substantive ethnomusicological perspectives on Nollywood film music and its musicians. The research period (1994 to 2016) offers considerable depth and breadth for uncovering details about the construction of identity. In part, the approach allows the film music practitioners themselves to be heard. It is an ethnographic work that stands to benefit both scholars and industry professionals of Nollywood cinema. This research is the entry point for anyone interested in Nollywood film music and is, thus, relevant for the following reasons.

1. It is the first to provide a detailed account of Nollywood film music organisational structure, processes, and other business and creative perspectives. This, in turn, shows how mainstream Nollywood differs significantly from other known film music traditions of the world.
2. It offers an accessible and authoritative account of industry practitioners regarding the notion of identity in their creative works.

3. It provides a detailed analysis and criticism of ‘prefiguring’, which is the singular and definitive aesthetical approach to film music in mainstream Nollywood.
4. It presents materials from ethnographic data and critical foundations of film music scholarship to enable a clear understanding and reading of Nollywood film music including, but not limited to, issues of genre, language, and process.
5. It stimulates a wider academic debate on identity and approaches to film music through the shades of identity that the study reveals.
6. It is the first in-depth study that opens the film music world to the local variations and counter practice inherent in mainstream Nollywood – revealing, for instance, the tensions in collaborative processes during international co-productions between Nollywood and its counterparts – and how identity is shaped and negotiated in the final product.

1.6 Structure of Thesis

This thesis has six chapters. Chapter 1 presents an overview of mainstream Nollywood cinema: its history, legacies, internal (human and synthetic) influences, approaches, and film genres. Also, the chapter offers an overview of scholarship on identity as a provisional framework for advancing the discourse of this research. It also brings to the fore some of the recent academic debates on and around Nollywood, such as issues of language, ethnicity, and identity. Essays from the vibrant Nigerian research culture together offer a kaleidoscopic view of mainstream Nollywood via some contextual, symbolic, cultural, socio-economic, and ideological reconstruction. The chapter closes with a literature review of both Nollywood and non-Nollywood film and film music studies—publications that will, in part, highlight the parallels between the state of research in Nollywood and other world traditions.

Chapter 2 proceeds to examine how identity is presently perceived and constructed in mainstream Nollywood. The first section discusses whom the stakeholders and what their roles are, what kind of structure supports their activities, and how the existing hierarchies compare with other known cinema industries. The arguments are developed using Film, Film music, and Social theories as well as texts from scholars such as Jonathan Haynes, Robert Faulkner and Mark Slobin. With that knowledge, the chapter proceeds to argue that the perceived shades of identity subsist in the interplay of

practitioners' creative intentions, available musical and technological resources, local and foreign influences, consumers' taste and expectations, musical form, genre categorisation and ideologies, language and politics, as well as the prospects and limitations of Nigeria's musical culture. Apart from providing the framework for understanding the linkages between genres of Nollywood film, music, and film composers, the chapter also shows how Nigerian popular music is re-designated in film. This finding is fascinating as it forces a reconceptualisation of popular music as film music. For the first time in the thesis, we read the perspectives of some industry practitioners about identity both as a concept and commodity within (Nollywood) film. Those specific thoughts, including data from studio observations, are employed alongside arguments on the role and importance of processes, oral tradition, money, power relations, structure, musical form, and language to identity. Together, and within the three contexts for performing identity (stated in the introduction), these developments reveal the three schools of thought concerning Nollywood film music practice. They are the Traditionalist, Temperate, and Pro-Hollywood schools.

Chapters 3 and 4 are devoted to the textual and processual examination of the selected case-study films. To be clear, chapter 3 considers the film *Ekaette Goes to School* (2014), while chapter 4 discusses *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2013) and *Baby Oku in America* (2013). This consideration will involve examining each film's narrative, structure, chronology, music and musical choices, as well as the reasons for and style of soundtrack approach. Whereas chapter 2 benefits from the plurality of thoughts of practitioners, the discourse on identity is both advanced and more focused through these case studies in chapters 3 and 4. And so, by interpolating the thoughts and intentions of the practitioners responsible for each case-study film alongside literature from other film traditions (Faulkner 1983; Berrian 2008; Slobin 2008; Tuohy 2008; Haynes 2016), as well as having Nollywood composers respond to queries from the researcher's own observations and analyses, we are able to expand our knowledge and understanding of the shades of identity and undercurrents of Nollywood film music. A text-tune correlation analysis of one of the case-study films will support earlier statements concerning language as a central identity index. Whereas chapter 3 specifically focuses on local production processes and the dynamics of identity formation, chapter 4 considers how local identity might be challenged and modified in an international co-production between, say, Nollywood and Hollywood. Among other things, findings

show that there is a local(-ised) Nollywood film music identity that is aesthetically recognisable and grounded in the notion of prefiguring. Similarly, there is a glocal(-ised) film music identity that is the result of tensions in international co-productions. In this instance, identity is shown to undertake a metaphoric journey between the implicated film music traditions.

Chapter 5 synthesises all information sourced in previous chapters to explain the shades of Nollywood film music identity and their relatedness. Significantly, I discuss the “big reveal” that is the three identified contexts (Blocking, Blurring, and Acquiescing) and the preconditions for performing identity in Nollywood film music. I also look into such aspects as sustenance and authorial autonomy and their connection with notions of a persistent identity system, identitarianism, and the disclosed shades of identity. Relying on all data and statements from the research, I theorise that Nollywood film music possesses an identity system that enables its shades of identity.

The thesis ends in chapter 6 wherein I revise and integrate results and analyses of data from fieldwork against the set-out objectives in order to offer my positions on and around the research. The chapter specifically discusses my findings for the present—one of which is that Nollywood film music identity is, among other things, performed through three contexts and is strongly influenced by three schools of thought, the industry’s occupational structure, and Nigeria’s musical and business culture. It concludes with recommendations for future frontiers of the research—one of which is the subject of ‘New Nollywood’ (a parallel film industry) and its implications for film music practice and identity.

1.7 Value of study

As a summary, there are important ideas and statements that combine to give value to this research. First, it offers an original comparative overview showing differences in both film music approaches and business structures between Nollywood and mainstream Hollywood. One striking difference is the singing voice and vocal styles, which together are a prerequisite for practicing film music in mainstream Nollywood. Also, through the synthesis of data from fieldwork and existing theoretical assumptions, this study reveals various shades of Nollywood film music identity and identification tags. The second is the case for a persistent identity system, which I offer via a careful

consideration of the ‘rules of Nollywood film music’. I also explore the ways in which engagement with identity issues have forced film composers into camps of Nollywood adherents. The third speaks to the aesthetics and principles of Nollywood film music practice, which is garnered from the oral and material accounts of practitioners who, themselves, work in accordance with informal yet symbolic actions. Through such data, for instance, we discover three schools of thought on Nollywood film music identity. They are:

- (1) The Traditionalist: consisting of persons who strongly contend that Nollywood soundtrack should, regardless of film genre, remain texted (vocal) music in indigenous Nigerian languages and Pidgin English. They also argue that the identity that results from *singing* the entire film should be maintained because any effort to have Nollywood soundtrack bear the quality and character of, say, mainstream Hollywood will culturally eliminate the ‘Nolly’ from the ‘wood’.
- (2) The Temperate: a group that does not entirely favour or oppose a conservative film music identity. They advocate for subtle modifications including, (1) partial prefiguring: meaning that the texted (vocal) music should only offer a vague idea of the plot and, therefore, be reusable in any other film with a similar theme. (2) That the lingual identity of Nollywood soundtrack can and should include more Nigerian languages and, more importantly, proper English in certain film genres. They also contend that marketers and executive producers should not solely decide the choice of language. (3) As a stylistic tool, prefiguring should be maintained but restricted to only a few and specific scenes for emphasis. (4) That, as an identification tag, purely instrumental music can be introduced to help accentuate moods. And this approach should reflect a deliberate recourse to indigenous percussive instruments/instrumentation.
- (3) The Pro-Hollywood: this school argues that Nollywood soundtrack should comprise entirely instrumental music. And that prefiguring, whether in part or whole, has no place in Nollywood films. They are outright advocates of underscoring, the use of source music, and other Hollywood film sound particularities like the long-form tonal construction of musical themes. The Pro-Hollywood argument is that the Nigerianness of Nollywood productions subsists in the storylines, cast and crew, setting, language of dialogue, and

fashion. Therefore, film music should ‘complement’ Nollywood films by taking on a global (that is, Hollywood) character.

Finally, the value of this research subsists in other embedded thoughts and facts such as the implications of composers’ social identity for the practice, as well as the transnational aesthetic objectivity and metaphoric journey of identity in film music.

1.8 Identity as Thought

Identity has remained a fundamental subject matter in many disciplines. The earliest philosophers considered identity to be the First Law of Thought. Identity derives from the Latin *idem* meaning ‘the same’. But ‘the same’ is not necessarily the meaning of identity. In the article titled ‘Expressing Cape Verde: *Morna*, *Funaná*, and national identity’, Palmberg (2002:117) offers three ‘definitions’ of identity: ‘unique individuality of each person’, ‘a sense of sameness and belonging to a community’, as well as ‘phenomena that are identified in order to classify them’. In my opinion, Palmberg’s statements do not really define identity. They only support the idea that there are types of identities, for example, social identity, material identity, cultural identity, and qualitative identity. Whilst I agree that identity connotes uniqueness of being – a distinctiveness of character, independence, and (with particular reference to human personality) the self, I also think that ‘a sense of sameness’ (or even difference) is only valid for the purpose of comparison. In Palmberg’s context, it appears that the meaning of identity as a core and integrated phenomenon subsists in the word’s etymology. Logically, identity presupposes itself. In other words, it makes sense to argue about the uniqueness of ‘self’ with reference to ‘otherness’. But the word uniqueness is indicative of difference. Therefore, things are self-identical because, to an appreciable extent, they differ from other equally self-identical entities. Palmberg is also quick to acknowledge that his first two ‘definitions’ are both contradictory and mutually exclusive because both talk about uniqueness and sameness at the same time. My understanding is that both sameness and difference are essential to the importance of identity. As such, sameness cannot be adequately discussed without reference to difference. Yet identity neither strictly means sameness nor difference. Perhaps, it is sameness, difference, and everything in-between, which then supports discussions of identity from two fronts: identity-in-sameness and identity-in-difference. In this sense, identity becomes a matter of agency, wherein difference is not the opposite of sameness

but rather the absence of it.

As an issue of agency, Benwell and Stokoe (2006:17) argue that the study of identity has occasioned paradigmatic shifts: first as ‘self-fashioning, agentive, internal project of the self’; then, as ‘the understandings of social and collective identity’; and lastly, postmodern accounts which treat identity as ‘fluid, fragmentary, contingent and, crucially, constituted in discourse’. So, the meaning of identity inheres in the three paradigm shifts. It is interesting that identity as a ‘project of the self’ has endured centuries of human intellectualism. All arguments about identity have understandably begun at the level of individualism. From a sociological perspective, and as a reflexive project between the self and others, Giddens (1990: 31), argues that identity has to be ‘routinely created and sustained’, constantly having to be ‘explored and constructed as part of the reflexive process of connecting personal and social change’. This implies that human beings are actively involved in constructing and de-/reconstructing their identities as their social circumstances change. More so, this self-versus-other occupation reflects not only the bifurcation between individual and group (or collective) identities but also the degree of tension in identity formation. And such tensions make identity both pluralistic and fluid in nature. Accordingly, we can speak of multiple individual and collective identities as well as relative and partial identities.

Broadly speaking, identity is a two-way adversarial process that often produces ‘persistent identity systems’ (Spicer 1971). Spicer uses the word ‘persistent’, which is, in my opinion, particularly instructive because, unlike sameness, the realm of difference is broad, boundless, and somewhat unreliable. So, a persistent identity system can only materialise when properties of identity (including internal material harmony, intensity, diversity, and reliability) are more or less ‘the same’ over time. With respect to Nollywood film music, ‘prefiguring’, ‘singing/vocal styles’, ‘texted music’, and ‘language’ are the core properties that have remained the same over two decades. Through these properties mainstream Nollywood demonstrates some consistency that serves as basis for a persistent film music identity system. Given this, it becomes easier to evolve and consider other kinds of identity (or shades of identity) with attributes that are wholly or partially predicated on difference to the reference model. With some consistency, that reference model provides a starting point for rationalising other (derivative) forms of identity. In the Nollywood context, this reference model is firmly

embodied in the approaches of the Traditionalist School. Furthermore, a persistent identity system makes a shared identity inevitable. And so, within mainstream Nollywood, that 'shared identity' finds currency in a film music culture driven fundamentally by the power of texted music and prefiguring. Here, the word 'culture' loosely encompasses resources of history, language, common practices and the transference of symbolic meaning, which the works of Giddens (1991), Beck (1992), and Bauman (1998) have addressed.

In a study of this kind, culture cannot be overlooked. For Palmberg (2002), the concept of culture in identity or identity in culture provides a link between individualism, a sense of sameness, and collectivism. What then is cultural identity? Cultural identity has been examined in two ways: as shared culture, which provides us with a stable, unchanging and continuous frame of reference and meaning, and secondly as 'what we really are', 'what history has done', 'what we have become' and 'the way we position ourselves within the narratives of the past' (Hall 1990: 223). In my opinion, it is in this sense that we can consider a Nigerian musical culture that is based on a country's shared history; but more importantly, how that musical culture has been positioned within the narratives of Nollywood film and film music as a response to *what we really are* and/or *what we have become*. While a subject such as language lends itself easily to arguments about sameness and difference, the case for music is problematic because of the ambiguous nature of sound as a phenomenological object (see the seminal works of Merleau-Ponty 1945; and Husserl 1950). And this difficulty is exacerbated in the context of film music. But first, how has identity been theorised in art and popular music?

There are many academic texts that focus on music and identity (for example, Waterman 1990; Garofalo 1993; Manuel 1997; Turino 1999, 2004; Solomon 2000; Reed 2005; and Sherinian 2007). In *Musical Identities*, MacDonald et al (2002) discuss the functions of music and the resulting identities from music and musical processes. The broad nature of the subject benefits from in-depth and useful literature reviews, notably the work of Cowlyn Trevarthen on the origins of musical identity and the development of social awareness. Specifically, the authors' attempt to differentiate between *musical identities* and *identity in music* is clear. The former (from where the book takes its title) implies process: the means by which a musician constructs his/her

identity. The latter (identity in music) suggests that culture is an important factor in defining (social) identity especially through categorisations of music. Both tiers and postulations promote the *individual* (of creative intentions and skill acquisition) versus *communal* (of collective thoughts on musical form, as well as social values and norms) dichotomy of identity. As shown in subsequent chapters, identity in mainstream Nollywood film music context can either originate from the singular or the collective. The construction of singular and collective shades of identity is a form of understanding and critiquing ‘who we are’, something that happens when such identities require modification or are being modified. In mainstream Nollywood, the composers and musicians who participate in the formation of ‘new’ identities aid that change. They are the ones that I have referred to as Nollywood adherents: a body of predominantly film music practitioners who demonstrate certain ‘awareness’ and the essence of symbolic presentation or representation in their craft.

According to Even Ruud, identity in music is ‘a process, something never fulfilled’, as well as ‘a metaphor for self-in context that is performative’ (1997:3). Although Ruud’s study is within the domain of Music Therapy, the author offers a theory of identity that is based on qualitative research procedures, which draw on both the Discourse and Narrative theories. Through the sections from *The Concept of Identity to Music – the Metaphor of Identity*, one thing is clear: identity is a narrative that is told (performed) by the self. And this understanding is critical to my research because, within the three contexts through which it is performed, the identity of Nollywood film music is also contingent on the narrative of individual practitioners. Individualism is therefore a strong index that I consider and explore in this thesis.

On the notion that identity is performative, Martin Stokes indicates that music and musical performance define and reinforce cultural differences of ethnicity, nationalism, and class. This happens via ‘conscious unchanging patterns of recognitions of geographical areas vis-à-vis the understanding of people’s identities’. His text considers how aspects of musical expression (of style, mode of practice, and genre) combine to underline social identity of specific milieus. The text explores this notion by asking how, and to what extent, music is utilised by persons and communities to *emplace* territories through and even beyond immediate geographical boundaries (Stokes 1994: 3-5). There is also the argument that music does more than merely represent the

practitioners. Stokes suggests that music is a powerful tool for the sustenance of societal values, social and political order, which in turn feed the discourse on authenticity and tradition, nationalism and nationhood, ethnicity and regionalism, and, by extension, the local versus the global. The book covers a range of parts of the world—from countries in Europe, Asia, South America, and the Middle East. In relation to this thesis, I find Stokes' argument about music's capacity to (re-) emplace territories relevant. So, for instance, through the embedded musical arts practices (song, instrumentation, and dance) and languages, Nollywood soundtracks present its audience with an opportunity to own and connect with the Nigerian cultural space. The target audience's ability to 'take ownership' is proof that music can be used to reconstruct identity and re-emplace territories (explored further in chapters 3 and 4).

Finally, identity is mutable. This notion has been confirmed by Gerd Baumann whose book *Contesting Culture* (1996) discusses the different ways ethnic groups in the London Borough of Southall articulate and change identity. Among the interesting things about Baumann's work is his choice of case study—Southall. The borough is made up of people of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds who are engaged daily in forms of cultural assimilation and resistance. On the basis of multi-ethnicity, the demography of Southall is akin to the various ethnicities that make-up present-day Nigeria. Baumann could easily have concentrated his efforts on a single ethnic group of Southall. Rather, he opted to cover the five prominent ethnic groups, which include the Sikhs, Irish, Hindus, Afro-Caribbeans, and Muslims. His argument is that focusing on a particular group inevitably leads to a very narrow understanding of identity formation processes and, ultimately, essentialism. Put simply, the identity of individuals is always under negotiation and is, at best, an approximation. Beyond individuals, this manner of negotiation is capable of shaping and reshaping the identity of ethnic groups or 'communities'. Baumann's approach has inspired me to consider how humans—as agents of cultural transmission and assimilation—might interact to shape identity in Nollywood film music.

In all, if we accept that the identity we pursue in this study is by humans, for humans, and with humans then we need to open up the enquiry to embrace the activities of mainstream Nollywood film music practitioners working as both 'self-in context' and 'community'. The analytical chapters will deepen the discourse by examining sameness

and difference at local and global levels. This consideration has potential to reveal varying perspectives to the ‘Nigerianness’ of Nollywood film music. Exploring the efforts of non-Nigerians working with Nigerians in, say, an international co-production also offers a tangible framework for theorising that spectrum of identity. At this juncture, further arguments and formulations about Nollywood film music identity will benefit from a review of scholarly texts on film and film music.

1.9 Review of related literature

This section has two parts: relevant essays from non-Nollywood film music studies and, more specifically, the literature on Nollywood film music. Indeed, the preponderance of publications on non-Nollywood film music provides some context for developing propositions and counter-arguments about the practice in Nollywood.

Scholarship on non-Nollywood film music

The study of music and the moving image is replete with publications and theories of aspects that range from the creative and business processes to listening practices, reception, history, and structure. Many consider Claudia Gorbman’s *Unheard Melodies* (1987) seminal to this area of musicology. In this most fascinating and fundamental text, Gorbman’s methodical approach explains how music works to shape our understanding and perception of plot (or narrative) in films. My analytical approach to Nollywood film music is, in part, aided by her work including such notions as ‘diegesis’. Unlike Booth (2008), Faulkner (2005), and Cooke (2010), Gorbman’s work does not feature interviews and oral accounts of case study films and their respective film music composers. Rather, the book sets out to answer questions such as ‘What is music doing in the movies, and how does it do it?’ (1987: 2). Likewise, I have applied both questions to my own research, and it has led to very interesting results such as the centrality of the human (singing) voice and prefiguring in Nollywood film music. Using the tools of semiotic narratology, Gorbman also offers compelling analyses of the interaction between music and image. Readings of films such as *All About Eve* (1950), *Blue Angel* (1930), *Citizen Kane* (1941), *Mildred Pierce* (1945), and *The Jazz Singer* (1980), serve as source materials for discussing the function of music on film. Whilst providing the historical transition from silent to sound film, the author addresses the psychological functions of music on film, including, but not limited to, the interpretive: of music and how it offers ‘anchorage’ to combat possible ambiguities of

visual cues (1987: 55). She also assesses the anthropological perspective when she argues that music evokes a sense of collective identity through its ancient ties to ritual and creates an ‘untroublesome social subject’ by weakening defences against ‘fantasy structures’, and thereby *sutures* the spectator's consciousness into the narration (1987: 57-58). The discourse on functionality is advanced by the concept of the diegesis—a word that is credited to Plato, the philosopher. Diegesis is ‘the narratively implied world of the actions and the characters’ (1987: 21). The term links Gorbman’s work to the broader field of narrative studies, a subject of inquiry in various interpretive disciplines, from literary criticism to music analysis, and even to the practice of law. She also argues that music can be analysed using ‘three codes’ or systems into which signs are organised. They are, the *Pure*, the *Cultural*, and the *Cinematic* musical codes. Elsewhere, and as a defence, Gorbman presents a counter argument to Adorno’s and Eisler’s criticisms of the earliest ‘rules’ of writing music for films, which is credited to Max Steiner. Towards the book’s end, she explores methodological problems via an analysis of *Zero de Conduite* (1933), which primarily concerns how to ‘quote’ a film. Two standard ways are proposed, namely: (1) present the dialogue with a verbal description of the music, and (2) present score samples along with still shots. All in all, Gorbman's approaches to the interaction between music and narrative at different levels suggest new and interesting directions with clear and accessible exposition and demonstration of basic principles of signification, especially in a medium where the dual nature of ‘the sign’ as envisioned by Saussurian linguistics lends itself to semiotic analysis. Some of the terminologies in my thesis have been drawn from Gorbman’s text, and my analyses in chapters Three and Four are approached using her recommended steps.

For more about approaches to Hollywood film sound, I turn to Cooke’s (2010) text, *The Hollywood Film Music Reader*. My interest in this book was motivated by its title, particularly because I thought it would ‘reveal’ the identity of Hollywood film sound, which might in turn be a working ‘model’ for exploring same in mainstream Nollywood. I was also curious to know what methodology the author may have employed. To date, I’m not certain that the text accomplishes what the title suggests. In other words, the publication does not fundamentally *theorise* Hollywood film music. It is, no doubt, full of information on film music practice in America. And that information is more or less a three-part compendium of the history of approaches and

transitions, which we garner from the oral accounts and documented opinions of practitioners. At the very least, Cooke's anthology provokes (a renewed) interest in the movies cited. Like Booth (2008), which is discussed below, Mervyn Cooke skilfully annotates the insider accounts of practitioners, which reveal, among other things, how music is placed in Hollywood films. The knowledge of where and how to place music on film is one of the differences that the practice in Nollywood reveals (see chapter 2). My research mirrors Cooke's approach to oral evidence, which the recorded opinions of Nollywood film music practitioners offer as both exclusive and reliable information on their works as well as the creative intentions/processes in relation to identity (see attached audio and video files).

Gregory Booth's *Behind the Curtain* (2008) addresses music in Bollywood from a largely historical perspective. Overall, he treats Bollywood as a literary text and analyses it based on specific periods of production, events, situations, industry behaviours, and factors that aided, impeded, or determined development. The approach combines the oral accounts of Bollywood film music practitioners with data from ethnographic work to demonstrate how Hindi film music practice evolved over time. Broadly speaking, the history is presented in a bifurcated structure: 'Old Bollywood' and 'New Bollywood'. The author discusses nearly all aspects – from changing technology, music-making traditions, hierarchies, and remuneration, to issues of style, meaning, and creative intentions – which accentuate the industry's exploitations and explorations throughout the periods of transition. A website that offers the reader an opportunity to experience some of the audio examples gives depth to the research. This piece of work does not specifically address identity in Bollywood film music. However, it provides helpful ideas for carrying out similar ethnographic work on Nollywood film music: ideas such as what aspects of studio observations to focus on, what kinds of data/materials to engage with and request to see/have, and which practitioners to interview first and why.

Another interesting text is Robert Faulkner's (2005) *Music on Demand*. This book discusses Hollywood composers and their careers mainly from the fields of sociology and economics. It is replete with information about power, influences, opportunities, control of resources, and how the dynamics between filmmakers (whom he refers to as 'employers') and freelance film composers (employees) shape Hollywood. Faulkner's

methodology is akin to empirical studies within ‘new economic sociology’. His results are complemented by oral and material accounts of respected practitioners (filmmakers, film composers, directors, etc.) whose words summarise their perceptions and definitions of success and failure within the existing structures. Although my research does not explicitly focus on the careers and networks of Nollywood film composers and their clients, I have applied as well as challenged Faulkner’s interesting formulations on social organisations in the entertainment industry. The arguments show that, as with many things Nigerian, Nollywood operates an industrial process, which, in my opinion, probably requires a Faulkneresque but certainly a Nollycentric social theory. For example, whereas Hollywood practices an institutionalised vertical integration, my research reveals that Nollywood upholds an individualised vertical integration. To be clear, my research does not pursue the social theory of Nollywood film music practice. Yet I have taken an interest in understanding Nollywood’s linear business/organisational structure, specifically to highlight how it affects the identity of the resultant film music (see chapter 2).

I also found Mark Slobin’s *Global Soundtracks: Worlds of Film Music* (2008) very useful. His is a collection of perspectives of film music practice from several cultures of the world. Like Mera and Morcom (2009), the Slobin text advances arguments about approaches and processes, styles and ideology, as well as those ‘major and minor’ borrowings that happen in film music practices across different cultures. Such borrowings provoke thoughts about ‘influences’, which ‘open the ears to the ethnomusicology of film’ (Slobin 2008: 337). I particularly found the contributions of scholars such as Sue Tuohy, Abdalla Adamu, and Brenda Berrian both relevant and intriguing for the parallels that they raise in comparison to mainstream Nollywood. For example, in writing about Chinese ‘reflexive’ film tradition, Tuohy claims that ‘individual films delineate only two or three musical choices, such as whether to compose revolutionary music [...] or decadent “yellow” music’ (Tuohy 2008: 185). This point is fascinating because Nollywood faces something similar but not exact. Nollywood actually ties certain musical genres to certain film genres (discussed in chapter 2). So, whereas Chinese films offer a very narrow ambit of choice of *style* of composition, Nollywood’s narrow compass lies within *genre* categorisation and ideology. Tuohy also claims that the many Chinese dialects, which are ‘mutually unintelligible’ and ‘favoured by different groups of [Chinese] people’, create the

‘problem of spoken language’ in its film music (2008: 189). Again, Nollywood shares a similar problem, which it has arguably resolved via the use of Nigerian Pidgin English (see chapter 2). Finally, Tuohy concludes by talking about how what is essentially ‘foreign’ is ‘embedded within the tradition of Chinese reflexive film’ (ibid. 204). This notion is also palpable in the thoughts and approaches of some Nollywood film composers who try to negotiate both ‘local’ and ‘foreign’ characteristics in their soundtracks (see chapter 4).

Another good contribution to the Slobin text is Adamu’s article on soundtrack in Kanywood (Nigeria’s Hausa film industry). Adamu’s article provides details of how Kanywood applies music in its films. My research shows that Kanywood’s approaches contrast with the practice in Nollywood. This distinction also helps the argument that I present later, which is broadly about why and how mainstream Nollywood is perceived to be more ‘nationalistic’ than Kanywood. Finally, there is Brenda Berrian’s text, which discusses ‘the narrative point of view’ of music in Palcy’s and Deslaurier’s films. She maintains that both music and lyrics ‘function as commentary’ in the plot’s development, and that this approach is ‘a stylistic feature of French African film’, which reveals ‘how music accompanies oral storytelling’ (2008: 302). Brenda’s observation echoes my earlier arguments about prefiguring in Nollywood films and how it is embedded in indigenous knowledge (Sylvanus 2012). This thought is made clearer in chapter 3 where I discuss the articulation of local film music identity using one of the case study films.

Finally, the search for uniqueness in film music traditions led me to Mera and Burnard’s *European Film Music* (2006). This book features essays from several (European) film music scholars on the film music practice of different European countries. The book aims to show that European and, at least, American (Hollywood) film music and approaches to film sound are distinguishable and different. Most of the essays are rather scientific in approach, and each contributor argues from the point of view of their respective (European) nationalities and traditions. In my view, the ‘differences’ in perspectives and contexts do not quite allow for the emergence of a unitary homogenous identity of European film music, to which its American ally (or any other film/film music tradition) may be compared. There is a supposition that the reader is familiar with the case study films, which the various authors cite. More so, it appears

that the identity of European film music is as multidimensional as the cultures of the member nations that make up Europe. The book is broadly structured in two: going from general issues (of problems and prospects) to the specific (of certain films and soundtracks). In all, specific and interesting thoughts on European film music come to the fore. For example, Vernon and Eisen suggest that the narrative of a European film can be disregarded in order that the soundtrack may assume a life of its own. In other words, the soundtrack does not need to be loyal to the plot or moving image. This is quite intriguing, especially in relation to how music functions in mainstream Hollywood and Nollywood films. I have also contrasted their postulation with Nollywood's use of music as a prefiguring tool. My research thus shows that music rarely 'takes on a life of its own' in mainstream Nollywood. In comparison, the force of prefiguring not only deconstructs the aesthetics of film music in Nollywood but also motivates my formulation of shades of identity (discussed later). In all, the publication serves as a foundational text for theorising (the) identity in/of European film music.

Scholarship on Nollywood Studies

The emerging body of scholarly writing about African cinema in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries greatly focuses on the advent and activities of Nollywood (for example, Adesanya 2000; Haynes 2000; Larkin 2004; Jedlowski 2010; Sylvanus 2012; Krings and Okome 2013; Ugochukwu 2013). And the works of these and other scholars have helped to erect and sustain a young discipline called Nollywood Studies.

Writing on Nollywood films

Pierre Barrot's *Nollywood: Le Phénomène Vidéo au Nigeria* (Nollywood: The Nigerian Video Phenomenon) (2005) is among the earliest detailed scholarly works on Nollywood. It considers the Nigerian video production franchise within the context of African cinema, theatre, TV productions and popular literature. It outlines its development and suggests possible influences from foreign creative and cultural industries such as Hollywood. The first part of the book is about Barrot's methodology: the application of a global and historical approach. His insightful observations of the development of Nollywood are supported by his years as a journalist and regional audio-visual French attaché in Nigeria. The second part, whose title translates as 'Nollywood invades Africa', complements the first with five chapters with various contributions from mostly African authors, which focus on representation and the

reception of Nigerian video films on the African continent. Both parts are linked together by one of the distinctive features of the book: a well-presented and useful compilation of a selection of ten video films produced between 2000 and 2004, plus a conclusion to each chapter giving a foretaste of the eighty films quoted in the book. This blend of reflection and direct contact with the material discussed, coupled with the pictures grouped at the heart of the book, offers a user-friendly approach to the vast scale of Nigerian cinema productions. It ends with an appendix containing three more articles of secondary interest, and a list of the Nigerian video films mentioned. From the point of history, Barrot's text is useful as complementary research to this study. However, it does not discuss Nollywood soundtracks in any detail—let alone provide evidence of 'possible foreign influences' in its film music.

Some other scholars of Nollywood feature films have bemoaned the emphasis on glamour over substance (Adesanya 2000: 49), the idolisation and/or pervasion of wealth and violence (Okwori 2003; Ukah, 2003), and the reproduction of oppressive female stereotypes (Garritano 2000). In general, critics argue that Nollywood lacks the ideological mission that could make it relevant to political and social transformation in Africa (Lawuyi 1997:477–78). But Jonathan Haynes (2006) has disputed Lawuyi's position in a cogent response to those who would condemn Nollywood as politically irrelevant. Haynes examines the various factors that play upon Nollywood video producers and production, including a National Censor's Board that constantly bans videos that it finds politically subversive and/or socially irresponsible. In other cases where the occult is promoted in films, the Board acts on the basis of 'rebranding' the country's image in order that the focus might be on what is culturally plausible. Haynes's postulation is rather multifaceted and wide-ranging. In general, Haynes argues that assessing the social significance of Nollywood videos demands that scholars rethink well-established assumptions (and by that he is referring to Euro-American centred theoretical dogma) about what constitutes 'the political' in African cinema such as Nollywood. In furtherance of the need to rethink well-established theories, my research has critically engaged with certain theoretical constructs about mainstream Hollywood and how they do not fit into Nollywood. Logically, politics and the notion of social significance are not far removed from the matter of identity, which I discuss in chapter 2.

Anthropologist Brian Larkin is another scholar with publications about the Nigerian movie industry.¹⁰ His article *Hausa Dramas and the Rise of Video Culture in Nigeria* (2000) offers both an historical and analytical study of cinema processes and productivity within the forces of public and private interests. This article is actually foundational to his subsequent publication on media piracy, which, according to Larkin is based in ‘unofficial, decentralised networks’, and that the film industry thus ‘represents the migration of these networks into the mainstream’ (Larkin 2000: 212). Although Larkin focuses on Hausa videofilms, piracy is also commonplace in Nollywood. But unlike Nollywood films, pirating Nollywood soundtracks requires a market for it, which presently does not exist.

But Brian Larkin is not the only scholar who has focused on Hausa videofilms. In *Transgressing boundaries: Reinterpretation of Nollywood films in Muslim Nigeria* (2013), Abdalla Adamu discusses how Hausa videofilm (Kanywood) producers ‘overcome their cultural and religious prejudices’ in their efforts to rework Nollywood films for consumption in northern Nigeria (Adamu 2013: 288). He approaches the issue by examining the processes of ‘appropriation’ and ‘adaptation’ and how they are applied in the ‘remake’ of popular Nollywood films. The article focuses on an exemplar Hausa film called *Auduga* (meaning ‘cotton’) (2004), which was directed by Abba El-Mustapha. This film is a remake of a 2003 Nollywood film called *Dangerous Twins*, which was directed by Tade Ogidan. Adamu contends that the producers of *Auduga* follow a style of appropriation that he calls the Hollywood-Bollywood-Kanywood strategy. According to Adamu, the appropriation technique seeks to emphasize the ‘Islamicity of the plot elements and to distinguish itself from the appropriated Nollywood film’ (Adamu 2013: 297). In *Auduga*, this is realised by introducing the laws of Islamic inheritance, which provides that under sharia law, a non-Muslim cannot inherit property from a Muslim. Adamu also asserts that this approach strongly imitates Bollywood filmmakers’ style of remaking Hollywood films, which involves developing the original by ‘adding emotions, extending the narrative, and including songs’ (2013: 297). Apart from ‘reading’ the film’s plot, Adamu’s work benefits from interviews and conversations with the producer of *Auduga*. The combination of authorial (producer’s) comments on the creative processes of *Auduga*, and the analysis

¹⁰ For more, see Larkin (2000, 2001, and 2004).

of the film's 'cultural disjunctions' together explain why early Nollywood-Kanywood hybrid films with 'themes of national unity were not well received by the Muslim Hausa' (Adamu 2013: 300). In all, although Nollywood's *Dangerous Twins* speaks morally to an urban audience across Nigeria, the desire to localise and Islamise its content remains central to the 'guiding principles' of reinterpretation by Kanywood filmmakers—a conscious declaration of Islamic values and identity. Of this, Adamu remarks:

Considering the differences in social, cultural, and religious mind-sets and beliefs that divide Muslim and Christian videofilm producers in Nigeria, a Nollywood film can only be *redirected* rather than remade by Muslim producers. That way, it is not just remade, but “born again” for a different audience (Adamu 2013: 301).

The above thus confirms my earlier assertion that whereas Nollywood is more nationalistic in its portrayal, Kanywood is firmly rooted in ethnic sensibilities. There is one other related work by Adamu (2008), which addresses soundtrack in Kanywood of northern Nigeria. It is the first time any academic document would discuss music in relation to an ethnic Nigerian film industry. This is so because there are, as yet, no (ethno-) musicological writings on, for instance, the Yoruba film industry (also called Yoruwood). For this reason, the next review begins with Adamu's (2008) publication, which serves to corroborate the distinguishing assertions in film music publications about the national film industry, Nollywood.

Writing on Nollywood film music

Adamu's text on Kanywood film music is particularly important as a contrast to my (2012) work on mainstream Nollywood soundtrack. This contrast does not only reside in the nomenclature or pan-ethnic and pan-Nigerian representations of the film industries that each author examines. Very significant distinctions come to the fore from point of approach to film music and musical styles/practice, genre ideology, perception, and cultural/religious biases. For instance, I explore the strategic application of song, which favours the art of prefiguring in Nollywood rather than Adamu's song and dance routines (*rawa da waka*) and themes of Kanywood productions. That said, Adamu's only work on Kanywood film songs appears to have been triggered by comments in Larkin's (1997) article: '*Indian films and Nigerian lovers: Media and the creation of parallel modernities*'. In the article, Larkin discusses the influence of India's Hindi music on Hausa media culture as well as how it has

affected the people's taste and other related cinematic sensibilities. He stresses that the informal distribution channels, which rely heavily on Lebanese and Indian traders has popularised Indian films, and the media contents have inevitably suppressed the Hausa local culture. As a result, he asserts that the musical import of such a culture has had far reaching effects on the recipient (Hausa) culture. That impact is responsible for the distinguishable characteristics of Kanywood productions, including, but not limited to, taste and audience expectations and perceptions, musical style and function within the film, and so on.

Responding, Adamu (2008) assesses Larkin's statements about this super-imposition of media culture from a technological and sociological viewpoint. He juxtaposes the borrowed Hindi film music culture with the hitherto existing indigenous Hausa counterpart to establish the premise for a virile mass culture assimilation and/or annihilation in Hausa videofilm soundtracks. Adamu examines how aspects of the creative soundtrack processes were overturned by new and available technology, as well as the challenges and prospects of transitions induced by adaptations that are predicated on cultural similarities and appropriations between India and the Hausa people. Specifically, he argues that the 'beheaded' traditional Hausa music genre is grounded on (1) the sudden collapse of patronage by its aristocrat class; (2) an unfavourable market for traditional music; (3) the advent and acceptance of the electronic keyboard, which presented local musicians with a new and expanded sonic palette; and (4) the overwhelming appealing power of Hindi music as used in Indian films.

In terms of commodification, Adamu observes that Hausa video film soundtracks are released as a precursor to their respective films. My understanding is that this industrial behaviour is borrowed from Bollywood, and the consumers of Kanywood productions endorse it. Adamu explains that the approach serves a dual purpose: firstly, it is a form of advertisement for the forthcoming film, and secondly, funds from the sales of the soundtracks are needed to cover expenses, such as the printing of the dust jackets. Sylvanus (2012) indicates this approach in mainstream Nollywood when the '*I go chop your Dollar*' soundtrack was released ahead of its film *The Master* (2005). For the first time, a Nollywood soundtrack sold more than the film; yet this practice was, unfortunately, short-lived in the industry. The reasons had less to do with the business

model than with cultural factors such as the widely held notion that music, drama, and dialogue are an inseparable whole. Because Nollywood soundtracks are more or less sung synopses of their respective films, it is logical that releasing the film songs ahead could lower or discourage the demand for the films. Another reason is that Nollywood films are not structured to feature song-and-dance acts that might require music. On the other hand, the Kanywood audience is served the film music ahead to provoke their imagination and expectations about what the dialogue and dance routines might be. This approach reflects a cultural and business alignment in Kanywood. I argued in an earlier study that it is possible to accept that the release of film songs as audio track or music video in Nollywood was only experimental (Sylvanus 2012). However, the convention has not gained enough momentum to either compare or compete favourably with what is obtainable in Kanywood – something that has been put down to the differences in ‘operational principles’ between Nollywood and Kanywood marketers, composers, and producers (Adamu 2013: 299).

With specific reference to Nollywood, my work addresses a topic that had previously received no scholarly attention. The text advances debates in two fields: (a) Nollywood studies, and (b) popular music as film music in Nollywood. It explains how (southern Nigerian) popular music is utilised in Nollywood films. It also reveals the developmental curve of the ‘national’ film industry’s production from 1991 to 2011, as well as how key human and material agencies contributed to redefine and refine Nollywood film music. The book’s overall goal is a classification of Nollywood film music and its diachronic development. The author surveyed about 60 films (among them a number of Nollywood “classics”), eight of which were scrutinised in more detail. A number of Nigerian film music composers were interviewed. Particularly rewarding is the discussion on the relationship of ‘prefiguring’ and the role of songs/song-texts (and oral literature/folklore)¹¹. To advance this argument, the author relied on a theoretical model he developed and calls the Critical Orientation and Practice (COP) model. This model is non-specific in nature and may be applied to all other film music studies wherein there is concern to ask whether a soundtrack possesses the potential to *seek* and *find* its target audience.

¹¹ It would be helpful to substantiate and develop this part of the argument a little bit more by referencing some of the scholarship on African oral literature (perhaps, Okpewho [1992] or Finnegan [2007]).

Specifically, by *critical orientation* I consider where the material (that is the combined musical import of each soundtrack) is ‘located’, and more importantly, whether or not the material *seeks* and *finds* its audience. The need to establish where the material is *located* is driven by the changing nature of ‘representation’ in Nollywood films from inception to date. The material is, for example, indigenously *located* if it is stylistically or morphologically (speaking of sound family) representative of the locale of the narrative. Also, the material *seeks* its audience by its strong musical persuasion (appeal) and consequently, *finds* its audience if such an appeal triggers a marketable demand for the soundtrack. This is not to say that the material can only *find* its audience from a commercial perspective. Indeed, the material can *find* its audience socially, morally, philosophically, politically, gender-wise, ideologically, and even technologically. According to the author, the commercial factor remained the strongest single denominator of change in approach to soundtrack processes (or trajectory) in Nollywood films after 1997.

On the other hand, by *critical practice* I consider both the predominant genre/style that is employed, what informs such creative choices and manner of application, as well as the changes and the reasons for such changes in approach over the period covered by this research. For instance, the overwhelming preference for highlife in Nollywood feature films from the late 1990s to date, further affirms how filmmakers have keyed into the musical taste of the Nigerian public to sell their movies and soundtracks. The highlife music genre is a unique soundtrack resource because its dynamism does not only reside in the aesthetics of its form and style but more so in its critical song-texts, which guarantees its development and narratological interplay in Nollywood videofilms. Together, the application of both methods of enquiry produces a clear path for understanding and appreciating the trends in about two decades of film music practice in Nigeria. Although this study is primarily limited to the soundtracks in the examined Nollywood feature films, I endeavour to present the synopsis of each film as pretext for the corresponding inferences. The methodology is valid for this material as it is based on an approach somewhat akin to grounded theory where it is the data that drives the methodology.

In all, the COP model reveals three distinguishable epochs in Nollywood film music practice. They are: The Mimetic (1992-1996), Pragmatic-Expressive (1997-2009), and

Opaque (2010 and beyond) eras. Again, all these are thought-provoking extrapolations that give thrust to the historical perspective of film music practice in Nollywood. Although the COP model was valuable to the previous study, it was not immediately possible to ascertain whether or not soundtrack productions from Kanywood and Nollywood bear similarities in, say, the collaborative process, business, training, and structure. The current research on Nollywood soundtracks neither focuses on its history and taxonomy nor its comparison with any ethnic film industry in Nigeria. Instead, the study focuses on establishing the distinguishable attributes that give mainstream Nollywood film music its identity. As well, the study examines evidence of foreign influences and how film music composers and musicians conceptualise identity. This is necessary to do because the industry is guided by the need to ‘align’ with what most Nigerians (including industry practitioners) indicate as the ‘global standards’ in soundtracks. Among other interests, the study aims to determine whether or not Nollywood soundtracks are exclusively ‘Nigerian’ in character: relying solely on Nigerian music and a unique style of application. Significantly, the present study references the 2012 text on the matter of stylistic application, which is an important marker of identity. Generally, the current research advances arguments about the music and musicians in and of mainstream Nollywood production and processes—all in relation to the ‘shades of identity’.

Specifically, the current research differs from the former by focusing extensively on the industry’s unwritten procedures in the production of soundtrack. As discussed in the next chapter, mainstream Nollywood operates a unique and divergent film music making process. It is an industry that thrives on informality and very quick turnover of film projects and profits. This unique process largely plays out in a word-of-mouth tradition, which among other things, reveals: (a) the exclusion of the film director from the creative and collaborative process; (b) the conscious aversion for documenting transactions of film projects and commissions; (c) the overwhelming power of the filmmaker to decide cinematic contents (material and human); (d) the exclusion of royalties in the reward system; (e) the formulation and use of a Nolly-centric film music lexicon; (f) the irrelevance of a storyboard, temp-track, and film score; (g) the elevation of dialogue and vocal music over camera function; and (h) the broad underwhelming interest in sophisticated technology, which, in part, explains the relegation of quality in the pursuit of entertainment. To this end, the pathway to discerning and constructing

identity in Nollywood film music is process. The following chapter thus examines, discusses, and develops some of these thoughts following critical engagement with both human and material enablers of identity in Nollywood film music.

Chapter 2

Nollywood film music: Industry, identity, and integration

Mainstream Nollywood has championed an unprecedented cinematic revolution on the African continent since the early 1990s. This revolution has been made possible by its extensive output, its popularity, and unparalleled ability to reach remote and non-elite audiences (Mbamara 2005). To date, approximately 350 privately owned production firms carry out all productions (Ugochukwu 2013). One of the fascinating things about Nollywood is that it gives voice to an array of cultural views—beliefs, music, poetry and dance, and history: it essentially tells the Nigerian story the Nigerian way. For this reason, mainstream Nollywood film music is in itself the narration of both a unifying Nigerian musical culture and internal and external divisions about ideas and frontiers. Understanding the industry’s conceptualisation of identity thus requires that we problematise both the business and creative processes in order to know: what the place of word-of-mouth in Nollywood film music practice is, and how the outcome influences identity; how *the market*, which is based on consumption, competition, open social mobility, and individual achievement affects identity formation in Nollywood film music practice; why language is critical to Nollywood film music and, therefore, its identity; how money, power, and politics work to characterise Nollywood film music identity; whether or not the musical form of Nollywood soundtracks is unique enough to reflect a shared identity; how much of practitioners’ social identity—of professional and social experiences—are reflected in the identity of Nollywood film music; and how identity *changes* in an international co-production, especially given the power dynamics that very often characterise First World—Third World exchanges.

This thesis maintains that Nollywood film music is largely the product of informal practices and symbolic actions (discussed later). Many such actions are garnered through practitioners’ statements such as ‘This is the way we do things around here’ (Erowele 2015). Such a statement implies norms that insider-practitioners intuitively follow. In other words, their actions and inactions together signal and symbolise what is really valued in the industry. Taken together, these and other observations combine to both suggest and situate Nollywood film music productions within a differing operational space and structure. This chapter thus examines how identity is presently

perceived and conceptualised in mainstream Nollywood. Here, I argue that the perceived identity is constantly shifting; and that it subsists in the interplay of practitioners' divergent and intersecting creative intentions, available musical and technological resources, local and foreign influences, consumers' taste and expectations, the power dynamics between the executive producers/marketers, film directors, and soundtrack composers, as well as the prospects and limitations of Nigeria's musical culture. Accordingly, I put forward three schools of thought on Nollywood film music and its identity namely: The Traditionalist, the Temperate, and the Pro-Hollywood. I do so, in the interim, from exploring stakeholders' perspectives on identity both as a concept and commodity within Nollywood (section 2.7). Using case study films in subsequent chapters, I offer a more nuanced examination of these Schools and the contexts through which identity is performed.

For now, and as part of my findings, I establish that Nollywood's structure of film music production differs significantly from some other known cinema traditions of the world. This unique structure influences its film music identity. Later in this chapter, I probe the impact of Nollywood film genres, including those that incorporate recognisable attributes of other film genres into its film music genre.¹² In addition, the thoughts of local film music composers, as well as studio observations from fieldwork, are employed alongside the arguments on the role and importance of creative intentions, word-of-mouth interactions, money, social identity, power relations, structure, musical form, and language to the identity of Nollywood film music. Finally, I explore some of my research objectives and questions by relating data from fieldwork with literature about other film music traditions. In what follows, I present and discuss who the stakeholders of the film music industry are, their roles and hierarchy, what the existing (collaboration) structure is, and how that structure influences the final product.

2.1 Nollywood film music production: Stakeholders, structure, roles, and relations

In this section, I identify all those involved in the business and creative processes of Nollywood film music production. I also explain what their definitive individual roles

¹² Here, the excellent publication of Haynes (2016) is indispensable for its detailed history of Nollywood film genres: their development and evolution, critical analyses and comparative study, categorisation, labeling, ideology, as well as sustenance and audience reception.

are as well as how they interact in the collaborative process. By examining the stakeholders' working relationship, Nollywood's unique structure and hierarchy of practitioners emerges. This structure differs significantly from those found in, say, mainstream Hollywood and European film traditions (Figure 2.1). And in the following, I explain how this structural difference is critical to the perceived local identity.

Nollywood film music production team and their roles

Nollywood uses familiar designations to identify its human enablers within the production process. However, not all titles depict the function of the bearer in their entirety. For example, there exists someone called the Marketer whose full designation reads 'Executive Producer/Marketer' (EPM). By convention, a marketer strategises and promotes the sales of a product. However, in Nollywood the marketer (or EPM) is the equivalent of Hollywood's film producer and, perhaps much more. The EPM is usually the sole financier of film projects—a very powerful figure who controls nearly everything from decisions about: who to cast in the film; which composer to contract; what to pay the different members of the production team; to when the soundtrack should be submitted; what musical genre and style the soundtrack should possess; the language of choice for the lyrics; and, occasionally, where music should be laid on a film. As such, it is unsurprising that the EPM's interaction with the rest of the team is usually more monologue than dialogue.

The next group of stakeholders are the film director and film music composer.¹³ Fieldwork reveals that the film director is only responsible for coordinating the film's visual subjects and objects. Even so, the final decisions rest solely with the EPM, and there is very little room for compromise. In essence, the film director plays no part in the collaborative process and outcome of any locally made Nollywood soundtrack. This is a striking and astounding observation, particularly as it differs markedly from most director-led Euro-American processes. Specifically, all expectations about the soundtrack flow directly from the EPM to the composer. As such, and to paraphrase most of the practitioners that I interviewed, what is termed a 'discussion' with the EPM

¹³ For the purpose of this thesis, the list of Nollywood's established composers includes Stanley Okorie, Austin Erowele, Shadrach John, Mike Nliam, and Chiemere Emejuobi. Of this category, only Sammie Okposo has quit the practice. Other less well-known composers include Maxwell Chidiebere Leonard, George Nathaniel, Kayode Dada, and Chimex Alex.

is more or less an instruction to the composer. Basically, the role of the film composer in Nollywood is to realise the EPM's prescribed creative (musical) intentions, however flawed. The composer's opinion seldom counts, except in rare cases where the film genre is itself a hybrid.¹⁴

In addition to the aforementioned stakeholders is the film sound editor who works more closely with the director than with the composer. The sound editor performs many audio-related tasks including laying the soundtrack onto the film – a role that is arguably reserved for the composer in some other film traditions. This is the status quo in Nollywood because many of the composers either do not have the technology to lay soundtrack onto film, or they lack the know-how, or both. As a consequence of having the sound editor in this role, the art of prefiguring becomes a subtly contested privilege between the sound editor, the EPM, and the composer. In effect, this collaborative demarcation between the sound and music professionals encourages the control of music by the former in ways that promote prefiguring. Put simply, the process drives the aesthetic construct of Nollywood soundtracks.

Others in the production team include singers, recording studio managers, and audio engineers who are basically the support staff and financial responsibility of the film composer. Generally, the EPM expects the film composer to write, perform, and record the soundtrack alone. This demand implies that the industry expects a film composer to possess a singing voice. This, too, is another marked difference in comparison to its Euro-American counterpart wherein composers may not necessarily be singers. Erowele remarks:

To belong to the industry, you must be more of a singer/songwriter. You must be talented especially in the ability to visualise the script [plot] because [until recently] you only get the script not the preview [rough-cut] of the film. (Austin Erowele, interview with author, 10 August 2015)

For this reason, EPMs seem acutely aware of how each film composer sounds in song. So, to ensure compliance, some of them listen for the composer's own singing voice in the soundtrack. What the above suggests is the existence of some hierarchies and structures that guide the production process.

¹⁴ Hybrid film genres are those that show inter-generic or trans-generic attributes. For instance, the presence of attributes of a Horror film genre in, say, Comedy (see Section 2.4).

Hierarchies and the structure of production

It is my theory that the hierarchy of Nollywood film music production is somewhat linear and less complicated than, for instance, Hollywood's (see Figure 2.1). The head of the production team is always the EPM. Although there is a film director, the next important person to the EPM, in context of the soundtrack, is the film composer. As already stated, the film director has no responsibility in the film music process. In reality, most composers and directors never get to know each other. The sound editor, singers, and other audio studio personnel make up the lowest tier of this hierarchy. This simple one-directional production structure has merits and demerits. On the one hand, it eliminates the bureaucracy of extensive and rigorous collaborations that exists where too many persons are involved. It also saves production time, which is very important to the EPM. On the other hand, not much creative freedom is encouraged as composers merely work to the EPM's terms. Also, the turnover time affects quality negatively because works are often hurriedly done. These issues encourage thoughts on the tension between 'quality' and 'the popular', and how they may be negotiated. The fact is that this hierarchy and structure is not going to change any time soon because it is remotely guided by what Haynes (2000; 2010) describes as Nollywood's 'cultural value and politics of mass entertainment'. Therefore, it is logical to conclude that the industry has taken a stance regarding the aforesaid tension. My view is that that Nollywood stance privileges 'the popular' over 'quality'.

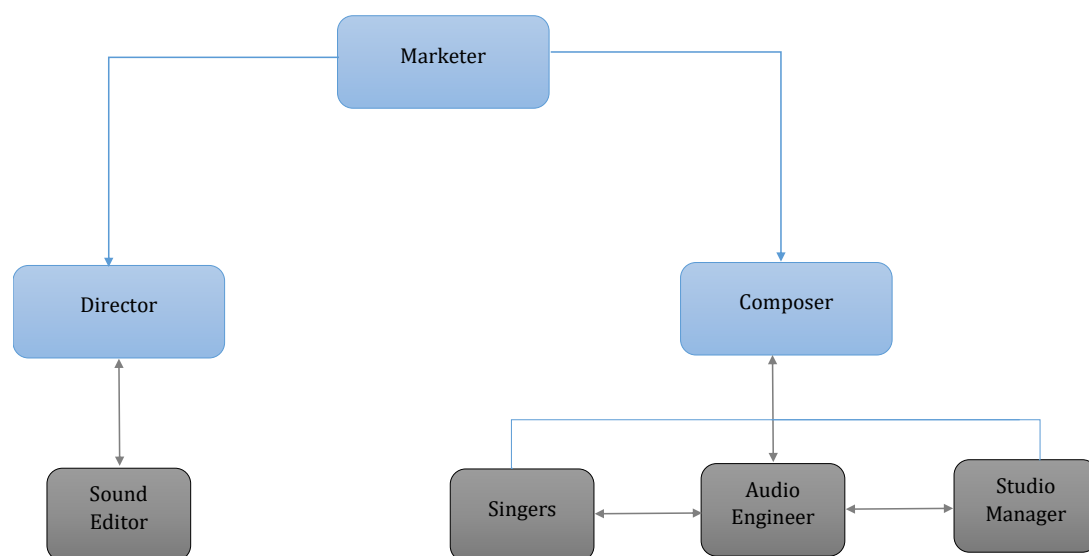


Figure 2.1. The Nollywood film music structure of production

The Nollywood film music production structure is different on paper and in practice to its Euro-American counterpart. Specifically, it contrasts significantly with the auteur-driven model of Europe and, perhaps, Hollywood. According to Menne (2011: 36), the auteur theory argues that ‘the unity of a film—its totality of decisions—must be rooted in the director’s agency’. In other words, the film director is the major creative force in a motion picture and is considered the ‘author’ of the movie. Both the European production model and the complexities of collaboration in Hollywood give considerable (creative) influence to the film director. By my scrutiny, Nollywood’s organisational/production model is both culturally specific and relevant to Nigeria. Four main reasons support this position statement.

First, the ‘absence of a founding philosophy’ or bureaucratic process by a body of filmmakers to fashion out Nollywood’s agenda means that the industry would need to adopt a bottom-up conceptual approach to cinema. This grassroots/streetwise approach would work to guarantee a production process that thrives largely in a non-formalised (word-of-mouth) tradition. This then feeds the second reason – ‘appropriation’. As an industry, Nollywood is a socio-culturally responsive phenomenon. This implies that the customs, laws, values, and expectations of its host culture and people primarily dictate its cinematic contents and business strategies.¹⁵ Accordingly, film and film music projects were and still are seen through the prism of folklore and theatre, where, like the leader of the cultural troupe, Nollywood’s EPM is the be-all and end-all. There is, therefore, no room for a parallel leader in the guise of an artistic (or film) director. In other words, stakeholders appropriate the collaborative roles and also reinvent the observable functionality of human agency and music in folklore and drama. They also appropriate indigenous modes of transacting business, particularly word-of-mouth commissions, payment by cash, and the conviction that royalties to film composers is both alien and untenable.

The force of appropriation connects the third reason: ‘power’. Nollywood’s existing organisational structure essentially treats the composer as a marginal rather than strategic component of the film project. For instance, the EPM prizes the actor well

¹⁵ This is evidenced in over 200 Nollywood films that I have watched, and the oral accounts of stakeholders. The film and film music themes of such productions specifically depict the way of life and forms of recreation/entertainment of the locals.

above the film composer; and will likely risk contacting and contracting an outright novice for the soundtrack:

In terms of musical quality, for instance, these guys [EPMs] are so cheap that they would rather go to some roadside studio and get something knocked together, instead of coming to people who are experienced, and who can give them something good. So, you hear some soundtracks, which sound like...somebody is just hitting tins and then you hear some very scary voice singing, you understand. So, it saddens me. And that is where this criticism is coming from; that's the angle it is coming from. I bet you will not watch any of Stanley's stuff [work], my stuff, or Austin's stuff, and not see some form of quality, whilst retaining the local content. (Shadrach John, interview with author, 6 August 2015)

The ability to wield power flows from the fourth reason – ‘money’. In this context, the EPM is often the sole financier of the project. Unlike the European or Hollywood film director who often has to account for film project funds from sponsors, Nollywood's EPM owns all profits/losses and reports to nobody. Money is therefore a critical reason negotiation of and around soundtrack are tied to the number of theme songs per film since, according to Erowele (2015), ‘the more [the] theme songs, the more [the] money’. This factor has, together with the urge to imitate how music functions in indigenous storytelling practices, ensured that Nollywood film music does not adopt the long-form narrative tonal model. The organisational structure alone, however, does not fully reveal every detail leading up to the final soundtrack. A deeper understanding follows from examining aspects of the creative process.

2.2 Identity via a non-formalised tradition: A divergent creative process

Whereas it can be argued that Hollywood soundtrack productions are more expensive, less hurried, and structurally and aesthetically detailed, Nollywood's, on the other hand, are transacted orally, very cheap, and completed over a remarkably short time (often between two days and a week). Structurally, Nollywood soundtracks lack homogeneity: the musical compositions do not develop thematically from start to finish in the films. Many of such film songs are strophic in form and tonality, and strategically applied to scenes without regard for the music's rhetorical function and potential for continuity. Also, Nollywood film music rarely synchronises with the moving image, and there is no conscious effort to emphasise diegetic and non-diegetic narrativity.¹⁶ All locally

¹⁶ See for example, *Bonds of Love* (1996), *The Master* (2005), *Ekaette Goes to School* (2014), and *Native Fowl* (2014). These and similar mainstream Nollywood films can be seen online via such outlets as Iroko TV. I should caution that Iroko TV streams films from many sources including ‘New Nollywood’ – the parallel industry to the one in focus here.

made Nollywood films have texted (vocal) music soundtracks that are originally and specifically composed for them. All the practitioners who spoke to me maintained that there are no musical scores or any other form of musical notation in use in Nollywood. Thus, the process requires that film songs be learned by rote. This exercise could take between a few minutes and some hours (Figure 2.2). Also, depending on the complexity of the song(s) as well as the disposition of the musicians, actual audio recording follows immediately. Erowele offers a detailed description of this process during a studio observation in Lagos.

First, I write my songs. Next, you come to this kind of studio [where] you have the engineers, singers, etc. and meet. And since I have prepared everything—without music score... I pre-record the songs. I have a [mobile] phone here that I record my songs [into]. I write the lyrics and I record the songs with its lyrics in my own voice. Once the singer comes, I give the singer the phone [and] she listens to it, takes the [written] lyrics to the [recording] booth to sing. Now, she knows the melody [and] she knows how it [the song] goes...she just knows the song! So, that's for the singer. My engineer is there. He is monitoring everything. He is the technical person. Also, he makes his own input too—his own suggestions, like, 'why don't you do it this way, and so on?' (Austin Erowele, interview with author, 10 August 2015)



Figure 2.2. Nollywood film composer, Austin Erowele in session with one of the female singers. *Photo credit:* author, 2015.

Similarly, I note that the backup singer does not work to any kind of ready-made backing track or programmed instrumentation. Rather, she works to a rendition in the composer's own voice (in this case, Erowele's), which is stored in a mobile phone (see video example 1 in the attached disc). All other aspects of the soundtrack are then realised in a different or the same studio using the keyboard and computer programming apps. Both the business and creative processes create a framework of something unique and fascinating about mainstream Nollywood film music (see Figure 2.3 below).

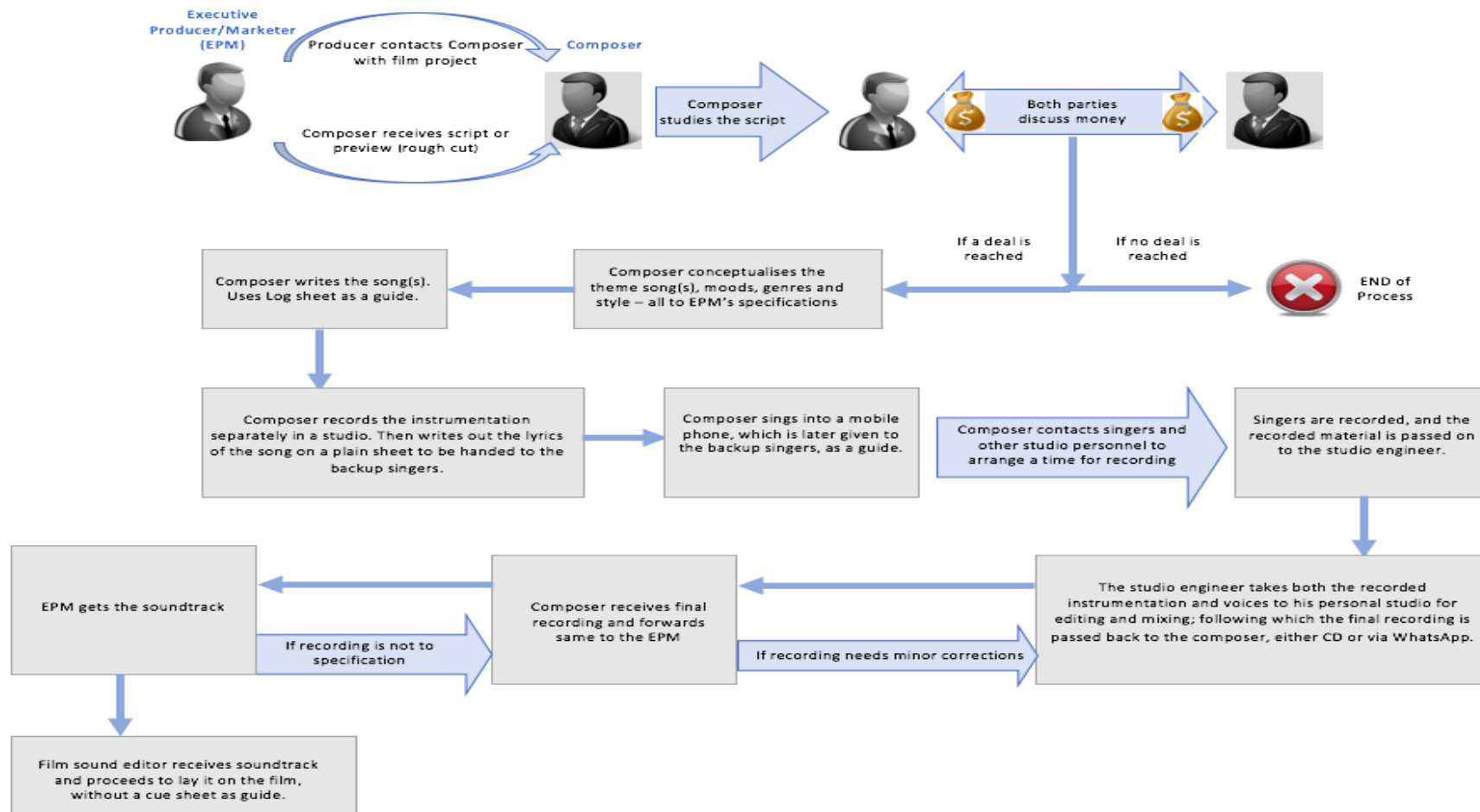


Figure 2.3. Mainstream Nollywood film music process chart

Taken together, it is not surprising that the industry's practitioners have developed a film music lexicon of their own—of expressions such as 'log sheet', which is clearly a bastardisation of Hollywood's 'cue sheet'. Basically, the Nollywood log sheet is a list of sound samples and effects to match the different moods in a film's plot, and is usually in the composer's handwriting (Figure 2.4).

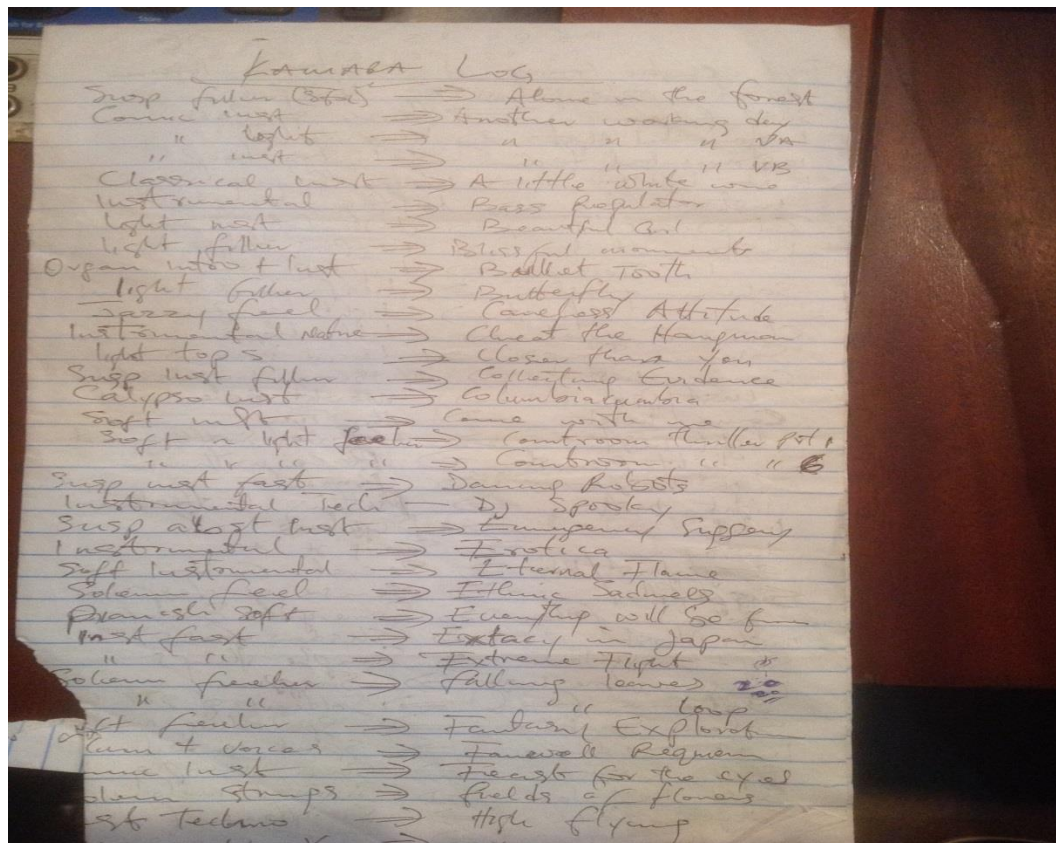


Figure 2.4. A sample log sheet ('Kamara Log') for use in a Nollywood soundtrack. Courtesy of Austin Erowele, 2015 (used with permission).

As noted earlier, both the sound editor and EPM actively engage in some decisions about the soundtrack, especially prefiguring and, therefore, spotting. Stanley Okorie, who is widely regarded as the 'Father of prefiguring in Nollywood', explains:

So, most times you make a song... for instance, you see [that] in a story a woman's husband dies in scene 14, and in scene 15 she is crying. You now make a song for scene 15 but the [sound] editor now goes ahead and lays it on scene 13. What has he done? He has already told the story of the film. It's not Stanley Okorie that [has done that], because the story of a film (even the foreign ones) must be about [the film]. So, what happens is that most times the [sound] editors—some callous editors—lay this song that is supposed to have been sung after the husband has died...they now lay it before the husband dies. So, that already tells you that the husband is going to die. [...] So that's number one. Most times you find out that what I get is the rough cut, it is not the final cut [of

the film]. So, I may make the music for scene 15. But by the time the [Executive] producer and director see the film, there is no more scene 15. So, that music made for scene 15, which they have paid me for, will not be wasted. They can play it at scene 12; after all, ‘the woman’s husband will die’. (Stanley Okorie, interview with the author, 1 August 2015)

Okorie raises a valid concern. Yet it can also be argued that the absence of a final sound map or cue sheet, which, according to David Sonnenschein, ‘details exactly what sounds are on which track at exactly what time’, paves way for editing assumptions because the Nollywood log sheet does not, in the Hollywood sense, ‘give accurate guidance to the sound editor and mixer’ (Sonnenschein 2001: 49). Thus, one way to curb the powers of ‘some callous [sound] editors’ might be to introduce cue sheets. But this may never happen because the notion of ‘cue sheet’ is unimportant in Nollywood. So, whereas a cue sheet reveals minute-by-minute details of sound–visual relationship/design, the (Nollywood) log sheet is a temporary cognitive expression of choices made at the earliest stages of composing for the film. To complicate matters, the log sheet is not also passed on to the sound editor.

Nollywood composers also uses the term ‘score/scoring’, which strictly means deciding where to place music on film—something called ‘spotting’ in Hollywood. So, even when Nollywood films show credits with the words ‘Music score by...’ it really does not refer to the existence of any orchestrated (notated) material. Shadrach John explains:

We are not trained. Everything you see is raw talent, [and] from experience. It is [a] very crude process for us over here. We do not do all this music notation thing. For example, I had a week to do this [referring to a soundtrack], and I wrote three songs, you know, three tracks for this. But we have people that read music. They can actually do these things [score for film]. But because of the money...a single project may only bring in \$1000; and don’t forget [that] you have to pay everyone that works with you [per project] from that money. So, they [those who studied music] think it’s an insult to their professionalism. (Shadrach John, interview with the author, 6 August 2015)

Similarly, I would add that preparing a film score requires ample time and attention to detail—two elements that the industry itself does not encourage.

My ethnographic research also reveals that the use of ‘source music’ is highly discouraged, in part, because of litigation in connection with the use of copyrighted materials. Also, ‘Temp tracks’ are not required and used in Nollywood because it is not the norm to sample the opinions of a select audience concerning prospective film

songs.¹⁷ So, whereas Hollywood employs temp tracks to commercially evaluate consumers' taste and expectation, Nollywood's evaluation is entirely based on the words of the EPM who relies more on intuition than actual empirical survey. This kind of behaviour bestows EPMs with considerable influence—an aspect that feeds the politics of film music identity (discussed in section 2.5). In all, I argue that the above observations, which arise from working within an oral tradition, combine to bestow Nollywood film music with its own inviolable spirit. It is, therefore, my theory that some differences exist between Nollywood and, say, mainstream Hollywood soundtrack processes. The table below summarises some of these differences.

Hollywood	Nollywood
The singing voice is not critical to film music	Film music must be sung. As such, all composers are required to be vocal performers
Music is fluid in tonal and formal organisation, and completed over several months	Music is completed in a few days, and long-form narrative tonal construction is not considered
Music is homogenous, and develops both thematically and seamlessly throughout the entire film	Music is strophic. And so, the integration of music into the narrative and visuals of films is not seamless
Music is not hyper-explicative because of the emphasis on picture composition and movement of camera	Music remains hyper-explicative because dialogue and drama are stressed above picture composition and movement of camera
Music is used both aesthetically and rhetorically to connect scenes where there is no dialogue	The aesthetical and rhetorical power of music is underused in scenes without dialogue
The strong attraction for music without words makes the soundtrack very gestural with emphasis on diegetic and non-diegetic narrativity	There is little or no appeal for purely instrumental music. Music is rarely in synchronisation with the moving image, and diegetic music is often non-existent
There is a strong tradition of reliance on source-music	Owing to issues of royalties, copyright infringement, and litigation, the use of source-music is strongly discouraged
Prefiguring is not critical to the narrative construction of the film score	Prefiguring is the norm, and its understanding and use is not the exclusive preserve of the film music composer
The composer works closely with the film's director to decide 'the right' music for the film	The film's director is totally ignored in the collaborative process. Instead, the composer works to the specifications of the executive producer/marketer (EPM)

¹⁷ For a fuller understanding of Temp tracks, and source music see, for example, Sadoff (2006).

Soundtrack reveals significant preference for underscoring	Soundtrack is linguistically marked by the use of texted (vocal) music in local languages – a behaviour that is culturally informed
When there is texted music, the soundtrack does not normally reference the specific storyline	Texted music is a sung synopsis (abstract or verbatim) of the storyline, and usually in vernacular and/or Nigerian Pidgin English
Music seems well-budgeted for and in terms of logistics and personnel	The budget for music is quite minimal because the composer is considered a dispensable rather than strategic constituent of the film
The creative environment and production line for soundtrack always involves a network of individuals from lyricists to arrangers/orchestrators, performers, and copyists	Production remains a single artist endeavour. As such, the cost of additional personnel is borne solely by the film composer
Film music draws materials from both Western Pop and Art music culture	Soundtrack materials draw mainly from Nigerian Pop music culture
Musical scores are produced for rehearsal and recording purposes	There are no musical scores. Instead, songs are learnt and recorded by rote
The cue sheet is an important component for the production team	The cue sheet is an unknown term/concept. Instead, composers create what they call a ‘log sheet’, which shows how sound samples are matched with moods
Temp tracks are indispensable and vital for initial presentations and polling of audience reception to the soundtrack	Temp tracks do not exist. Instead, the EPM’s intuition guides their assessment of what will appeal to the audience
The term ‘score’ does not refer to spotting	The term ‘score’ refers strictly to decisions about where to place music on the film
Film working titles are decided early and seldom change from script to final release	Film titles get changed as many times as the EPM decides; often without informing the composer
Film music is practised and refined within ‘an open system model of social structure’ (Faulkner 2005: 11)	Film music is practised and refined within word-of-mouth tradition and a non-institutionalised vertical integration

Table 1. Some differences between Nollywood and Hollywood film music traditions

Finally, locally produced Nollywood films usually disclose storylines through the camera’s ‘long shot’. This suggests that the camera is not the ‘narrator’ of plots: it does not ‘move’ in the manner of classic motion picture films (Ajibade 2013). Thus, I argue that this practice is both technological and ideological in orientation. I call this the ‘sanctity of immobility’ because it is an ideology that the industry’s approach to camera has sustained for two and a half decades. Technically, it is mimetic of a TV tradition

wherein the target audience is expected to ‘fill in’ from genuine socio-economic and cultural experiences. Like Nigerian TV productions, Nollywood particularly favours the ‘long shot’, ‘medium two-shot’, ‘close-up’, and occasional ‘three-shot’ camera styles.¹⁸ Following this manner of use of camera, Geiger (2012: 59) notes that Nollywood pictures ‘closely resemble the TV soap operas that in part influenced it’. Yet by avoiding series and serialisation, Nollywood movies also conform to the structure of film production. This is why Nollywood embraces both motion picture and television approaches, and is, therefore, a hybrid film industry (discussed in Haynes and Okome 2000).

By de-emphasising the role of the camera and emphasising both dialogue and vocal music, a conscious shift away from ‘seeing’ to ‘listening’ is established.¹⁹ This explains why one can ‘watch’ Nollywood films as much with the ears as with the eyes. The emphasis on listening is strongly reflective of an oral tradition, which not only demands that production processes are both participatory and representative, but also that the spoken word (whether as dialogue or texted music) is elevated above all other forms of (non-verbal) communication, including picture. This shift further implies that the soundtrack becomes hyper-explicative as a tool for revealing the story or ‘singing the film’ as commonly expressed within the industry.²⁰ The notion of singing the film (or prefiguring) is a core index for knowing how to read Nollywood film music (nuanced with film examples in Chapter 3). By comparison, this approach contrasts sharply with mainstream Hollywood where the soundtrack is not hyper-explicative. Instead, a greater premium is placed on the appeal of picture composition and the camera as narrative tools (Ramsaye 1926; Pichel 1946; Sontag 2001; and Zone 2007).

Overall, this section has focused on the industry’s business and creative processes with intent to advance our knowledge and understanding of Nollywood soundtracks from the perspective of divergence. As a result, many facts have emerged including: how film projects are contracted and executed; who the stakeholders are; where their

¹⁸ Thompson and Bowen’s *Grammar of the shot* (2009) is a useful book that explains everything from the different kinds of shots to the guidelines for their application.

¹⁹ This argument is well advanced in TV music texts such as Donnelly (2005).

²⁰ This expression became widespread from the mid 2000s following Nollywood’s use of texted (vocal) music to narrate the storylines of films. According to Shadrach John, local stand-up comedians invented and popularised the term to disparage Nollywood’s approach to film music.

allegiances rest and intersect; what the practitioners truly value; what guides and sustains the system; and how mainstream Nollywood film music process differs from other known traditions. The Nollywood business and creative processes have, among other things, guaranteed the preservation of its film music genres, their strophic musical forms, local languages, and the art of prefiguring. And so, I agree with Jeffery Geiger who, while discussing the political aesthetics and ‘shifting perceptions’ of Nollywood films, suggests that the industry does not need a ‘western auteur (a ‘Scorsese’) [model]’ because of the ‘distinctive styles of [executive producers/marketers] such as the Ejiro brothers, Izu Ojuwku, and [...] Tony Abulu’ (2012: 61). The nature and content of music in Nollywood films is thus shaped through two and half decades of inter-subjective agreements among stakeholders—leading to an enduring and unique process wherein the socio-cultural connotation, iconography, and signification of the music are derived. This process defines the film music in specific business, social, cultural, and organisational terms (discussed subsequently). In essence, Nollywood’s divergent creative process has worked and continually so for the local industry, especially regarding the character of its film music. This divergent creative process is given depth through a closer examination of attributes such as prefiguring, language, genre, and other identity markers of mainstream Nollywood film music.

2.3 Prefiguring in mainstream Nollywood

Prefiguring fundamentally involves the use of music to predict scenes in films. Methodically, film songs are placed just before the intended scenes and/or dialogue. However, there are instances when the songs and the presumably foreshadowed narrative happen concurrently. Nevertheless, whether prefiguring is wholly or partially applied, the viewer is never left in doubt of what is to follow. Prefiguring is akin to the art of storytelling in indigenous Nigeria—a process that encompasses considerable diversity in languages, songs, mimes, dances, and dramas. Indigenous story telling is nearly always a total theatre in which music serves a narratological function. Specifically, most folk tales and epics are rendered with their appropriate folksongs that serve either thematic/background functions or as narrative markers. Furthermore, the texts of such folk tunes may or may not wholly ‘foretell’ the tale but they are never considered irrelevant. Even in the case of unspoken tales, which may be expressed as mimes or danced dramas, the instrumental music functions intertextually to ‘voice’ the ‘unvoiced’. This takes the form of a position statement in line with Carolyn Abbate

who, while studying the musical narrative of nineteenth century European opera affirmed that ‘certain gestures experienced in music constitute a narrating *voice*’ (Abbate 1991: ix). This implies that what distinguishes narrative from music is not a succession of events but rather a story told by a storyteller, which she calls a ‘voice’. This ‘voice’ does not musically assume the role of miming the events, instead it is imitative of the narrator: a somewhat disconnection between the narrator and narrative, and subtle rhetoric. And this ‘negotiating’ ability of certain musical instruments (for example, *Oja* “the local transverse flute”, which is used in *Ekaette Goes to School*) is very potent in mainstream Nollywood productions (see chapter 3).

In an earlier work, I noted that prefiguring underpinned the evolution of a creative process with a strong desire to quit the relentless and monotonous use of preexisting music in Nollywood (Sylvanus 2012). I also stated that the momentum for change in approaches to mainstream Nollywood film music and, therefore, its identity, was provoked by a shift from mimesis to originality. What I did not add is that that change was also as a direct consequence of the changing narratives and film genres of mainstream Nollywood. In other words, as changes occurred in dialogue, themes, and locations of plots, so also did the music. To some of the practitioners, the music needed to *orchestrate* the cultural identity and narrative of every Nollywood film:

The music follows the trend of the stories [in mainstream Nollywood]. There was a time when the films were all comic—largely comedy; everybody went comedy [with] the music. There was a time it went epic, everybody went epic. There was a time it went glamour: big cars and big houses and phonetics, everybody had to go [that route]. Now, it has come local to the village—with the drunkard and the village child, and the street urchin and the miscreants, and the corrupt elders. So, it [the music] must go that way (Stanley Okorie, interview with the author, 1 August 2015).

‘The music must go that way’ unequivocally emphasises prefiguring as well as how important components of music genre, language, popular maxims, and indigenous practices combine to inform new and enduring ways of conceiving film soundtracks. For the records, it was Stanley Okorie who popularised prefiguring from the mid-1990s; and can rightly be dubbed ‘The Max Steiner of Nollywood’ for establishing what is undoubtedly the singular and easily discernible trait of cultural identity in Nollywood film music.²¹

²¹ See the film entitled *Karishika* (1998) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yCh0CuKzryQ>>

As hinted, prefiguring offers Nollywood a film music cultural reference, which not only appeals to a significant percentage of the Nigerian populace, but also fosters a resistance to notions of (cultural) identity liberalisation/ domination within the industry (discussed later). From a Nollywood viewer's perspective, prefiguring continually presents a functional relationship between the background music and the narrative—primarily because one can *hear* the synopses in the soundtrack. This ability to *hear* the synopses is the hallmark of prefiguring in Nollywood: a relatively easy and distinct approach to the relationship between music, dialogue, and the moving image as well as an intelligent and traditional way to 'give back' the plot to local audiences. The art of prefiguring, which had been initiated in the wake of the mid 1990s became a standard and endorsed Nollywood approach by 2003 (Sylvanus 2012).

But the Nollywood specifics of prefiguring were in its infancy and would later emerge from the continuous interplay of individualism, originality, repetition, and the negotiations of subtle ideological differences among its film composers. Over time, prefiguring would usher in a style of sound-visual synergy that gives Nollywood film music a *structural identity*. While discussing film music in general, Gorbman (1987: 15) previously suggested that 'whatever music is applied to a film segment will *do something*, will have an effect—just as whatever two words one puts together will produce meaning different from that of each word separately.' Through prefiguring we see how mainstream Nollywood applies music to film segments, albeit for different reasons. As such, the effectiveness and functional value of prefiguring in mainstream Nollywood is best appraised within its larger musical and filmic context (elaborated in chapter 3). Here, however, our immediate concern is the conceptualisation and contextualisation of identity, which is a transformational process of the people's socio-cultural realities. And the mediums through which the composers channel all experiences drive these realities. One such medium is language, which I examine below.

2.4 Language and identity in Nollywood film music

Language is part of a broad range of issues that relate to identity in Nollywood film music. And so, in this section, I consider the critical importance of language on viewers' motivations and industrial behaviour toward mainstream Nollywood film music. Specifically, I highlight the cultural message(s) embedded in locally produced

Nollywood soundtracks, as well as the impact of videofilm songs on local dialects and Nigerian Pidgin English.²² At the start of this chapter, I stated that Nollywood film music is in itself the narration of a unifying culture. Thus, one way of examining that narration is via composers' dedicated use of some Nigerian languages in film music. Specifically, there are over 250 local dialects spoken in Nigeria (Adekunle 1972). Many of them have become extinct, and the surviving ones have been identified and categorised by scholars of Nigerian languages. For example, Adekunle (1972: 186) states:

To the casual observer, social communication across linguistic boundaries in Nigeria appears impossible as an indisputable consequence of the country's linguistic diversity. But this bird's-eye view of the language situation could be misleading. A more realistic picture emerges when this multilingual situation is studied in relation to the interaction across the following levels: (1) the district level, (2) the divisional level, (3) the provincial level, (4) the state level, (5) the regional level, and (6) the national level.

According to Adekunle's classification, Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo are 'class A' languages that 'serve as lingua franca or trade languages in some parts of the country' and are spoken at national level (1972:186). Others such as Edo, Ibibio, Efik, Izon, Kanuri, Itshekiri, Tiv, Igala, Nupe, and Urhobo are 'class B' languages that are spoken at the state levels only. The bulk of the remaining dialects are considered 'minor' and are confined to the rural parts of the country. Many established Nollywood composers do not dispute the status and stages of usage of these Nigerian languages. As a rule, they make a habit of privileging one or all of the three 'main' languages in various film song texts – often times in combination with Nigerian Pidgin. Citing the Igbo language as an example, veteran Nollywood film composer Stanley Okorie tells me that:

It [Nollywood film music] has lingual identity. [For instance], Igbo is able to express more feelings to a larger number of people. [...] And usually, when you cry in Igbo, people connect with you faster than when you cry in English. The linguist may bother, or the grammar person may bother about the rightness of the grammar. But I am looking for the thing that communicates the feeling the most (Stanley Okorie, interview with the author, 01 August 2015).

Okorie's comment also indicates the function of language in shaping people's perceptions of reality. Peter Mwaura, former director of the School of Journalism, University of Nairobi, captures this notion thus:

²² For more notes on Nigerian languages and Pidgin, see Ndolo (1989), and Ofuani (1981).

Language influences the way[s] in which we perceive reality, evaluate it, and conduct ourselves with respect to it. Speakers of different languages and cultures see the universe differently, evaluate it differently, and behave towards its reality differently. Language controls thought and action and speakers of different languages do not have the same worldview or perceive the same reality unless they have a similar culture or background (Mwaura 1980: 27).

Strengthening Mwaura's position within discourse on colonialism, some African intellectuals have concluded that the 'domination of a people's language by languages of the colonising nations was critical to the domination of the mental universe of the colonised' (Ngugi 1986:16). Following Ngugi's statement, I can affirm that Nollywood film music composers use Nigerian languages in their soundtracks not only as a medium to perform ethnicity, but also as a fundamental show of resistance to the British (Queen's) English and, therefore, colonialism. As one of the central objectives of this thesis, I show this process of linguistic decolonisation in the language and style of communication of two Nollywood soundtrack texts side by side the words of established composers (see chapter 3). For example, Stanley Okorie's show of resistance to linguistic colonialism is palpable when he says,

Let the Hollywood people do their Hollywood thing and speak their English, and let the Nollywood people do their thing and speak their local whatever [languages] (Stanley Okorie, interview with the author, 1 August 2015).

It is my view that Nollywood's influence in the development and preservation of indigenous Nigerian languages and (Nigerian) Pidgin is too pervasive to be overlooked. Nollywood productions are seen in nearly every Nigerian home. And the activities of producers, composers, and marketers – who arguably decide content and commodification of locally produced films – are convinced that language is the most important marker of cultural identity.

So, in spite of the preference for the English language in videofilm dialogue, all respondents during fieldwork considered and affirmed that the local dialect and Nigerian Pidgin play a significant role in the pleasures and genuine emotional connection that local audiences derive from Nollywood soundtracks. To such individuals, those languages are a part of their cultural heritage and identity – a legacy to be valued and protected especially given the degree of access to and influence of foreign creative and cultural media content. Most times, according to Stanley Okorie, 'the marketer wants the soundtrack in Igbo [language] even when the film is completely

[in Standard] English' (2015). This behaviour confirms Adegbija's remark on language and cultural identification:

A language that is deliberately used in the home and public sector, which its speakers are proud to be associated with, which has a vibrant culture that is consciously promoted and orchestrated into prominence, and which the younger generation are eager to use and be associated with, can never die (Adegbija 2001:307).

Therefore, the use of texted music is Nollywood's conscious effort to orchestrate ethnicity through local Nigerian languages and Pidgin English. This consciousness also guarantees the afterlife of the preferred languages and is akin to Sue Tuohy's observation about the introduction of sound in Chinese film. Tuohy (2008:189) claims that the many 'mutually unintelligible' Chinese dialects and 'the possibility of music and dialogue in [Chinese] film' compel 'new choices to be made concerning language and musical genres'. She notes that the problem of choice of language is not resolved by consensus but rather by privileging Mandarin over other Chinese dialects. On the other hand, rather than privileging one Nigerian dialect over the rest, Nollywood resolves the language impasse by consensus via the use of Nigerian Pidgin. The notion that Nigerian Pidgin is the 'common man's means of eloquent oration' (Sylvanus 2012: 39) gives it purposeful dynamism in a multicultural and multilingual environment such as Nigeria. West African, and therefore, Nigerian Pidgin has been described as follows:

The language consists of English words, which in their pronunciation are adapted to the African's mode of speech. Grammatical distinctions are reduced to a minimum. This does not mean that the language lacks form. New grammatical forms have evolved, and these are not English but African, corresponding to the syntactical formations of West African languages. Pidgin English is a West African language, which takes its word-material from the English vocabulary (Westermann 1949:120).

Westermann's assertion implies much code mixing and switching, the dominance of local accents, intonation, and enunciation in Pidgin. Historically, the function of Pidgin has continually shifted: from one that was essentially a language of commerce in pre-colonial and colonial times to that of an interethnic (linking) language in post-colonial Nigeria. The efficacy of Nigerian Pidgin has made it suitable for use in novels, pop music, advertising, radio and TV programs, Nollywood films, Nigerian computer games, and film music. And the reason for this efficacy is because, in the African context, 'Pidgin is not a mere simplification of English, but a separate and describable language' whose vocabulary and lexical forms have 'changed their meaning to fit into

the value system and worldview of the African people' (Schneider 1966: 2).

Consequently, I note that mainstream Nollywood soundtracks cannot be entirely instrumental (wordless) music. All or a good part of the soundtrack must be texted music that works to communicate indigenous culture and the thematic preoccupations within each film, as well as reinforce Nigerian Pidgin English and ethnic dialects.

Shadrach John posits:

What we do is, in fact, [...] either make [that is, have] the chorus sing in vernacular [local dialects] then the verses in English, or Pidgin, or [we] mix it up. [So that] it's now a fusion of [Pidgin] English and vernacular. Or I sing vernacular all the way. (Shadrach John, interview/studio observation with the author, 6 August 2015)

This rule is particularly binding whether or not the soundtrack is used for prefiguring purposes. The EPMs also enforce compliance within the industry by expressly demanding it of the composers as well as rejecting any form of creative/cultural deviancy:

Why wouldn't they [soundtracks] have lyrics? Nobody has time for your instrumentals. Are you trying to make the people watching the film sleep? A couple of times I have done movies with instrumentals—with serenades for certain places. All right. But that's as far as it goes. Don't forget: the people who appreciate jazz and instrumental music don't watch our movies. (Stanley Okorie, interview with the author, 1 August 2015)

Okorie's assertion confirms two important points: the centrality of language and the human singing voice to identity in mainstream Nollywood film music. These are thoroughly explored and nuanced using case study films in chapter 3.

In summary, language empowers and engenders communalism, as well as a right to the Nigerian cultural space through words, code mixing and switching, accents, intonation, and enunciation all of which are perceptible in Nollywood film songs. As shown in chapter 3, Nollywood film song texts are not only 'a means of audio and mobile culture and language promotion' in Nigeria (Adegbiya 2001: 300) but are also a fundamental tag for its *lingual* film music identity. Finally, the mention of a Nigerian cultural space necessitates a discussion on the country's musical culture – of music genres and how it serves as a crucible for referencing and articulating identity in Nollywood film music.

2.5 Genre in Nollywood film music/identity: Effect of Nigerian musical culture

Of the numerous publications on Nollywood, Haynes' *Nollywood: The Creation of Nigerian Film Genres* is about the only text that focuses explicitly on Nollywood film genres. Consequently, this section credits Jonathan Haynes with parts of the information on Nollywood film genre. Haynes (2016) notes that mainstream Nollywood productions cut across several film genres that are inextricably linked to the nature and evolution of the industry. So that by following 'agreed' approaches to and descriptions of film narratives and form, the industry establishes a localised concept and meaning of genre:

In naming genres, I have followed common usages of the film industry and fans. ... These usages are not altogether consistent or systematic. Internet sites selling Nollywood films often dump them into Hollywood's generic categories, which is usually misleading. The terms I have adopted... [not only] indicate how different Nollywood's genres are from Hollywood's, but also how profoundly they express the intentions of Nigerian society. (Haynes 2016: xxv)

Indeed, some of the genres bear conventional (Hollywood) labels such as 'Action', 'Animation', 'Biopic', 'Comedy', 'Crime', 'Drama', and 'Horror'. Similarly, Mainstream Nollywood offers definitive localised film genres such as 'Campus', 'Christian film', 'City film', 'Community', 'Cultural-epics', 'Diaspora', 'Family', 'Love', 'Melodrama', 'Money-ritual', 'Romance', 'Royal', 'Rural (Village) film', 'Slave film', and 'Vigilance film'. My understanding is that the proliferation and sustenance of these film genres are predicated on the repetitive thematic preoccupations of Nollywood films. In other words, the definitions of these genres can be gleaned from their labels and, more important, particular storylines that support their categorisation.

Specifically, mainstream Nollywood film genres subsist in themes teased out of Nigerian socioeconomic and cultural realities, which the local discourse on class, disease, gender and sexuality, history, income and inequality, myth, marriage and procreation, religion, regional and national politics, social identity, violence, as well as voodoo sustain. Following these genre categorisations and labels, Nollywood demonstrates a 'triumph of enormous proportions ... [as] a popular art-form whose perspective must stay close to that of its broad audience of ordinary Nigerians or risk commercial disaster' (Haynes 2016: xxiv/xxv). My communication with established Nollywood film composers revealed that some of the aforementioned film genres are equally aesthetically identifiable and explicable through the popular music genres of

their respective soundtracks. This fascinating and distinctive Nollywood film music attribute offers the local variation and counter-practice necessary for rethinking the function of music in film, especially given the depth of research carried out so far on its Euro-American counterpart. In a sense, this section attempts to complement Haynes' work through advancing the discourse on film genre from both popular music and film music perspectives. In what follows, I outline the Nigerian popular music genres that broadly constitute the Nollywood film music repertoire, as well as analyse a few to show their association with the industry's film genres.

2.5.1 Nigerian Popular music as Nollywood film music

From the 200 mainstream Nollywood films that I have seen, over three-quarters possess soundtracks with overwhelming characteristics of Nigerian popular music. This implies that the Nigerian popular music culture is a primary resource for mainstream Nollywood film music. Notably, the diversity in Nigerian popular music practice, production, consumption, and appreciation has endured since the country's Independence in 1960. Of this, Andy Frankel notes:

Nigeria is a giant in musical expression. From its hundreds of distinct ethnic groups have come seemingly limitless musical expressions over the course of the last half century. Recordings of everything from pop to traditional music have chronicled the political, cultural and stylistic history of a colonial nation, the struggle for self-determination, an emerging nation and the boom and bust of an African giant. Literally, tens of thousands of recordings have been made by record companies, scholars, amateurs, social clubs, broadcasters, cultural centres and a variety of other organisations (Frankel 2004:11).

Despite such a remark, critical foundations of popular music scholarship in Nigeria remain embryonic and in desperate need of publications to keep pace with the vibrant industry. As an overview, Nigerian popular music can broadly be categorised in two.

The first is what I have labelled the 'glocalised' genres – many of which are Euro-American appropriations that have been deregistered, reframed and, therefore, domesticated using indigenous musical idioms, instruments and instrumentation, as well as semiotic systems such as language. Examples include Nigerian hip-hop, Nigerian rhythm and blues (R & B), Nigerian rap, Nigerian reggae, and Nigerian pop gospel. The second category is the 'localised' genres: those that are arguably of Nigerian (African) origin, for example, Nigerian highlife, afrobeat, and juju. This second category basically consists of genres that are inscribed and distinguished along

ethnic and linguistic parameters, and sub-culture areas of Nigeria. As is the worldwide convention, popular music in contemporary Nigeria employs electronic and digital equipment, forms of popular culture (television, radio, film, videogames) and social media platforms for its dissemination. Nearly all varieties of Nigerian popular music have target audiences, markets, and appreciation both in Nigeria and the Diasporas. As a culture influencer, mainstream Nollywood patronises some of these popular music genres. My investigations reveal that rap, highlife, rhythm and blues, and hip-hop are among the most frequently used in mainstream Nollywood soundtracks. At this juncture, a detailed account of all genres of Nigerian popular music would be interesting. However, for reasons of scope and focus, only Nigerian rap (representing the glocalised category) and Nigerian highlife (representing the localised category) genres are discussed here.²³ Broadly, the two examples in focus bear tonal and formal attributes that are somewhat emblematic of the rest.

By my critique, mainstream Nollywood employs Nigerian rap, in part, because the genre readily lends itself to the infusion of sounds and dialogues of folk music, text, and popular culture. Fundamentally, the genre supports the indigenous vocal inflection of songs using a ‘typical’ Nigerian vocabulary. The form of Nigerian rap broadly resembles its American variant: it conveys and allows for different layers of vocal-instrumental entry and drop out, constantly varying the texture within and between verses and refrains. Generally, the harmonic vocabulary of the Nigerian rap genre is loosely limited to a continuous alternation between two (and sometimes three) held-out block chords, which are often played on a synthesiser and a decayed electric guitar. This attribute works perfectly for mainstream Nollywood as most of its film music employs limited harmonic resources. This observation is validated by one of Nollywood’s established composers:

Over here, we are very different in [approaches to] producing our own local moods and incidentals [sound effects]. [Film] sounds are not of high quality [and] sometimes the [film] songs play on just one chord. Over there, they [mainstream Hollywood] are very advanced [but] we do not have such [expertise]. (Austin Erowele, interview with author, 10 August 2015)

²³ For useful and specific information about the other genres, see publications by Alaja-Browne (1989), Waterman (1990), Emielu (2009; 2011; 2013), Okuyade (2011), and Onwuegbuna (2016).

Nigerian rap further allows for the employment of recognisable melodic samples from folk and popular music. Rhythmically, the genre regularly infuses indigenous beats with the *break-beats* and speaker-pounding *jeep-beats* of its American alternative. In some cases, the bass and drums are mixed low in the track so that they simulate ‘action’ (Erowele 2015). Nollywood composers’ perception of rhythm in Nigerian rap is that it guarantees the genre’s stylistic currency as soundtrack in Nollywood ‘Action’ film genres. Like many Nigerian popular music genres, the lyrics of Nigerian rap music are often an intelligible combination of local Nigerian languages, the Nigerian Pidgin English, and occasionally Standard English. Here, the advantage of language, which spans a broad linguistic base, ensures that mainstream Nollywood soundtracks are able to ‘sing the film’—a phrase that implies the use of texted (vocal) music to either narrate or foretell Nollywood movie plots. Like other genres in the glocalised category, Nigerian rap is a crucial example of the syncretism of much contemporary music with elements of Nigerian identity.²⁴ Through the appropriation of the globalised genre of rap, Nollywood film composers localise the genre to embody the sounds and discourses of their indigenous musical inventions, which in turn creates the musical expressions for (re-)imagining and revealing Nollywood storylines.

The second popular music genre of interest in Nollywood is the Nigerian highlife – one that Austin Emielu and Sonny Oti have significantly theorised. Emielu, for instance, indicates that the highlife genre is ‘rooted in the diversities of traditional [Nigerian] social dance music [...] including *Kokoma*, *Agidibo*, *Dundun*, *Akpala*, *Ekipiri*, *Swange*, *Itembe*, and *Kalangu*’ (2011: 377). Indeed, the highlife music genre is a fusion of indigenous (syncopated) dance rhythms, simple harmonic progressions, and melodies with instrumentation that generally includes African drums, harmonicas, guitars, and accordions.²⁵ Analytically, the nature of highlife song-texts suggests that the ears and minds are now more critically important than the senses of sight, touch, and body-ballroom gestures (Oti 2009). Invariably, the audience of highlife music is drawn into paying apt attention to the intertextual and metatextual messages embedded in the music. The shift of emphasis from ‘seeing’ and ‘dancing’ to ‘listening’ and

²⁴ See, for example, ‘Lagoscity’ by Tupengo, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sLfOSveh5zw>

²⁵ Chief Steven Osita Osadebe’s ‘Nyem obi gi’ (Give me your heart) is a good example. See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LzbQi8Sdv5s&index=2&list=PLFgKxgOAsx08ST4MSstpXf-jQ1c71hhYf>

‘contemplation’ sits well with the general perception that mainstream Nollywood productions emphasise dialogue, improvisation, and listening over camera movement and motion picture composition. Logically, this explains the ease with which the Nigerian highlife consistently makes the repertoire of Nollywood film music. The genre is, in my opinion, a unique soundtrack resource because its dynamism does not only reside in the aesthetics of its form and style but more so in its critical song-texts, which guarantees its development and hyper-explicative efficacy in Nollywood films. To reiterate, there are other genres of Nigerian popular music used in Nollywood including Afrobeat, Afropop, and Nigerian reggae. Fundamentally, the industry’s preference for such popular music genres as film music subsists in their diversity and, more important, narratological and aesthetical capacity to ensure that the target audience can watch Nollywood films as much with the ears as with the eyes. Taken together, this overview has been useful for understanding how a few of the Nigerian popular music genres differ, why they appeal to Nollywood practitioners, and how their origins and characteristics work to confer a potentially Nigerian film music identity. Nollywood practitioners are acutely aware of this pop music objectivity, and have exploited it in ways that provoke a rethink of the term ‘genre’.

Rethinking Genre

Following what appears as a direct association between certain genres of Nigerian popular music and mainstream Nollywood film genres, veteran Nollywood film composer Shadrach John posits:

Genre refers to a particular kind of music: you have rhythm and blues, reggae, highlife and the rest of them. In the Nollywood world, so to say, all these come in to play. It depends on the kind of story and the kind of movie. I happen to have done [soundtrack] for a romantic movie [genre]. There is a particular [music] genre [and] style that you use for that one, which is Pop R & B. Then you have the Comedy genre, and that basically requires highlife... dramatic style, because you are going to talk about the story; you know it has to be funny. You have to bring in the comical part of it. [...] So, based on that I think a link [between film music and film genre] has now [been] created and developed. So, if you give me a comedy movie for instance, with a certain theme, I ordinarily just use highlife music or style to interpret it; likewise, other genres. Then you

have the Crime [genre], the action movie... that has to do with either [Nigerian] reggae or rap music. Then you have the indigenous stories – we call them the [Cultural] epic stories. It has to do with culture...so sometimes we incorporate our cultural [folk] beats. (Shadrach John, interview with author, 6 August 2015)

This is an astounding revelation that suggests how processes of localisation have given rise to a Nollywood (pedagogical) approach to film and film music categorisation. Consequently, I investigated Shadrach John's statement using a small sample of 40 films of varying popular music genres and soundtracks by different composers within the last fifteen years (see Table 2). The outcome confirms what has, arguably, become a template for deciding the choice of musical genre for the soundtracks of some mainstream Nollywood film genres.

S/No.	Title of film & Year of release	Genre of film	Genre of soundtrack	Film composer
1.	The Master (2005)	Comedy	Highlife	Stanley Okorie
2.	Ada Mbano Reloaded (2014)	Comedy	Highlife	Chimere Emejuobi
3.	Family Man (2014)	Comedy	Highlife	Austin Erowele
4.	Spanner (2003)	Comedy	Highlife	Stanley Okorie
5.	Matters Arising (2013)	Comedy	Highlife	Austin Erowele
6.	Native Fowl (2014)	Comedy	Highlife	Shadrach John
7.	Ibu in Campus (2011)	Comedy	Highlife	Chimex Alex
8.	Double Mama (2013)	Comedy	Highlife	Stanley Okorie
9.	Okon Lagos (2011)	Comedy	Highlife	George Nathaniel
10.	Fifa Agent (2010)	Comedy	Highlife	Stanley Okorie
11.	Return of White Hunters (2010)	Drama	Hip hop	Shadrach John
12.	Ekaette Goes to School (2014)	Family/comedy	Highlife/ Pop synthesised folk music	Maxwell Leonard Chidiebere
13.	Birthmark (2015)	Drama	Hip hop/R&B	Kayode Dada
14.	Save My Soul (2014)	Drama	Hip hop	Chimere Emejuobi
15.	Holding Hope (2012)	Drama	Hip hop/R&B	Austin Erowele
16.	Unforgiveable (2013)	Drama	Hip hop	Izuchukwu Vincent
17.	Knocking on Heaven's Door (2014)	Drama	Hip hop/R&B	George Nathaniel
18.	Lagos Cougars (2014)	Drama	Hip hop/R&B	George Nathaniel
19.	A Place Called Happy (2015)	Drama	Hip hop/R&B	MOSA
20.	Behind the Melody (2012)	Drama	Hip hop/rap	Michael Oyong
21.	Darkness of Sorrow (2008)	Drama	R&B	Austin Erowele
22.	The Return of X-Gang (2005)	Action	Rap/reggae	Shadrach John
23.	Escort Service (2011)	Action	Rap	Austin Erowele
24.	Four Crooks and a Rookie (2012)	Action	Rap	Chisorom Ukomadu
25.	Pleasure Booster (2011)	Action	Rap	Austin Erowele
26.	Professional Lady (2012)	Crime	Rap	Seigha Abide
27.	Final War Game (2006)	Crime	Rap	Shadrach John
28.	Dirty Secret (2010)	Crime	Rap/hip hop	Austin Erowele

29.	The Faculty (2007)	Crime	Rap	Shadrach John
30.	Queen of the Jungle (2009)	Crime	Rap	Shadrach John
31.	Return of Destiny Call (2009)	Cultural-epic (or Traditional)	Pop synthesised folk music	Chimere Emejuobi
32.	Beyond Conspiracy (2009)	Cultural-epic	Pop synthesised folk music	Maxwell Leonard Chidiebere
33.	The Return of Odo (2010)	Cultural-epic	Pop synthesised folk music	Stanley Okorie
34.	Diamond Kingdom (2013)	Cultural-epic	Pop synthesised folk music	Shadrach John
35.	The Twin Sword (2014)	Cultural-epic	Pop synthesised folk music	Austin ('Dr. Browne) Ogbu
36.	The Unkind (2014)	Thriller	Afro-pop/rap	Beat Sleenga
37.	Behind the Curtains (2015)	Thriller	Afro-pop/hip-hop	Isaac Igbana
38.	Doll House (2015)	Thriller	Afro-pop/hip-hop	Jah Baby
39.	Thy Will Be Done (2015)	Thriller	Afro-pop/hip-hop	Luke Corradine
40.	The Department (2015)	Thriller	Afro-pop/rap	Bez

Table 2. Some Nollywood film genres and their prescribed film music genres²⁶

The table above shows how different film music composers have approached similar film genres with 'agreed' popular music genres. This, for me, is fascinating especially when contrasted with, say, the Chinese cinema. In writing about Chinese 'reflexive' film tradition, Sue Tuohy claims that individual films 'delineate only two or three musical choices, such as whether to compose revolutionary music [...] or decadent "yellow" music' (2008: 185). As observed, Nollywood offers something similar but not exact. In Nollywood, certain musical genres are completely tied to certain film genres. So, whereas Chinese films offer a narrow ambit of choice of 'style of composition', Nollywood's equally narrow compass subsists within 'genre categorization and ideology'. In essence, Nollywood film genres can be identified using certain Nigerian popular music genres. It is, therefore, my theory that the strict association of film genres with established preferences of Nigerian popular music produces both a 'rule' and what I call a *Marginal-genre* identity of Nollywood film music (discussed later). But this observation is also the basis for problematising genre.

Genre problematised

The categorisation by genre is, in my view, both helpful and unhelpful. Whereas it might be argued that this Nollywood genre categorisation and ideology limits creative/musical flexibility, no doubt, it effectively inspires a rethink of the conventional ways of defining and distinguishing film genres. In other words, music is

²⁶ While some these films are available to see on YouTube, others can be downloaded and viewed for a small subscription at IrokoTV.com.

and can be a critical part of the distinguishing characteristics of film genres, particularly as constructed in mainstream Nollywood. This notion constitutes one of the ‘rules of Nollywood’ and is, therefore, an important identity marker that is sustained, in part, by the fact that film producers and EPs demand its adherence:

Maybe [a] kind of movie has been done in the past with a type [genre] of music, let’s say, highlife, which is for [the] comedy [film genre]. The executive producer of the movie might actually say to you: ‘So and so movie was done in time with this genre or style of music, could you please do the same thing, or something similar?’ (Shadrach John, interview with author, 6 August 2015)

As a shorthand description, the Nollywood film–film music categorisation provides simplicity and analytical clarity. However, cultural texts such as film and film music seldom fall neatly into discrete compartmentalisation. As such, I argue that Nollywood’s application of specific music genres to its films is also problematic. By the prevailing film–film music classification, I am concerned to ask: what is the influence of Nollywood film genres on its film music? How, for instance, do Nollywood ‘hybrid’ film genres (those with multiple generic attributes that transcend conventional boundaries of definition) speak back to its film music? Are the soundtrack genres ‘revised’ in such instances?

As noted by Haynes (2016), mainstream Nollywood has developed a few culture-specific genres such as ‘Family’, ‘City film’, and ‘Cultural-epic’ (also called ‘Traditional’). The ‘Cultural-epic’, for example, is a Nollywood film genre that is primarily characterised by stories from ‘the rural’ (see examples 31–34 in Table 1). The narratives cover issues from land and farm disputes to conflicts within and between rural communities, rural development and governance, inter- and intra-tribal marriages and trade, and myths. ‘Family’, on the other hand, is the ‘queen of Nollywood genres’ with storylines that are mainly about the need for education, civic and family responsibilities, the consequences of deviancy and evil in society, parenting and parenthood, and sometimes faith-based/traditional African beliefs/vocations (Haynes 2016: 77). A few film examples in this category are *Shame* (1996), *The Maid* (2004), and *Sorrowful Child* (2014).

Critically, the narrative constituents of other genres can be, and normally are, at work within a single Nollywood film. This means that Nollywood film genres are not wholly independent of one another. Instead, the film genres are in constant tension with

and relation to one another. Whether or not this is deliberate is yet to be fully established in publications about Nollywood films. As may be found in mainstream Hollywood, there are Nollywood films that are inherently hybrid in nature (see, for example, *Apostles of Lucifer* 2004). By my scrutiny, this hybridity is regardless of any genre's dominant attributes or 'recognisable' film music genre. Thus, it is common to find 'Action' movies that incorporate attributes from 'Cultural-epic'; 'Family' movies that feature aspects of 'Comedy'; and 'Drama/Romantic' films that contain elements from 'Horror'. Here, lies the problem with Nollywood's static film/film music compartmentalisation.

I understand that what I propose here requires some kind of analysis that shows how film genres influence film music. I also understand that to do so invites arguments regarding film genre theory. Yet I think it is beyond the scope of this chapter (or indeed the thesis) to embark on arguments about film genre theory. Therefore, I would like to propose at the outset that the existence of film genres is taken for granted, and that they can indeed be defined thus:

[Genres are] groupings of films which become recognised by creators, critics and audiences over the course of time and which are seen in terms of complex structures of conventions, consisting of things like recurrent plots, stereotyped characters, accepted ideas, commonly-known metaphors and other linguistic and narrative devices (Cawelti 1999: 14).

I should point out that Cawelti's definition does not account for hybridity, perhaps because the concept is essentially an outlier of his fixed genre supposition. Even though hybridity is not the main focus of this section, problematising genre here requires that we momentarily transition away from Cawelti's definition. This transition is not in any way intended to downplay the observations made so far about genre in Nollywood, but rather to offer a semblance of balance of criticism. Again, mainstream Nollywood offers hybrid film genres that show inter-generic or trans-generic attributes. By the established film/film music genre association, it is only logical that the music of/for such hybrid genres 'shift' or 'change' as the attributes of the plot shift. For instance, if, within the Nollywood context, there were a love scene (a generally accepted feature of 'Drama/Romantic' genre) in, say, a 'Crime' genre, it would make sense for the background music to be of the rhythm and blues genre.

Hypothetically, the composer temporarily changes or shifts his choice of popular music genre from Nigerian rap to rhythm and blues. Likewise, the soundtrack should understandably make a return to its 'prescribed' (rap) genre as soon as the narrative pivots back to the features of 'Crime'. Put simply, when components from other genres permeate a certain film, the accompanying music genre should 'shift' somewhat away from the generic archetype to, presumably, accommodate the 'hybrid' attributes. Of course, this shift in music would likely blur the more static reading of Nollywood genre categorisation. As already hinted, these assumptions will require further research as it is not immediately clear how hybridity impacts the current genre categorisation, neither do we know how it challenges the Nollywood film composer. Therefore, I have to relegate such an enquiry to a subsequent time and publication. In the interim, however, I shall attempt a preliminary exploration/conclusion.

Hybridity is primarily concerned with the dismantling of essentialist structures of cultural texts (of film, music, language, and so on); and such deconstructions ultimately affect notions of identity. Bhabha (1994) defines hybridity as the aesthetics of identity wherein 'two discourses are *mixed* in one 'utterance' to destabilise traditional boundaries and myths of cultural homogeneity' (quoted in Benwell and Stoke 2006: 28). With reference to mainstream Hollywood, Altman (1999) argues that the categorisation of films by genre is problematic. For him, much of genre theory is a discourse that obeys a certain academic rationalisation: a concept that does not quite equal the evidence that the films present. He maintains that film genres are not the unchanging, discrete categories they have been labelled, and have never been. Instead, Hollywood's standard tradition encourages a mix of genres within individual films. Altman's argument is also true of some mainstream Nollywood productions because Nollywood films demonstrate the fluidity of discrete genre boundaries. This, hypothetically, means that as narrative and thematic elements from one genre *overlap* into another in the course of a film, the 'prescribed' musical genre of the dominant film genre *shifts* to accommodate this change. This thus ensures that the music being used remains inspired by and suitable for the demands of the narrative. By this premise, the aesthetics and simplicity of the marginal-genre identity, which serves to structure and clarify initial analysis of film songs, is temporarily dismantled to pave way for what might be called a hybrid-genre identity.

Earlier, I tried to resolve the problem of creative (authorial) autonomy within the context of hybridity in mainstream Nollywood. Specifically, I sought to know the degree to which the EPM influences matters of music and music genres in a hybrid film genre. Of this power dynamics, composer Austin Erowele asserts:

Let me be honest to you. We don't use words like hybrid here. For us, it is all about which music style fits the film. We try to keep it simple. Some of us [composers], like I told you before, have a...call it template for our styles or genres for certain films. But when it is like that, that is preparing music for what you call hybrid film; I usually ask the marketer [EPM] what he wants first because he is the one paying for it. He may say '*do it with one style*' or he can even tell me which styles he likes me to combine as long as it won't cost extra money, or he can tell me to go ahead and combine whatever different genres I feel will fit the film. (Austin Erowele, telephone conversation, 26 March 2017)

His assertion, in part, confirms that when presented with a hybrid film genre, say, a mix of drama and comedy, the decision to incorporate (Nigerian) highlife music (a prescribed genre of comedy) aesthetically blurs the identification code that the dominant film genre (that is, drama) conveys. As a process, we can infer that although such creative decisions seemingly originate from the composer, however, the power to endorse it rests almost exclusively with the EPM. As an example of a Nollywood hybrid film genre with shifting music genres, *Ekaette Goes to School* (2014) connects four Nollywood genre paradigms namely *Family* (the dominant genre), *Drama*, *Traditional*, and *Comedy*. However, its soundtrack broadly features two music genres: Nigerian pop-synthesised folk and Nigerian highlife (discussed in chapter 3). Structurally, and owing to the art of prefiguring, Nollywood film music genres shift without necessarily referencing either the preceding or succeeding music genre(s).

Theorising popular/film music genre

For a start, literature on Hollywood and European film music offer very little on genres (for example, Kalinak 1992; Smith; Abel and Altman 2001; Kassabian 2003; and Mera and Burnard 2006). Claudia Gorbman, for instance, comes very close by asking how music works in film genres such as 'animation, documentary, and experimental film' (Gorbman 1998:43). However, she does not critique the relationship between genres of film music and film. Her assumptions imply that music in mainstream narrative cinema is more homogenous than it actually is. On the one hand, she is arguably correct: film music does operate in broadly similar ways from one film genre to another—'screening' and 'reinforcing' meaning, 'amplifying' mood, and so on. But our interest

here is not necessarily in ‘how’ music operates within film. Rather we are keen to know which genre of (popular) music is in operation within a given film.

Mainstream Nollywood film/film music genre categorisation raises a few more interesting theoretical concerns. One such concern is the emergence of stereotypes as the industry inevitably ties certain film and film music genres to certain composers. So, for example, the name Stanley Okorie is roundly associated with both ‘Comedy’ and ‘Cultural-epic’ film genres. Composer Shadrach John confirms the existence of stereotypes:

The [executive producers/] marketers decide most of these things. They meet regularly in Onitsha [southeast Nigeria]. Like, before I get jobs, they must have sat to talk about it, and say, ‘OK, Shadrach did that job and he was fantastic; why don’t we give this to him, he can do it?’ Let me shock you. There was a time when, after [the release of] *Aki na Ukwa* (2002) – the Comedy movie, I became a ‘Comedy [film] soundtrack producer’ for about two years. [So], somebody will make an Urban [City] movie and say, ‘Let me give it to Shadrach’, and they [the EPs] will say, ‘No, no, no, Shadrach is a Comedy soundtrack person.’ That was how... I’m telling you, I just kept getting it [comedy soundtrack requests] because of *Aki na Ukwa*. Until one or two guys said, ‘But Shadrach started with “Urban” thing [soundtracks], so he can also do [compose for] it.’ (Shadrach John, interview with author, 6 August 2015)

The other theoretical issue that the current genre association raises is one of identity. Earlier, I suggested that this taxonomy confers a marginal-genre identity on Nollywood film music. Here, the word ‘marginal’ is used in a minimalist sense. This means that some Nigerian popular music genres such as highlife, Nigerian reggae, afro-pop, and Nigerian rap can and do discretely stand as film music genres in mainstream Nollywood (see Table 3). For example, Nigerian highlife is both a popular music genre as well as a comedy film music genre. This finding effectively inspires a rethink of the conventional ways of defining and designating popular music genres. But more so, it invites academic scrutiny on and around the parameters for distinguishing and/or associating film and film music genres, especially as presently conceived in the Global North.

S/No.	Popular music genre	Film music genre designation
1.	Highlife	Comedy/Family film music genre
2.	Rap	Action film music genre
3.	Reggae	City film music genre
4.	Hip-hop	Drama film music genre
5.	Rhythm and Blues	Romance film music genre
6.	Afro-pop	Thriller film music genre
7.	Pop synthesised folk	Cultural-epic or Traditional film music genre

Table 3. Some Nigerian popular music genres and their respective film music designation

As a summary, Nollywood's genre ideology and categorisation enables us to know *which genre of popular music is in operation* within a film. By this approach, specific Nollywood film genres, thus, possess their own musical paradigms/identities that are equally evocative of their own 'film world'. Clearly, the marginal-genre identity invests Nollywood film music with a sense of 'self', especially in reference to other cinema traditions such as mainstream Hollywood. This identity offers some framework for notions of sameness as well as difference, and is constituted in discourse, process, and performance. It is my theory, therefore, that this marginal-genre identity not only reveals simplicity but is also the result of Nigerian popular music and its strategic role in the articulation and negotiation of film genres. This argument should provoke an academic debate on and around the conventions of both popular music and film music as highly genre-specific issues within film.

To be clear, this section set out to do three things: to know what genres of Nigerian popular music regularly constitute the repertoire of Nollywood soundtracks; to know how mainstream Nollywood film music genres work to identify Nollywood movie genres; and what possible theoretical issues and inferences the resultant genre categorisation affords film and film music scholarship. Consequently, I have established that mainstream Nollywood relies heavily on Nigerian popular music as soundtrack resource. With a few examples, I have also shown what musical attributes differentiate the popular music genres and why Nollywood composers prefer them. Citing about forty films, I have presented Nollywood's film/film music genre association as well as the 'new' designations of the Nigerian popular music genres that constitute the bulk of Nollywood film music repertoire. Through the analyses and arguments, I have also established that mainstream Nollywood film music possesses a marginal-genre identity. To balance the scrutiny, I have equally challenged this

outcome by situating the subject matter within notions of hybridity, precisely to provoke a rethink (within the industry) in relation to creative preferences, aesthetics, and stereotyping.

In all, this section has been useful for showing the relevance of Nigerian musical culture, particularly its genres of popular music to the negotiation and re-signification of identity in mainstream Nollywood film music. The fluidity of film music implicates popular music in ways that suggest a mix of the local and global. For mainstream Nollywood, it is a matter of the extent of the local referents and their worth as (national) cultural/identity signifiers. The sustenance of this industrial behaviour/practice rests on the influence of certain individuals whose profound impact on the creative and business decisions of local film and film music productions, as well as the organisational structure has been established. In effect, genre is codified within the relationships of powerful industry stakeholders. For this reason, my position that Nollywood film music identity is a subtly packaged/contested commodity necessitates a closer examination of the power dynamics and politics of influential individuals and the different groups within the industry.

2.6 The politics of identity in local productions: Money and power relations

Every humanly run organisation provides a recipe for artful negotiation of interests. The ability to maximise and/or appropriate ideas and ideals (material and abstract) in one's favour is political. As may be found in other traditions, the politics of Nollywood film music identity subsists in the interplay of stakeholders' resources and interests. That interplay is also inextricably tied to commerce. As already established, it is the EPMs who control and exert significant influence over the rest of the production team. These persons predetermine a good degree of artistic/cultural content of many mainstream Nollywood soundtrack productions through outright persuasion or prescription, or both. Specifically, they employ tools such as 'terms of contract', the guarantee of artist promotion, industry connections/clout, and the promise of continued patronage. Another means by which they influence the creative process and outcome is via the blatant supposition of consumers' taste, perceptions, and ideological stance on Nollywood film music. In other words, EPMs claim to 'know' the market very well and are, therefore, better placed to 'advise' composers. Too often, many (if not all)

Nollywood film composers prioritise the EPM's wishes above their own approaches to film music.

The first thing that determines the preference of the soundtrack is the marketer [EPM] because he is the one paying. The marketer wants the greatest goods for the greatest people [and] for the greatest profits. And when it comes to soundtrack, there are three things: know the film and the owner of the film [that is the EPM]; know what the film requires; and know what the marketer [EPM] expects. If you do what the film requires and you do not do what the marketer expects, you will have your marketer very upset because he will not recover his money. (Stanley Okorie, interview with the author, 1 August 2015)

However, mainstream Nollywood film composers are fundamentally songwriters and performing musicians whose educational backgrounds, cultural/religious affiliations, philosophical views, and social identities combine to inform their respective individual film music ideology. Hence, instances of subtle local (internal) resistance abound when personal opinions of film music composers are at variance with the prescriptions of the EPM.

Basically, the marketers [EPMs] dictate who appears in the movie, or who does what in the movie. They tell us [film composers] what to do, consciously or unconsciously. So, when I'm dealing with a client, I study his mentality, so I'm going to do it [the soundtrack] according to how he wants it. But be sure that you might hear some of my jobs and think: 'Is this Shadrach?' because it [will be] completely different [to what the EPM intended]. (Shadrach John, interview/studio observation with the author, 6 August 2015)

But the deviancy that Shadrach John notes is not persistent enough to tilt the balance of power in favour of Nollywood film composers. Indeed, this (imposed) creative sequestration has been largely attributed to the fact that many of the EPMs, as Max Steiner said concerning Hollywood, lack the 'ability to understand the language of music and what it can and should do for their pictures' (Steiner, quoted in Faulkner 2005: 6). Again, John posits:

These guys [referring to the EPMs] are crazy. They are not professionals per se. So, they want something that will make sales... something commercial. Let me imitate some of my clients [who] call me: 'Chadlack [Shadrach], is it not odinally [ordinary] sound that I want you to put in this movie? What is so special about it?' [So], they know that it [music] is important. But they don't value it. (Shadrach John, interview/studio observation with the author, 6 August 2015)

In many instances, a Nollywood film composer who decides to 'ignore' the EPM risks losing patronage. This is so because 'no matter how gifted a musician you are, if he [the EPM] does not see it [that is, what he prescribed], you may never get another job' (Okorie 2015). This, unfortunately, means that the composer starts from a

disadvantaged position in the collaborative process because the EPM has both the funds and the film projects, which guarantee power.

This EPM–film-composer relationship resembles Hollywood’s post-Studio system, which Robert Faulkner examines in *Music on Demand*. As a part of the text’s broader issues, Faulkner proposes two approaches for explaining and ‘understanding the social organisation of the entertainment industry’ (2005: 9). And these two formulations are the Distributional and Transactional approaches. Significantly, both contemporary Hollywood and Nollywood film composers are freelancers. In mainstream Nollywood, for instance, when Stanley Okorie is not composing music for film he is managing the production of beverages in a local company. This observation provokes interest in knowing whether or not Faulkner’s social organisational formulations might be suitably applied to Nollywood wherein the film music tradition is dissimilar (see Table 1). And if so, what can we learn about, say, composers’ social identity in relation to both their works and how they are treated in mainstream Nollywood? Also, what kind of film music identity emerges from the existing power dynamics and business structure? In what ways does the composer foist his individual characteristics upon the creative work? And how does his artful negotiation of the existing influences alter identity, if at all?

The business of Nollywood film music: Competing without advantage

Faulkner’s first formulation, which is called the Distributional Approach, defines freelance structure through ‘the distribution of certain characteristics of film composers and filmmakers’ such as ‘number of film credits, Academy Award nominations or Oscars, and the commercial success of their films’ (Faulkner 2005: 9). Of the three characteristics only the third—the commercial success of films – fits the Nollywood context:

They [the filmmakers] still patronise me because a lot of the movies’ [soundtracks] I have done have become hits. My songs have made some of the films hits! That is why I am still in this business. (Stanley Okorie, interview with the author, 1 August 2015).

The other two characteristics cannot be reliably applied in mainstream Nollywood because:

- (1) Mainstream Nollywood films can start and end without credits to the film music composer, as observed in such films as *Evil World* (2014), *Sugar Cane* (2013),

Access Code (2014), *The Department* (2015), and *Pot of Life* (2015). And even where there are appropriate film music credits, it is not unlikely that film titles have been changed without informing the composer. This behaviour makes tracking, collating, and connecting works with and to specific composers cumbersome.

I discovered this during a studio observation wherein Shadrach John could not recognise a film that credited him with its soundtrack. Citing a current film project, he explains how this might happen, and what action he has taken in response.

I just did this [soundtrack for the film], *Madam Flavour* (2015), last week. It has Patience Ozokwor [popular Nollywood actress] in it. This is probably the working title. So, if you go looking for it [in retail stores], you might not find it, unless they [the filmmakers] decide to retain it [the film's title]. I did something that might make them retain it: I put the name of the film in the song. I wanted them to retain it, so I put the name. We do not usually put the name. (Shadrach John, interview/studio observation with the author, 6 August 2015)

- (2) Nollywood film music composers do not enjoy any form of social recognition, reward, and nomination for cinema and cinema related awards. To reiterate, composers are not paid royalties; rather they receive one-off payments upon completion of each film project. In effect, Nollywood film music composers have a social identity that compares relatively poorly with their international counterparts in Europe and North America. This lowly identity manifests in how their creative works are treated: film credits may not acknowledge them; film titles can (and usually do) change without the composer's knowledge; and composers are not entitled to any kind of compensation. As individuals, they are not well remunerated and are considered as 'disposable items'.

Having said so, Faulkner (2005:10) also notes that the distributional approach ensures that a few 'established' Hollywood soundtrack practitioners enjoy 'a disproportionate share of available film projects'. Whilst this fact may be true for Hollywood there are a few reasons to dispute it in mainstream Nollywood. First, the combined effects of poor valuation of film music and the film composer, the ridiculous expected turnover time of film music projects (about two to seven days), the choking volume of films produced weekly (about 60), and the inexpensive cost implications (about \$700 per soundtrack project) make the trade perfectly competitive yet undesirable as a fulltime career. Indeed, the EPM's commodity mind-set guarantees that a composer is not as

strategic as, say, an actor to the film project. And this is why anyone with a modicum of soundtrack know-how can replace the more established composer.

Second, the creation of stereotypes (wherein certain composers have been effectively linked with particular film music styles and film genres) is in itself limiting and, thus, works against the notion that one might control a disproportionate share of the numerous film genres and projects in Nollywood. The reason is simple: mainstream Nollywood accounts for several different film genres and projects, which Haynes (2016) has rigorously documented. Consequently, a composer who is permanently linked with just one or two movie genres does not control a disproportionate share of the industry's overall film projects.

Third, both Hollywood and Nollywood are engaged in what economists call Vertical Integration – a concept that describes ‘the extent to which stages in production and distribution are under the control of a single firm’ [or individual as observed in Nollywood] (Bindermann 1999:3). Kirsten Bindermann suggests that the reason for vertical integration range from (1) locking down ‘sources of supply’, which in this context includes owning the film project, the money, and sometimes the work tools (camera, costume, vehicles, buildings, and so on); (2) securing ‘the market’ (through owning the recording and production studios, and the distribution links and retail platforms); to (3) working against the ‘profit margins of intermediaries’ or competitors (through forms of rent seeking, price fixing, and extortionate behaviour by, for example, denying local competitors the chance to book workspace in a studio or granting such studio access at a prohibitive cost to competitors).

While all three reasons for vertical integration are demonstrable in both Hollywood and Nollywood, the latter industry differentiates transactions in terms of strategic need, and thus reveals that both the Euro-American classical concept of ‘market’ and hierarchical contracting (as described by Faulkner) are only two of many possible social organisational forms across global cinema traditions. So, by incorporating both the vertical integration framework and Nollywood's one-directional production process (Figure 2.1), a different and fascinating film music industry emerges. Within a vertically integrated Nollywood, I observe that the Nollywood film music space bears several characteristics of perfect competition, as espoused and advanced by economic theorists. Francis Edgeworth, for example, defines perfect competition from the

‘contracts’ angle. In his often-referenced book *Mathematical Physics*, Edgeworth (1881), lays out the dynamics of contracting in a perfectly competitive market: individual buyers and/or sellers may freely contract and re-contract independently with an indefinite number of counterparties, and without third party brokerage or penalty for contract breach.

My interpretation is that Hollywood practices an institutionalised (or corporate) vertical integration. This kind is aimed at creating entry barriers through elitist constructs such as qualification requirements for the film composer—some of which have already been listed as ‘the number of their film credits, Academy Award nominations or Oscars, and commercial success of their films’ (Faulkner 2005:10). Nollywood, the other hand, practices an individualised vertical integration entrenched in an oral tradition. This guarantees that competition is not suffocated, as it is in itself insufficient to erect entry barriers. This explains why film and film music practice remains an all-comers affair: anyone can transition from carrying microphones to becoming a composer and from a singer to a director and/or executive producer—often without formal training, professional licensing, and institutional regulation.²⁷ Chuks Onyizuwe confirms this assessment:

I have been in this industry [Nollywood] for ten years marketing and producing films. And I can tell you that most of the people who are producers are cinema illiterates. You see, Nollywood is surrounded by such people and I’m sorry to use those words. Most of the things are done by those categories of people. So, it is difficult for them to understand the new innovations in film production! In the Nigerian film industry generally, people do what we [the Igbo ethnic nation] call *Igbodibo* (apprenticeship). So, you see a marketer [EPM] with servants who work as storekeepers and errand boys. After six or seven years, you “settle” [pay off] that person, and the person will just go into film production! It is a myopic understanding. Sadly, there is no new concept in [the] Nigerian film industry. Even as a [film] sound designer you must go to school and get the new innovations into the system. The current sets of soundtrack producers do not have any other thing to offer except their [present] level of knowledge. And we cannot blame them. How can somebody produce a film within three weeks; edit it and expect the soundtrack to be fantastic? Imagine also a situation where a film director will be directing more than ten films a month, and an actor on set will tell you he is rushing off to be on another set in a few minutes...and where a film producer will tell you he needs to produce over 60 films in a year.

²⁷ Mary Njoku, Uche Jumbo, and Desmond Elliot are a few examples of individuals in Nollywood who in various films have assumed many roles simultaneously, including starring themselves alongside their roles as director, screenwriter, and EPM (see, for example, *In the Compound* [2012], *Kamara’s Tree* [2013], and *Oge’s Sister* [2015]). In some cases, companies owned by the same individuals carry out both the production and post-production of these films.

Everything is fast-tracked and so they don't have the time to do good jobs.
(Chuks Onyizuwe, personal interview with the author, 14 August 2015)

Onyizuwe's comment is understandable because the Nollywood vertical integration arguably mirrors Joan Robinson's delineation of perfect competition, which focuses on pricing and behaviour of the firm. In her article 'What is Perfect Competition?' Robinson (1934: 104) provides the framework with which we may identify a perfectly competitive market: one that she defines as 'a state of affairs in which the demand for the output of an individual seller is perfectly elastic'. In such an environment, the market space is crowded and replete with 'supplies'. Producers sell identical output at an exogenously determined market price, which they have no influence over. In other words, they control only quantity (how many films to produce) and cost of production. Increase in profits are directly proportional to the quantity produced but inversely proportional to cost. Relying on the number of films produced monthly, which, according to Kelvin Okike, is estimated at 300 films, mainstream Nollywood outputs 3,600 films per annum.²⁸ This figure signifies that there are at least 60 EPMs competing for shelf space in the shops of film distributors/retailers. Robinson's framework thus supports Onyizuwe's statement about the volume-based pursuit of profitability exhibited by EPMs in mainstream Nollywood.

The business of composing for film in mainstream Nollywood arguably shows that the devices of perfect competition are at work. In this context, the Nollywood film composer embodies the firm, and the film music space represents the market. True to the entrepreneurial nature of mainstream Nollywood, the composer doubles up as the only, if not the most important, supplier/seller, with the EPM as buyer of his creative merchandise.

And so, within this framework exist four main indicators of a perfectly competitive (Nollywood) film music market:

1. *Freedom of entry and exit*: in the absence of prohibitive entry costs, economies of scale, or network effects, incumbents in an industry face porous borders and permeable barriers to entry. Competition enters and exits the industry freely. The 'all-comers' nature of Nollywood film music practice (as mentioned above)

²⁸ Kelvin Okike is a lawyer and CEO of WENAMS Global Ventures—one of the largest retail outfits of Nollywood, Hollywood, and Bollywood films in Port Harcourt, Rivers state, Nigeria.

is testament to the presence of this characteristic. Barriers to entry are minimal and malleable: they hinge only upon individual entrepreneurial ambition.

2. *Uncontrolled access to resources and homogenous units of input*: both the established and novice film composer has access to the units of production. In other words, in completing a Nollywood film music project, all composers have access to readily available talent (sometimes self-sourced as in when vocals are supplied by the same composer), and equipment (if not self-owned, can be sourced from a production studio and at short notice).
3. *No informational asymmetry between buyers and sellers*: all buyers have complete information about products being sold as well as the fees charged by each supplier. The resulting effects can be seen in Nollywood wherein the composer is a price taker; his price negotiating ability constrained by the EPM's high bargaining power.
4. *Firm output is homogenous, and the resultant product a commodity*: the transient/transactional, and one-directional relationship between the powerful EPM and film composer (in which the EPM dictates the creative output, coupled with the high substitutability of composers as suppliers) leads to a homogenous film music output. Anyone can decide to enter the business of film music composition; market share is fragmented across several composers—self-acclaimed, reputable, and all else besides. EPMs themselves barely pause for thought in deciding to switch composers.

All these dynamics, including the absence of an established Guild of film music composers, pre-qualifications for composing for film, and recognition by professional bodies, are the salient ingredients against the erection of entry barriers. From the point of economics, this implies that Nollywood film composers are currently competing without advantage.

But, perhaps, it is Faulkner's second formulation—the Transactional approach that best fits the Nollywood scenario. According to him, the second approach 'looks for complex networks of existing relations' for purposes of 'understanding the forces that direct the flow of industry work' (2005: 10). No doubt, the factors that drive the flow of work in

Nollywood are money and film projects. However, whereas both composers and filmmakers seek out one another in Hollywood, the situation in Nollywood is one-directional: it is the film producers who seek the composers. This is, again, due to the volume of films produced. This overwhelming volume of production has only one implication: composers are weighed down by film projects and business relationships are at once transactional and transient. Nollywood's transient filmmaker–film composer relationship further disputes Faulkner's notion of 'inner-circles'—of filmmakers and composers who, together, 'form an open system model of social structure' in order to 'reduce uncertainty, narrow complexity of choices', and enhance chances of 'securing control over a turbulent environment' (2005: 11). To be clear, only the Nollywood EPMs function as a union – a very strong one. On the contrary, Nollywood film composers do not yet operate as a 'community'. And this is evidenced in their recent failed attempts to regulate film project contracts and fees.

Shadrach John: We [the established composers] are not formally registered because we have been having issues with people not cooperating. Let's take for instance, charges: the economics aspect of it [film sound production] where, if we say 'charge so and so amount for so and so kind of movie'—and when the chips are down (maybe because of the hardship of the country, or one challenge or [the] other) the person will now go back and instead of charging what we agreed, will charge 50% [less] and still deliver. I don't know how. So, [to] the next client: when you tell the client that 'this' is 'the fee', the client will say 'no, [the previous] person charged this [half of the current fee].' And that person could probably be someone that we respect – one of the pioneers that we look up to. So the thing has put us in disarray right now. But a few of us are coming back together to see what we can do again. We met a couple of months ago, [and] first of all [we] took out a name – to see how we can take it to the next level. But that is the challenge we are facing, because it is affecting us. But we are working on it, so we hope to get somewhere. (Shadrach John, interview/studio observation with the author, 6 August 2015)

Stanley Okorie: Yeah, we have identified ourselves but, unfortunately, that is the bad side of the local thing. Everybody wants to do his own thing. I know Abbe Eso at one point tried to get people around. He called me and a few people; but you see, I'm in Umahia [southeast Nigeria]. But that does not mean we cannot [form a] group. I do not know what finally happened to it because at that point I left for China. And I was away for a long time. So I do not know if that thing [the Union of Nollywood film composers] worked. At a point, it was a sort of union they wanted to do. They wanted to be...they were quite ambitious. They said they wanted the music producers and composers for films to get royalties. That would have been wonderful. I do not know... Why do things just not work here? I don't know. It is a 'Nigerian' factor. Everybody looked at it...I did not believe in it because I know the marketers [EPMs] who are my friends will say, 'Ah, ok we will pay him [the composer], we will pay the director, we will pay the... By the time we pay all these royalties, how much [will we make]?

Why don't they [the composers] just shoot their own films and pay themselves royalties?' (Stanley Okorie, interview with the author, 1 August 2015)

Essentially, there is not a clearly identifiable social structure of stakeholders who work within 'inner-circles' in mainstream Nollywood. Consequently, a discourse about and around uncertainty and the maximisation of choices for controlling the film music business environment is untenable, at least following Faulkner's perspective. The alternative, in my view, is to pursue the politics of a one-directional business relationship for its impact on the identity of Nollywood film music. First, Nollywood communities of filmmakers (that is, EPMs such as Chico and Zeb Ejiro, Kenneth Nnebue, and Uche Jumbo) largely comprise persons of Igbo (southeastern) ancestry. This already indicates that there exist ethnic-national power relations in the industry and its *modus operandi*. According to Shadrach John:

Loads of movies from Nollywood [are] actually told from the eastern [Nigerian] point of view because a lot of the players are actually Igbo. In fact, 99.9% of the players [stakeholders] in the Nollywood movie industry are Igbo. So, when they tell these stories, they tell the story from that perspective. So, sometimes there is need for us to use some cultural stuff to depict or to tell, [or] to interpret the movie musically. The only issue I have with it [the movie market network] is that it has been restricted to a particular part of the country. (Shadrach John, interview/studio observation with the author, 6 August 2015)

So, the power and resources for running Nollywood film/film music market processes and production networks seemingly rest (and disproportionately so) in favour of Igbo businesspeople who, in addition to operating a linear organisational structure, embody the socio-cultural realities of the Igbo tribe of southeastern Nigeria. Second, the lack of commendation and reward for productivity, which, in part, characterise the composer's social identity, confers weakness in the politics of local production processes. That weakness typically robs Nollywood film music composers of ample grounds to decide whether the soundtrack's identity will be 'ethnic' or 'national'. Consequently, what we get is arguably a film music identity that is both culturally and conceptually reflective of Igbo subculture of modern Nigeria. In this sense, ethnic (Igbo) identity becomes *performed* in Nollywood soundtracks (discussed in chapter 3). This, here, represents one of the shades of identity that this study addresses (the case-study analysis that substantiates this position statement is also given in chapter 3).

In a single sentence, this section demonstrates the importance of individuals and groups to the construction of identity, which 'enable us to place ourselves in imaginative

cultural narratives' (Frith 1996:124). At this juncture, it will be beneficial to specifically hear the perspectives of some of these individuals (many of whom represent a cross section of stakeholders within the industry). Through their own words we experience both opposing and complementary ideologies of and judgments about the 'Nigerianness' of Nollywood film music. I find their comments invaluable not only as important sources on local film music discourse but more so because they combine to set up the arguments and counter-arguments on and around the shades (or definitions) of identity in the succeeding analytical chapters. For now, their arguments have enabled me fashion out the three schools of thought that regulate and support the various interpretations and formations of identity in mainstream Nollywood film music.

2.7 Contesting identity: Nollywood adherents/Schools of Thought

In the summer of 2015, I undertook fieldwork in the following Nigerian cities: Lagos, Asaba, Port Harcourt, Umuahia, and Onitsha. I met with several notable Nollywood practitioners and businessmen (hereafter referred to as Nollywood adherents) to get their perspectives on issues of soundtrack and its identity (see Figures 2.5–2.12). Here, a Nollywood adherent is a person who advocates a set of ideas resulting from engaging and experimenting with issues of Nollywood film music identity. Specifically, interviews with the selected adherents covered a range of aspects including, but not limited to, matters of style and application of music to film, cultural/industry values, collaboration and remuneration, the changing expectations of Nigerian audiences toward Nollywood soundtrack, cultural specificity, and what the competing voices of film music refinement propose. Each respondent spoke to the matter from their respective experiences presumably in the hope that Nigerians will soon evolve a soundtrack ideology that is both locally and globally acceptable. In reality that day may be far off; yet the notion that Nollywood film music is on the verge of some critical refinement is trite. To be clear, I have selected and presented the opinions of only three of the several respondents. Their statements are emblematic of shared and contrasting views within the industry (for more, see Appendix B).



Figure 2.5 Stanley Okorie (film composer)

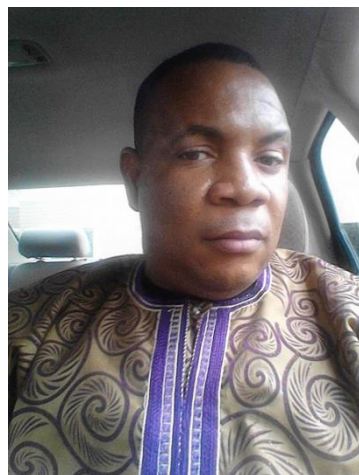


Figure 2.6. Austin Erowele (film composer)



Figure 2.7 Kelvin Okike (lawyer/film retailer)



Figure 2.8 Shadrach John (film composer)



Figure 2.9. Brownny Igboegwu (Nollywood actor)



Figure 2.10. Chuks Onyizuwe (EPM)

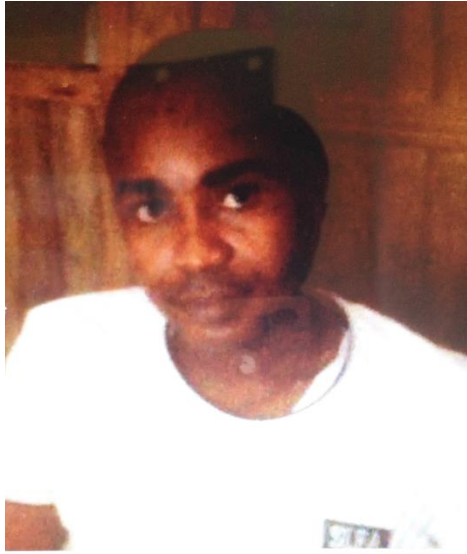


Figure 2.11 Uche Egeonu (EPM)



Figure 2.12 Yemi Alade-Lawal (music supervisor)

The nature of mainstream Nollywood soundtrack is closely tied to the practitioners' individual and collective perceptions of identity. Of this, Stanley Okorie (2015) remarks:

Well, one, it is Nollywood not Bollywood or Hollywood. Two, it has to convey a Nigerian identity. It is a Nollywood film. It has a Nollywood identity: the lingual identity, the style identity. ... Your identity is who you are: the air you breathe, the name you bear, the language you speak, the women you fall in love with, the children you bear, the work you do, [and] the death you die. That's the totality. So, we have to localise the concepts to where we are.

When it comes to localisation, for me, there are four things: What are you localising? Who are you localising it for? How do you localise it? And how do I myself as a [soundtrack] producer keep my own identity so that if you hear the soundtrack, you know it is Stanley Okorie? And the person who is shooting a movie says 'Oh, I like this voice, or I like this style'. So, those are the four arms for me. So first, what are you localising? [It is] the story: it is not a story in America or London. It is a story [told] in Nigeria, so let it be here. ... That's for 'What'. 'How?' How is... don't speak Queen's English when you are singing a song in Nollywood. Depending on the film, make it what the average person can understand; like... I am coming, my darling. Instead of 'I am coming, my darling', you can say, 'My darling, I de come'. Pidgin is the language. That's the second one. Then the choice of instrument/s [e.g.] the xylophone, the highlife feel [groove], and the choice of rendition: sometimes purposefully speaking wrong English! [For example], "I didn't know that you de. I didn't know that you de", that is [to say], "I wasn't aware that you are there". And then getting it close to the people: that's just the process of localisation. Then the fourth one will be my style – and I have my style. God gives every creative man his own identity: by my voice, by my style, which a lot of people try to copy too. You know I can't stop people from copying me but I'll just have to keep reinventing myself. So,

that's localisation: bringing it so close to the people and most importantly, making the music for the market! Because if you make fantastic [film] music that they give you award for in America, and the film does not sell here, nobody will bring another film for you. I don't think I've ever won an award for anything. I have never. If I have, I don't know.

Okorie's logic of localisation/difference is arguably a show of resistance to some of the aforementioned Hollywood film music approaches (discussed fully in chapter 4). His approach, which has been endorsed by some other composers and filmmakers, appears to disregard the notion of glocalisation (the practice of conducting any kind of work without prejudice to either local or global views). Thus, assessing identity from the point of glocalisation, fellow Nollywood composer Austin Erowele (2015) asserts:

We shouldn't run away from those things that make us unique from other film industries. Our identity is in the style. Our style is using percussive instruments and vocalisation of film songs all the time. These are the things that give us our [film music] identity. But it should be done in moderation. It should be streamlined so that it [the film] becomes very palatable for people to watch. For instance, what makes movies interesting is suspense. What I do is abstract narration of the plot. Now, [in this sense] you are doing two things at the same time: you are giving them [the viewers] a song that is relevant to the movie but at the same time isn't revealing everything that is in the movie. This approach gives the soundtrack second hand value because you can apply it to any other film with [a] similar theme.

As noted earlier in the thesis, there are some practitioners who vehemently oppose the notions of localisation, glocalisation, and Nigerian identity in Nollywood film music. EPM Chuks Onyizuwe (2015) believes that the industry's film music appeal should reflect Hollywood approaches.

As far as soundtrack goes, you don't need to hear somebody's voice. It's instrumental [music]. So, if you intend to produce a film that will go international you must be careful with the soundtrack. I'm sure you have heard them say that the film *Baby Oku in America* (2013) sold out. But Baby Oku sold because of the concept of the film—the storyline, the casting, and picture quality – not the soundtrack. Baby Oku's soundtrack is rubbish as far as I am concerned. Nollywood soundtracks have to be criticised the same way we criticise the films. And don't forget what I said earlier: what do you expect from somebody that is limited in soundtrack understanding? His production will be limited because there is no extra step to improve the work. In a country where the producers of soundtrack are not more than five, is that not monopoly? What do you expect? And they do not want to improve their knowledge to international standard. Do you expect them to criticise themselves? No. Instead, they will be telling you stories to make you believe that they know what they are doing. The whole industry's system is not organised. There are no academies for training

[soundtrack] producers. What machines or technologies is he [the film composer] using? So, this is why identity will need to be revised. We either resolve to do soundtrack the international way or we pack it up.

The above comments and those of other practitioners (see Appendix B) reveal three schools of thought on Nollywood film music and its identity²⁹. I call the first, Traditionalist. This group consists of persons who strongly opine that Nollywood soundtrack should, regardless of film genre, remain very local. The soundtrack should be texted (vocal) music in indigenous Nigerian languages (particularly, Igbo) and Pidgin English. More so, they argue that the identity that results from singing the entire film should be maintained. To them, all attempts to ‘modernise’ the soundtrack should be resisted. The crux of their argument is that any effort to ‘refine’ or have Nollywood soundtrack assume the quality and character of, say, Hollywood will culturally eliminate the ‘Nolly’ from the ‘wood’. This ‘elimination’ promotes a direct yet lopsided competition with more established cinema traditions of the world. And they reason that such a move can immediately alienate a critical mass of the home audience who draw meaning and cultural specificity from the status quo. Stanley Okorie is the embodiment of this school.

I call the second, Temperate. The individuals of this group do not entirely favour or oppose a conservative film music identity. Theirs is an argument for subtle modifications including, (1) partial prefiguring: meaning that the texted (vocal) music should only offer a vague idea of the plot and, therefore, be reusable in any other film that is thematically similar. (2) That the lingual identity of Nollywood soundtrack can and should include more Nigerian languages and, more importantly, Standard English in certain film genres. They also contend that marketers and executive producers should not solely decide the choice of language. (3) As a stylistic tool, prefiguring should be maintained but restricted to only a few specific scenes for emphasis. (4) That, as an identification tag, purely instrumental music can be introduced to help accentuate moods. And this approach should reflect a deliberate recourse to indigenous percussive instruments. Overall, Temperates are of the view that this kind of refinement will not remove the ‘Nolly’ from the ‘wood’ and/or estrange the focus fan base. Rather, their

²⁹ I had suggested two schools of thought in my MA dissertation (Sylvanus 2011). However, the current research has necessitated an upward revision of that position statement.

proposition aims to elevate the local identity onto a ‘special’ status among other cinema traditions of the world. Austin Erowele and Shadrach John pioneer this school.

I call the third, Pro-Hollywood. As the name suggests, the members of this group are for everything Hollywood. To them, Hollywood is the ‘Holy Grail’. They argue that Nollywood soundtrack should be entirely instrumental music. And that prefiguring, whether in part or whole, has no place in Nollywood films. They are outright advocates of underscoring, the use of source (or licensed) music, and other Hollywood film sound particularities. The Pro-Hollywood argument is that the Nigerianness of Nollywood productions subsists in the storylines, cast and crew, setting, language, and fashion. Therefore, film music should ‘complement’ Nollywood films by taking on a full global (Hollywoodesque) character. The motion for a more outward looking Nollywood film music identity is also linked to the matter of ‘quality’, which this school argues can only be achieved from adopting Hollywood approaches. Yemi Alade-Lawal (whose views are and works are revealed in chapter 4) is strong a proponent of this school.

2.8 Chapter summary

Taken together, this chapter has shown that Nollywood film music identity is a constantly revised and changing phenomenon. Through the different sections I have engaged with the complexities of its negotiation: of musical form, style and genre, language, individual and collective ideologies, national and international lines of artistic/creative loyalty, divergent and intersecting film music traditions, internal politics and power dynamics, the effects of stereotypes, as well as the competing thoughts on the Nigerianness of Nollywood film music. I have also raised queries (some of them to be answered in the succeeding chapters) about how Nollywood film music speaks to culture, its consumers, and even scholars. This aspect resonates with Mark Slobin’s notions of social and cultural meanings of film music, and why ‘moments across the film world’ offer the ‘local variation and counter-practice’ necessary for ‘an ethnomusicology of film’ (2008: xii/337). The social and business world of film composition in Nigeria also reveals the degree to which social identity influences film music. Nollywood film songs and film narratives explore and ‘portray the power of film music to transform society’ (Tuohy 2008: 179). Also, Robert Faulkner’s formulations were applied to Nollywood film composers’ occupational networks. The outcome showed that, as with many things Nigerian, Nollywood operates an industrial

process, which probably requires a Faulkneresque but certainly Nollycentric social theory. However, because my study strictly focuses on the ethnomusicological, I have consigned the task of formulating any social theory regarding Nollywood film music practice to scholars in the relevant academic disciplines. Finally, this chapter has presented threads of the local variation and counter-practice, which can stand as the ‘rules of Nollywood’ film music tradition. These rules and other distinctive strains such as artistic and social values are aggregated for case-study purposes in the next two chapters.

Chapter 3

Performing identity in mainstream Nollywood film music

Throughout this thesis I maintain that the identity of Nollywood film music involves a binary tension: on the one hand, it is a focus on the materiality of Nollywood as an institution – its social organisation and systems of film music production, markets and power relations, techniques and technologies—and, on the other hand, the composers’ representative practice through which musical value and meaning are made. The first part is closely linked to the field of Social Theory, and I have devoted a part of chapter 2 to that discourse. In a later chapter, I attempt to link and possibly resolve the binary tension between industry, internal divergent practices, texts (that is, soundtrack content), and emerging identities. In this chapter, however, I focus on the second (musicological) part of that dual tension using experiential data from one of the case study films and its soundtrack, as well as interviews/recordings to theorise identity as both a discursive and performative localised phenomenon. To do so, I particularly reference two texts, namely: Stokes’ (1994) *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place* and Benwell and Stokoe’s (2006) *Discourse and Identity*. In this context, I argue that the force of individualism influences values that shape identity within the practice. Those values in turn provide the unchanging frame of reference for identity in Nollywood film music. I also argue that identity in Nollywood film music evolves from the dynamics of ethno-culturalism, and socio-economic and political integration in Nigeria. My analyses show how identity is localised, performed, and communicated in Nollywood film music. Finally, I use the arguments to discuss both the industry’s ‘Communities of practice’ and the first two schools of thought on identity. To begin, I present the summary of plot and soundtrack of the case study film *Ekaette Goes to School* (2014). In addition to the summary is a graphical representation of placement of shots, scenes, duration, narrative, and music. This figure is useful for illustrating prefiguring through the significant structural, chronological, narratological, and musical moments in *Ekaette Goes to School*. To be clear, the figure is not the entire minute-by-minute account of plot and soundtrack. Rather the diagram represents moments in the film that I have chosen, decided, and based on their relevance to the context of discourse, that is, identity in local Nollywood film music productions (see Figure 3.3).

3.1 *Ekaette Goes to School*

Ekaette Goes to School is a film directed by MacCollins Chidebe. It is approximately two and a half hours long and belongs to the Nollywood genre known as ‘Family’.³⁰ The film is broadly structured into two sections, each with a subplot. Section One covers everything from the opening credits [00:45] to the scene just before the penultimate climax and narrative shift [99:43]. And section Two begins from the penultimate climax [99:43] to the closing credits [150:08]. The dust jackets (Figures 3.1 and 3.2) show the changes in the film’s title from *Ekaette Goes to School* in section One to *Mama Class One* in section Two. This change in title is common practice within the industry and, although it may be a technical consequence of how much material can be contained per disc, has no tangible implications for either the narrative or soundtrack on this occasion.

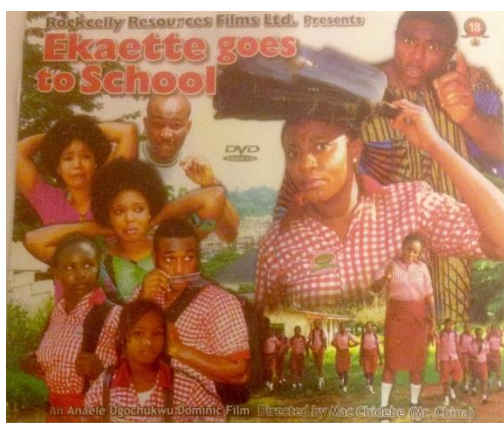


Figure 3.1 Dust jacket - Section One

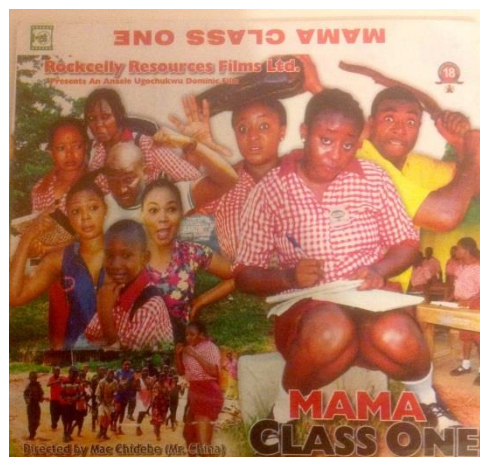


Figure 3.2 Dust jacket - Section Two

Ekaette Goes to School is the story of a young Ibibio woman (played by popular actor Ini Edo) who is married to an Igbo man named Onuwa (Bob-Manuel Odogwu).³¹ The movie is set in an unnamed Igbo village in southeastern Nigeria. As inferred from the opening scenes and lyrics of the soundtrack, Ekaette (also called Celina by her husband) is uneducated and, therefore, an object of ridicule to many. She constantly quarrels with other villagers who seize every opportunity to expose her illiteracy. However, following some introspection and consultations with her spouse, Ekaette decides to register at the nearby school. She is eventually enrolled in ‘Class One’. Even so, the jeers increase particularly among her classmates who think that, as a married woman,

³⁰ This film is available in VCD/DVD formats and via such online platforms as Iroko TV.

³¹ For more on the Ibibio ethnic nationality of Nigeria, see Noah (1987).

she is far too old for the class. It is this thought that the villagers express when they chant: 'Ekaette, mama ndi One!' meaning 'Ekaette, over-aged class One pupil'. This chant becomes central to all aspects of the film: its dialogue, music, picture composition, chronology, and development of plot.

Midway into the film, Ekaette is faced with a bigger challenge at school: her English language teacher (Mr Chimex) desires to have sex with her. She is perplexed at her teacher's sexual innuendos, which range from love letters to inappropriate body gestures and touching, and the promise of extramural classes to improve her study grades. Structurally, this is the penultimate climax of the film because, before now, every scene and song focused on Ekaette's preparedness for and subsequent registration at school. To make this narrative shift obvious to the viewer, there is a scene at the local pub where Onuwa and his friend argue for and against the likelihood that Ekaette will be involved in unlawful sexual intercourse with male teachers. Onuwa seems convinced when his friend suggests that all Ekaette will do in school is 'share her bottom'. To 'share [her] bottom' is coded Nigerian Pidgin English for promiscuity and prostitution among women. The phrase appears as a sub-theme set to music in the soundtrack. As anticipated, Onuwa goes home and confronts Ekaette – asking to be reassured about her fidelity. In the succeeding scenes, Ekaette is able to fend off the sexual harassments by threatening to report Mr Chimex to the Head teacher. This too is foreshadowed in the texted (background) music, which a female soloist renders.

Finally, the plot climaxes with a raised lifestyle and socio-economic status, which her good education has afforded Ekaette and her family. According to the film, she graduates with good grades and is eligible to stand for political office at the local government level. Having been voted in as the county council chairperson of her community, she now owns an official urban-style residence, a car with police escort, and is paid a flattering salary. The movie ends with everyone else (including Onuwa) regretting not 'going to school' and hence proceeding to enrol at Ekaette's alma mater.

The length of *Ekaette Goes to School* is characteristic of how Nollywood approaches cinema: a succession of indoor and outdoor scenes with emphasis on the 'spatial' rather than 'temporal' dimension. As such, the pictures of this film draw mainly from four locations of the set village. These are Ekaette's home (specifically her bedroom), her school, the local pub, and the road that connects the first three. The Nollywood

approach to cinema broadly ensures a strict chronology and linear structure (especially where there are no scenic flashbacks) that make both the narrative and music very easy to follow. Like in other global film traditions, the road is a common ‘symbolic’ feature in Nollywood films. According to Françoise Ugochukwu, the road ‘occupies a good half of the film time [...] and is used as a systematic marker of time—separating one day from the next’ (Ugochukwu 2013:29). The use of the road thus helps to structure *Ekaette Goes to School* by ‘signalling a pause in action, [which is] combined with songs [...] as the story evolves’ (ibid: 100). As with several mainstream Nollywood films, the soundtrack and dialogue more than the camera reveal the story. In what follows, I discuss how music and language reveal the plot in *Ekaette Goes to School*.

3.1.1 Film songs, musical genres, style, and application

Ekaette goes to school has five different vocal-instrumental compositions, which I have labelled A, B, C, D, and E. In adherence to the primary rule of Nollywood, the composer (Maxwell Chidebere Leonard) has ensured that nearly all the lyrics and tunes serve the purpose of prefiguring. He does this by drawing on, developing, and setting important phrases from both dialogue and plot to music. Examples of such phrases include ‘Ekaette, ete mbok’ (Pardon me, Ekaette), ‘mama ndi one’ (over-aged class One pupil), and ‘Nwa ticha wan chop my ting’ (my teacher wants to have sex with me). These songs are then strategically placed ahead of the events or pictures that they foretell (Figure 3.3). All songs are in the simple call-and-refrain musical form with short and memorable melodies. Also, the instrumental accompaniments are realised using basic computer programming and software. By my aural analysis, the harmonies of all five songs are limited to the primary chords of their respective keys. The employment of limited harmonic resources in *Ekaette Goes to School* is not unintentional. Rather it underlines the state of refinement of film music in mainstream Nollywood, as well as how the industry has manoeuvred its limitations to sustain a divergent creative process (as discussed in chapter 2).

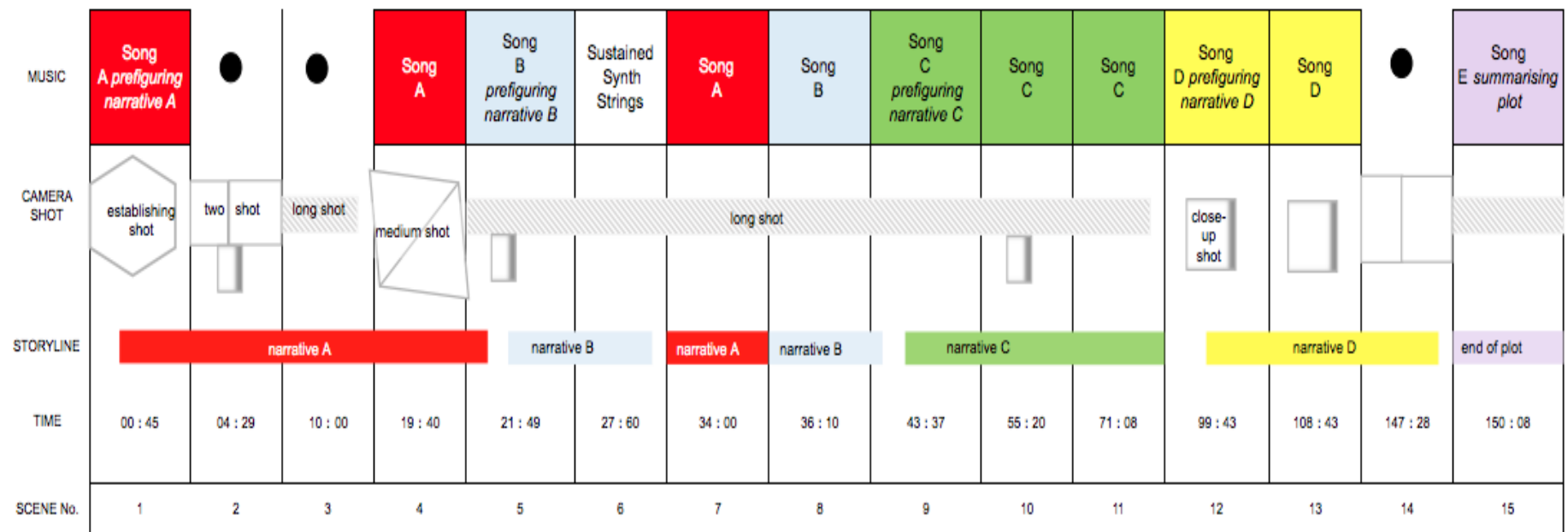


Figure 3.3. Placement of music, scenes, and narrative in *Ekaette Goes to School*

For the soundtrack of *Ekaette Goes to School* to accentuate Nigerianness, it has to emphasise a degree of ‘difference’ in line with ‘the organising principles and musical instruments used, and its cultural significance among those involved’ (Emielu 2013:95).³² For this reason, the songs are clearly characteristic of two musical genres namely, Nigerian folk and highlife. And with the exception of the fourth, every other song is in the composer’s own voice. From the point of musical creativity, song A uses a four-note melodic motif, which is essentially a text-tune correlation of the name *Ekaette*. This correlation is an initial effort to nuance ethnic/cultural identity. In terms of pitch, this motif consists of a repeated tone that leaps a perfect fifth, and falls a major second.



Music Example 1: Schematic of the four-note melodic motif of song A

All three pitches and resulting intervals are arguably a part of the broader musical scale of the local *oja* (wooden transverse flute). The *oja* also sounds this motif at various points during the film – often signalling moments involving the protagonist to the viewer. This manner of application of musical motif is borrowed from two approaches: (1) television music, and (2) indigenous storytelling practices. The first approach uses musical motifs as thematic ‘signposts’ and genre ‘reminder’ to the viewer.³³ In the second approach, musical compositions rely on ethnic musical instruments such as *obodom* (large wooden slit drum) and *oja* to ‘voice’ the unvoiced (as discussed in section 2.3).

Song A specifically simulates a traditional (ethnic) groove that is evocative of Igbo and Ibibio folk music and dance.³⁴ The song explicitly employs only local instruments such as the *oja*, *ekwe* (small twin metal gong), and wooden hand clappers to accompany the

³² Emielu’s quote was made in relation to his work on types of West African highlife music and ethnic identity.

³³ This theory has already been advanced in the works of Fiske (1987), Ellis (1992), Donnelly (2005), and Wiley (2010).

³⁴ There is ample evidence of research on Igbo and Ibibio traditional music and dance in, for example, Echeruo (1975), Nzewi (1980), Kwami (1992), Onyeji (2004), and Ozah (2015).

singing voice. This approach is aesthetically instructive, not least, because it attempts to aurally ‘orchestrate’ and, therefore, situate the geographical setting of the plot from the outset. The integration of indigenous musical instruments/instrumentation is one way that many Nollywood composers construct musical value and meaning. And so, listening to *Ekaette Goes to School*, a local (Nigerian) viewer is arguably able to discern the accentuated milieu. In addition, there is the conscious linguistic choice of Igbo, Ibibio, and Nigerian Pidgin as song texts (see audio example 1 in the attached disc).

Songs B, C, D and E possess the quality of highlife – a musical genre and style that has been previously explained. While songs B, C, and D are hyper-explicative—informing the viewer of onscreen events, the final song E is a summary of the film’s moral and overarching theme (that is the need for education, opportunity, and ephemerality of life’s circumstances). All of these songs employ simple and memorable refrains with very basic harmonic progressions. And although each vary in tempo, tonality, and rhythm, their lyrics all make use of local languages (Igbo and Ibibio) and Nigerian Pidgin. Even where, for instance, the lyrics consist of words in proper English (as observed in the first few lines of song B), the singer renders them with Pidgin English tonal inflection (see audio example 2). The impact of this manner of rendition is deliberate and aimed at not ‘alienating’ the target audience. More so, the composers are able to do this without the thought of losing meaning because of the suppleness of English words. Lyrically, song B is an answer to song A: for example, the opening phrase ‘Ekaette goes to school’ answers song A’s question: ‘Ebe ka one je?’ (Where is she [Ekaette] going?). Song B happens because the scenes, which the music must ‘sing’, show Ekaette on her way to school [21:49–27:50].

The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The music is in 4/4 time. The first part, labeled 'Call (soloist)', consists of a melodic line starting on a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, an eighth note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, and a half note F4. The second part, labeled 'Response (backing voices)', consists of a harmonic line starting on a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, an eighth note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, and a half note F4. The lyrics 'E-ka-et-te goes to school; — she goes to school.' are written below the staff, with a long dash under the first part and a shorter dash under the second part.

Music Example 2: Schematic of the opening of song B

But this is not to suggest that the soundtrack develops its musical themes in a homogenous manner. Rather this happens because the scenes, which the music must predict, show Ekaette on her way to school.

Similarly, song C is based on the conversation between Onuwa and his friend. Its motif is the phrase ‘No share my bottom’, which the xylophone introduces.



Music Example 3: Schematic of the melodic motif of song C

The inclusion of the xylophone is another statement of intent to localise. The instrumentation employs synthesised guitar, drumbeats, and local instruments such as *ekwe*, xylophone, and gourd rattles (see audio example 3). The song possesses a rather distressed temperament that is intended to reflect Onuwa’s mood in the scenes where he doubts Ekaette’s fidelity [71:08–98:56]. The music also foreshadows the events wherein the English language teacher makes sexual advances towards Ekaette. This scene then paves way for song D whose accompaniment employs a mix of similar local and pop music instruments plus synth strings and keyboards.

Song D is particularly upbeat in character and rendered by a female soloist. This is the first time that the soundtrack’s solo part is in a voice that is not the composer’s. In my opinion, this departure from the rule is informed by both dialogue and picture. Specifically, the exchanges between Ekaette and her teacher highlight the sexual harassment that many young women experience in Nigerian schools [99:43–108:18]. Apparently, it makes sense that the lead singer in this context *represents* the character and gender of the film’s protagonist. It is a much-personalised song with messages in strong language. The lyrics make use of phrases, words, and maxims in both Ibibio and Nigerian Pidgin English. Words and phrases such as ‘toto’ and ‘him wan make I give am ikoko’ are suggestive and coded expressions for the vagina, and complicity in sexual intercourse, respectively. The entire song text describes how Ekaette eventually handles her teacher’s sexual advances and inappropriate physical contact. The backing voices interpolate every line of the soloist with “I no go gree!” meaning ‘I will not consent!’



Music Example 4: Schematic of the opening measures of song D

As shown in the schematic, the song opens with ‘Nwa ticha wan put me for trouble; I no go gree! He wan chop my *ting* o; I no go gree!’ This translates as ‘My teacher wants to implicate me; I will not consent! He wants to have sex with me; I will not consent!’ In addition, its harmony is a simple and continuous alternation of the tonic and dominant chords against the changing melodic phrases (see audio example 4).

To conclude, song E returns in the composer’s own voice. Its lyrics are about the value of good education, which is arguably the thematic preoccupation of the film. The song is in a major key, relatively fast in tempo, very rhythmic, and in compound quadruple time. It makes use of synthesiser-derived sounds ranging from keyboard to strings, guitar, and drumbeats. Its harmony employs only the primary chords (I, IV, and V) from start to finish. Its formal organisation is strophic with a chorus refrain to ‘answer’ each melodic phrase (see audio example 5). The words are mainly in Igbo language with occasional one-liners in Pidgin and proper English. The backing voices continually chorus ‘Echi eteka’ (Tomorrow might be too late) to the soloist’s phrases. Here, *Ech’eteka* is used in an advisory sense against procrastination for, according to another Igbo adage in the song text, *Echi di ime* (tomorrow is pregnant).

CALL (Soloist)

RESPONSE (Backing voices)_e

Okw'u - nua-fu-go, okw'u - nua fu-go nu na e-chi d'i-me. E-che-te-ka!

Music Example 5: Schematic of parts of the melody of song E

In all, these five songs reveal some consistency with the rules of Nollywood film music practice – one of which is prefiguring. Although the film’s dialogue is largely in Standard English, the nature and application of the soundtrack remarkably *gives back* the story to the people in the language that they understand best. In my view, this makes it possible for many Nigerians to appropriate the film as a product of their own culture. This, here, is one of the principal reasons why film music is texted in mainstream Nollywood. It represents how ethnicity finds a voice in their film music productions.

3.2 Performing ethnic identity in Nollywood film music: Rhythms of indigenisation

On identity and performativity, Butler (quoted in Benwell and Stokoe 2006:33) observes that ‘identity is performatively constituted by the very “expressions” that are said to be its results’. Mainstream Nollywood narratives and soundtracks constantly

operate in some relation to established discourses of the ethnic (or national) cultural identity. This assumption is not new to scholarship and neither is it to be associated only with Nollywood (for example, Turner 1986; 1993). Again, this is not supposedly a radical assumption, rather one that emphasises the conscious localisation of an appropriated art form. In this context, I maintain that the way to examine ‘the ethnic’ subsists in mapping processes of appropriation, adaptation, and deterritorialisation. The soundtrack of *Ekaette Goes to School* thoroughly establishes a unique sound–dialogue relation that favours an indigenous narrative system. To explain this, I will address three interconnected issues: the relation between the film’s storyline and cultural identity; the relation between the film’s soundtrack and cultural identity; as well as the relation between both the narrative and music and the degree to which the discursive influence of prefiguring reifies cultural identity. Consequently, I explore the connection between Nollywood film music and ethnic/national shades of identity: when it is made, and whether or not it is framed within one or more identity formations.

3.2.1 Mainstream Nollywood: Narrative, soundtrack, and cultural identity

In examining mainstream Nollywood film music, I infer that prefiguring offers us ideas about how to ‘read’ film music in its local movie productions. Such ideas include notions of interpretation or *preferred* meanings of the Nigerian film music reality (some of which have already been disclosed in chapter 2). The current chapter relies specifically on *Ekaette Goes to School* to demonstrate how certain Nollywood film composers focus on constructing and giving identity as well as relating it to the notion of cultural differentiation. In chapter 1, definitions of cultural identity were offered from which notions such as ‘cultural expression’, ‘nationality’, and ‘national sentiment’ arose. Here, I note that these sentiments vary according to the philosophy of cultures of the world. Thus, culture and cultural expression will be holistically treated as the fundamental component of cultural identity. After all, ‘culture is expressed not just in works of art or entertainment, but [also] in all forms of expression and analysis concerning the present as well as the past (Audley, 1983: xxi). Culture is complex and dynamic: an enduring and ever-changing phenomenon of communication and social interaction. For this reason, ‘familiar resources ranging from food, language, and religious rituals to [...] popular music are combined by individuals and groups into distinctive cultural repertoires or tool kits’ (Lull, 1995: 66). Consequently, film and film music have become part of Nigeria’s cultural identity.

In a 2005 television interview about the repetitive themes of Nollywood feature films, one of its foremost directors Bond Emeruwa asserted: ‘We are telling our own stories in our own way, [and] that is the appeal both for the filmmakers and for the audience.’ This assertion implies recourse to indigenous knowledge and culture. It effectively signals an end to imitation (of ‘foreign’ narrative/soundtrack approaches) and the beginning of self-discovery. It is a change that is also driven by the economic forces of demand and supply backed by a market in need of culturally relevant goods with remarkable yields. I have previously suggested that for many Nigerians in the homeland life happens according to Nollywood storylines and soundtracks (Sylvanus 2012). *Ekaette Goes to School* shows that cultural identity is firmly inscribed in Nollywood narratives. It is not a story of people in some other of parts of Africa or the world. It is a story that reflects the level of illiteracy in present-day Nigeria – a kind of identification tag that the nation is struggling to lose: how much its citizens perceive and value education and the educated; as well as the pride that certain ethnic groups of the country (particularly in the south) command from being ‘the most educated’. This cultural reality is obvious in the film’s opening exchanges between Ekaette and her husband wherein, as if to justify her argument, she names a number of well-educated Nigerians from her ethnicity. The narrative also highlights the general notion among Nigerians that people from Ekaette’s sub-culture area are exceptional in making love. This is an aspect of cultural identity, which the third song of the soundtrack captures explicitly (audio example 3, refers). The implication is that the film’s soundtrack does not alienate ethnic Nigerians. If at all, the music situates the narrative completely within a particular milieu of the country: a case of mapping ethnic territories as discussed in the next section.

Both narrative and soundtrack are particularly sensitive to audience expectations and responses. In other words, both plot and songs have been carefully composed and revised to fit the local film/film music discourse. The relation between the narrative and music makes this sensitivity possible. Once again, the single most important catalyst that links the narrative with the music is prefiguring. Through the art of prefiguring, the soundtrack of *Ekaette Goes to School* restates and speaks back to the film’s narrative whilst simultaneously relaying the story in Igbo, Ibibio, and Nigerian Pidgin—the ‘language’ of its target audience. This, here, is the first real experience of ethnicity as constituted in performance. But it does not end there. Beyond text and choice of

language are also decisions around instrument and instrumentation as well as genre, which *Ekaette Goes to School* clearly illustrates. The soundtrack is then applied scene by scene—almost as though the life of the storyline depends solely on that of the soundtrack and vice versa. It is this degree of interconnectedness that fastens the film’s entire plot to the culture of its production and ultimately its ethnic cultural identity. Prefiguring thus reifies cultural identity in Nollywood – a quality that contrasts sharply with approaches found in, for instance, European film music tradition wherein, according to some scholars, the music can lead its own life and not be empathic to the story (for example, Vernon and Eisen 2006).

3.3 Mapping territories of cultural identity

In chapter 2, I observed that a reasonable amount of Nollywood film music had the colouring of the socio-cultural realities of the Igbo tribe of southeastern Nigeria. I attributed this to the dominance of people of Igbo ethnicity in the business of film and film music production. Using *Ekaette Goes to School*, I will advance the argument by looking into the music’s own attributes: genre categories, instruments and instrumentation, and other peculiarities that might make territories easy to map. I particularly note that the territories to be mapped in this discourse are specifically sub-culture areas within modern Nigeria. As already stated, the film songs of *Ekaette Goes to School* belong broadly to Nigerian highlife and folk music genres. The highlife genre possesses distinctive ‘flavours’ across Nigeria. These flavours are constituted in the style of rendition, the preferred instruments and instrumentation, performance practice, and choice of local Nigerian dialects for the embedded messages. To be clear, highlife music is commonplace across Nigeria. However, each region and sub-culture modifies the genre’s attributes (of lyrics, syncopated rhythms, percussiveness, ostinato bass, solo and refrain) to suit their own musical taste (see Emielu 2009; 2011). For example, Igbo language highlife differs from highlife made in other Nigerian tribes by its integration of indigenous Igbo musical instruments such as *ekwe* and *oja*, Igbo words and maxims, as well as drumming patterns derived largely from Igbo folk music and dances. With these attributes, it is clear that the last four (highlife) songs of the soundtrack of *Ekaette Goes to School* are clearly Igbo in orientation.

I admit that the explanation and distinction given here might be difficult for the culture outsider to grasp. Yet it is worth considering that ‘all music is necessarily meaningful

insofar as it offers to the perceiving subject possibilities for action and imagination, and that meaning is wholly dependent neither on semiosis nor on the apprehension of formal or structural relationships' (Clayton 2001:1). And so, listening to the case study film music, a local (Nigerian) viewer is able to discern (or map out) which part of the country the film's soundtrack 'represents'. It is in the same vein that the local viewer is able to distinguish between folk music idioms of Igbo, Ibibio, Yoruba, and Hausa abstractions in a given Nollywood film soundtrack. Another way to map territories using Nollywood film music is to go by its film–film music genre categorisations (refer to Table 2). Given that only mainstream Nollywood accounts for this kind of listing, it is fair to conclude that, insofar as the association of film genre with film music is concerned, a musical genre such as (Nigerian) highlife does not only suggest that it operates within the Comedy film genre but also effectively connects the listener to the geographical space called Nigeria.

Altogether, I have attempted to show how local identity is elucidated in the film music of *Ekaette Goes to School*. In his approach, composer Maxwell Leonard Chidiebere has thoroughly localised the soundtrack—going beyond merely putting musical notes and sound samples together to embodying the sounds and dialogues of Nigerian musical culture: of ethnic musical peculiarities mainly through the Nigerian popular music genre called highlife. This way, a 'Nigerian' film music expression that serves as an instrument for mapping territories of cultural identity has been constructed. This is not just accomplished through the discourse surrounding Nigerian popular music, but also through the song texts themselves. These texts, which bear aspects of Nigerian popular culture, for example, emplace the soundtrack within a specifically Nigerian geographical space. There is also an implied acceptance of the connection Nigerian film songs have to the long history of abstraction of the country's folk and popular culture. With such creative (musical) imagination, local Nollywood film composers draw on all these sources to emphasise a potential Nigerian identity. Attention to the poetics of their film song texts (as indicated in songs B, D, and E) also provides some insight into how film composers can use texted music to imagine their subculture areas. *Ekaette Goes to School* could easily be used to construct a narrative about how local film composers appropriate Nigerian musical and popular culture forms to talk back to and resist influences from foreign film music traditions. Hence, identity becomes performed through a context that I call *blocking*. I use the term blocking to refer to any method

that facilitates Nollywood practitioners' conscious pursuit of a localised film music identity, including drawing only and mainly from Nigerian musical culture (elaborated in chapter 5). Nowhere else is the argument for and merit of blocking more evident than in the industry's local film music discourse about preventing perceived forms of foreign cultural imperialism.³⁵

To further nuance the notion of localisation, I briefly explore the distinctions between the highlife music genre of the Yoruba and Igbo (both representing two dominant ethnic groups where the bulk of musical idioms for Nollywood film music are sourced). Both Yoruba and Igbo highlife music of southern Nigeria have developed complex, interweaving, and contrasting rhythmic patterns. These highlife musicians generally pursue the realisation of at least two different rhythmic patterns occurring simultaneously. And it is precisely this juxtaposition of opposing rhythms that creates the vital inspiration of highlife music in southern Nigeria.

Generally, Yoruba and Igbo highlife music makes use of guitars, brass instruments like the trumpet, the human voice, and percussive instruments. The Yoruba on the one hand have a well-known drumming tradition; and their brand of highlife mostly privileges a variety of local tension drums such as *iya-ilu* (mother talking drum), *dundun* (hourglass drum), and *gudugudu* (kettle drum). On the other hand, Igbo highlife, which is heard in *Ekaette Goes to School*, employs local instruments such as the xylophone, *udu* (musical pot), *oja* (wooden transverse flute), *ufie* (wooden slit drum), and an occasional 13-stringed zither. Both brands of highlife can be distinguished by the groove that each evokes. Each groove is a function of intricate rhythmic patterns, timbre, roles of certain instruments, manner of singing, and other extra-musical nuances. Regarding the roles of specific instruments, for example, the talking drum and xylophone 'lead' and dominate the percussion section of Yoruba and Igbo highlife bands respectively. Just as the xylophone is not a common feature of Yoruba highlife, Igbo highlife bands do not use or emphasise the talking drum.

Both Yoruba and Igbo highlife music reveal interesting and distinctive rhythmic qualities that are bound up in traditional 'bell patterns'. In indigenous music practice, a bell pattern is considered the core rhythmic pattern from which other patterns derive or

³⁵ See the statements of both Stanley Okorie and Uche Egeonu in section 2.7.

relate to.³⁶ The bell pattern is usually assigned to certain percussive instruments such as the Yoruba *agogo* or the Igbo *ekwe*. As shown in the examples below, there are very subtle but significant distinctions between Yoruba and Igbo bell patterns. Patterns 1 and 2 of the Yoruba standard depict the different attack-points, which although beginning on different pulses, combine well to give a sense of rhythmic counterpoint. Patterns 1 and 2 of the Igbo standard contain equal strokes on near similar attack-points, but in a different relationship to the down beats.



Musical Example 6: Two common Yoruba bell rhythmic patterns



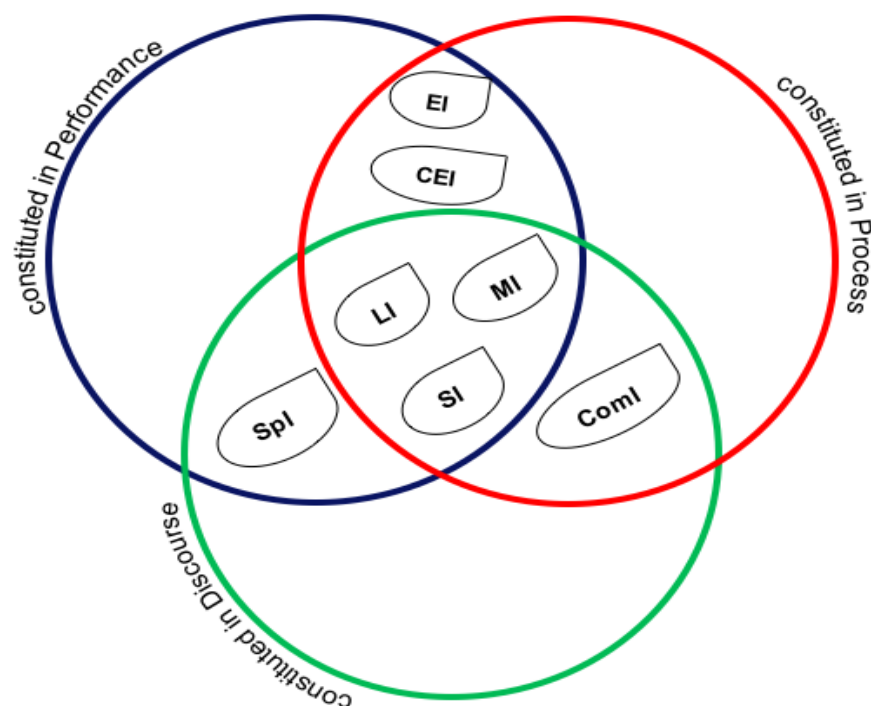
Musical Example 7: Two common Igbo bell rhythmic patterns

In quick tempo, for instance, these and other derived bell patterns combine to give a heightened sense of urgency, which some Nollywood film composers use as mood marking effects. Indeed, some of the composers have argued that the local percussive instruments are just as good for sound effects as those sound samples found in imported software.

We could not get our hands on those [Hollywood] sound effects. So, we had to improvise. Yes. But there is something we do now. Like, you could have a string instrument flowing in the background while you have something like the marimba or *ekwe* [twin metal gong] for a tense scene [especially] where there is a heated argument. Because it is local, there has to be something local; there has to be something cultural about it. (Shadrach John, interview with the author, 6 August 2015)

There is yet another distinctive quality between Yoruba and Igbo highlife. Yoruba highlife practice often involves assigning the melody part to *iya-ilu* while the guitars realise the harmonies. And while Yoruba highlife has something of a bluesy component within the talking drum's complex rhythmic patterns, Igbo highlife is known for its guitar phrasing style that mimics rhumba (see the example below).

³⁶ There are several essays on bell patterns found in sub-Saharan Africa. For more, see Agawu (2003), and Kubik (2010)



KEY:

EI = Ethnic identity
 CEI = Cross-ethnic identity
 LI = Lingual identity
 MI = Marginal-genre identity
 SI = Structural identity
 ComI = Commodified identity
 Spl = Spatial identity

Figure 3.4. The Nollywood film music localised shades of identity

In summary, this section has explored how both the object of scrutiny (identity) and the vehicle for its expression (Nollywood film music) is implicated in local cinema processes. From ‘listening’ to *Ekaette Goes to School*, we hear the vibrations of localisation and localised shades of identity, which have been fundamentally facilitated by the force of individualism.

3.4 Individualism as vector of stable values for a Nollywood film music identity

Identity is ‘an issue of agency and self-determination’, which Benwell and Stokoe (2006) argue has provoked paradigmatic shifts: first as ‘self-fashioning, agentic, internal project of the self’; then, as ‘the understandings of social and collective identity’; and lastly, the postmodern accounts which treat identity as ‘fluid, fragmentary, contingent and, crucially, constituted in discourse’ (2006: 17-18). So, the meaning of identity inheres in the three paradigm shifts. It is interesting that identity as

a ‘project of the self’ has endured centuries of human intellectualism. All arguments about identity have understandably begun at the level of individualism. And yet individualism has no exact meaning. Like identity, it remains fluid and susceptible to differing interpretations. Individualism is a theory, a practice, and a condition (Lewis 1911; Chelminski and Coulter 2007). Philosophically, individualism is applied in two ways: Solipsism (the notion that the self knows only itself), and Monadism (the doctrine that the world is composed of certain indivisible degrees of self-direction). Individualism has benefits, chief of which is the propensity for novelty or new standards. These standards become ‘schools of thought’. In other words, any school of thought is logically a group that promotes ‘shared individualism’. Hence, in relation to mainstream Nollywood film music, what has emerged as stable values and, therefore, a point of reference in the creative process has the imprimatur of individualism. As far as this research is concerned, Stanley Okorie is the one who laid down the mark for a stable frame of reference in Nollywood film music. He is, in a loose sense, the Max Steiner of Nollywood film music with protégés such as Maxwell Chidebere Leonard (the composer of *Ekaette Goes to School*) and Chimere Emejuobi. For this reason, I shall devote a few paragraphs to the contributions of Stanley Okorie as background to what I have termed the “rules” of Nollywood film music.

The individual film music creative process embedded in Stanley Okorie’s approach is the most significant identity feature to date in mainstream Nollywood. Such individual creativity has contributed to the success of both the composer and the industry. And that success reinforces the notion that ‘music provides an important means by which ethnic identities are constituted and mobilised’ (Stokes 1994:49). I must, however, emphasise here that Martin Stokes was not referring to film music. Yet the notion that identity is performative indicates that music and musical performance define and reinforce cultural differences of ethnicity, nationalism, and class. According to Stokes (1994), this happens via ‘conscious unchanging patterns of recognitions of geographical areas vis-à-vis the understanding of people’s identities’. His text considers how aspects of musical expression (of style, mode of practice, and genre) combine to underline social identity of specific milieus. He explores this notion by asking how, and to what extent, music is utilised by people and communities to *emplace* territories through and even beyond immediate geographical boundaries (Stokes 1994: 3-5). There is also the argument that music does more than merely representing the

practitioners. For Stokes, music is a powerful tool for the sustenance of societal values, social and political order, which in turn feed the discourse on authenticity and tradition, nationalism and nationhood, ethnicity and regionalism, and, by extension, ‘the local’ versus ‘the global’. Although Stokes’ argument is in context of art (and perhaps, pop) music studies, I find it well suited to film music practice in mainstream Nollywood where there are genre categorisations that encourage the mapping of territories using film songs.³⁷ This ability to map territories opens up discussions on identity and performativity as constituted in ethnicity—a signifier of *spatial identity*, which is discussed later in chapter 5.

According to Butler (1990: 33), identity is ‘a set of repeated acts within a rigid regulatory frame which congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance...’ or what Spicer (1971: 796) calls ‘persistent identity systems’. What both scholars suggest aptly describes the efforts of both Stanley Okorie and some Nollywood film producers over the years. Okorie’s approach to soundtrack composition is not far removed from performing local identity whether ethnic, regional, or national. I posit that his individualism awakened the ethnic and, arguably, national film music consciousness in/of Nigeria. Through a set of repeated acts/approaches, Okorie ‘mobilised’ a critical mass of the population to *hear* and own a film music identity that is firmly embedded in the crucible of difference to other cinema traditions of the world.³⁸

In Stanley Okorie, we witness the power of individualism as vector of stable values for the emergence of a Nollywood film music identity. This does not in any way suggest that Okorie’s style is *the identity* of Nollywood film music. Rather, his method provides a starting stable frame of reference: a process of *localisation* that both offers fixed features of and guarantees further inferential assumptions about identity in Nollywood film music. According to Okorie:

When it comes to localisation, for me, there are four things: What are you localising? Whom are you localising it for? How do you localise it? And how do I myself as a [soundtrack] producer keep my own identity so that if you hear the soundtrack, you know it is Stanley Okorie? And the person who is shooting a movie says ‘Oh, I like this voice, or I like this style’. Because part of art is also... One of the most important parts of art is the continued existence of the

³⁷ See Table 2 in chapter 2 and section 3.3 of this chapter.

³⁸ This has been articulated in parts of preceding chapters.

artist. If your art doesn't feed you [then] forget it. You go and become a mechanic. So, those are the four arms for me. So first, what are you localising? [It is] the story: it is not a story in America or London. It is a story [told] in Nigeria, so let it be here. I localise it also...(that's for *What*) [for] *How*. How is...don't speak Queen's English when you are singing a song in Nollywood. Depending on the film, make it what the average person can understand; like... *I am coming, my darling*. Instead of 'I am coming, my darling', you can say, 'My darling, I de come'. Pidgin is the language. That's the second one. Then the choice of instrument/s [e.g.] the xylophone, the feel...the highlife feel, you understand, and the choice of rendition: sometimes purposefully speaking wrong English! [*Pauses to give an example*] "I wasn't sure that... 'I didn't know that you de. I didn't know that you de'", that is [to say], I wasn't aware that you are there. And then getting it close to the people: that's just the process of localisation. Then the fourth one will be my style – and I have my style. God gives every creative man his own identity: by my voice, by my style, which a lot of people try to copy too. You know I can't stop people from copying me but I'll just have to keep reinventing myself. So, that's localisation (Stanley Okorie, interview with the author, 01 August 2015).

From Okorie's assertion, a genuine identity system should emerge from following some *rules of the practice*, which include the centrality of language, the singing voice, and texted music; as well as the means, and the mentality and sociality that bolster such a system.

On the centrality of language, voice, and texted music

I have dealt extensively on language and its importance to film music in Nollywood (see chapter 2). As far as mainstream Nollywood is concerned, its film music identity is firmly inscribed in a series of representations mediated by semiotic systems such as language. Identity or identification in this context becomes a force of reality that shapes and directs the thoughts of both practitioners and viewers. Paraphrasing Derrida (1976), Benwell and Stokoe explain that 'reality is always representation, and therefore it is language that *constitutes* the 'I' of the subject and brings it into being through the process of signification' (2006: 31). In effect, 'language both constructs social and political reality and is also constituted or conditioned by it (ibid. 107). Simply put, Nollywood film music without words in any of the 'agreed' languages is nothing beyond musical sound. It is meaningless. It neither fulfils the purpose of prefiguring/giving back the story to the locals nor does it enable the resistance of perceived cultural superiority of Euro-American productions. *Ekaette Goes to School* is thus a unique example of a Nollywood film soundtrack with a lingual identity that is not only culturally informed but also mutually constitutive in discourse and context.

To reiterate, this lingual identity potentially strips the English language of its cultural sophistication.

To further nuance the power of texted music, I explore parts of the lyrics of *Ekaette Goes to School* soundtrack alongside composers' statements that supposedly justify the practice. Granted that Nollywood soundtracks are largely texted (vocal) music, it would be beneficial to know how the words of the preferred language(s) function to underline ethnicity. From considering over 200 videofilms, I posit that mainstream Nollywood film music texts are applied in two ways and for the following reasons.

- (a) As a direct translation of the storyline in order to aid understanding. Thus, as the film unfolds in Standard English, the target audience are presented with a sung synopsis in either the indigenous language or Pidgin English, or an intelligible combination of both. This approach is largely commercially motivated. The choice of language is to inspire a sense of inclusiveness across a population of literate, semi-literate, and illiterate Nigerians who the executive producers decode as one huge market. As a result, the soundtrack is able to *find* you whether or not you belong to the 'niche' or 'mass' market. Many examples of this manner of application of lyrics abound. In the following transcription and translation of the soundtrack's selected lyrics, I name the soloist above his respective lines, which are in Pidgin English, Ibibio, and Igbo. And I also indicate and underline in the English translation the words that other voices join in on.

Ekaette Goes to School

Lyrics & Music: Maxwell Leonard Chidiebere (used with permission).

[Maxwell is soloist, backing up voices join in on underlined words/syllables]

Ekaette, Ekaette! <u>Mama ndi One</u>	Ekaette, Ekaette! <u>Over-aged class One pupil</u>
Ekaette, ete mbok. <u>Mama ndi One</u>	Pardon me, Ekaette. <u>Over-aged class One</u> <u>pupil</u>
Ebe ka one je? <u>Mama ndi One</u>	Where is she going? Ekaette. <u>Over-aged</u> <u>class One pupil</u>
Ekaette onwero kwa respect. <u>Mama ndi One</u>	Ekaette is disrespectful. <u>Over-aged class</u> <u>One pupil</u>
If Ekaette no understand o	Should Ekaette fail to comprehend
<u>Make una tich am o ...etc.</u>	<u>Kindly educate her ...etc.</u>

For this reason, one can watch the film as much with the ears as with the eyes. Enter Stanley Okorie:

I have found that there is something I've been doing [in film music] that is peculiar to me. It is working and... which a lot of people are copying. It's just being able to sound local. And don't forget that I am a mass communications graduate. I know that the ear is the most graphic of all the human organs. So, I sing the film in a language that won't be too low for 'angels' [that is elite audience] and too high for 'humans' [those who may not understand Standard English]. (Stanley Okorie, interview with the author, 1 August 2015)

Concerning the use of local dialects, many Nollywood composers broadly adhere to the tonal inflections of the local languages. However, film composers disregard this rule of inflection especially in instances where the song text features Standard English or even French words as observed in the film *Bonjour! Osuofia Speaks French* (2004). In such cases, the composers and performers either deliberately or ignorantly bastardise the pitches of English/French words/syllables in the tunes. This manner of inflection can be so subtle that it goes unnoticed to the uncritical ear (refer to audio example 4). When it is not a deliberate act, it is simply the influence of the practitioner's mother tongue. Either way, one thing is clear: the English (or European) language is baptised with a 'Nigerian' linguistic character. As a quick illustration, I present a melodic phrase of the second film song for *Ekaette Goes to School* (2014). In this schematic, the second syllable of the word 'understand' has been assigned a very low musical pitch, which forms an interval of a diminished fifth from the first syllable and a rising perfect fourth to the third syllable (see musical Ex. 9). Taken together, the pitches do not confer what one might call the 'proper' English intonation of the word itself.



Musical Example 9: A melodic phrase from song B in *Ekaette Goes to School*

Although a more appropriate representation of the word's inflection can be achieved by narrowing the intervals as shown in the example below, I argue that this is a pattern of phonological appropriation—a case of owning the colonialist's language by deregistering and reframing its proper enunciation.



Musical Example 10: Edited inflection of melodic phrase from song B

This ‘ownership’ represents an aspect of what many call Nigerian English (Ninglish) and is ‘the result of half a century’s interaction of English and indigenous [Nigerian] languages’ (Ugochukwu 2013:173). Significantly, Ninglish now has its own dictionary and is taught in all Departments of English in Nigerian Universities (Igboanusi 2002).

Texted music also functions thus:

- (b) As a satirical device that speaks to social, political, and moral consciousness.

This consciousness is humorously presented to engage the mind of the listener in much the same way that the words of a stand-up comedian would. This approach is roundly artistic in orientation and somewhat analogous to prefiguring. In this instance, the lyrics may or may not be a direct translation of the plot. However, such lyrics must offer an entertainment that is parallel to but not in conflict with the film’s drama and dialogue. This is achieved, in part, by the choice of musical genre and style of rendition in the preferred language, which is nearly always Nigerian Pidgin English. Pidgin English thus communicates the embedded messages and promotes a sense of inclusiveness in a multicultural and multilingual Nigeria. A good example is the soundtrack of *Native Fowl* (2014). The lyrics are a mix of Nigerian Pidgin, Igbo, and Yoruba languages. The texted music occurs within limited scenes of the film with light-hearted/ironical commentaries and even laughter (see audio example 7)

Native Fowl

Lyrics & Music: Shadrach John (used with permission).

[Shadrach is soloist, backing up voices join in on the chorus]

Obi eh, how you wan take do am o?	Obi, how are you going to deal with this?
How you go explain to mama and village people...	How would you explain it to mom and the community...
Say na Yoruba girl you wan marry eh?	That you choose to marry a Yoruba girl?
Onye ofe mmanu! Kai! Odiegwu! Hahaha!!	Oily soup consumers! Damn! Wonderful!

Chorus

Dis kain love, na correct	This kind of love is genuine
Dis kain love, na super	This kind of love is strong
Obi huru Abike n'anya	Obi loves Abike
Abike n'ife Obi o...ife o, ihunanya.	Abike loves Obi. Oh, such love.

On the use of music as a satirical device, composer Shadrach John (2015) asserts:

Yes, depending on the story and genre of the film, we look for something, something funny to go with the film. But this idea is not only [found] in Nollywood, you know. Actually, you can find it in Hollywood except that (and I may be wrong) they [Hollywood] rely more on only sound to create the satire. But over here [in Nollywood], the fun is in the lyrics because Nigerians, generally [speaking], do not appreciate music without words. We have urban movies, we have the epic, and you know comedy is about laughter; it's fun, so you are allowed to do a lot. You can tell the story; you can do all that. You can even talk about the funny parts of the movie in the song, so that when you are listening to it, you are laughing. (Shadrach John, interview with the author, 6 August 2015)

The impact of language in Nollywood film music does not only resonate among local audiences, but also among diasporic Nigerian communities where viewers' motivations and practices as well as identity reinforcement are practically tied to the cultural messages in the lyrics.

The significance of language necessarily implicates the human (singing) voice. In like manner, mainstream Nollywood film music must be sung. This means that every film composer must be capable of vocal performance. And this is mandatory for two main reasons:

- (a) It is a strong indicator to the EPM that the composer actually did the work, and thus distinguishes them vocally and stylistically from one another.
- (b) To avoid lawsuits arising from the use of copyrighted materials of other local and foreign artists.

Again, *Ekaette Goes to School* exemplifies the primacy of the singing voice in Nollywood film music practice. Whereas the industry does not require the composer to possess an amazing tessitura (vocal range) and/or singing ability, it does not also reward mediocre vocal performances. The rule that film composers must be vocal performers who perform their compositions sets Nollywood apart from other known global film music industries. This distinction is fundamentally a result of informal approaches to

business transactions of film projects, which characterises Nollywood. As noted in chapter 2, the informal nature of the industry guarantees that there is very limited bureaucracy from process to product. Thus, producers and composers have some unwritten agreements that help to facilitate work and remuneration. The absence of formal ways of dealing with practitioners and their works means that to avoid litigation composers must perform in their own singing voices. In other words, a Nollywood film composer is prohibited from appropriating another's material. Yet in the event that a composer contravenes this rule, it would be difficult to deny because the work would be in his/her singing voice. This is clearly an informal yet effective way of checking piracy.

Like many things informal, what is important is that this approach serves its purpose in the particular culture where it is practised. And the only way to ascertain that it does is to check for reliability. That reliability in this context is offered in the functionality of informality: its manner of transmission, the milieu of transmission, as well as the frequency and length of transmission. All these are possible because for most African peoples 'our books are in our heads'. This expression is trite and grounded in the notion that 'the epistemology of indigenous [African] knowledge productions is preserved in memory and is symbolically coded' (Nzewi and Omolo-Ongati 2014: 57).

Apart from the reliability and functionality of informality, both language and the singing voice suggest that soundtracks are nearly always texted in Nollywood. Within the industry, all three (language, voice, and texted music) are widely considered as basic components of sound-visual integration and cultural cohesion. To sustain the practice and guarantee stability, the industry and its stakeholders have fashioned out the means (social, material, and economic), which I have discussed in chapter 2. Essentially, Okorie's approach is an example of indigenous knowledge epistemology applied to musical arts practice. This knowledge is based on sub-Saharan musical arts philosophies espoused by Meki Nzewi and Rose Omolo-Ongati. Specifically, the use of language in film songs, prefiguring, and other film music 'rules of Nollywood' derive from a 'generic African creative and performance-oriented philosophy', which, according to Nzewi and Omolo-Ongati (2014), adheres to the 'principle of individuality in conformity'. This principle suggests that 'uniquely thematic components

(representing individuality) are combined to constitute the basic framework (the structural identifier) of a piece [in this case, Nollywood soundtrack]' (2014: 56).

As a position statement, Stanley Okorie's individualism and mentality—together with the mechanisms of operation that the industry promotes—have paved way for the specifics of local Nollywood film music practice, which are summarised below.

- The composer must be a vocal performer just as film music remains texted
- Music is strophic in form and tonality with strong preference for indigenous Nigerian languages, Nigerian Pidgin English, and the incorporation of local instruments/instrumentation
- Music must be hyper-explicative because dialogue and drama are stressed above picture composition
- Prefiguring (singing the film) is critical
- Soundtrack materials must draw mainly from Nigerian pop/folk music culture

It is these five cardinal points that I refer to as the stable frame of reference from where further inferential assumptions about identity in Nollywood film music have developed. These points, together, guarantee two outcomes of Nollywood film music practice that must be named: a persistent identity system (developed in chapter 5) and, consequently, the rise of 'Communities of practice' that support the three film music schools of thought.

3.4.1 The Traditionalist School

As earlier noted, Stanley Okorie (the father of prefiguring) leads the Traditionalist school. His protégés include Maxwell Chidiebere Leonard, Mike Nliam, Chiemere Emejuobi, and Chimex Alex. Analytically, *Ekaette Goes to School* ticks all the boxes regarding the specifics of film music practice that this School advances. In summary, theirs is a group of film composers whose methods favour core notions of indigenisation: that mainstream Nollywood soundtrack should, regardless of film genre and external influences, remain very local; so that the identity that results from singing an entire film is maintained. This also explains why Traditionalist film composers can boldly distort the syntax (tenses and structure of sentences) of Standard English for use as film song texts (see section 2.4). *Ekaette Goes to School* is only one of many such Nollywood films with Traditionalist soundtracks that facilitate audience capacity to draw preferred meaning, and cultural relevance and specificity (see film examples 1-

50 in Table 4). The preceding sections have established the ways in which prefiguring and other specific creative processes of the Traditionalist School offer answers to questions about articulating ethnic identity in Nollywood film music. For the Traditionalist School, attempts to ‘modernise’ the soundtrack should be resisted because it is likely to culturally alienate the ‘Nolly’ from the ‘wood’. To them, this ‘alienation’ encourages a direct yet uneven and needless rivalry with more established film music traditions of the world. But this audience alienation is not only limited to the cultural; it is also linked to the market.

Put simply, when Nollywood film music does not follow the localised template, the film fails on two fronts: (a) audience expectation or appeal, and (b) sales or viewership. In the first instance, composers want to enable the audience to watch Nollywood films with their ears—an ability that is strongly aided by prefiguring. And in the second, they want every soundtrack to have second-hand value from point of selling the film more than the film would itself. This is a point that even EPMs such as Uche Egeonu (the director of Top Ten Movies) affirm.

We like the way our soundtrack[s] are. As a marketer [EPM] we are only here in business to make profit. So, from my end we support the use of soundtrack to tell the story. Let me tell you, most times as a marketer we do [that is produce] films that do not do well in the market. But with a very *good* soundtrack the film [’s] sales pick up; even we end up selling the soundtrack on its own for higher profit than the film. (Uche Egeonu, interview with the author, 12 August 2015)

So, both composers and producers acknowledge that there is a market for film songs with localised approaches. In other words, it is what the people can identify with that they patronise the most. This is a perspective that is reinforced by Stanley Okorie during his brief comparison of two films: *A Mother’s Cry* (2013), which was locally produced, and *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2013), which was co-produced by Nollywood and the British Film Institute.

You know what? There is a film that was the largest selling film of 2013 [in Nigeria]. Em... was it *Cry of a Mother*? Oh sorry, *A Mother’s Cry*. It was the largest selling film. Actually, the people titled it after the [film] song *Akwa Nwa*, which I did [composed]. So, people call the film *Akwa Nwa*. But the title of the film is ‘A Mother’s Cry’ or ‘Tears of a Mother’. It outsold the so-called *Half of a Yellow...* whatever. Go and ask! That *Half of a Yellow Sun* did not sell! It did not find a market here because it was not localised for the audience here. Why? They [referring to the British Film Institute and overseas Nigerian film producers] did not consider what we have been doing here. You see I just have my style. One, I have my natural, God-given, artistic identity and signature.

Two, I have been able to create my own template for the kind of music I want to play [in films] such that when you hear it (some people hear it, and before they have written the credits), they just say ‘That’s Stanley Okorie’, ‘That’s Nollywood’. (Stanley Okorie, interview with the author, 1 August 2015)

We can also infer from Okorie’s argument that local Nollywood film music has ‘commodified identities’. This shade of identity can be understood via some frameworks, which Benwell and Stokoe (2013:165) list as ‘the identities of consumers; the process of identity commodification; representation of identities in commodified contexts; and self-commodifying discourses’. These and other identity formations are discussed further in chapter 5.

Meanwhile, as cultural or ethnic identity traits remain interwoven with reality and fiction in Nollywood, it seems that practitioners prefer greater amounts of ‘reality’ to some abstract film music contents and approaches. Yet this notion is not entirely correct. As fieldwork and some Nollywood films depict, there are other composers such as Austin Erowele and Shadrach John who do not entirely favour or oppose the Traditionalist inspired film music identity. The behaviour of this second group of composers is, in part, a consequence of globalisation of culture and the dynamics of worldwide cinema and film music production exchanges. For this reason, I have chosen to call this second school the Temperate.

3.4.2 The Temperate School

The Nollywood Temperate (film music) school of thought pursues a middle path that neither strictly adheres to the Traditionalist practice nor wholly embraces foreign film music approaches. As a summary, theirs is an advocacy that is founded on subtle ideological modifications including: limited prefiguring wherein only a few and specific scenes are ‘sung’; broadening the number of local languages beyond Yoruba, Igbo, and Ninglish—thus opening up the space to challenge the EPMS whose ethnicities often decide the choice of language; and an increased effort in the use of purely instrumental music as mood marking enablers. More so, this approach should reflect a deliberate choice of indigenous percussive instruments (see film examples 51-80 in Table 4). Overall, the Temperate school maintains that this kind of refinement will not remove the ‘Nolly’ from the ‘wood’ and/or estrange the focus fan base. Rather, their proposition will elevate the local identity onto a ‘special’ status among other cinema traditions of the world. The members of this school notably articulate identity through

the context of *blurring* (expatiated in chapter 5). Save these subtle differences the Temperate school affirms that language, the singing voice, and texted music are central to Nollywood film music and its identity. Hence, all that is required is a little more refinement for global acceptance. But the pursuit of global acceptance is a view that the third school of thought advances differently.

3.4.3 The Pro-Hollywood School

The third school of thought is one that I have called the Pro-Hollywood. Basically, the members of this school condemn everything about the specifics of local film music practice as laid down by the other two schools. As a group of predominantly overseas trained practitioners, many of the Pro-Hollywood composers argue that Nollywood soundtrack should be entirely instrumental music—conveying mainstream Hollywood soundtrack particularities. This school vehemently opposes prefiguring, whether wholly or partially applied. They pride themselves in such approaches as underscoring, the use of source (or licensed) music, and other Hollywood film music peculiarities (see, film examples 81-105 in Table 4). The Pro-Hollywood advocacy makes for an interesting comparison especially as it affects identity. I note that the members of this school perform identity within the context of *acquiescing* (discussed further in chapter 5). And so, in the next chapter I examine two international co-productions to know what kind of identity emerges from such approaches. Notable film composers of this school include Yemi Alade-Lawal, George Nathaniel, and Kayode Dada. Understandably, these composers and their protégés do more work in the parallel movie industry called ‘New Nollywood’. In 2012, a few disenchanted movie directors such as Tunde Kelani and Kunle Afolyan began a movement called New Nollywood, and with a single creed: to be as radically and artistically different from mainstream Nollywood as possible.³⁹ For clarity, a comparative study of both New and Mainstream Nollywood film music is not the focus of this thesis. I have, thus, relegated it to future research frontiers (detailed in chapter 6).

³⁹ The works of Ryan (2014) and Haynes (2014) focus on New Nollywood.

S/no.	Title of Nollywood film	Soundtrack School of Thought
1	<i>The Second Wife</i> (2005)	Traditionalist
2	<i>Dumebi the Dirty Girl</i> (2012)	Traditionalist
3	<i>Aki na Ukwu</i> (2002)	Traditionalist
4	<i>Holy Serpent</i> (2009)	Traditionalist
5	<i>Home Breaker</i> (2004)	Traditionalist
6	<i>Torn Apart</i> (2005)	Traditionalist
7	<i>Drop of Tears</i> (2005)	Traditionalist
8	<i>The Homeless Baby</i> (2014)	Traditionalist
9	<i>My American Husband</i> (2015)	Traditionalist
10	<i>Anini</i> (2005)	Traditionalist
11	<i>Angel in Hell</i> (2006)	Traditionalist
12	<i>The Apian Way</i> (2002)	Traditionalist
13	<i>The Apple</i> (2000)	Traditionalist
14	<i>August Meeting</i> (2001)	Traditionalist
15	<i>Blood Sisters</i> (2005)	Traditionalist
16	<i>Bonjour</i> (2004)	Traditionalist
17	<i>Landlord</i> (2007)	Traditionalist
18	<i>Bloody Moment</i> (2003)	Traditionalist
19	<i>Chicken Madness</i> (2006)	Traditionalist
20	<i>The Cry of a Virgin</i> (2006)	Traditionalist
21	<i>Common Game</i> (2006)	Traditionalist
22	<i>A Cry for Help</i> (2001)	Traditionalist
23	<i>Evil Doers</i> (2002)	Traditionalist
24	<i>Evil Forest</i> (2000)	Traditionalist
25	<i>Evil Men</i> (1998)	Traditionalist
26	<i>Evil Seed</i> (2001)	Traditionalist
27	<i>Egg of Life</i> (2003)	Traditionalist
28	<i>The End of the Wicked</i> (2007)	Traditionalist
29	<i>He-Goat</i> (2002)	Traditionalist
30	<i>Hour of Grace</i> (2001)	Traditionalist
31	<i>Nine Wives</i> (2006)	Traditionalist
32	<i>Osuofia in London</i> (2003)	Traditionalist
33	<i>The Master</i> (2005)	Traditionalist
34	<i>My School Mother</i> (2005)	Traditionalist
35	<i>Occultic Kingdom</i> (2005)	Traditionalist
36	<i>The People's Club</i> (2006)	Traditionalist
37	<i>Outkast</i> (2001)	Traditionalist
38	<i>Pound of Flesh</i> (2002)	Traditionalist
39	<i>Test of Manhood</i> (2005)	Traditionalist
40	<i>Ultimate Warrior</i> (2006)	Traditionalist
41	<i>Upside Down</i> (2006)	Traditionalist
42	<i>Karishika</i> (1998)	Traditionalist
43	<i>Wasted Years</i> (2000)	Traditionalist
44	<i>Who Will Tell the President</i> (2006)	Traditionalist
45	<i>Widow</i> (2007)	Traditionalist
46	<i>Home Alone</i> (2010)	Traditionalist
47	<i>Brain Box</i> (2006)	Traditionalist
48	<i>Lord of Money</i> (2007)	Traditionalist
49	<i>Reggae Boys</i> (2005)	Traditionalist
50	<i>Mother's Error</i> (2014)	Traditionalist

51	<i>The Faculty</i> (2007)	Temperate
52	<i>Money is Money</i> (2005)	Temperate
53	<i>Pleasure Boosters</i> (2011)	Temperate
54	<i>Native Fowl</i> (2014),	Temperate
55	<i>Family Man</i> (2014)	Temperate
56	<i>The Stone</i> (2015)	Temperate
57	<i>Rings of Fire</i> (2014)	Temperate
58	<i>Madam Flavour</i> (2015)	Temperate
59	<i>Wealth of Sorrow</i> (2016)	Temperate
60	<i>100 Days in the Jungle</i> (2009)	Temperate
61	<i>Baby Police</i> (2003)	Temperate
62	<i>Abuja Connections</i> (2003)	Temperate
63	<i>True Colours</i> (2008)	Temperate
64	<i>Back to Back</i> (2004)	Temperate
65	<i>Bad Boys</i> (2016)	Temperate
66	<i>Brainwash</i> (2006)	Temperate
67	<i>Fallen Iroko</i> (2007)	Temperate
68	<i>A Cry for Justice</i> (2010)	Temperate
69	<i>The Corporate Maid</i> (2008)	Temperate
70	<i>Desperate Billionaire</i> (2005)	Temperate
71	<i>Emotional Risk</i> (2007)	Temperate
72	<i>End of Pride</i> (2007)	Temperate
73	<i>The Fake Prophet</i> (2010)	Temperate
74	<i>Girls Cot</i> (2006)	Temperate
75	<i>Hideous Affair</i> (2010)	Temperate
76	<i>Mama Gee Goes to School</i> (2011)	Temperate
77	<i>The Morning After</i> (2004)	Temperate
78	<i>Mr. Ibu in London</i> (2004)	Temperate
79	<i>One Dollar</i> (2002)	Temperate
80	<i>Power of Lies</i> (2011)	Temperate
81	<i>The Devil I Called My Wife</i> (2013)	Pro-Hollywood
82	<i>Adesuwa</i> (2011)	Pro-Hollywood
83	<i>The Assassin's Practice</i> (2012)	Pro-Hollywood
84	<i>Black Gold</i> (2011)	Pro-Hollywood
85	<i>Bent Arrows</i> (2010)	Pro-Hollywood
86	<i>Feast of Honour</i> (2017)	Pro-Hollywood
87	<i>Foreign Daemons</i> (2011)	Pro-Hollywood
88	<i>Ije, the Journey</i> (2010)	Pro-Hollywood
89	<i>Hoodrush</i> (2012)	Pro-Hollywood
90	<i>Hot Tears</i> (2010)	Pro-Hollywood
91	<i>Last Flight to Abuja</i> (2012)	Pro-Hollywood
92	<i>Mortal Attraction</i> (2009)	Pro-Hollywood
93	<i>A Mother's Fight</i> (2013)	Pro-Hollywood
94	<i>Married but Living Single</i> (2012)	Pro-Hollywood
95	<i>The Meeting</i> (2012)	Pro-Hollywood
96	<i>Phone Swap</i> (2012)	Pro-Hollywood
97	<i>Pregnant Hawkers</i> (2012)	Pro-Hollywood
98	<i>Reflections</i> (2012)	Pro-Hollywood
99	<i>Reloaded</i> (2009)	Pro-Hollywood
100	<i>Tango with Me</i> (2010)	Pro-Hollywood
101	<i>The Tenant</i> (2008)	Pro-Hollywood

102	<i>Somewhere Down the Line</i> (2015)	Pro-Hollywood
103	<i>Turning Point</i> (2012),	Pro-Hollywood
104	<i>Half of a Yellow Sun</i> (2013)	Pro-Hollywood
105	<i>Doctor Bello</i> (2013)	Pro-Hollywood

Table 4 Some Nollywood films and the schools of thought behind their soundtracks⁴⁰

3.5 Chapter Summary

The arguments so far imply that the cultural identity of Nollywood narratives and soundtracks are, by default, classic examples of processes of localisation. Historically, the search for the ‘domestic character’ or Nigerianness of local Nollywood cinema productions was busily scrutinised from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s (Sylvanus 2012). That scrutiny focused on what can be described as ‘unique’, ‘native’, or ‘national’ in terms of their absolute difference from anything anywhere else on the planet. By contrast, it is rare to argue strongly for the cultural identity of, say, mainstream Hollywood and European plots and soundtracks because theirs largely reflect processes of globalisation. Granted that identity is a two-way oppositional process, it is logical that mainstream Nollywood favours indigenous practices in the subtle power relation between local and international film narrative formats. To be clear, conventional film narrative formats are fundamentally about representation and reality or representing reality. This means that all film narratives ‘begin with assumptions that all representations have meaning’; hence the use of the term *mise-en-scene*, which is ‘the expressive totality of what you see in a single film image...of cinematography, camera movement, picture, sound, and dialogue’ (Sikov 2010: 5).

In essence, this chapter is an exercise that tracks an example of the process of localisation of film narrative and music in mainstream Nollywood. Many Nollywood film and soundtrack examples illustrate the connection between its contents and ethnic identity. Significantly, the previous paragraphs examined the interconnection of narrative, music and ethnic (cultural) identity. That interconnection is realised in the Nigerianness of the storylines and film songs. It is also in the broad and decisive suburban attributes of plot settings, and other discursive frameworks. Thus, I argue that this ‘setting’ is physically and discursively responsible for the close identification

⁴⁰ To arrive at this Table, I watched all the listed films, listened to their soundtracks, noted their respective composers, and crosschecked each approach/manner of application with the three Nollywood film music schools of thought.

between the industry's content and the ethnic nations, which the human enablers embody. Similarly, attempts to explain the success of Nollywood outside Nigeria tend to use ethnic (or national) characteristics such as the local dialects, tribes, fashion, belief systems, religion, and food as their reference point (for example, Harrow 1999; Larkin 2004; Krings and Okome 2013; Ugochukwu 2013). Finally, the ideological content of Nollywood productions offers traditional (family) values and emphasise the dominance of 'the community' over, say, 'the individual', which, according to some Nollywood adherents, European and Hollywood traditions promote. For example, the industry does not pay soundtrack producers royalties because, apart from the fact that things are done informally, the concept itself contradicts the traditional tenets of communalism.

These are not the only relevant attributes. Indeed, mainstream Nollywood productions are also embedded into the local (media) economy and film/film music production culture. For this reason, Nollywood films have come to assume significant importance for local and national cable TV network stations and schedulers such as DSTV's Africa Magic channels, AIT, NTA, and Silverbird. As observed during fieldwork, this significance plays out in pubs, eateries, and commuter vehicles where Nollywood films and film songs are the mainstay of entertainment. Two things have brought about this kind of importance and followership: the appeal of its narrative and soundtrack, and the celebrity system that the industry's output has supported. Of the latter, Nollywood stars dominate the covers on mass-market products such as magazines, mobile telecommunications packages, consumables, the talk show guest list, as well as live appearances at large state-funded concerts. A structural reason for this is the direct (corporate) connection between Nollywood and the agencies of mass-market/consumption, which a few EPMS control.

What all of the above suggests is a highly reflective relationship between music, the moving image, viewer's interests and preferences, and cultural identity. Of course, open accesses to web sites that are dedicated to Nollywood productions dramatically amplify and accelerate the sustenance and development of the practice. Simply put, Nollywood productions stir up debates about how flexible 'agreed' (global) narrative formats are while correspondingly demonstrating how its own narratives and soundtracks set up unique rhythms of indigenisation. On the strength of these arguments, I posit that Nollywood film and film music remain framed within one or more identity formations.

These formations, which range from the lingual, ethnic, and commodified to audience preferences, are both fascinating and reassuring given the increasing influences of globalisation on creative and cultural industries across the world. In all, the plot and soundtrack of *Ekaette Goes to School* reveals the construction and representation of localised shades of identity through the interconnected and narrativised relationships that I have explored. As a comparative study, the next chapter interrogates the emergent identity from those foreign influences embedded in processes of globalisation which international co-productions between Nollywood and other (First World) cinema traditions exercise.

Chapter 4

Nollywood film music identity in global co-productions

In chapter 3, I scrutinised and presented the localised shades of Nollywood film music identity. I argued that that local film music identity bears discernible cultural elements; and the film songs deeply resonate *rhythms* of indigenisation. In other words, approaches to local film music production (particularly from the Traditionalist school) and the resulting identities reveal the broad and optimistic strokes of ethnicity, nationalism, and other mythic tropes of Nigerianism. However, because mainstream Nollywood also engages in international co-productions, essentialising those local tropes and identity formations is discursively risky. International co-productions present instances of cross-cultural tensions and borrowings between Nollywood producers and composers at home and the diaspora, and their foreign counterpart. This chapter thus focuses on the fascinating processes and outcomes of global co-productions between Nollywood and two other cinema traditions namely the British film industry and mainstream Hollywood. This is achieved by exploring the similarities and differences between approaches to film music and the cultures within which they operate.

Methodologically, I aim to combine a cultural studies approach (understood here as the critical reading of cultural producers, consumers, products, and the power relationships that inform those interactions) with an ethnographic approach based on my interaction with the soundtrack practitioners of two case study films: *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2013) and *Baby Oku in America* (2013). Findings show that identity in this context largely reflects the advocacy of either Nollywood's Traditionalist or Pro-Hollywood schools of thought: meaning that either mainstream Nollywood or its foreign counterpart dominates the influences of the creative process during every co-production. Analyses also show that Nollywood film music possesses both metaphoric and philosophical shades of identity. Here, I maintain that the identity from such co-productions is sometimes an accurate reflection of Nigerian cultural tropes. And in cases when it is not, the conclusion is that the identity outcome has been imposed by the dominant cinema tradition—arguably so for the silent indoctrination of values and ideas to the (technologically) dependent 'Other'. The discourse also extends to the transnational

aesthetics of Nollywood film music. And all these assertions are significant, not least, because they show the effects of both globalisation and glocalisation (the practice of conducting any kind of collaborative work without prejudice to either local or global views) on the divergent approaches to film music practice in Nollywood. In essence, these interactions encourage the continued dissemination of Euro-American cinema traditions in mainstream Nollywood often so and arguably within the pretext of ‘inclusion’. As such, the opinions and counter-opinions of the implicated practitioners (that is Stanley Okorie and Yemi Alade-Lawal) will be offered as basis for further framing the resistance versus complicity dialogue in international co-productions. Once more, this chapter focuses on the emergent identity issues from global co-productions involving Nollywood, Hollywood, and the British Film Institute. Let us now consider the storylines of both films.

4.1 *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Baby Oku in America*

To begin, both films are international co-productions between Nollywood and the British Film Institute, and Nollywood and Hollywood (or Nolly-Holly), respectively. Also, both films are love stories set to different backdrops. Specifically, *Half of a Yellow Sun* is a 2013 historical drama directed by Biyi Bandele and sponsored by both Nollywood and the British Film Institute (BFI). The film is titled after an image of ‘the rising sun’ in the Biafran flag (Figure 17).⁴¹ It is based on a novel of the same name written by the acclaimed Nigerian author, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. This film was first premiered at the 2013 International Film Festival, Toronto, Canada where it received glowing reviews. *Half of a Yellow Sun* is set in post-colonial Nigeria—shortly before and during the Nigeria Civil War (1967–70). It features a mixed cast of largely British and Nigerian (more specifically, local Nollywood) actors. These include Academy Award nominee Chiwetel Ejiofor (Professor Odenigbo), BAFTA award winner Thandie Newton (Olanna), Anika Noni Rose (Kainene), Onyeka Onwenu (Odenigbo’s mother), John Boyega (Odenigbo’s steward), Genevieve Nnaji (a university teacher), Joseph Mawle (the English writer called Richard), and Zack Orji (Nigerian businessman and father of Olanna and Kainene).

⁴¹ Biafra is the name of a former secessionist state located south east of Nigeria. It existed between 1967 and 1970, and its citizens were largely people of Igbo ancestry.



Figure 4.1. The Biafran Flag (source: Google)

As already noted, the film's overarching theme is love: a love story of two sisters (Olanna and Kainene) who are caught up in the brutal Nigeria Civil War. Following Biafra's declaration of secession from Nigeria, the effect of the war clearly shapes the lives and relationships of the film's five key individuals namely Olanna, Kainene, Odenigbo, Richard, and Ugwu (Odenigbo's steward). It opens with scenes from 1960 in which Nigeria celebrates her independence from British colonial rule. The joy of sovereignty and a newfound nationality provokes many things including the return of Nigerians in the diaspora. One such returnee is Odenigbo ('the revolutionary' professor of Mathematics) who resides in the university town of Nsukka, southeast Nigeria. He favours socialism and tribalism and opposes capitalism and nationalism or Pan-Africanism. He and his girlfriend Olanna regularly host fellow academics to discuss the nature of politics in Nigeria. Olanna has a twin sister called Kainene: a woman with a cold sense of humour that seems aided by the strain of managing her father's grandiose company in Port Harcourt. Kainene meets and soon falls in love with Richard (a married Englishman) who is in Nigeria to explore *Igbo-Ukwu* (Great Igbo) works of art.

Four years on, there is serious mayhem in Kano (northern Nigeria) where hundreds of mainly Igbo-speaking people—including Olanna's beloved auntie and uncle—have been gruesomely massacred. The aftermath of these killings would ultimately lead to the declaration of an Igbo state called Biafra. As these events occur, it also turns out that Odenigbo has impregnated a strange village girl. This news infuriates Olanna who later, in her moment of distress, has sex with Richard (her sister's lover). Kainne

realises that Richard has had sex with her twin sister, Olanna. These acts of indiscretion and infidelity eventually ruin the relationship between Olanna, Kainene, Richard, and Odenigbo.

As the civil war intensifies, Olanna, Odenigbo, Ugwu, and the baby from the strange village girl are forced to flee Nsukka. They finally end up in the refugee town of Umuahia, where they suffer severe food shortage and constant air raids by the advancing Nigerian air force. The situation is so hopeless: there is no clean water or medicine for the wounded and dying. So, Kainene decides to trade across enemy lines, but that move signalled the last time her lover and family would see her. The film ends with mixed emotions for two sets of people: Nigerians and Biafrans. Whereas Nigerians declared victory and celebrated the end of the civil war, Biafrans were left to suffer deep physical and psychological trauma.

Analytically, this film raises some interesting sub-themes that feed the identity discourse. One of them is the matter of ethnicity or tribal affiliation. The Nigeria-Biafra war broke out as a result of ethnic and political struggles, in part, by the numerous efforts of the disenchanted southeastern provinces of Nigeria. Identity was (and still is) central to modern Nigeria where much of its national life and character is defined by the illusion of oneness. These contested lines of allegiance are responsible for the different ethnic film industries found in Nigeria today. It is also why the film music of some Nollywood movies can be sympathetic to certain ethnic groups (discussed in chapter 2). Hence at international level, Nigerianness is broadly a function of the part of Nigeria that the individual identifies with. This point is closely linked to the next sub-theme: the role of colonialism and Western hegemony.

Historically, Nigeria was put together and named by Britain. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Britain is accused of exercising a prejudiced involvement in the civil war. As discussed later in this chapter, this show of power still shapes the thoughts and interactions involving Britain and its former colonies: an unspoken yet palpable notion in the exchanges between Nollywood and Western cinema traditions. A third related sub-theme is the politics of identity in post-colonial Nigeria. Although the social gatherings at Odenigbo's house are mainly debates on Nigeria's and, by extension, Africa's political future, the part played by Western powers such as Britain is an important factor to consider. Throughout their deliberations in the film, there is much touted recourse to

the value of various forms of African governance, which, according to Odenigbo, colonialism helped to discredit. On individual and collective identity, Odenigbo remarks:

The only authentic identity for the African is the tribe. I am Nigerian because a white man created Nigeria and gave me that identity. I am black because the white man constructed black to be as different as possible from white. But I was Igbo before the white man came [25:25–25:45].

The above quote reifies the use of persuasion by dominant groups/nations to decide matters such as the identities of the less powerful in society (explored in section 4.4). Finally, there is the role of global media on what might be termed ‘the Nigerian story’. Euro-American media have been accused of revising and portraying narratives emanating from Nigeria and indeed Africa to suit their interests. This approach has unconsciously caused many in Africa to look to the Global North for all manner of endorsement. And the need to be so endorsed is obvious in how some Nollywood practitioners discuss and approach film/film music. In all, what is fascinating is the tension created by those who resist such persuasions and dominance versus those who remain complicit in them. The narrative of the second case study film reveals notions of resistance to and apparent disinterest in Western persuasion/approval.

Baby Oku in America is a 2013 international co-production between Nollywood and Hollywood (popularly referred to as Nolly-Holly). Ikechukwu Onyeka directs this drama, which stars American actors Archie Ashcroft, Dianne Diaz, Laura McCray, Andy Khoeler, Tim Grill, Clarice Kulah, and their Nollywood counterparts namely, Mercy Johnson, Patience Ozokwo, Bola Komolafe, and Maureen Okpoko. *Baby Oku in America* features a young woman (Mercy Johnson) nicknamed Baby Oku (literally meaning ‘Hot chic’). The storyline is simple: she initially resided in a rural town in Nigeria where she met Okechukwu (a Nigerian-American man on a short holiday). Baby Oku becomes pregnant, and Okechukwu would later make plans for her to join him and give birth to the child in the United States. This decision would lead to a flurry of outcomes for both Baby Oku and Okechukwu. For example, Baby Oku would have him lawfully evicted from his house after discovering that women are better protected in America than in Nigeria. Away from the love theme, Baby Oku raises fundamental identity issues, which mainly manifest as a clash of Nigerian and American cultures. Here, the Nigerian social values that Baby Oku embodies come head-to-head with

America's. These clashes appear in both direct and subtle forms such as language, food, music, dance, dressing (fashion), names, forms of salutation, and gender (in-)equality.

As a drama within comedy subgenre, the significance of this film lies in the self-reflexive ways that it is framed: both as narrative and the reiteration of social critique from socio-economic class distinction to the naïveté of women in the Nigerian society. The film is structured as a travel tale and told in two distinct but narratively integrated parts. The first deals with Baby Oku's life in the village and the second focuses on her time in America. Both parts of the narrative have genuine implications for the plot as a journey of discovery. Specifically, the narrative privileges the connection between rural Nigeria and the metropolis in America. And Baby Oku is exhilarated about traveling to America where, according to her, 'you will chop dollars', a ubiquitous reference to an affluent life abroad.

Before departing Nigeria for America, Baby Oku engages in a series of quasi-comic skits – mesmerising her peers in the village with knowledge of an America that she was yet to experience. To the viewer, it is clear that the knowledge she dispenses is largely incorrect. But this is narratologically relevant to underscore her *difference* from other villagers and peers. She achieves this by *performing* how Americans talk and walk before the bewildered peers and villagers. By this act she *reinvents* herself in a somewhat hyperbolised movement and gestural codes. To complement, and as a conscious display of difference, she puts on a stylised outfit that is only suitable for cold climates. Bizarre as it may seem, the villagers are convinced. As she sets out for America, the soundtrack continues to reiterate this sense of a new spatial location and notes the transition from the village in southeast Nigeria (local) to the city of Atlanta (foreign).

Upon arriving Atlanta in America, Baby Oku takes the viewer on a journey that explores both physical and cultural spaces. Her cultural integrity and references are very Nigerian; and she barely gives them up throughout the plot. In some instances, she is seen exercising a sense of propriety in the actions she deems appropriate in her culture: acts that irk her American neighbours and consequently attract the police. For example, the morning after arriving her new home she puts on very loud Nigerian pop music, throws open the doors, and dances to the music on the lawn. Yet she is amazed at the disapproving reaction of her neighbours who threaten to call the cops on her.

Other instances abound, including where she walks into a restaurant demanding local Nigerian delicacies, much to the dismay of the waiters. Elsewhere, she is vehemently instructing her white American friends to set aside their popular dances in favour of some Nigerian dance routines. She continues this way until she finds company in fellow diasporic Nigerians who introduce her to many things with intent to de-Africanise her. In the end, she imbibes a few American values signalling a form of ‘agreement’ whilst retaining some of her Nigerian traits. In the process, her estranged husband Okechukwu returns home to embrace the birth of their son, and her newfound friends and way of life.

The plot of *Baby Oku in America* broadly represents an interesting experience of a cross-cultural production in which we explore the culture of the White man to see where we (the Third world) have agreements and disagreements. It is one co-production that is far from demeaning to the Nigerian (or African) sensibility especially as the protagonist goes about establishing her culture on that of the host society. And the soundtrack (see audio example 6) inscribes this overarching message of resistance in such words as ‘Na who de run tings for New Yorku, hot lady for Atlanta, chop nkwo bi wit Obama? Okwa nu Baby Oku!’ (Who calls the shot in New York? Who is the don in Atlanta that eats *nkwo bi* (local Igbo salad) with Obama? It is Baby Oku!). To me, this reading is mediated by a discourse of conquest, which the relationship between rural Africa and urban North America provokes. I do think that this *conquest* helps to revise the filmic/film music gaze and postcolonial context of the text, as well as the transnational nature of its narrative. There is therefore a shift from reading the film and its soundtrack from the perspective of the First world (as is the case in *Half of a Yellow Sun*) to that of the post-colonised subject. In other words, *Baby Oku in America* can and should be read at both the ideological and cultural levels, especially as both perspectives feed off the politics of culture and *difference*.

4.2 Overview of music of *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Baby Oku in America*

The outline of music in both these films is quite straightforward. *Half of a Yellow Sun* features a list of preexisting music of mainly European and North American extraction. These include *Un Poquito de tu amore*, *Finlandia*, *Naughty little flea*, *Funeral ceremony*, *Bere bote*, *Hail Biafra*, *A Night in Tunisia*, *Corcovado*, *Go lil Lisa*, *My little suede shoes*, *Arrival of the Queen of Sheba*, *Dramatic Event*, *Simini Yaya*, and *Santa*

Baby. Of the list, only two songs are from the Nigerian pop music industry. It is on the merit of this list that many in Nollywood (including such composers as Stanley Okorie, Shadrach John, and Maxwell C. Leonard) have questioned the cultural relevance and identity of the soundtrack. Away from the list, the film music production covers such conventional Hollywood approaches as the use of licensed music, diegetic music and temp tracks, an orchestrator, a copyist, and so on. The English Session Orchestra, conducted by Matt Dunkley, performs the film score (see audio example 7). The music's theme develops thematically from opening to end credits with much underscoring—a clear attestation to the differences that underlie how Nollywood and Western cinema traditions approach film music (refer to Table 1). Yet unlike *Baby Oku in America*, the music of *Half of a Yellow Sun* does not give back the story to the local viewer in Nigeria.⁴² It has, in many respects, been abstractly conceived and applied to indicate the 'mighty hand' of the colonialist.

On the other hand, *Baby Oku in America* uses a single song titled 'Baby Oku' to *sing the film* as well as provide commentary from start to finish. This is in keeping with the local Nollywood film music practice, which I have established in the previous chapter. The soundtrack is vocalised and performed in the composer's own voice—a sharp contrast to what is found in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. It is strophic in form, and in a major key. Harmonically, it uses only the primary chords and their possible inversions. The music neither develops thematically nor aesthetically. For narratological emphasis, it employs the name of the protagonist (Baby Oku) both in the verses and chorused refrain. As expected, *Baby Oku in America* privileges Nigerian highlife music genre with all its nuances. This approach gives back the plot to the viewer. And this ensures that the narrative is given cultural currency and duly invested with critical purposes that are discussed below.

4.2.1 Comparative analysis and reading of both soundtracks

In *Baby Oku in America*, the protagonist represents the rural archetype of the postcolonial. Yet as a character, she functions as one who is designed to reverse the countryside stereotype that is perceived as the embodiment of the unintelligent being. This is instructive because the narrative actually deregisters and reframes an existing

⁴² To 'give back' the story implies singing the film using Nigerian languages (refer to chapter 3).

episteme: The First World discourse on African values and knowledge systems. It is an episteme that subtly exalts and institutionalises Euro-American culture above its African *other*. From the point of music, and as a sung synopsis of the film, the soundtrack also deregisters the same episteme. As a common narrative tool in Nollywood, the music carries through the special qualities of the film language by directing the viewer to the intentionality of conquest of an American metropolis. And through prefiguring the plot as well as obedience to other specifics of local Nollywood film music practice, it functions effectively to oppose and reframe Hollywood film music approaches. In the following transcription and translation of parts of the lyrics of *Baby Oku in America* soundtrack, I name the soloist (Stanley) above his respective lines, which are in Pidgin and Igbo. And I also indicate and underline in the English translation the words that other voices join in on (refer to audio example 6).

Baby Oku

Lyrics & Music: Stanley Okorie (used with permission).

[Stanley is soloist, backing up voices join in on underlined words/syllables.]

Godu don bless awa village o	God has blessed our village
Bless awa family	And blessed our family
Baby Oku awa sista <u>de for Amerika</u>	Our sister Baby Oku is <u>now in America</u>
No be small somtin o; is a very bigi miracul o	This is no small feat; it is a very big miracle
Asi Baby Oku don reach, <u>we go de chopu dollar</u>	Now that Baby Oku is over there, <u>the Dollar is ours to spend.</u>
Oku nwa, <u>Baby Oku</u>	Hot chic, <u>Baby Oku</u>
Ndi ocha go know say n'obata go	The White people will acknowledge her arrival
Na who de run tings for New Yorku?	Who runs the show in New York?
Hotu lady for Atalanta....	Hot chic in Atlanta...
Chop nkwobi wit Obama	Share a plate of Igbo braised goat meat with Obama
Okwa nu <u>Baby Oku!</u>	It is <u>Baby Oku!</u>

I note that this kind of application and reading is not present in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Its soundtrack is not, for instance, hyper-explicative; neither does it function as a commentary on the journey of the Igbo (Biafra state) and their quest for liberation from the Nigerian state. All that it does is obey the rules of Hollywood namely, the use of preexisting music, underscoring, diegetic music, as well as the aesthetic, rhetorical, and thematic development of its music. This, I argue, is the critical framework for contextualising the identity of Nollywood film music in international co-productions.

Yet the manner of application of music is not the only barometer for comparative analysis. Another area to consider in the identity argument is the cultural-historical representation of the music to the story of each film. Here, Yemi Alade-Lawal (music supervisor of *Half of a Yellow sun*) argues that the choice of songs for *Half of a Yellow Sun* aptly represent the period of the plot and, therefore, speaks correctly to the Nigerianness of the soundtrack.

What we wanted was music from the period: so the period in time here was 1960 – 1969. But I was with the film before principal photography and shooting. And I was with the film till the very last day that the film got locked and delivered. When the picture got locked, that's when I really got off. But I got off, in terms of searching for the music. We went through tons of songs. You know with these kinds of things, you just don't pick a song, and it sticks, for various reasons. The licensing might not work for it, the fees might not be right. So, we had that 9-year period to pull music. And as we were looking at it, we felt that in Nigeria in the 60s, music was coming from all over. American music was coming to Nigerian radio, and we also had music from all over Africa – Congo, Ghana, you name it – it was just a collage of music, it was beautiful [...]. Basically, the music was very rich, you know, and that's what the director wanted. He wanted music from that era, and he wanted music that he knew we could hear on the radio in those days. So, the 14 cues that we ended up with, basically, were the ones that we could work with, and worked well for us. So, we had songs like '*Naughty Little Flea*', '*A Night in Tunisia*', '*Un Poquito de Tu Amore*', and '*Corcovado*'. And we had songs from Miriam Makeba. We had two Nigerian cues in there: so, we had '*Hail Biafra*' and '*Bere Bote*'. We looked at a few library songs, and the director liked that, and it was a straight licensing arrangement, so very easy. (Yemi Alade-Lawal, interview with the author, 3 December 2014)

So, from the point of musical genres, it can be argued that the soundtracks of both films depict the Nollywood (geographical) space where they have been first experienced, then obtained or even (re-)created. The operative word in this argument is *experience*. This is because a non-Nigerian viewer can, for example, single out Sibelius's *Finlandia* theme in *Half of a Yellow Sun* as the basis for a counter argument. Yet it is important to note that, while it is European symphonic music by origin, the same musical theme was adopted for use as the anthem of the seceding state of Biafra. *Finlandia* thus becomes de-territorialised and historically/philosophically positioned within the Nollywood space (discussed later). In this context, the soundtracks of both films signify metaphoric and philosophical shades of identity and transformation. But these two shades of identity are not pervasive enough to stand as one of the established theoretical assumptions of this thesis.

There is yet a third interesting parallel arising from the distinctive conditions of production, distribution, and consumption of both soundtracks. It is the transnational aesthetic objectivity that both film music convey in relation to their respective pictures (detailed in section 4.4 using *Finlandia*). As a common denominator, both films employ Nigerian pop music. However, *Half of a Yellow Sun* leans heavily on an actual foreign licenced repertoire, which Yemi Alade-Lawal defends:

They [Nigerian musicians] sang all over the whole place, and there were no instrumentals. And when we were looking for the license to work, it was kind of difficult... to chop the track, or recreate them. I mean, we could have re-created some of the tracks but... for instance, you couldn't get a Victor Olaiya highlife track [...] that was just devoid of vocals, and just have ten minutes of... no, even a minute of instrumentals. No, none of that existed. If you wanted to loop a little particular section, it wouldn't really be very endearing. So, this made us expand our search to a global one, and that is why we end[ed] up having smooth jazz cues in there. (Yemi Alade-Lawal, interview with the author, 3 December 2014)

This is instructive because, regardless of the composers' choices, each soundtrack broadly operates in opposition to the montage of the pictures. In other words, a situation where images of America are accompanied by Nigerian music (as observed in *Baby Oku in America*) or, as noted in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, images of Nigeria are accompanied by European and American Art and pop music creates an interesting dynamic. To an uncritical viewer, such underlying music–image chiasma can make each film both aesthetically and narratively challenging to read. Yet it is also the fascinating bit: the transnational character and metaphoric journey of identity that the viewer is immediately confronted with in each film.

4.3 Resistance, compromise, and complicity

My fieldwork reveals that mainstream Nollywood film songs are local creations that are largely unimpeded by the formalities of the Nigerian music industry and popular culture. Regarding how film music practice works in Nollywood, I note that the varying degrees of awareness of individual and collective responses is closely linked to each practitioner's professional and social experiences. Nevertheless, an international co-production logically presents moments of tension around film/film music approaches, particularly in the power dynamics that very often characterise First World–Third World exchanges. Such tensions are accentuated by the vastly divergent approaches to film and film music practices found in Nollywood and other global traditions like

Hollywood (refer to Table 1). As the logic of Euro-American film music refinement and capitalism stretches and exploits the circumstances of an international co-production, Nollywood film music practitioners adjust to either resist transformation (as observed in *Baby Oku in America*) or conform and allow for compromise and complicity (as noted in *Half of a Yellow Sun*). Another reason that drives the power relations is in Nollywood's strong reliance on and adoption of First World technologies for local soundtrack productions. Stanley Okorie confirms this when he says:

Number one, do not forget [that of] all the things used in Nollywood (from equipment to cars, to even cameras), none is made in Nigeria [or] in Africa. I hope you know. So, indirectly, we are sustained by what happens over there [in the Global North]. So, we cannot run faster than the back that is carrying us. (Stanley Okorie, interview with the author, 1 August 2015)

In this context, it follows that mainstream Nollywood film music may or may not be opposed to, and positioned outside of, say, the 'rules of Hollywood'. Thus, any discourse on the identity that results from an international co-production certainly creates new and bifurcated problems. This is true because an international co-production opens up the space to assumedly give Nollywood film music a 'guided' Euro-American identity—one that emerges in much the same way as Nollywood's gender narratives, which Garritano (2000:190) describes as 'the products of multiple negotiations informed by the cultural contexts and ideological perspectives'. Hence, a show of resistance or compromise by local film music practitioners requires that we find out: who determines and influences the creative process in, for instance, a Nolly–Holly production; whether the resulting identity emerge from the people as accurate expressions of their socio-cultural realities and modes of existence; or whether it is imposed by those in positions of dominance for the silent indoctrination of values and ideas to a (technologically) dependent 'Other'. Having suggested that identity in Nollywood film music is a subtly packaged commodity, it is equally imperative to interrogate the ways in which the commodification of film songs and their incorporation into mainstream popular culture has altered the power dynamics between local and foreign approaches, and between the people and cultures that produce and consume them. A similar enquiry would cover the degree of influence of Euro-American approaches on Nollywood's perspectives to soundtrack as an imposition of foreign hegemonic values and ideals: for example, does the relationship between the film musics and their respective source cultures serve as a conduit for ideas that articulate

and promote local identity through resistant spaces, which in turn work to destabilise the dominant Euro-American film music narratives? Or are both positions true?

For a start, the questions of how and what kind of identity emerges from such international co-productions is directly linked to issues of perception and acceptance. In other words, there is a proportional relationship between how much editing goes on in the creative process and approaches to film music and the identity of the final material. I argue that the more a Nolly-Holly soundtrack is edited and managed by non-Nollywood forces/institutions, the less likely it is to contain ‘Nollycentric’ content, but the more likely it is to gain Euro-American appeal. Conversely, the higher the resistance to foreign influences in the creative and editing processes, the greater the freedom of the Nollywood practitioner to create ‘messages’ of their own; but the less likely it is for the product to gain Euro-American appeal. And within music such ‘messages’ become a means for constructing place-based and ethnic identities.⁴³ Accordingly, Stuart Hall explains that actual identities revolve around resources of history, language, and culture. In other words, identity is better understood when contextualised within forms of cultural representation (Hall 1996: 1-7). It has also been observed that ‘identity and culture are two of the basic building blocks of ethnicity’, and that ‘individuals and groups attempt to address the problematics of ethnic boundaries and meaning’ through those building blocks (Nagel 1994: 172).

Music, whether sacred, sectarian, or secular, remains a constituent of both building blocks. It shapes and is in turn shaped by both insiders and outsiders of culture. Joane Nagel explains further:

The construction of ethnic identity and culture is the result of both structure and agency—a dialectic played out by ethnic groups and the larger society. Ethnicity is the product of actions undertaken by ethnic groups as they shape and reshape their self-definition and culture; however, ethnicity is also constructed by external social, economic, and political processes and actors as they shape and reshape ethnic categories and definitions (Nagel 1994: 152).

Simply put, it is possible for music to either represent or misrepresent a people: it arguably depends on how such music has been applied, the context/medium of usage, and the persons involved. In what follows, I focus on the arguments and politics

⁴³ Stokes (1994); Bauman, (1996); and Frith (1996) have advanced theories on the nexus between music and place.

surrounding the use of Finlandia in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, particularly to ascertain the degree to which the soundtrack explicates Biafra's identity within the forces of resistance and complicity.

4.3.1 Finlandia and Biafra in *Half of a Yellow Sun*

This sub-section critiques the film music representation of Biafra in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. I do so specifically by addressing those issues arising from the incorporation of the Biafran anthem into the soundtrack. Here, the implication is that our understanding of Biafra's identity within the soundtrack should necessarily foreground the contexts in which it has been both produced and re-enacted. This is so because forms of popular culture are often strongly linked to their socio-economic and cultural contexts. As a cultural text, the Biafran national anthem enables us to 'read' some meaning into the peoples' collective worldview and identity. Through its use/misuse in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, I interrogate the degree to which the soundtrack *signals* Biafra to the viewer (especially the culture outsider). For some context, I present an overview of the Biafran anthem: its sonic and textual attributes, as well as the underlying philosophy.

The Biafran Anthem

According to Carlos Abril, a national anthem is 'a unique musical work in that it functions primarily as a malleable symbol of a bounded geographical region' (Abril 2007: 73). Daughtry (2003: 42) goes further to suggest that it is more profitable to 'regard an anthem not as the static reflection of a monolithic ideology but as a polysemous text through which national identity is constantly negotiated'. Apparently, the consensus among some other scholars is that a national anthem is fundamentally a valid representation of a society that is geopolitically, socioeconomically, and culturally bounded (for example, Cerulo 1993; Feinstein 2000; Cusack 2008). In my opinion, a national anthem is the singular irreducible musical expression of a people's history, power, belief, and collective aspiration, which, depending on the forces of migration and globalisation, can transcend physical boundaries.

Generally, such a national anthem is capable of rousing patriotic sentiments and solidarity, especially when performed as texted vocal music. It represents one of several cultural 'gateways' to a people's shared identity. In this case, the Biafran anthem is a unique cultural text that arguably reflects who the people are, who they would like to become, what history has done to them, and how they wish to view humanity. This

‘reflection’ is gleaned from parts of *The Ahiara Declaration* (the country’s breakaway document), which states in part that:

The Biafran Revolution is not dreamt up by an elite. It is the will of the People. The People want it. ... In our society, every human life is holy, every individual person counts. No Biafran wants to be taken for granted or ignored, neither does he ignore or take others for granted [...] Therefore, all forms of disabilities and inequalities, which reduce the dignity of the individual or destroy his sense of person, have no place in the New Biafran Social Order. ... From today, let no Biafran pretend that he or she does not know the mainspring of our national action, let him or her not plead ignorant when found indulging in un-Biafran activities. The principles of our Revolution are hereby clearly set out for everyone to see. They are now the property of every Biafran and the instrument for interpreting our national life (1969: 23-27).

The music of the Biafran anthem is a twenty-four-bar appropriation of the ‘hymn’ section of *Finlandia*—a symphonic poem by Finnish composer Jean Sibelius (see the transcription below). *Finlandia* itself was originally written as a show of solidarity for ‘Finnish Pride’—a national caption to express the struggle for freedom from Russian domination (see Grimley 2011). Like Finland, Biafra sought and fought to be liberated from the Nigerian state and the perceived ethnic discrimination and domination. It is, therefore, understandable that Biafra would appropriate *Finlandia* as a shared musical imaginary of the quest for sovereignty.

The Biafran Anthem

Words by Nnamdi Azikiwe

(1966 - 1970)

Tune: Finlandia by Jean Sibelius

Moderato

Land of the ris - ing sun, we love and che-rish. Be-lov-ed

home - land of our brave he-roes. We must de - fend__ our

lives or we shall pe-rish; we shall pro - tect__ our - selves from our

foes. *f* But if the price__ is death for all we hold dear,

then let us die____ with - out a shred of fear.

Logically, Biafra's struggle for freedom subsists in a national identity, which, in this context, her anthem helps to construct. To be clear, there are many lyrics (sacred, sectarian, and secular) that have been set to Finlandia. For example, 'Be Still My Soul', 'Finland, Behold Thy Daylight' and, in this case, 'Land of the Rising Sun'. At this juncture, I should caution against overly valorising Finlandia as a cultural signifier because of the music's own global appeal. Yet it is this appeal that lends it to the forces of appropriation (the adoption of cultural text) as well as deterritorialisation (the relocation and/or re-emplacement of an 'appropriated' cultural text). Here, the appropriation of the Finlandia melody gives Biafra a *conferred identity*, largely because the anthem's tune has neither originated from nor is it an original musical thought of Biafra. It has essentially been 'taken' from continental Europe, and its ownership 'transferred' to West Africa. Although this 'ownership' is both abstract and subjective, it is also justifiable within the music and identity discourse, which, according to Frith (1996: 125), holds that '[music] defines space without boundaries (a game without frontiers)'.

The lyrics of the Biafran anthem, on the other hand, reflect something original: a carefully conceived text for the purpose of guaranteeing *intimacy* (that real emotional connection with what is perceived). Here, librettist Nnamdi Azikiwe translates and normalises the idea of Biafra as both a sequence and consequence of the war (see stanza below).

Land of the rising sun, we love and cherish
Beloved homeland of our brave heroes
We must defend our lives or we shall perish
We shall protect ourselves from our foes
But if the price is death for all we hold dear
Then let us die without a shred of fear.

The lyrics arguably capture the experiences and revolutionary spirit of Biafra and Biafrans. It portrays the pursuit of sovereignty as an act of solidarity. Specifically, the first two lines describe a time of tranquillity and independence, which, historically was the case following the declaration of statehood in 1967. By contrast, the next two lines clearly situate the people in time of war—with rousing words/phrases such as ‘defend’, ‘perish’, and ‘protect ourselves from our foes’. Accordingly, Biafra would go to war with Nigeria shortly after the declaration of statehood. The final two lines, and perhaps the most poignant, summarises their struggle and the consequences that might befall them, while simultaneously offering some encouragement. Biafra would eventually lose the war with a very high death toll in the Spring of 1970.

Like the Finnish text that was set to Finlandia, Biafra’s lyrics speak of overcoming great obstacles on the path to freedom. Azikiwe’s devotional and exploratory approach to the lyrics ensures that it yields *immediate* meaning to the Biafran and her sympathisers. The implication is that without the anthem’s text the process of deterritorialisation becomes problematic. In other words, it is the anthem’s lyrics that thoroughly emplaces or re-emplaces Finlandia within Biafra, especially knowing that there are other texts that have been set to the same tune. And so, it is the text more than the tune that gives the Biafran anthem its *referential identity*. Here, the referential identity refers to those core and reflexive indicators of perceived ‘Biafranness’— most of which are only brought to life in the anthem’s lyrics. Therefore, to fully normalise the idea of Biafra

both as an ethnic and geographical construct the anthem needs to be performed with words.

Analyses and Extrapolations

The soundtrack notably opens with a dramatic, well-orchestrated European-style martial music that is indicative of conflict. This piece of music apparently contrasts with the scenes showing Nigerians celebrating their independence from British colonial rule [2:40–2:54]. The soundtrack and pictures not only begin with ‘opposing interests’ in exploring/exploiting the narrative of war, but also oppose each other in context of the geography of both the film and, more important, film music gaze [see minutes 52:48–91:05]. This observation is most palpable in the scenes portraying the aftermath of a horrible civil war [67:30–91:00]. The perceived opposition between the film’s picture and soundtrack makes for two critical readings (1) a Nollywood transnational aesthetic objectivity, and (2) a contentious musical depiction of Biafra and its identity. According to Stokes (1994), music is utilised by people and communities to ‘emplace’ territories through and even beyond immediate geographical boundaries. Although Stokes’ argument is limited to folk, popular, and art music, we can argue that film music is also important for both making and marking territories and, therefore, identity. Because of its temporal and imaginary spatial allusions, film music presents unique opportunities for drawing inferences on as well as informing notions of (1) place and (2) collective identity, at least in mainstream Nollywood terms.

On informing notions of place in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the Finlandia tune (which is to be ‘read’ as the instrumental version of Biafra’s anthem) is aesthetically emblematic of ‘movement’ across cultural territories. Traversing borders of culture through music implies that Finlandia, in this context, becomes deterritorialised and, therefore, historically/philosophically (re-) positioned within the West African geographical space called Biafra. The processes of appropriation and deterritorialisation work to redefine and bestow ownership of what is/was considered a European cultural text. As previously hinted, the Finlandia soundtrack aesthetically contrasts with the images in this film. This also brings about an interesting sound–visual relationship wherein the viewer is presented with images from Africa (Biafra) and background music from the Global North (specifically European Classical music).

The result of this kind of juxtaposition is what I call the transnational aesthetic objectivity of film music. As a rule, the moving image must not mimic or depict this ‘movement’ across territories. In other words, both music and picture must represent contrasting cultures. This notion thus supports my argument that Nollywood film music possesses a transnational aesthetic identity (TI), which mainly occurs in international co-productions. Mainstream Nollywood seems particularly disposed to this transnational aesthetic objectivity, especially in such productions where the intersection of continents and cultures is inevitable.⁴⁴ That said, how exactly is the identity of Biafra conveyed in the soundtrack of *Half of a Yellow Sun*? The answer lies in a careful juxtaposition of the anthem’s text and tune with the contingencies of the soundtrack’s production alongside such notions as appropriation and deterritorialisation.

War is indeed a terrible endeavour, and the scenes from 67:30–91:00 leave no doubt about this. Through the camera’s movement, depictions of a lost war – wretchedness, famine, disease, hunger, and despondence are presented. While these images evoke pity, the background music appears to ‘distance’ itself from the narrative. This quality is quite prevalent in some European film music traditions wherein the soundtrack can pursue a parallel pathway to the narrative.⁴⁵ It contrasts markedly with the Nollywood approach, which is shown to tie soundtrack to the dialogue and storylines of film. Specifically, the thought that the soundtrack ‘leads its own life’ is from wondering why the romantic Finlandia tune should accentuate images of despondence and misery, especially from the perspective of a viewer who knows nothing about Biafra. To help make the connection, the film’s music supervisor Yemi Alade-Lawal informed me that the Finlandia tune is ‘the Biafran National Anthem’ and, therefore, ‘representative of Biafra’. This therefore means that the music is neither accidental nor indifferent to the particular scenes where it occurs. But his ‘clarification’ only raises a deeper concern, which is the crux of this section: how ‘representative’ of Biafra is Finlandia here?

My position is that the incorporation of Finlandia into the soundtrack of *Half of a Yellow Sun* is more revealing for what it excludes than includes. First, it completely excludes the lyrics, which, as earlier established, accounts for Biafra’s referential

⁴⁴ In other examples of an international co-production, Nollywood applies Nigerian pop/folk music as soundtrack to pictures from North America. See such Nollywood films as *Baby Oku in America* (2013), and *Ije, the Journey* (2010).

⁴⁵ For an in-depth explanation of this approach, see Chion (2009).

identity. Second, it disregards some of the melodic notes, for example, the mediant (third degree of the scale) in measures 15 and 16, and, in another instance, completely excludes the final two and a half measures, that is 22 to 24.⁴⁶ This second omission notably offers no ‘closure’ and potentially distorts the attribute of a conferred Biafran identity. These reasons beg the resistance–complicity questions: why was *Finlandia* incorporated into the soundtrack? Was its inclusion fully ‘agreed’ by both Nollywood and the BFI? What specific roles did the film music practitioners on both cinema traditions play? Was the context for the anthem’s inclusion sufficiently established? If so, why was the anthem, to use Yemi Alade-Lawal’s own word, ‘bastardised’?

Any form of music, including film music can and should be used as a means to express and articulate identities (MacDonald et al 2000). The manner of use of *Finlandia* in *Half of a Yellow Sun* raises concerns about the creative process and decisions that led to its inclusion in the soundtrack. Of this, Yemi Alade-Lawal explains:

Well, that [the tune’s arrangement] was done in Ben’s style, and he called it the bastardisation of *Finlandia*. So, he played it backwards [and] upside down; but we could still hear the fact that it’s *Finlandia*. See, that is another thing that was very good about this film. Ben Onono, being an Igbo guy, [is] from the region [southeast Nigeria]. His parents [were] involved in the [Nigeria–Biafra] war, [and] it is fresh to them! So that was why he convinced us. [And] by the time he played the bastardisation of the Biafran anthem, we loved it, because we thought: ‘wow, it was very gripping’. And, yeah, it is the centre of the film, really. And it cost me a lot of money. (Yemi Alade-Lawal, interview with the author, 3 December 2014)

The statement ‘That was why he [Ben Onono] convinced us’ is a clear indication that the inclusion of the anthem was an afterthought. Alade-Lawal affirms:

Ben Onono and Paul Thompson are the arrangers of the score, here. What sold me to Ben was the fact that Ben played that *Finlandia* track in such a. ... It just had an emotional feel [to it]. We were just sitting in Ben’s house, hearing a grand piano. We had all these conversations about the music [as] we watched a demo of *Half of a Yellow Sun* that they had shot to go get some money. And at the end of the day, he [Ben] just played *Finlandia*, and it was really awesome, and that sold me to the idea: yeah, I need this kind of music, and I really want it big. And ‘big’ is like having a live orchestra and getting it done properly, as opposed to just having it with piano and synth strings and whatnot. (Yemi Alade-Lawal, interview with the author, 3 December 2014)

⁴⁶ Refer to the schematic in the section ‘The Biafran National Anthem’.

Unfortunately, the Biafran anthem was not given Alade-Lawal's 'big' portrayal whether as vocal and/or instrumental performance. Instead, it was simply a piano and string music refraction (broken statement) of the anthem, which the politics and tensions within the production process inspired. Again, Alade-Lawal states:

My job was basically to make sure that Ben had the free reign to do what he wanted. But obviously, and I'm telling you, the BFI [British Film Institute] did not want a [film] score. Yeah, they did not want a score and yet (I do not know if I can put this into your stuff [research] because it is a little politics) this was a film that was pretty much a Nigerian story; directed by a Nigerian; music supervised by a Nigerian; and composed [arranged] by a Nigerian. So, it had a lot of Nigerian influence in it! Biyi [the producer] wanted it to make a statement. But they [the BFI] just did not see the need for a score: they thought it was just a waste [of time and resources]. They felt [that] you could just get somebody to do a couple songs here and there, and then it would fit like you see in [mainstream] Nollywood. The director and the producers were fighting and fighting. They [BFI] did not understand it, though, but we fought for that. These things do happen, where there is (I hate to say the word), the pre-colonial view of Africa. And we wanted to make a point – that we understand film; and our films can have score[s]; they can be expensive; they can sound nice; and they can have an African feel to it. So, we ended up with a score and about fifteen cue music in the whole project. (Yemi Alade-Lawal, interview with the author, 3 December 2014)

The above statement emphasises two important and interconnected points: the lopsided postcolonial exchanges that characterise the relationship between the so-called developed and developing worlds, and the centrality of Biafra's anthem to the film's narrative. In my view, the BFI's initial posturing and efforts to 'seize' the creative decisions about the film music is a clear display of cultural imperialism, which arguably obfuscates whatever meaning inheres in the word 'independence' and the identity thereof. Hegemony in an international co-production such as the Nolly-BFI, takes on genuine palpable domination that works through discourse. Cultural imperialism describes how an African film industry and culture influencer such as Nollywood can be subjected to European authority. It also highlights the arrogance and stereotypical neo-colonial attitude toward 'Black culture' and its humanity. As such, and considering the role of colonialism and economic power, Nollywood cannot in this context be regarded as the repressive institution.

Regarding *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the BFI's desire to dominate the soundtrack process not only underlines hegemony and the misguided perception of 'success', but also inadvertently sets up adversarial reactions, which eventually produces the disjointed

and uninspiring musical representation of Biafra. This raises a broader ancillary philosophical query about neo-colonialism and the ‘success’ of cultural imperialism in Africa. Who accounts for the ‘success’ of the White man’s endeavours in Africa, especially regarding issues of cultural identity? Addressing Biafrans on the notion of neo-colonialism, Ojukwu (1969: 9) asserts:

For this reason, our struggle is a movement against racial prejudice, in particular against that tendency to regard the black man as culturally, morally, spiritually, intellectually, and physically inferior to the other two major races of the world - the yellow and the white races. This belief in the innate inferiority of the Negro ... has from early days coloured the attitude of the outside world to Negro problems. It still does today. It is this myth about the Negro that still conditions the thinking and attitude of most white governments on all issues concerning black Africa and the black man; it explains the double standards which they apply to present-day world problems; it explains their stand on the whole question of independence and basic human rights for the black peoples of the world.

From the point of mainstream Nollywood, the soundtrack of *Half of a Yellow Sun* fails to deregister and reframe an existing episteme that is the subtle exaltation and institutionalisation of First World culture, including film music approaches, above its African *other*. As observed in Yemi Alade-Lawal’s account, this ‘exaltation’ either draws resistance or complicity from the Third World.

Lastly, on informing notions of a collective identity, we necessarily have to revert to the music’s text and tune because theorising music in the context of social identity is a ‘major preoccupation’ that describes the emergence of a *new framework* wherein ‘music “reflects” nothing; rather, it has a formative role in the construction, negotiation, and transformation of sociocultural identities’ (Born 2000:412). The immediacy in meaning alongside mediated responses, which both the text and tune of the Biafran anthem respectively evoke, is not causal but correlated. This means that the cultural reference to and totality of meaning of Biafra as constituted in her anthem are best transmitted through and appreciated in the unity of its text and tune. Thus, presenting a wordless ‘bastardisation’ or refraction of the anthem (as heard in the soundtrack) deals a big blow to the integrity of Biafra’s identity.

This same refraction (or broken musical statement) bears another ‘unintended’ consequence: it distorts that real emotional connection with what is perceived by the target audience and, thus, blurs the referential Biafran identity. This projection is

strongest in the scenes where the people of Biafra declare themselves a republic [53:25–53:40]. The picture shows, among other things, a modified map of Nigeria—an indication that a new country is born. At this juncture, and given the significance of the declaration, I had expected to hear Alade-Lawal’s ‘big portrayal’ of Biafra’s anthem rendered in full voice and instrumentation. Alas, the soundtrack ‘snubs’ Biafra’s purported ‘sovereignty’. This leads me to reason that if Nigeria had been defeated in the 1967 civil war, Biafra’s territorial sovereignty might have been received and expressed differently in the soundtrack. Unfortunately, Biafra lost the war, and painfully so as stated by Odumegwu Ojukwu:

Ours has been a revolution in reverse. The conventional course of national revolutions is that they should be preceded by intensive preparation and education of the people, culmination in the revolutionary action, the seizure of power, [and] the war of national liberation. In our own case, the revolutionary act seized us before we were fully prepared for it (Ojukwu 1969: 374).

Ojukwu’s assertion is an acknowledgment of a failed geo-political endeavour, which the pictures of *Half of a Yellow Sun* rightly portray. Perhaps, it is in the context of the above quote, which was made shortly before the republic’s demise, that the bastardisation of Biafra’s anthem might be justified. Even so, this justification is debatable because the instrumentation alone does not quite normalise the idea of Biafra. Additionally, I argue that Biafra would have been thoroughly enacted following Nollywood’s Traditionalist school of thought. Apart from the anthem, I should also point out that the film score could have benefitted from the use of a few Biafran war songs such as ‘Enyimba Enyi’.⁴⁷

Apparently, the way that Biafra’s anthem was interpreted and applied in *Half of a Yellow Sun* reads as a well-calculated attempt to subjugate a people and their identity. Politically, many Igbo people remain sympathetic to the Biafra project. And in the last five years, there have been reports of protest marches that have been met with fierce resistance on the part of the Nigerian government. Given that there was a plan to premiere *Half of a Yellow Sun* amidst such protest marches, it is logical to imagine that a ‘big’, full-throated rendition of the Biafran anthem would have contributed to

⁴⁷ War songs such as *Biafra Bilie* (‘Biafra Arise’) and *Ebe Ka Unu Si?* (‘To which Land Do You Belong?’) were and still are central to issues of Biafran identity. Indeed, over twenty Biafra ‘referent’ songs have been chronicled and explained in the accounts of Nwachukwu-Agbada (1996) and Omeje (2005).

heightened civil unrest in the relatively unstable Nigerian polity. Of note, Britain did not back Biafra during the civil war. And through the BFI's involvement in the soundtrack of *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Britain apparently failed to back Biafra once again. The bastardisation of Finlandia evidently contradicts Alade-Lawal's claim that the Biafran anthem is 'the centre of the film [music]' when, in fact, it does not go far enough to emphasise Biafra. Essentially, without those images of the aftermath of a brutal civil war, the music alone does not explicitly suggest Biafra to the viewer. Indeed, the one option for fully realising, appreciating, and signalling Biafra in the soundtrack subsists in the cultural essence and meaning embedded in the anthem's text—an option that was arguably frustrated following the forces of resistance and complicity. Yet this is not to suggest that Nollywood is exonerated from any blame. As already mentioned, a bit more research into and incorporation of 'the music of Biafra' on Nollywood's part might have enhanced the soundtrack's overall capacity to *orchestrate* Biafranness. Nonetheless, *Half of a Yellow Sun* remains an example of Nollywood's capacity to negotiate identity as a construct that is dependent on the interaction between music and place.

4.4 Discussion

The effect of resistance and/or complicity on the part of Nollywood is critical to its localised film music processes and shades of identity, especially when challenged by some perceived 'superior' cinema traditions. This statement presupposes that Nollywood is subservient to, for example, the British Film Institute. And it seems logical considering that 'there is a political need to exploit a notion of identities', which has been acknowledged as 'ideological and hegemonic constructed forms of closure by repressive institutions' (Hall 2000: 18). Hegemony is 'a way of representing the order of things [...] which makes them appear universal, natural, and continuous with "reality" itself' (Hall 1982: 65). This, according to Benwell and Stokoe (2006: 30), implies that subordinate bodies 'give their consent to particular formations of power because the dominant cultural group generating the discourse persuades them of their essential 'truth', 'desirability', and 'naturalness''. Hegemony, in such an international co-production, takes on genuine palpable domination that works through discourse.

Thus, in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, I observe how the dominant cultural group (herein represented by the film music team of the British Film Institute) *persuades* the subject

(their Nollywood counterpart/collaborators) to acquire a particular ideological film music identity: one that is totally unsympathetic to Nollywood's specifics of localised identity formations. By implication, this process of identification becomes a colonising force that shapes and directs the subject. This is further aided by the notion that the human enablers on the side of Nollywood are diasporic Nigerians who are constantly resolving two polarities: being a part of the industry in Nigeria and their own *displaced* reality in Europe. In response to this notion, Yemi Alade-Lawal posits:

Look, this world is suffering from homogeneity right now. So, everybody wants to conform to the status quo. So, if Hollywood is the benchmark, you are looking to almost copy that. I am still a Nigerian. But you see Nigerian films, or when you watch Nollywood movies, they have that annoying music that goes with it. Nollywood movies have limited songs, you should watch [a few]. I've got a video to show you. And if [in] the scene, the mother or the son has just left the child [...], the music will just tell the story again of what has just happened, and it can take another ten minutes for it to just move on! I guess maybe I live in the West, so my sensibilities are like 'come on, move on'. Whereas in Nigeria, in Nollywood, people go: 'OK, cool, so that's what's going to happen', and ten minutes later you are still thinking 'OK', and then you are running your own little commentary behind it. So maybe we, here, are trying to adapt to what is happening [globally]. I guess, at the end of the day, music in films will be of a standard, and of a quality, and eventually the Nollywood music will kind of mirror that or follow that, which is what is happening now anyway, with the New Nollywood films. (Yemi Alade-Lawal, interview with the author, 3 December 2014)

When asked about Nollywood's localised film music approaches, he asserts:

I think '*Half of a Yellow Sun*' has set the precedent for some [mainstream Nollywood] filmmakers to make sure that they have strong music content in their films, because they now know that it can be done. And yes, Nigerians still have rich music, and there is a style [referring to prefiguring], and we just need to incorporate it somehow [and] in such a way that it is not too overpowering, because... what I mean is when they place this music in these Nollywood films, it's so overpowering, and a little bit annoying. So that is the style, and if you are living outside of that territory, then you may not really like it. (Yemi Alade-Lawal, interview with the author, 3 December 2014)

On the flip side, there are instances where mainstream Nollywood clearly resists such persuasions. In *Baby Oku in America*, for example, Nollywood distances itself from a potentially Hollywood prescribed film music identity. In other words, Nollywood refuses to be treated as a mere effect of 'universal' film music discourse, ideology, and 'standard'. Instead, she assumes the role of an initiator of action that leads to an

inscribed localised film music identity. The following assertion about the creative process of the soundtrack of *Baby Oku in America* clarifies this point.

Fortunately, I know the person that owns the Baby Oku film. He is my *oga* [patron]. And he sent me a text and said, “Your money has been paid. Make it local...local...very local”. (Stanley Okorie, interview with the author, 1 August 2015)

In my opinion, Okorie’s posturing is, in part, enabled by the use of Nigerian languages, which can be scrutinised on two levels: its compelling deliberateness and the formation of social meanings, which in turn reveal different discursive and performative constructions.⁴⁸ So for example, *Half of a Yellow Sun* makes use of proper English for the most part of its dialogue and soundtrack lyrics. Conversely, *Baby Oku in America* employs a linguistic mix that slightly privileges Nigerian Pidgin and Igbo over Standard English in both dialogue and soundtrack. The ideological and cultural ‘baggage’ noted in *Baby Oku in America* is certainly not an oversight. Rather, it is deliberately done as an opposition to the hegemony that the Global North represents in this context. Like in *Ekaette Goes to School*, the *Baby Oku in America* soundtrack strips the English language (the language of the colonialist) of its ‘cultural sophistication’, which then paves way for an iconoclastic reading of Baby Oku (the protagonist) as the main text of the plot. This is something that the soundtrack of *Half of a Yellow Sun* does not do. And the reason is simple: it was made to meet ‘international’ standards guided primarily by the British Film Institute (BFI). Another underlying excuse for the difference in approach to use of language inheres in the kind of audience that the producers of both films targeted. Generally, I think that the producers of *Half of a Yellow Sun* could have made the connection better by, at least, incorporating more Nigerian pop and folk music.

All these constructions have provenance within theories on institutional power. And they are possible because of the ‘transformative capacity of human action’, which Giddens (1981: 67) argues is ‘at the heart of both domination and power’. Thus, the resultant film music identity of international co-productions involving Nollywood is often caught up in the dichotomies of cultural imperialism, hegemony and autonomy, nationalism and globalisation, among others. This is so because the film music traditions of all collaborative parties are mutually implicated in the fierce ideological

⁴⁸ Refer to section 2.4 for an extensive note on the role of language in Nollywood film music identity.

warfare between complicity with dominant agendas and the creation of hegemonic spaces—a war that is ultimately tied to the alternate acceptance of and resistance to the forces of globalisation, migration/diaspora, and global capitalism.

4.5 Nollywood film music, globalisation, and diaspora

We live in what has been dubbed the Postmodern Age – one that is arguably driven by processes of globalisation. Such processes are characterised by ‘faster and closer connections across geographical spaces’ (Giddens 1991), and ‘an increase in the mediation of experience’ through such media as the Internet (Grodin and Lindlof 1996). This implies that as people of diverse places across the globe face similar and interconnected kinds of socio-economic experiences, a transnational culture that speaks to some shared socio-cultural truths begins to emerge. Consequently, distant and perhaps invasive events and thoughts from around the world continually shape the consciousness of ordinary people. This consciousness is nearly always changing: a very fluid and ‘elusive’ experience that impacts our ‘postmodern’ identities. In *Identity*, Zygmunt Bauman states that postmodern identities are ‘the most acute, the most deeply felt and the most troublesome incarnations of ambivalence’ (2004: 32).

But Bauman’s apathetic view has also been countered by other scholars who think that postmodernity demonstrates humanity’s creative capacity across and within contexts such as *diaspora* (Hall 1995), *hybridity* (Bhabha 1994), and *crossing* (Rampton 1995). In my opinion, both perspectives only do well to confirm the paradox that is globalisation: it is both an attraction and a distraction. As an attraction, globalisation engenders creative and self-defining possibilities which global capitalism rewards. However, it is a distraction that can produce a ‘crisis of identity’ (Erikson 1968). In relation to cinema and film music, mainstream Hollywood productions arguably pursue a great deal of ‘hybridity’ and ‘crossing’ of cultures than does mainstream Nollywood. And this is why I stated earlier that it is more difficult to argue for the cultural identity of Hollywood and European film/film music because, unlike mainstream Nollywood, they are more representative of processes of globalisation (see sections 2.4 and 3.2).

For the purposes of analysis, I will like to approach this argument from three distinct but mutually exclusive strands. First, there is a link across the African diaspora, with Nigerian social forms lodged in collective memory, which regularly manifest in language, dance, film, music, religion, and other expressive cultural forms. As a

continuum within that diaspora, mainstream Nollywood film music maintains its formal musical and compositional elements, genres, and styles (see chapter 2). As well, the populations trading and consuming Nollywood films/film songs no longer require physical travel for cultural contact. Rather, they rely on the movement of information across technological networks such as the Internet.

The second dimension to the argument operates at a more autonomous level as a set of links created by diasporic residents themselves: of Nigerian citizens such as Yemi Alade-Lawal living and working as film music composers/supervisors overseas. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* we observe how diasporic practitioners like Yemi Alade-Lawal set aside those already established abstractions and specificities that give Nollywood film music its localised shades of identity for the more ‘universally appealing’ Euro-American refinement. Alade-Lawal further defends this perspective (of leaning more toward the Global North to borrow, blend, and expand approaches and soundtrack materials) by revealing that:

The [film] director wanted a full classic cinematic score because the idea was to write a film that was a date movie. So, even though the [Biafra-Nigeria] war is a very touchy subject, and very sensitive to a lot of Nigerians, he wanted something really sweet and romantic, and at the same time, something that sets the African music cinema in a different light. He wanted a full score *a la* Hollywood. Again, the story [*Half of a Yellow Sun*] is a love story set in Nigeria [against] the backdrop of the [civil] war. So, we did not want to shoot ourselves... I mean, I’m sure the director did not want to shoot himself in the foot by just being banal and looking for just Nigerian music. And I’m probably talking to you now because you find the soundtrack a little bit more interesting and out of the box. So, that was the way we did it: [presenting] what is obvious, what is real, what is true, what is representative and what works. So, it had to fit, and we had to be able to pay for it. Affordability was very important! (Yemi Alade-Lawal, interview with the author, 3 December 2014)

Finally, there are the experiences emerging from, and defined by, the material legacies of colonisation and the near perpetual dependence on Europe and North America, which continually (although not always obviously) determines ‘the position’ of peoples and institutions of African origin within the globe. Conditions such as racism, class antagonism, and limited technological/economic opportunities persist nearly unchanged to date. These conditions have caused a few Nollywood composers such as Stanley Okorie to approach international co-productions from a default disposition of resistance to perceived ‘oppressive systems’ and/or ‘higher power’. Emerging out of

Nolly-Holly films such as *Baby Oku in America* (2013) and *Ije, the Journey* (2010), this disposition is given voice by the creative practitioners who inhabit those spaces.

You will never be American. You will only hurt your feelings: you will never be American. Don't forget [that] I'm also a Canadian citizen. And I know that they have, or there is still a certain level of expectation for [people] coming from the Third World. In Canada there is something unspoken called discrimination! It is even in London; I mean...it is unspoken but it is there. So, why would you want to compete with them? You are playing in a game where the enemy is the referee and has made all the rules! He is the referee and the rules are his. So, you can give a goal and he says 'No, you don't score goals when I am not in a good mood'. So, would you ever win? You'll never win. Once in a while I get films that must have the 'Western feel'...but most times I do a lot of the 'locals'. An American is an American; a Nigerian is a Nigerian. Your identity is who you are: the air you breathe, the name you bear, the language you speak, the women you fall in love with, the children you bear, the work you do, [and] the death you die. The only identity I know is the only one I have. [And] that is the only one I can convey. You see, the Chinese have a strong identity in everything they do. I hope you know [that] even the Indians and the rest of the world do. It is just us [Nigerians] that seem to be so crushed of spirit that we do not stand up for our own African identity. But I think all that is slowly changing, you know. But what I can tell you is that I have my preference for the local things. I like it local because that is where I am. Well, acting local but still thinking international... And don't forget: this love for my local stuff did not happen when I was here; it happened when I was abroad. (Stanley Okorie, interview with the author, 01 August 2015)

If not already said, the opinions and counter-opinions of Stanley Okorie and Yemi Alade-Lawal firmly establish the framework for the resistance versus complicity dialogue in international co-productions.

4.6 Chapter summary

This chapter has established that mainstream Nollywood film music possesses a transnational aesthetic identity (shown as "TI" in Figure 5.1). The transnational aesthetic identity is constituted in both process and performance. Via the concepts of appropriation and deterritorialisation, the dialogue has also been extended to nuance the metaphoric journey of identity in Nollywood film music. To be clear, when, in an international co-production, the discourse of Nollywood film music is in no way connected to an effort to promote the collective (Nigerian) identity, it merely becomes another resource appropriated by the coloniser or dominant cinema tradition for indoctrination of foreign values. It thus becomes possible for Western cinema cultures to be perpetuated and maintained even as it appears to become 'inclusive'. Hopefully, this critique of the ways Nollywood film music identity is both negotiated and

rearticulated in international co-productions can stand on its own as a preliminary theoretical exploration. To conclude, as global film musics criss-cross geographical spaces with limited inhibition, we are all implicated in the power dynamics inherent in our own consumption of them. And as the world's (totalitarian) systems of domination narrows, hopefully, its ears will grow bigger to accommodate the intensifying global and exotic approaches to film music.

Chapter 5

The shades of identity, performance contexts, and persistent identity system

This chapter is a synthesis of the most important arguments in preceding chapters. It specifically outlines, integrates, discusses, and summarises three central outcomes: (1) the Nollywood film music shades of identity and their interconnectedness, (2) the three contexts through which the shades of identity are performed, and (3) the Nollywood film music (persistent) identity system, which is the result of integrating the first two points. To start, I name and discuss the eight shades of Nollywood film music identity (seven of which belong to the localised crucible). These are:

- The Ethnic identity (EI)
- The Cross-ethnic identity (CEI)
- The Lingual identity (LI)
- The Marginal–genre identity (MI)
- The Structural identity (SI)
- The Transnational aesthetic identity (TI)
- The Commodified identity (ComI), and
- The Spatial identity (SpI)

To be clear, the above listed shades of identity do not represent all the possible derivable forms of identity, nor do they stand as immutable entities that are constituted in discourse, process, and performance. Together, however, they represent a macrocosm of musical and extra-musical expressions embedded in mainstream Nollywood productions.

Broadly, this thesis offers ideas for a guided approach to reading (and even making) Nollywood soundtracks. It makes a case for understanding how Nollywood film music speaks to culture, its consumers, and even scholars. I make my argument by examining the forms of cultural synthesis and portrayal of, as well as preconditions for realising the shades of identity. I then look into such aspects as sustenance and authorial autonomy and their connections with the shades of identity. Relying on all data and

statements from the research, I submit that identity in Nollywood film music is more localised than transnational. The shades of identity are roundly emblematic of practitioners' engagement with identity issues in their creative works. Throughout this thesis, identity is shown to be a socio-musically articulated phenomenon that can be re-/de-articulated and is deeply reliant upon the interplay of variables and preconditions such as money, politics, technology, individualism, ethnicity, social identity, business/organisational network, vertical integration, cultural and material appropriation, barriers to entry, and so on. Finally, it is my theory that the changing correlation between the identified variables, the 'rules of Nollywood', and shades of identity is not a statement of causality but of cultural portrayal and specificity.

5.1 Nollywood film music and its shades of identity: A critical overview

This section considers what has been both foregrounded and backgrounded so far. For example, it reviews the extent to which Nollywood film music identity has conformed to Nigerian cultural norms. We know from preceding chapters that the materials and design of Nollywood film music indicate practitioners' ideological motifs and their portrayal of meanings. So, when exactly is identity meaningful to both creator and consumer? The short answer is when Nigerian (musical) culture has overbearing effects on its film music production and reading. This question has, however, been provoked by the ways Nollywood film composers construct aspects of their perceived realities in films: of their imagining of place, people, objects, events, culture, and other abstract concepts and possibilities (chapter 2). The imagining of identity is further implicated in *how*: those processes of articulating the various identity markers in relation to, say, certain ethnic groups within Nigeria (chapter 3). The point I am keen to stress here is one of symbolism: a system by which the creative and ideological concerns are framed, positioned, and transmitted within film. In other words, this section broadly evaluates Nollywood film music identity, particularly how it has been articulated to appear accurate, normal, ethical, and even commonsensical within (and sometimes outside) its culture of production.

To recap, identity in Nollywood film music rests on the working of the following parameters: musical form, style and genre, language, individual and collective ideologies, national and international lines of artistic/creative loyalty, opposing and intersecting film music traditions, money, internal politics and power dynamics, the

effects of stereotypes, as well as the competing thoughts on the Nigerianness of Nollywood soundtracks.

At the outset, I mentioned that Nollywood film music is arguably a mimetic representation of the Nigerian reality. This notion implies that local Nollywood film composers are expected to be sensitive to the sociocultural demands of the movies. For instance, the soundtrack should be audience-culture centred and not director/auteur-led as noticeable in European traditions. To this end, film composers are expected to continuously regulate themselves by asking questions such as:

- Is the music culturally proactive: will it speak to and promote Nigerianness?
- Is the manner of application of music in tandem with indigenous approaches to music and theatre? In other words, does the music ‘sing the film’?
- Does the music give back the storyline to its audience?
- Does the soundtrack rely on cultural signifiers such as musical instrument/idiom, style, and genre?
- Is the music texted and performed in the composer’s own voice to guarantee authenticity?
- Does it provide appropriate commentary in relation to the film?
- What language does the soundtrack privilege: is the music predominantly in the local dialect, Nigerian Pidgin, or in Standard English (the language of the colonialist)?

Having thoroughly engaged with established Nollywood film music composers and adherents and having also analysed some films and witnessed their own engagement with the above questions vis-à-vis the cinematic contents; my research thus accounts for the following shades of identity.

The Structural identity

The structural identity refers to the basic layout of aspects of the soundtrack in a film. In some other cinema traditions this encompasses aesthetic and rhetorical dimensions: of emphasis on diegetic and non-diegetic narrativity, tonal and formal developments of thematic materials, underscoring, and so on. In mainstream Nollywood, however, some of these structural components remain fairly disregarded and/or completely contradictory to what this study calls the ‘rules’ of Nollywood film music practice (see section 3.4). Fieldwork has shown that many Nollywood film composers understand the need for cultural portrayal in the dynamics between sound and the moving image. And so, I maintain that the main operating index of this shade of identity is prefiguring. Save the third, the two other Nollywood film music schools of thought are aligned in the continuous structural use of music to foreshadow scenes and retell storylines. As far as Nollywood is concerned, I posit that prefiguring is the gateway to reading its film music. Thus, prefiguring provides the structural link between music, dialogue, and drama in Nollywood cinema.

As outlined in chapter 3, prefiguring conjures up layers of meaning (from the immediate or direct to the implied or preferred) for Nollywood audiences. Prefiguring is a function of indigenous storytelling practices in Nigeria—the appropriation of which depicts Nollywood film music’s reflexivity (the ability to speak back to culture). Within the locally made films (and a few international co-productions), prefiguring supports the functional structure (block-by-block relationship between the background music and the moving image), which may not appear as dense and multi-layered in comparison to, say, European film/film music. It may not even be aesthetically and rhetorically appealing in comparison to mainstream Hollywood. Yet its existence and local efficacy are undeniably overwhelming. Put simply, Nollywood film/film music synergy will have no distinguishable structural identity without prefiguring. Take away prefiguring, and what remains is something akin to TV’s theme music or signature tune—a piece of song that distances itself from the Nollywood videofilm style of narration. The Nollywood film music structural identity is mainly constituted in performance but also in process and discourse (Figure 3.4). This resolves another central research question about whether or not Nollywood film music identity is motivated by a persistent and recognisable framework, which the art of prefiguring regulates.

The Lingual identity

Through chapters 2 and 3, I have thoroughly engaged with the notion of language and its efficacy as an identity maker and marker in Nollywood film music. To recap, I stated that most soundtrack lyrics are in one or more Nigerian languages, as well as in Nigerian Pidgin English (or Ninglish). As such, Nollywood film music re-enacts the filmic gaze and dialogues by giving back the story it to its target audience either in the local dialect or a mix of local dialects and Nigerian Pidgin. As a tentative hypothesis, I propose that this manner of use of language gives Nollywood film music an aural subtitling function, which, rather than have onscreen subtitles of dialogue, enables the viewer to *hear* the dialogue (although not verbatim) in the soundtrack.

In this context, language is understood as a culture-specific index of identity. Consequently, it is treated to some agreed principles during musical composition. For example, the tonal inflection of local dialects are always respected and applied to the composition of musical tunes (section 3.4). This rule ensures that the correct and intended meanings of lyrics are conveyed to the listener at all times. This is true even where the Nigerian film composer is not a native speaker of the choice dialect (as observed in *Ekaette Goes to School* wherein the composer is of Igbo ethnicity but he correctly inflects the Ibibio words of the song text to convey their proper meanings.

In all, each locally produced Nollywood soundtrack takes on the character of its respective film by conveying vital narrative and extra-narrative information. This quality determines the cultural tone and is consequently transferred into the soundtrack's narratological function via choice of language. This, here, resolves another central research question regarding what kind of identity follows from considering the dependence and application of language to Nollywood film music (of text–tune correlation, melodic contour, and other forms of cultural practices). It is my theory that Nollywood film music has an unmistakable lingual identity. And this shade of identity is constituted in discourse, process, and performance.

The Ethnic identity

Like the lingual identity, the construction and performance of ethnicity works through the interconnected and narrativised relationship of texted music and the moving image (see parts of chapters 2 and 3 for the analyses). To summarise, the ethnic identity of Nollywood film music is principally supported by a strong reliance on Nigerian musical

culture: of musical idioms, style, modes of singing and instrumentation, and genre. From the analytical chapters, it is clear that most mainstream Nollywood film songs reflect a strong preference for the pop music and musical practices within southern Nigeria. We have also established that two reasons account for this trend: (1) the ethnicities of production teams, especially composers, marketers, and singers, and (2) the unspoken prejudice against the (Islamic) music of northern Nigeria.

The Nollywood ethnic film music identity represents a microcosm of the conscious unchanging qualities that combine to underline local identities of sub-cultural areas in southern Nigeria. The ethnic identity is fundamentally realised from the local film composers' representative practice, which conceptually combine to portray ethnic Nigerian cultures. This shade of identity is constituted in both process and performance. It responds to the research concerns about what constitute appeal and the creation of Nollywood film music as well as how ethnic cultures have been harnessed and deployed to create an identity or a set of identities—one that arguably speaks for a larger group than does the local musical practice.

The Cross-ethnic identity

Having argued that Nollywood film music is performatively constituted in ethnicity, it yet reveals cross-ethnic characteristics. The cross-ethnic shade of identity works from the point of syncretism, which refers to the creative admixture of local and appropriated musical resources to create new/refined forms and variants. Syncretism or *syncretisation* is a theoretical concept based on Merriam's (1955: 28) work, which argues that the potential for blending structures within two musical systems is greater when they are similar than when such structures are dissimilar. The similarities that exist in the cultural patterns of various ethnic groups in Nigeria attest to Merriam's postulation: a case of interesting crosscurrents that redefine the national music treasure and, therefore, the expression of what might be regarded as a national identity in music. Syncretism is further aided by the unhindered accessibility of musical resources as well as fluidity of other forms of cultural appropriation like language. It is, thus, unsurprising to experience one or more combinations of the musical instruments and practices of different ethnicities within Nigeria in one or more mainstream Nollywood soundtracks.

These forms of appropriation range from dialectical to drumming or rhythmic patterns, style of singing (throaty or nasal) and preferred harmonisation. An example of a

Nollywood soundtrack that demonstrates syncretism is *Native Fowl* (2014). Here, the music combines both Yoruba and Igbo bell patterns as its rhythmic core and phrasing referent.⁴⁹ In addition to Nigerian Pidgin, the lyrics also contain expressions in both Yoruba and Igbo dialects. The groove is syncretic, meaning that although it is readily identifiable as highlife, it may not be easy to categorise exclusively as Igbo or Yoruba (see audio example 8). In many instances, the use of cross-ethnic musical resources can and has been necessitated by the narrative and/or locations of film plots. This lends credence to the notion that the music *follows* the story:

If I am doing a soundtrack that has to do with a story in the north [that is] northern Nigeria, I'd have to "do something"; I'd have to play something 'northern'... you know, [I] get the *karango*, get the *goge*, you know, their instruments, and "do something" with it, to identify that part of the country. (Shadrach John, interview with the author, 6 August 2015)

Essentially, the cross-ethnic identity is constituted in both process and performance. It also responds to the research concerns about what constitutes appeal and the creation of Nollywood film music as well as how ethnic cultures have been harnessed and deployed to create an identity or a set of identities.

The Marginal-genre identity

Nollywood production processes have led to music and film genre labelling and categorisations, which I have discussed extensively in chapter 2. There, I established that Nollywood actually ties certain Nigerian pop music genres to some of its film genres (see Table 2). As such, its film music possesses what I call a Marginal-genre identity—meaning that some Nigerian pop music genres such as highlife, Nigerian reggae, afro-pop, and Nigerian rap can and do discretely stand as film music genres in Nollywood. To reiterate, Nollywood's genre ideology and categorisation enables us to know *which genre of music is in operation* within a film. The marginal-genre identity invests Nollywood film music with a sense of 'self', especially in reference to other known cinema traditions. This shade of identity is constituted in discourse, performance, and process. It speaks to the central research question concerning what prerequisites combine to create a sense of sameness as well as distinction about Nollywood film music identity. It is my thesis that the marginal-genre identity not only reveals clarity but also the result of music's key role in the articulation and negotiation

⁴⁹ There are several essays on bell patterns found in sub-Saharan Africa. The works of Agawu (2003) and Kubik (2010) are particularly useful.

of Nollywood film genres.

The Transnational aesthetic identity

The transnational aesthetic identity of Nollywood film music is one of the most intangible and easiest to overlook. The term ‘transnational’ correctly suggests that it is unique to international co-productions only. As shown in chapter 4, this shade of identity thrives within notions of self-reflexivity and generally operates in opposition to picture. Reflexivity has been widely theorised (for example, Babcock 1980; Myerhoff and Ruby 1982; R. Bauman and Briggs 1990). One of the fundamental uses of the word ‘reflexive’ indicates ‘the capacity of any system of signification to turn back upon itself, to make itself the object by referring to itself’ (Myerhoff and Ruby in Tuohy, 2008: 179). Nollywood soundtracks display self-reflexivity particularly in international co-productions by mirroring its own domestic resources and approaches for use in films bearing images of foreign socio-cultural contexts. To recap, an internationally co-produced Nollywood soundtrack is capable of operating in one of two ways: it is possible for images of foreign lands to be accompanied by Nigerian pop and/or pop synthesised folk music (as observed in *Baby Oku in America*) or, as noted in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, images of Nigeria are accompanied by European and American Art and pop music (refer to chapter 4).

This fascinating music and image counterpoint is not one of conflict but rather a subtle transnational relationship of genuine yet divergent aesthetical character, which encourages the metaphoric journey of identity in film music. It is also indicative of an understanding based on mutual ‘accommodation’ of contrasting elements of and approaches to cultural texts from two film traditions—something Stanley Okorie implies when he says:

Baby Oku is not an American. Lying down in a garage does not make you a car. And being in McDonalds does not make you a burger, does it? So, it seems it is a film of two...of dual identities. So, both identities can live together and flow, as far as I am concerned. (Stanley Okorie, interview with the author, 1 August 2015)

In all, the transnational aesthetic identity reveals a narrative of ‘African modernity’ (a term I have borrowed from Larkin [1997] to describe a ‘third space’ for the allocation of culture and cultural texts as an active language of difference). It is an identity that is constituted in both process and performance. It addresses one of the research objectives,

which is to ascertain the presence and degree of foreign influences on Nollywood film music identity as well as what this knowledge adds to the discourse on resistance, compromise, and complicity in international co-productions between Nollywood and other film industries of the world.

The Commodified identity

From the outset of this thesis I stated that identity in Nollywood film music is a subtly packaged commodity. Until now, this statement has only been implicated in the various chapters particularly through the interface between context of production, text, transmission, and target audience (consumer). For this reason, I shall commit a few paragraphs to further nuance it. Theoretically, four different interpretations of the term *Commodified identity* have been proposed. These, according to Benwell and Stokoe (2006: 165) include (a) Identities of consumers (b) The process of identity commodification through acts of consumption (c) Representations of identities in commodified contexts, and (d) Self-commodifying discourses. Of these, only the first two are applied to my discourse of commodified identity in Nollywood film music.

To be clear, what accounts for Nollywood's popularity inheres in proximate experiences, which its film narratives, themes, language of dialogue, and film songs offer. In 'Charting Nollywood's Appeal Locally and Globally', Adejunmobi writes:

What is at stake in the appeal of Nollywood...is not cultural proximity in the sense of shared cultural heritage, shared cultural patrimony or devotion to a common store of values... Viewers may or may not recognise *akpu* [cassava meal] and bitter-leaf soup [as] displayed on screen, but they understand when meals are meant to be read as signs of excessive consumption, and...as signs of indigence and poverty (2010: 109).

Adejunmobi concludes that '[Nollywood] films travel so well across state and cultural boundaries in Africa because the conflict they represent and the resolutions they offer are perceived to be experientially proximate for postcolonial subjects' (2010:109). In other words, Nollywood's divergent creative practice and its cinematic attributes (of dialogue, music, fashion, and lifestyle) cohere into a cultural frame of reference that has spread beyond Nigeria and even Africa. Significantly, the nature of Nollywood film music makes for a proximate experience wherein it serves a sense of shared, collective 'African' identity: an identity that is, by this study, unequivocally opposed to, say, a collective European identity. I make this assertion on the premise that 'only the

disparate, and often intersecting practices through which Africans *stylise* their conduct and life can account for the thickness of the African present' (Mbembe 2002: 292-93). Many of the Nollywood film composers have both directly and indirectly affirmed that their creative ideas and works are not only ethnically motivated but are also aimed at viewers who are predominantly members of the black race at home (on the African continent) and the Diasporas.

That [Nollywood productions] is what black people watch in Russia, because I get calls from Siberia, Canada... I have people [who] call me from the UK, [and] from America, you see. They are watching the homemade Nollywood because, you know, it is a lonely place out there. Let's take for instance an Igbo man in Brussels, probably the only black person in that place. He's so lonesome over there...he's so lonely, and then he gets his hands on a Nollywood movie where they speak his language, sing songs he can identify [with], and where they portray his culture... Man, it's amazing! That is why the thing [Nollywood] is so powerful over there. (Shadrach John, interview with the author, 6 August 2015)

Shadrach John's quote suggests that mainstream Nollywood emphasises 'the African present' through '*what* people in Africa *do* with and *make* out of cultural forms' (Bryce 2013: 232). By this approach, Nollywood film composers manipulate the rhetoric of authorial autonomy and resistance (of foreign cinema influences) in order to develop their imaginary of proximate experiences. The outcome of this process is an identity that is intelligently promoted: a *commodified identity* of film music that exemplifies the ways in which shared (cultural) realities are constructed and transmitted for consumption.

Bryce (2013: 228) notes that 'although the buzz surrounding Nollywood has waned somewhat since its initial impact, there is still, many years later, a loyal and committed audience serviced by numerous outlets importing and selling films'. This indicates that Nollywood viewers have been inadvertently drawn into 'a relationship of consumption' via 'the promise of [cultural] fulfilment' (Benwell and Stokoe 2006: 171, my emphasis). Consumption is 'a tribe-specific paraphernalia' (Warde 1994: 69) that accounts for 'a crucial part of *belonging* to social groups' (Bauman 1993). The notion of belonging to one social group or another is interesting given the general feeling that Nollywood film and film music patronage is largely by people of 'the Black race'. I am aware that this assumption is problematic because it situates followership of and audience response to Nollywood productions within the pieties of racial distinctiveness. However, I maintain that observing consumer behaviour in relation to Nollywood

productions can support this statement. My experience in the UK, for example, clearly shows that interest in Nollywood and its cinematic productions concentrate more among diaspora Nigerians and (sub-Saharan) Africans, as well as migrants from the Caribbean. I know this, in part, from visiting parts of London where Nollywood films are traded. And most of the retailers confirm that their customers are essentially non-Caucasian people. This, here, is instructive because ‘consumption is an activity by which individuals *express* identity’ (Benwell and Stokoe 2006: 170). Consumption is therefore critical to identity not least because it reassures *commitment*.

The commodified identity is, in my view, concerned with the determining of transition: from thinking that an identity-related work such as Nollywood film music, and its value has the potential to warrant forming a commitment to it, to genuinely being committed to it. That transition happens gradually as Nollywood viewers gain more knowledge and proximate experiences with the identity elements in its film music. One indicator of that transition is the sense that the sociocultural and musical information being acquired is viewed as something authentic, which in turn confirms the decision that was made to patronise it. This process does not necessarily entail a *re-evaluation* of commitment (which implies a reopening of a decision previously made), but rather an ongoing monitoring as to the viability of the commitment. And the viability of commitment rests exclusively on those unchanging film music attributes, which most mainstream Nollywood composers have engaged with and sustained over the years (notably from the Pragmatic-Expressive Era (1997–2010) to date).⁵⁰

Another fascinating discovery from visiting those Nollywood retail outlets in the UK is that the customers roundly call Nollywood productions ‘African movies’. This observation is helpful because it implies a conscious underlining effort to embrace the Nigerian specificities of Nollywood film and film music as shared African practices. Yemi Alade-Lawal insists that this kind of label is a depiction of ownership by non-Nigerians within the Black race.

I have watched Nollywood movies in Jamaica, and boy, they [the Jamaicans] do not complain about the music! They like the stories, they like the music, and they *feel* it. So, in a way, you could say, if it ain’t broke, don’t try to fix it. (Yemi Alade-Lawal, interview with the author, 3 December 2014)

⁵⁰ Historically, the Pragmatic-Expressive Era is one of the three periods of film music practice which my earliest publication accounted for (see Sylvanus 2012).

As a commodity, this non-Nigerian appropriation and ownership is only possible because Nollywood composers pursue a certain intensity of the ‘African present’ for inclusion in today’s global marketplace. The identity of the African present is, in this context, offered up as ‘a paradoxical space for the agency of the subject, facilitating both creative potential and self-defining possibilities via consumption, but also subjecting identities to the law of the market’ (Benwell and Stokoe 2006: 22). It is my thesis that the commodified identity has sustained both local and diasporic interests in Nollywood film/film music for over two decades. It is a shade of identity that is constituted in both process and discourse.

The Spatial identity

Here, I shall draw briefly on the work of Benwell and Stokoe (2006) to discuss this shade of identity. Both scholars have pursued their perspectives of spatial identity within the field of sociology and social actions such as human body gestures, conversations, and other semiotic symbols. To them, spatial identity pursues ‘the inextricable links between identity and location’ (Benwell and Stokoe 2006: 204). As a poststructuralist and postmodern theory, Foucault (quoted in Benwell and Stokoe) argues that it is *space* more so than *time* that is ‘crucial to contemporary cultural and social analysis’, so that both space and place take on less static connotations and more dynamism as ‘constructed tools of *thought* and *action*’ (2006: 211). This assertion resonates with Stokes’ (1994) notion of use of music to construct place – a thought that I have explored with regards to Nollywood film music in previous chapters. What remains now is to link the constructions of place in Nollywood film music to the current shade of identity.

For a start, every cultural text including Nollywood film music conveys information concerning *who* the practitioners are and, to some extent, *where* they are. The notions of ‘who’ and ‘where’ are interrelated components of identity that thoughts and actions serve to realise. In mainstream Nollywood film music production process, the accounts of these components are both tangible and intangible and have produced the identities so far discussed. For example, via a conscious reliance and application of Nigerian popular music as soundtrack genres, traditional musical instruments and modes of instrumentation as mood markers, as well as vocal performances in local dialects,

Nollywood film music reveals ethnically and linguistically marked identities. These, in essence, cannot be discussed outside the space and place where they are practiced.

In other words, Nollywood film music identity possesses a spatial category, meaning that both the space and place of such cultural texts ‘take on a symbolic significance around which identities are constituted and performed’ (Hetherington 1998: 106). Significantly, the bulk of the shades of identity so far discussed are conceived and articulated locally. This arguably implies that Nigeria is the cultural capital of nearly all Nollywood (film music) spatial practice. And this assertion comes from scrutinising the representative connotations of identity in its film music. Nollywood’s spatial identity inheres in discourse and performance. It answers the query about where the cultural capital of its film music identity resides, and how that identity or sets of identities are projected to the rest of the world.

5.2 Sustenance and interconnectedness of the shades of identity

All the shades of identity remain interconnected within contexts of performativity, discourse, and process (Figure 5.1). In terms of their interconnectedness, I posit that no shade or shades of identity operate alone at any given time and in any single Nollywood film—a fact that underlines the fluid and oppositional nature of identity. This observation is true not only for all locally produced Nollywood soundtracks but also for those international co-productions wherein Nollywood film music peculiarities dominate. To reiterate, mainstream Nollywood film music is a socially responsive phenomenon, which absorbs cross-cultural and transnational film music influences. These absorptions are, no doubt, essential aspects of its growth, development, and sustenance. This study has established verifiable evidence of Nigerian musical culture in the several and interrelated approaches within Nollywood film music practice. The use of Nigerian popular music genres/styles, for example, is a constant process of recreation that is contingent upon prevailing social-cultural, musical, and historical dynamics. These ‘recreation’ processes act as bridges between the schools of thought, industry stakeholders, fans, and evolving trends.

Mainstream Nollywood film music has shown capacity to articulate ‘self’ both regionally and globally. Such capacity guarantees its sustenance as the relationship between continuity and change come under negotiation. Throughout this thesis, I have shown how the shades of identity represent a macrocosm of musical and extra-musical

expressions within Nollywood films. I have also demonstrated how Nollywood film music speaks to culture, its consumers, and scholarship. I have made my arguments by examining the forms of cultural synthesis and portrayal of, as well as prerequisites for, realising the shades of identity. My analyses have proven that identity in Nollywood film music is more localised than transnational. I have also argued that its film music identity is both plural and mutable—always in the process of becoming—and to some degree susceptible to re-signification. Thus, it is on these premises that I anchor my theoretical framework on identity as a seminal response to the need for a guided approach to reading and composing for film in Nollywood. In what follows, I present and theorise the three contexts through which these shades of identity are performed within mainstream Nollywood.

5.3 Performing identity in Nollywood film music: Overview of contexts

At the outset, I indicated that identity in mainstream Nollywood film music is performed through three contexts labelled ‘Blocking’, ‘Blurring’, and ‘Acquiescing’. All three contexts are the outcome of (Nollywood) composers’ actions and inactions, which the forces of resistance, compromise, and complicity motivate. From each context emanates culturally maligned, supportive, and compromised (musical) messaging, which each composer both negotiates and promotes during the film music process. Specifically, all three contexts are constantly present and active in the dynamics of Nollywood film music execution—from contracting and collaboration to creative decisions about musical genre and style, as well as approaches such as prefiguring, and internal discourse about the music’s own cultural representation. At all times, the three contexts are constantly facilitating the outcome of one or more shades of (Nollywood film music) identity. In what follows, I present and describe each context—detailing the behaviours, outcomes, and consequences embedded within them.

Blocking

Within blocking, mainstream Nollywood composers often adopt a ‘reactionary’ posture. Although, this stance is not always a conscious one, the mission is usually one of completely ignoring what many of them consider as culturally alienating influences (particularly from mainstream Hollywood) in order to ‘safeguard’ that which conveys

and confers ‘an authentic Nigerianness’ upon their creative works. This behaviour is also encouraged by EPMS when they instruct composers to ‘make it local...very local’. Consequently, the more the composer becomes aware of this posture, the more (creative) resources s/he deploys to ensure the outcome of the intended (localised) identity. The combined social and cultural materials available to such composers bolsters both the mentality and capacity for performing identity through blocking. In terms of behaviour, Nollywood practitioners acting within the crucible of blocking consciously do the following:

- *They appraise their source.* This is what Stanley Okorie implies when he says: ‘Know the owner of the film; know what the film requires; and know the market’.
- *They reference the Traditionalist school of thought.* This is evidenced in statements such as ‘This is how we do it here’; ‘Do not speak Queen’s English when writing a song for a Nollywood film’; ‘Make the soundtrack percussive’; ‘highlife is the genre’; and ‘We shouldn’t run away from those things that make us unique from other film industries.’ Generally, referencing their communities of practice or schools of thought is important, not least, for protecting against perceived foreign film music influences and principles (see film examples 1–50 of Table 4).

It is my thesis that the context of blocking is suited to the understanding and explication of identity as the expression of ‘the Self’ rather than a sense of obligation to ‘Others’ and ‘Otherness’. The Nollywood Traditionalist film music school of thought is, by this research, the main purveyor of blocking.

Blurring

Here, composers are driven by the desire to demonstrate the capacity to ‘wed’ both global and local film music ‘competencies’. Through the context of blurring, identity is performed primarily as a show of acculturation—of the desire to ‘blend’ as many (rather than wholly ‘safeguard’ local) film music approaches. Through blurring, composers fulfil the need of having interacted with other cinema traditions and certainly the dismantling of perceived strictures within ‘the local’. Consequently, mainstream

Nollywood practitioners often adopt an ‘open-minded’ posture within which they do the following:

- *They acknowledge difference.* This is contained in expressions like ‘Both identities can dwell side by side’; ‘We can take what is good from Hollywood and add to our own.’
- *They reference foreign and local approaches.* In addition to prefiguring, composers experiment with instrumental music for periods of silence and the various moods within Nollywood films (see examples 51–80 of Table 4).

Blurring is, therefore, suited to the understanding and explication of identity as the creative equivocation of both ‘the Self’ and a sense of obligation to ‘Others’ and ‘Otherness’. In effect, the practitioners appear to have developed enough ‘trust’ in the different film music approaches to risk alienating their target audience. The Nollywood Temperate film music school of thought is, by this research, the main purveyor of blurring.

Acquiescing

Acquiescing is a context for mainly realising a film music identity that differs wholly from the localised variety of mainstream Nollywood’s. Here, composers often adopt what is a perceived ‘global’ posture. This stance is always a conscious one with intent to completely disregard ‘the local’ in favour of foreign film music approaches, particularly from mainstream Hollywood. In terms of behaviour, the Nollywood practitioners acting within the context of acquiescing are complicit in the following:

- *They advocate ‘global standard’.* This is gleaned from statements such as ‘We either resolve to do soundtrack the international way or we pack it up’; ‘Nollywood soundtracks have to be criticised the same way we criticise the films’; ‘What modern machines and technologies are the soundtrack producers using [in Nollywood]?’
- *They reference only mainstream Hollywood.* This is primarily substantiated in such films where there is a great degree of underscoring, mood marking/sound

effects, diegetic music, and other Hollywood film sound idiosyncrasies (see film examples 81–105 of Table 4).

It is my thesis that the context of acquiescing is suited to the understanding and explication of identity as a sense of obligation to and appeal of another (reference) institution. In other words, identity works via a strong desire to fit into and *be like* the reference institution. For this reason, there appears much effort to know more about and apply Hollywood film music approaches, not least, for sustaining a sense of ‘membership’ of a refined tradition.

5.4 The Nollywood film music (persistent) identity system (NoPIS)

The willingness of many EPs and other stakeholders to get behind homegrown film composers has contributed to the present success of mainstream Nollywood film music, primarily because it has created a Nigerian film music climate that continually ensures the viability of ‘the local’. To this end, the ‘Persistent Identity System’ (an expression that is borrowed from Edward Spicer, and discussed in section 1.8) of Nollywood film music is an amalgamation of (1) the shades of identity and their interconnectedness, as well as the attributes that offer a stable frame of reference (see chapter 3); and (2) the three contexts through which identity is performed: ‘Blocking’, ‘Blurring’, and ‘Acquiescing’. By implication, the model simulates the previously discussed indoctrinated and incorporated actions and perspectives of Nollywood adherents and film composers. The diagram itself (Figure 5.1) suggests that the three contexts through which identity is performed (blocking, blurring, and acquiescing) form a stable and reliable backdrop for the more fluid and interconnected vehicles of identity formation namely, process, performance, and discourse.

To be clear, the notions of resistance, compromise, and complicity are purely abstract/psychological states that practitioners trigger and are triggered by. On the other hand, the three contexts through which identity becomes performed are the actionable concrete circumstances and effects of those triggers.

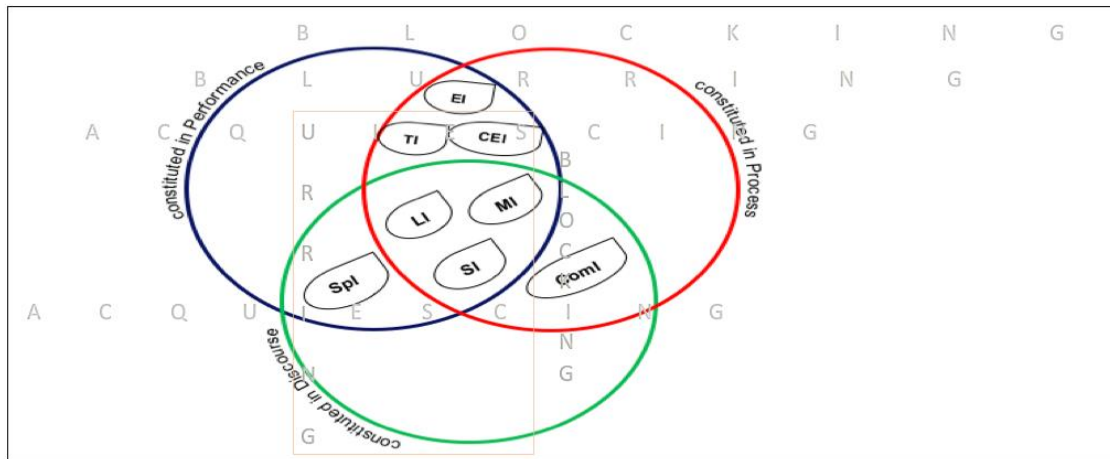


Figure 5.1. The Nollywood film music identity system (NoPIS)

Logically, the shades of identity are the tangible manifestations of the entire matrix. So, whereas some of the shades of identity may appear ‘universal’, others such as the lingual and structural are uniquely Nollywood’s. The Nollywood Persistent Identity System (NoPIS), which I have proposed, stands as a preliminary theoretical model with potential for improvement and, indeed, application to other film music industries wherein there is a need to explore identity.

As a summary, this chapter has presented and explained the (eight) shades of identity that Nollywood film music possibly conveys. Of these, five belong wholly to the localised shades of identity; one is categorised within the transnational; and the remaining two others belong to both the transnational and localised shades of identity. Although I have also suggested that Nollywood film music offers both metaphoric and philosophical identities (see chapter 4), I have not advanced these possibilities because they are not yet pervasive enough. Similarly, I have not discussed the potential for a technology-driven identity because, of the list of resources (musical genres and styles, musical instruments and shades of instrumentation, and appropriate technology to support musical creativity), technology is the least stable. Of this instability, we are reminded that ‘the meanings attached to technologies, their technical functions, and the social uses to which they are put are not an inevitable consequence but something worked over time in the context of considerable cultural debate’ (Larkin 2008:2). Veteran Nollywood composer Stanley Okorie offers a concise insider perspective about the use of technology.

Technology, especially in music and film, is to make things better. A more expensive camera is to do what...make the picture [look] close to life! If the camera makes the thing green when it is blue, is it [right]? It's not. So, technology as far as I am concerned in music is for you to make a piano still sound like a piano; make my xylophone still sound like xylophone; [and] make my local oja [flute] sound like my local oja. Every other thing technology can do for us now is give us more features to make our sounds more true to life. Yeah. But in the end a xylophone has to be a xylophone. Technology is not...or should not be a limitation either. Something becomes a limitation when you say it is a limitation. I do not need high fidelity to record my normal music. I do not need [or] want the best of studios. Will my xylophone sound like a xylophone? Fine. Will the voices come out nice and clear? Fine. Will it sound decent? Fine. If the best technology equates to the best sales, fine! Then we go for technology. But it is not really equating to it. I'm not saying technology is not important but... people want the natural sound and the natural feel. Use whatever technology or software you want but make them [the people] connect with it. That [is what] works for me. I use a lot of technology: every new software that comes [out], I have in my studio. But it just helps me work easier, you know, work better. But that is just as far as it goes. (Stanley Okorie, interview with the author, 1 August 2015)

So, inasmuch as technology is important to the creative process, I note that it is of no substantial consequence to identity in Nollywood film music. This statement implies that we cannot herein submit a shade of identity that is technological or technology-born. And this, here, resolves one of the central research objectives of this thesis, which is to establish the impact of such technologies as sound and visual equipment, software, and recording studios on the identity of Nollywood film music.

In all, this chapter has shown that the discussed shades of identity are fluid, interconnected, and constituted in process, performance, and discourse. The chapter has equally addressed these identities with reference to the three contexts through which they are performed: blocking, blurring, and acquiescing. Finally, the chapter has established that there exists a persistent identity system that supports the enactment of identities in mainstream Nollywood film music. I call the model NoPIS, which is the acronym for "Nollywood Persistent Identity System". Based on the arguments made in this thesis, I theorise that the NoPIS is the result of a sustained culture of production, the interactions of human agencies, and the material nature of the film/film music industry.

Chapter 6

Conclusions

6.1 Overview

At the outset, I indicated that several film industries make up the Nigerian film industry. However, this study has only focused on mainstream Nollywood, which is basically distinguished by its preference for the English Language as the medium of expression. My experience from fieldwork, data collection, and analyses has been both exciting and challenging. Like a sprawling beast, mainstream Nollywood is constantly evolving and cannot be tamed in a single thesis. As such, I have limited my research to only the consideration of identity issues. In so doing, I have focused on some aspects of the soundtrack production processes: of practitioners' perceptions of identity and how they have articulated it in both their own words and works. Although I have seen over 200 Nollywood films (many of them produced in Nigeria), this thesis has critically considered only three as primary case studies.

The need for more published texts on film music outside of the dominant North American/European cinema traditions have motivated this research. Accordingly, this study considers mainstream Nollywood, which, in addition to being 'the most visible form of cultural machine on the African continent' (Krings and Okome 2013: 1), has been overlooked by film music scholars. This thesis is the first of its kind to focus entirely on the film music making processes of mainstream Nollywood in relation to identity. It adds to an emerging body of film music texts on African cinema (for example, Adamu 2008; Sylvanus 2012; Letcher 2014). Going by the earliest chapters, I observe that Nollywood film music making processes bear important expectations, which its composers deal with. A few include the ability to: (1) generate a 'successful' and 'culturally relevant' (Nigerian) piece of work;⁵¹ (2) *appeal* to the EPM and target audience; (3) create a sense of authenticity by ensuring that the music both *tells* and *foretells* the narrative; (4) decide content in line with the *rules of Nollywood*, and turn in the film music within what is commonly acknowledged as very short deadlines.

⁵¹ The word 'successful' is used only relatively to embrace the business and artistic dividends of the cinematic product and, more important, depends on the stakeholder you ask.

Fieldwork has also shown that there is an enabling socio-cultural and informal fiscal environment that supports the business of film music production in Nigeria. Granted these conditions, the composer's ideologies and intentions are then carried through in the genre, style, and manner of application, which give it meaning and socio-musical symbolism. All these are complemented by the social action, interaction and mediation between such groups as fellow film composers, sound editors, producers, EPMs, promoters, and even film critics and comedians who are often not involved in the production process. The social actions emanating from such a chain of interactions adds new meanings to the film music—one that is situated between the word, sound, and screen: a reconfiguration of orality and viewership. Over the years, this reconfiguration has persisted with some refinement. And this notion is evident in the soundtracks of many Nollywood films including, but not limited to, *Ekaette Goes to School*.

To this end, I maintain that Nollywood film music possesses different functions for its local and diasporic audiences. To some viewers, the music epitomises recognisable, symbolic, and discursive tropes upon which they *compare* themselves to 'others'. This manner of 'comparison' is, in my opinion, a demonstration of identity. To some other audiences, the music invokes a sociocultural reality that its viewers have no actual experience of, and yet meets a yearning for 'a home of their own' by simply filling the void of cultural dislocation. The ability to fill the void of cultural dislocation is also testament to Nollywood's development of a unique film music identity.

Apart from such general observations, this study reveals specific developing trends on and around identity issues and processes in composing music for Nollywood films. Some of the analyses have highlighted areas of interest and frustration especially in terms of the EPM–composer collaboration dynamics, which consciously excludes the film director; the social organisational framework and the barriers to entry for film music business in Nollywood; the problem and prospects of its genre categorisation and labelling; the merits and demerits of a Nollycentric film music approach that the three schools of thought promote and sustain; the dynamics of power, money, and ethics to the conceptualisation and articulation of identity; and the forces of ethnicity, language, and cross-cultural and transnational film music influences. I have also attempted to explain the connection between the industry, the marketers' cinematic intentions, the composers' responsibilities and independence, and other stakeholders' interpretations.

This connection has led to an overarching fact: Nollywood may have transformed film music via the process of localisation; yet film music itself has transformed its host culture (Nigeria) especially regarding the reading and discussion of identity.

At the outset, I stated that as far as Nigeria is concerned, film and film music are borrowed art forms. They are popular texts that have not originated from Nigeria, yet their successful appropriation and reinvention has made them a part of that (Nigerian) culture. This research has, particularly, demonstrated how film music has been used to articulate the shades of identity of its host culture in cinema. The shades of identity encourage and confirm interpretations of fluidity (following the degrees to which uniqueness, sameness, and diversity vary and interact in Nollywood film music) and the tensions that exist when the materiality of Nollywood as an institution and the composers' representative practice are juxtaposed.

My understanding of these issues has come from adopting an approach that broadly relies on data to determine the methodology and research outcomes. Consequently, much of the primary data have been sourced from ethnographic fieldwork, while the rest are the outcome of my critical thinking/reading, and analyses. So, for example, using case study films alongside interview transcripts/studio observations, chapters 3 and 4 offer critical analyses of identity issues that are gleaned from the convergent and divergent perspectives of local productions and international co-productions. Chapter 5, on the other hand, demonstrates my efforts at theorising the shades of identity (disclosed in the previous chapters), the three contexts through which the identities are performed and, significantly, the Nollywood Persistent Identity System (NoPIS). On the whole, this thesis represents an ethnomusicological study of mainstream Nollywood with concepts/typologies and perspectives that derive mainly from engaging with the stakeholders' local discourse on film music and identity: their own film music ideologies, business and production frameworks, creative intentions and approaches, authorial autonomy/preferences, and cinematic works.

6.2 Objectives and research questions

The arguments that I have presented in this thesis have progressed from an initial set of correlated research objectives and questions.

First, I set out to determine how a receiving creative and cultural industry such as Nollywood imagines and articulates identity through film music. This was achieved largely through fieldwork in Nigeria during which the Nollywood adherents (of established film composers and other prominent players such as executive producers/marketers) discussed their thoughts and works. Their differing opinions would eventually lead to the establishment of three Nollywood film music schools of thought and, by extension, the persistent identity system (NoPIS).

The second objective was to establish whether or not imported technologies such as sound and visual equipment, software, and recording studios influence identity formation and transmission in Nollywood film music. To this end, I met with two of the established film composers in their studios. Before me, they experimented with and discussed the available technologies including those perceived advantages and limitations, as well as how the dearth of appropriate skillset and some technological challenges have, for example, led to local improvisations of sound effects.

For the third objective, I sought to know how Nigeria's cultural diversity, the market, and popular music space influence thoughts and actions concerning identity in Nollywood film music. To do so, I focused on and questioned my respondents about issues of cultural appropriation (of popular dictums, language, music genres and styles, and indigenous storytelling approaches), as well as the nature of Nollywood's informal business structure, and the effect of practitioners' social mobility and social identity. I also examined over 200 Nollywood films for evidence of Nigerian musical culture. It was immediately clear that Nollywood is both broadly and strongly reliant on the music's own culture from which the essentials of its film music are derived. Further analysis led to the discovery of a unique film and popular music genre preferences/categorisation, which invariably produced one of the shades of identity.

The fourth objective was to ascertain the presence and degree of foreign influences on Nollywood film music identity. This knowledge and understanding emerged from examining issues of resistance, compromise, and complicity in international co-productions between Nollywood, Hollywood, and the British film industry. My understanding was further aided by an analysis of two case-study films vis-à-vis the insider accounts of their respective film composers/music supervisors. It was discovered that Nollywood film music is capable of a transnational aesthetic objectivity wherein identity 'travels' through diametrically opposed cultures.

The fifth objective aimed at identifying and interacting with the industry's foremost film music practitioners and, therefore, gatekeepers of the existing schools of thought. I initially contacted Stanley Okorie (one of the renowned composers) who then put me in touch with others. I then travelled across various parts of southern Nigeria to meet with my principal respondents and to discuss their works.

My final objective was to contribute both substantially and distinctively to the global knowledge, perception, and understanding of Nollywood film music practice. For this, I have focused on issues of identity formation as a starting point, not least because it offers some preliminary theoretical assumptions for advancing thoughts on, say, musical meaning and representation. By implication, I have also considered how music functions to represent its source culture in mainstream Nollywood, as well as how Nollywood's film music construction of both the 'local' and 'global' shades of identity might be understood. In essence, this thesis has focussed on an industry that has been overlooked by film music scholars. In line with this statement, and in relation to all the objectives, I present below the findings of my research.

6.3 Findings

This section is an overview of the findings of my ethnographic and ethnomusicological study of identity in Nollywood cinema. It is based on how the analyses, inferences, and discussions of the data from fieldwork and review of related literature work to support a critical reading of identity as summarised in each of the preceding chapters. For this purpose, I have divided the findings into two main parts: those linked with the materiality of Nollywood as an institution (its social organisation and systems of film music production, markets and power relations, and technologies), and those connected with the creative genius and practice of its film composers; the combination of which have created the Nollywood film music Persistent Identity System (NoPIS). As well, I conclude with a summary of findings from case study films in section 6.4.

1. Findings according to the materiality of Nollywood as an institution

This research reveals that identity in Nollywood film music is first a function of the industry as an institution. Mainstream Nollywood shapes identity through the largely unwritten institutional goals. And these goals are determined and promoted by the interests and activities of a group of powerful individuals who are mainly independent

marketers and executive film producers (EPMs). The institutional goals then feed both the mentality and sociality that strengthen its system of film and film music production. Some of its easily discernible goals include (1) the promotion of Nigerian culture through the indigenisation of stories, dialogue, songs, and settings of film narratives—an objective that is self-evident in many Nollywood films and film songs; (2) the domination of the Nigerian and, arguably, African and global cinema markets—something many stakeholders make a point of by reminding us that Nollywood is now ranked second to Hollywood in volume of production; and (3) the ability to compete as a viable entertainment alternative to other African and global cinema traditions.

These goals are then articulated via some fixed and pre-discursive features of institutionalism such as its informal business organisation, money, hierarchy, designated market outlets, studios, and choice of cast and production teams, film locations, as well as the industry's film music lexicon, source of creative/cultural materials, value, and use of time. Accordingly, I have found out that mainstream Nollywood film music practice thrives in word-of-word tradition and is embedded in a rather linear organisational structure (discussed in chapter 2). As well, several film music projects are conducted without much documentation and entangled processes of collaboration: there are no written contracts for film music projects; no royalties; no need for the film director; no need for temp tracks; no need for sophisticated technologies; no need for film scores; and no barriers to entry. In addition, film songs are texted and learned by rote (and often performed in the composers' own voice), and remunerations are nearly always by cash because Nigeria operates a cash economy.

On the one hand, these approaches (which obviously contrast with the more refined traditions in the Global North) arguably validate pro-Eurocentric views and European hegemonic myths about the underdevelopment of Nigerians and, *pars pro toto*, Africans. Yet I argue that these simply bestow Nollywood with its own inviolable 'spirit'—something of an institutional identity. And these unique procedures both directly and indirectly decide the appeal and identity of its film music. The suggestion of an institutional identity is debatable, especially to those for whom the concept of institution (as 'self') and community imply homogeneity. My position is that this is not a case of distinction *without* difference (sameness) but rather distinction *with* difference (diversity). For in the latter, the institutional identity promotes a system of film music

practice that is distinctive but with internal differences. The system of practice refers to what I have defined as the Nollywood film music schools of thought. These are the Traditionalist school, the Temperate school, and the Pro-Hollywood school. The existence of three schools of thought confirms the notion that identity in Nollywood film music is not straightforward or remotely homogenous – a point that addresses one of my research concerns: is a homogenous Nollywood film music identity possible? In essence, these schools promote contrasting ideas and ideals on and around the notion of a collective or unitary film music identity.

To recap, the Traditionalist school is defined by a very conservative approach to the ideals of film music localisation (discussed in chapter 3). It is championed by Stanley Okorie (the ‘Father of Prefiguring’) and strongly backed by many EPMs, independent retailers, and distributors. The core of this school’s ideology is prefiguring: the use of texted (vocal) music to sing and foreshadow scenes of Nollywood films. Other fundamentals include keeping the film music lyrics linguistically marked using any of the three most widely spoken Nigerian dialects (Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa), and the Nigerian Pidgin English (Ninglish). Also critical to this school is a dedicated use of certain Nigerian popular music genres (like the highlife, Nigerian rap, and synthesised folksongs) as preferred film music genres of some Nollywood film genres. Hence, for the Traditionalists, when Nollywood film music does not follow its localised template/creed, the film itself is likely to fail on two fronts: (a) audience expectation or appeal/reception, and (b) sales or viewership. And this failure is strongly attributed to the potential for the soundtrack to sell the film more than the film is able to sell itself.

The second is called the Temperate film music school of thought. It pursues a middle path that is partially sympathetic to film music approaches of the first and third schools. Austin Erowele and Shadrach John lead this school; and its film music ideology is founded on four approaches: (1) partial prefiguring: meaning that the texted (vocal) music should offer no more than a vague idea of the film plot: it should not sing the entire film. To them, this method extends the afterlife of the film music by making it reusable in other films with similar themes. (2) More languages: Nollywood soundtracks can and should include more Nigerian languages and, contrary to the Traditionalist view, Standard English in certain film genres. For this purpose, they maintain that EPMs should not solely decide the matter of language in film songs

because of possible ethnic prejudice. (3) Refine prefiguring: this stylistic tool should be maintained but restricted to *only* a specific scene for thematic emphasis. (4) Include purely instrumental music: as a way of refinement, bits of purely instrumental music can and should be introduced with emphasis on indigenous percussive instruments as mood markers/sound effects.

The Pro-Hollywood is the third Nollywood film music school. It represents the opposite extreme of the Traditionalist school. The exponents of this school are largely overseas trained Nigerian film composers living at home and in the Diasporas. Some of them (including Yemi Alade-Lawal, George Nathaniel, and Kayode Dada) have the backing of a few film producers and EPMs like Tunde Kelani, Kunle Afolayan, and Chuks Onyizuwe whose activities have led to the rise of a parallel industry called ‘New Nollywood’. To be clear, the Pro-Hollywood school strongly condemns the approaches of both the first and second schools. To them, the art of prefiguring (whether wholly or partially applied) is prohibited, and mainstream Nollywood soundtracks should rely entirely on instrumental music. Similarly, this school endorses underscoring, the use of source (or licensed) music, and all other Hollywood film sound peculiarities. Simply put, film music should ‘complement’ those (Nigerian) cultural attributes embedded in Nollywood films by taking on a more global (*a la* Hollywood) character. The rise of ‘New Nollywood’ and the activities of the Pro-Hollywood school of thought encourage an interesting discourse on the future of Nollywood film music in relation to identity and other issues. As future frontiers of this research, I have devoted a section of this chapter to the conversation on New Nollywood versus mainstream Nollywood.

2. Findings from composers’ representative practice

The findings here represent what I have called the *specifics of Nollywood film music practice* or simply put ‘The Rules of Nollywood’. These Rules are the result of some two and a half decades of robust social, material, and economic mechanisms of operation sustained largely by the forces of informality, individualism, reliability, and functionality. The Rules of Nollywood film music practice offer unchanging features of reference (drawn mainly from the first two schools of thought) from which further inferential assumptions about identity have emerged. These rules, which have been well discussed in chapter 3, include:

- *The primacy of the singing voice*
- *The primacy of texted music and language*
- *The primacy of strophic musical form and use of local musical instruments*
- *The primacy of prefiguring*

6.4 Summary of findings from case study films

Mainstream Nollywood film soundtracks convey shades of identity that are, together, an expression of Nigeria's own cultural pluralism, free enterprise, and a persistent identity system (NoPIS). Though the analytical chapters, I have shown how the shades of identity are constructed and contextualised in relation to the three case study films. As already discussed in chapter 5, these shades of identity are not standalone components. As shown below, a single Nollywood film can have no fewer than three shades of identity operating in its soundtrack. I note at the outset that two shades of identity are common to all Nollywood soundtracks whether as local or international co-productions. These are the commodified and spatial identities (explained in chapter 5).

Ekaette Goes to School

This film was analysed and discussed in chapter 3 as part of efforts to theorise identity in local Nollywood film music productions. There, I established that this film's soundtrack critically abides by the rules of Nollywood and is notably reflective of approaches of the Traditionalist school. For example, all five standalone songs serve the purpose of prefiguring, and the music privileges Niglish and local Nigerian dialects (Igbo and Ibibio) in its lyrics. This and other core observations are evidence of an internal identity tension that aims to establish notions of Nigerianism (of 'what we really are') including 'what history [colonialism] has done', 'what we have become' as a result, and 'the way we position ourselves' within cultural mediums such as film.

Specifically, the music of *Ekaette Goes to School* reveals the presence of all the interconnected localised shades of identity: the structural identity (implicated in the block-by-block manner of sound–visual relation strengthened through prefiguring); the lingual identity (of the manner of use of language as described earlier); the ethnic identity (from examining the musical idioms, the composer's style of rendition and instrumentation, and choice of local musical instruments); the cross-ethnic (arising from Igbo and Ibibio folk music elements, particularly song A); the marginal-genre

identity (of matching the choice of Nigerian popular music to the film's genre in conformity with the industry's genre ideology and categorisation); the spatial identity (resulting from emplacing the music within the Nigerian cultural space); and the commodified identity.

Half of a Yellow Sun

This film represents the efforts and outcome of cinematic collaboration between Nollywood and the British Film Institute (BFI). The film was analysed and discussed in chapter 4 as part of efforts to determine what kind of film music identity exists in international co-productions involving Nollywood. Generally, this film's soundtrack revealed the depth of tension (of resistance and compromise) fuelled by differences in the film music approaches of both parties. This alone accounted for much initial disagreement on the need for a film score—one that impacted on the soundtrack and the evaluated identity. As a contrast, this film music did not follow the unwritten transactional procedures of mainstream Nollywood. In fact, the film director was central to the production team. Also, the film music is structurally different: synchronising with image and showing evidence of much underscoring. Notably, it does not 'sing the film'. It thus does not have the unique Nollywood structural identity. Although the soundtrack contains a few texted (vocal) music cues, only one (*Bere Bote*) is in a Nigerian dialect. Of note, these songs, including *Bere Bote*, do not follow the Nollywood prescriptions on mode of application of language. For this reason, this film fails to convey a Nollywood film music lingual identity. Similarly, the soundtrack does not adhere to the Nollywood genre ideology and categorisation. Therefore, it does not possess the marginal-genre identity. *Half of a Yellow Sun* also reveals a very strong preference for European-style orchestral music. Culturally, this instantly alienates the 'Nolly' from the 'wood' and denies the soundtrack of an ethnic or even cross-ethnic identity.

Having said so, this film's soundtrack does possess an identity—one that subsists in the aesthetic plane: of images of Nigeria accompanied by European and American Art and pop music (see chapter 4). This approach presents a music-to-moving-image transnational counterpoint. This counterpoint bestows the film music with the transnational aesthetic identity—a genuine self-reflexive appeal that also encourages the metaphoric journey of identity. As with all other Nollywood film soundtracks, *Half*

of a Yellow Sun possesses both the commodified and spatial identities. In all, three shades of identity operate in this film: the commodified, spatial, and transnational aesthetic identities.

Baby Oku in America

Baby Oku in America is another international co-production between Nollywood and Hollywood (also known as Nolly-Holly). In chapter 4, I analysed this film's soundtrack to establish a counter argument about the identity issues in relation to the observations made in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. *Baby Oku in America* proved a different proposition for negotiating identity. The soundtrack begins this negotiation process as a sung synopsis of the film—an unmistakable attribute of 'the local' in Nollywood film music. This immediately signalled intent to resist Hollywood film music influences. The soundtrack 'sings the film' and, thus, possesses the Nollywood structural identity. The music also carries through the unique qualities of the film language by directing the viewer to the protagonist's desire to 'conquer' a different culture. It does this via its lyrics, which are mainly in Igbo dialect and Ninglish. This confers it with the Nollywood lingual identity. The choice of highlife as the film's music genre is also indicative of adherence to the Nollywood rule of genre ideology and labelling. This choice identifies *Baby Oku in America* as a comedy film genre. This quality thus endows it with the marginal-genre identity. Similarly, the singing and instrumentation style accentuate the musical arts practice of Igbo ethnicity. This characteristic adds the ethnic identity to the soundtrack. As in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *Baby Oku in America* also presents that music-to-moving-image counterpoint wherein images of America are accompanied by Nigerian popular music. This grants the soundtrack a transnational aesthetic identity. Altogether, this film's soundtrack has seven shades of identity in operation. These are the structural, lingual, ethnic, marginal-genre, commodified, spatial, and transnational aesthetic identities.

6.5 Future frontiers: New Nollywood versus Mainstream Nollywood

This thesis has concentrated on the identity of mainstream Nollywood film music. The result is a cocktail of negotiated styles and approaches, preferences, lines of loyalty, ideological intersections and divergences, and influences. Taken together, these have inspired a few of my theoretical frameworks/outcomes such as the existence of a persistent identity system (NoPIS), the three contexts for performing identity, the film

music schools of thought, and the different shades of identity. Of this hallmark, I posit that the pathway to examining and understanding identity in Nollywood film music is through the NoPIS, which has emerged from synergising the identity outcomes from both composers' representative practice and the materiality of Nollywood as an institution. And this position statement holds true for as long as the variables in each category of my findings remain relatively unchanged.

I also acknowledge that this research has ancillary matters that can benefit from a more focused study. Some include a very detailed study of the local market and film music business model; the impact of globalisation and changing technologies on both business and creative processes; and social mobility and identity in film music. I also wish to add that between the three schools of thought only the Pro-Hollywood seems to have received minimal focus. This is because its practitioners and community of practice belong to a parallel framework called 'New Nollywood', which, as earlier indicated, is not the focus industry of this thesis. Nonetheless, interesting perceptions of New Nollywood exist from both scholars and local film composers. For example, Jonathan Haynes declares that:

"New Nollywood" is a phrase being used to describe a recent strategy by some Nigerian filmmakers to make films with higher budgets, to screen them in cinemas both in Nigeria and abroad, and to enter them in international film festivals. This is a major structural shift in the Nollywood model of film production and distribution. Kunle Afolayan exemplifies this trend: his restless experimentation as a director and producer reveals the current structure of opportunities, and his situation as a filmmaker informs his films culturally and thematically. There are practical limits to the current possibilities of New Nollywood, and there is less to its apparent convergence with the rest of African (celluloid) cinema than meets the eye, but New Nollywood is likely to prove to be an invaluable preparation for coming transformations in the Nigerian film industry as Internet streaming and the construction of movie theatres in Nigeria displace the sale of films on discs as the central mode of Nollywood distribution (Haynes 2014: 53).

And while some have expressed genuine excitement about New Nollywood, others have either dismissed it as a fad or remained indifferent.

Oh, absolutely. It [New Nollywood] is getting better, man. I mean, look, we're having this conversation, and everybody that I've just mentioned, including Kunle Afolayan... they want to have the best movies. *October 01* is a great New Nollywood film, I've heard. I haven't seen it yet, but the critics like it, and the buzz out of Nigeria is really good. (Yemi Alade-Lawal, interview with the author, 3 December 2014)

New Nollywood...hmm, I don't really know. I belong to the market. I belong to the person who is buying the film. If you make New Nollywood [films] and nobody is buying it, that's shameful. My allegiance is to the man who spends [the] money he would have used to buy sardine and bread or *garri* [cassava flour] and *ofe* [soup] to buy our films. That's my allegiance! The New Nollywood can be high flying; the Old Nollywood can be conservative. I don't mind. (Stanley Okorie, interview with the author, 1 August 2015)

The New Nollywood, well, what they are doing is not bad either. They are showing the world that we can also do it the Hollywood way. But what about the Nigerian way: isn't that why Hollywood took note? That these guys [mainstream Nollywood] are wonderful... everything about the Nigerian movie – you write the script, you shoot the movie, you release the thing in a month... in fact, some people...can produce 5 movies in a month. It is dynamic. It is an amazing feat! I'm telling you. That was why they [Hollywood] took note. In two weeks, you are done with your movie. You shoot, you edit, you do music and you release the thing. So its... I think we should stick to Old Nollywood... improve quality, but stick to the identity. It is important to me. New Nollywood can come and say they want to be Hollywood, no problem, but I am both for the local and the foreign, make no mistake about that, in case one of them gets his hands on this thing [interview], and thinks that I am pro-local and anti-foreign. (Shadrach John, interview/studio observation with the author, 6 August 2015)

These comments reveal some of the fault lines and different perspectives: they layout the apprehensions that should provoke further research interests and opportunities in film music studies of the Nigerian cinema. The film music activities from New Nollywood certainly have consequences: how, for instance, will audience preferences shift? What will be the effect of that shift on the business and creative dimensions in mainstream Nollywood? What kinds of adjustments will practitioners make? Going forward, what will such paradigm shifts mean for the film music identity of both mainstream and New Nollywood?

6.6 Last Words

This thesis has confirmed my initial position statement that mainstream Nollywood film music production process encapsulates deep-seated understandings and assumptions of the host culture—of shared beliefs, values, and attitudes—and is harnessed to accentuate identity. The construction of singular and collective shades of identity is a form of understanding the 'Self', which happens when such identities require reform or are being refined. In mainstream Nollywood, the composers and musicians who participate in the formation of these shades of identity aid that reformation. To reiterate, they are the ones that I have referred to as Nollywood adherents: a body of largely film music practitioners who demonstrate self-understandings and the essence of symbolic

presentation or representation in their craft. Their actions and inactions signal and shape others' understandings of the industry's film music culture and identity. They see film music as both a performance and context that provides a particularly fruitful arena for the expression of multiple identities. As a complex semiotic form with multiple features such as melody, timbre, voice, rhythm and meter, and form, this thesis, to echo Rice (2001), shows that film music inherently provides an ideal 'sign' for simultaneously and temporally representing multiple aspects of identity.

In the final analysis, I maintain that Nollywood merits inclusion in the canon of global film music studies. In a sense, this is an open invitation to film music scholars with their full arsenal of critical scholarship into the study of music in Nigerian cinema. Some immediate areas of interest might be to compare auteur and Nollywood film music from specific perspectives; Nollywood film music as a theoretical construct after its Euro-American counterpart; the development of a robust and critical Nollywood film music language and pedagogy; gender and film music in Nollywood; audience reception and perception of Nollywood film music; as well as Nollywood film music and reflexivity. As a researcher, I am constantly reminded that this work is only the tip of the proverbial iceberg. The questions that have been raised throughout this thesis, including any unresolved arguments, remain desirable premises for a more focused study.

Appendix A

Some of the questions used during fieldwork

1. How was soundtrack conceived of in the early years of Nollywood, and who were the forerunners?
2. Was (or is) there a sustained desire by film music experts to impress film producers/directors in Nollywood? If so, why?
3. What was the procedure for producing a film song, and how is it different from what goes on today?
4. Can you tell us what changes happened in Nollywood soundtrack practice when digital sound and filmmaking techniques became introduced? What year did that happen?
5. Who were the foremost film-song experts to adopt and promote this sophistry?
6. What kind of impact did this development have on the art form and audience? So, for instance, was there a collapse of the film music ideology that went before?
7. What can you tell us about the transition from music for TV series (such as *Behind the Clouds*) to music for Nollywood films? What aspects were borrowed, retained, and/or discarded in the process?
8. Are there persons who are formally schooled in film music practice within Nollywood?
9. Is there a professional union for film musicians of Nollywood? If so, when was it founded, what is the name, and what are the objectives of the union?
10. Do you think that Nollywood film music possess qualities that are commercial and homogenous to the culture of the people? If so, can you say what those qualities are?
11. What can you tell us about the first direct approach to soundtrack production and the people involved in the business? For example, were they (ethno) musicologists?
12. What is the relationship between musical style and genre ideology in Nollywood soundtracks? So, for instance, would you say that musical elements are randomly deployed in a single soundtrack repertoire?
13. Do you suppose that there is a considerable degree of ideological uniformity in Nollywood soundtracks (NS)? (*If so, does that uniformity and musical style make NS more or less amenable to the kinds of analysis that have informed much film music studies of other cultures of the world?*)

14. Do you produce musical scores for NS soundtracks? If so, are such scores available and accessible?
15. How do you negotiate production deals?
16. Do you own and work in your studio? In what ways does working from your own studio differ from productions undertaken elsewhere?
17. Whose responsibility is it to undertake and organize the tasks of deciding, arranging, rehearsing, performing, and recording the film's music?
18. Given your experience, what can say about collaboration between film directors/producers and film musicians/composers of the industry? Is there a unique working relationship or not, and why?
19. What are the limitations you face in sound recording for Nollywood films? Are those constraints cultural, technological, and/or economic?
20. Who are those that influence soundtrack production, and why? Specifically, would you say that some experts within the industry exert considerable influence on, say, technological decisions, the ways soundtracks are played and recorded, as well as the business and working conditions of soundtrack experts?
21. What are your perspectives of the connection between Nollywood film music experts and the use of pop music?
22. Does the fact that some of the soundtrack experts are themselves popular musicians influence musical standard and identity in Nollywood films?
23. How would you describe the relationship between popular film and popular music in Nigeria?
24. How do you (Nollywood musicians) source materials for your soundtracks?
25. Are Nollywood movies and film songs holistic products or a construction of sets of discrete components? In other words, is the integration of music into the narrative and visuals of Nollywood films flawless? What are the challenges for actual production?
26. What technology (including software) was available to you in the past for the purpose of film music production?
27. What new technology and system of use do you have now?
28. What elements do you consider before creating the soundtrack of any Nollywood film?
29. Is the business of soundtrack production lucrative and, therefore, competitive?

30. Has anything changed about the song-recording practice within the industry since inception? For instance, was there a time when you (experts) would have recorded a song before the scene in which it was to be featured?
31. Save a few films and their soundtracks e.g. *The Master & I go chop your dollar* (2005), many Nollywood film songs are rarely and barely 'standalone' commodities. What do you think is responsible for this?
32. Two factors that contributed to the industrial structure in which film musicians (and others) worked in India's movie industry are the continued commercial importance of the recorded song, and the linguistic content. How do these factors play out, in your opinion, within Nollywood to shape its structure?
33. Many followers of Nollywood soundtracks criticize both the creative and audio qualities. What is your opinion on this?
34. According to the Nollywood Study Centre (NSC) in Lagos, there are a little over 350 film production firms within Nigeria. How many of these are actual film music studios, and what can you tell us about them?
35. The matter of audio quality causes one to reflect on the sophistication of foreign studios and equipment. Are there any efforts/investments to replicate what is obtainable in other parts of the developed world? If so, in what ways are you and others engaging to bring this about, and what are the challenges (if any)?
36. It is commonplace for the film musician–film producer dynamics to change as one moves up the ranks following more stable and rewarding collaboration. What, in your opinion, are the factors for such changes, and how does that affect the business and output within Nollywood?
37. Assuming that there are varying degrees of awareness of individual and collective responses regarding how film music practice works in Nollywood, how would you describe the musician's professional and social experiences?
38. Taking your expertise into account, how would you describe your career as a film music professional, as well as your relationship with specific film producers or directors?
39. Are you concerned about the influences of foreign films and their respective soundtracks on local content/production? If so, what are your concerns, and how do you go about negotiating such influences?
40. Can anyone join the trade as a film music composer or indeed producer?
41. What are the conditions and requirements (if any) for practicing as a film song professional in Nollywood?
42. Is there a pathway (formal or informal) for anyone who decides to take to this occupation in Nigeria? How are folks trained, essentially?

43. How does the society see film music experts? In other words, what kind of social identity is constructed around your status?
44. What are the attractions to your job as a film musician in Nollywood?
45. What can you tell us about the structure for the production of songs and background music for Nollywood films? How are aspects of the process (from start to finish) divided?
46. How long would the soundtrack of a typical Nollywood film take to complete, and why?
47. Who are those involved in the 'creative environment' of film music production? So, for instance, are there lyricists, choreographers, arrangers, sound editors, etc. who work together with the composer or songwriter during the soundtrack production process? What are the roles of such persons or groups of persons?
48. Many Nollywood soundtracks are vocal music. What can you tell us about matters of rehearsals and performances in the cause of a single production?
49. Do you have a compositional mind-set and routine you adhere to as a film-song expert in the industry? In other words, what would constitute the ideal soundtrack of a Nollywood film for you?
50. Based on your experience, do you support the notion that composing background music is less prestigious than writing songs?

Appendix B

Transcripts of interviews

Interview 1

Stanley Okorie, interview with the author, held in Umuahia, Nigeria on 1 August 2015.

Researcher (R): Good afternoon, Stanley Okorie.

Stanley Okorie (SO): All right.

R: *My name is Peter, and I'm here to ask you a few questions regarding the practice of soundtrack in Nollywood. For a start, could you just introduce yourself (tell us who you are, how you came into Nollywood, and where you are at the moment in the industry)?*

SO: Well, my name is Stanley Okorie. I came into Nollywood like every other person. I came into Nollywood even before Nollywood had a name. I think I came before the name. And just like 90% of everybody in Nollywood, um...we just... some walked in, some stumbled in, you know. So, whether you are stumbling in or walking in, now everybody is sitting down. We are all seated in and in the practice of er...movie making: some as directors, some as this, some as costumiers, some as writers, some...you know. I am not a musician. Musicians are people I respect very much. I wouldn't want to class myself amongst them, all right. I just like music. I...especially um...actually as a songwriter, I am just a basic songwriter who happens to be able to...because I couldn't get people to sing the things the way I like, I just said let me see if I could sing them myself. And I couldn't get people to play it with the local feeling I like. I grew up in the village with my grandparents so they don't... most of these people didn't grow up in the village so they don't understand the village...the rural groove. So when they play the keyboard it is still sounding very sweet: it sounds city-esque but they don't have that um...what do I call it? It doesn't have that...native ingredient. So that is how I got into soundtracking and um...that's what I have been doing—sometimes full time, sometimes part time but that's just it.

R: *Thank you very much. Oh that's very interesting. Yeah, earlier on you did say that you lived in London and that you are a Canadian citizen...*

SO: Yeah.

R: *...and you had chanced on this man called Sammie Okposo who himself was into some form of soundtrack writing for Nollywood in the early years.*

SO: Yeah.

R: *How was soundtrack conceived of in the early years of Nollywood, and were you one of the forerunners?*

SO: No, no, no, no, no. I wasn't even one of the tenth runners. At the time I met Sammie (that was the time the Nollywood thing was still growing and um...Sammie is my friend and...) I was working. I was working for a man called Soni Irabor as a production assistant in his advertising agency, and um...I like music, I could play piano too so...and I could write songs. And, I could sing to some level, you know, and for caution sake I kept everything in my bathroom. I'm a professional bathroom singer. So, um, Sammie...I said I met Sammie somehow by chance and Sammie said 'Look, I do soundtracks. You write, let's...you write, I produce.' So, I wrote and Sammie (who sings too)...at a point Sammie started singing. We started working together but at some point I told Sammie: 'Sammie, this thing...it doesn't have the local ingredient. It's not there...it's still sounding 'Lagos-polished'. It's not supposed to sound so polished.' You know and so...well...er...that is where our disagreements usually started and all that. But I have a lot of respect for Sammie. And I think he does the same thing for me. So, after a while em...Sammie is a very good musician with his gift. I have mine too but I think my own bias is towards local stuffs: I like the local things.

R: *Thank you. You said something about native feel or groove...*

SO: Yeah.

R: *That is interesting because it brings us closer to the reason for this research, which is the search for an identity for Nollywood soundtracks. Um, can you explain what you mean by "native feel"? And can you point us to a few examples of the things you've done that contain what you mean by "native feel" to the soundtrack?*

SO: Ah, I think everything is...OK, once in a while I get songs that have...I get films that must have the 'Western feel' – the hip-hop, the stuff...but most times I do a lot of the 'locals'. [pauses] An American is an American; a Nigerian is a Nigerian. Your identity is who you are: the air you breathe, the name you bear, the language you speak, the women you fall in love with, the children you bear, the work you do, [and] the death you die. That's...that's the totality... A lot of Nigerians will never feel snow [and] will never see snow. So, when you say *as white as snow*, what is...what does snow mean? It means nothing. But if you say *as white as cassava*, I can understand that. That's localising whiteness. For instance, in Africa...in the world I'm sure the largest mammal is a whale. But for some people the largest mammal is a cow! So, they'd say *God is bigger than a cow*. And when they tell you *God is bigger than a c.*, it means he is very big. That's localisation of god. Alright? And when they tell [you] that in the U.S. or in Canada the roads are smooth, and in Africa when they tell you that the road is good, it means it is not as smooth as 'the other side' but it has some potholes that you have to manage. So, we have to localise the concepts to where we are, you know.

R: *So, how have you done that?*

SO: [Stutters] When it comes to localisation, for me, there are four things: 1. What are you localising? Who are you localising it for? How do you localise it? And how do I myself as a producer keep my own identity so that if you hear the soundtrack, you know it is Stanley Okorie? And the person who is shooting a movie says, “*Oh, I like this voice*”, or “*I like this style*”. Because part of art is also... One of the most important part[s] of art is the continued existence of the artist. If your art doesn’t feed you [then] forget it. You go and become a mechanic. So, those are the four arms for me. So first, what are you localising? [It is] the story: it is not a story in America or London. It is a story [told] in Nigeria, so let it be here. I localise it also...(that’s for *What*) [for] *How*. How is [pause] don’t speak Queen’s English when you are singing a song in Nollywood. Depending on the film, make it what the average person can understand; like... *I am coming, my darling*. Instead of ‘I am coming, my darling’, you can say, *My darling, I de come*. Pidgin is the language. That’s the second one. Then the choice of instrument/s [e.g.] the xylophone, the feel...the highlife feel, you understand, and the choice of rendition: sometimes purposefully speaking wrong English! [Pauses to give an example] I wasn’t sure that... ‘I didn’t know that you de. I didn’t know that you de’, that is [to say], I wasn’t aware that you are there. [Stutters] And then getting it close to the people: that’s just the process of localisation. [And] then the fourth one will be my style – and I have my style. God gives every creative man his own identity: by my voice, by my style, which a lot of people try to copy too. You know I can’t stop people from copying me but I’ll just have to keep reinventing myself. So, that’s localisation...and I don’t go to... It’s an African film. It is an African film! And I’ve lived in London, I’ve lived in the Detroit, I’ve lived in Canada, I’ve lived in Germany, I’ve lived in Scotland, I’ve lived in Sweden, I’ve lived in Denmark! I have lived in more than eleven countries (of course, you know with a Schengen you travel round). And I was outside Nigeria for eight years. I went to almost all the countries in Schengen. But I like it here [Nigeria]. I like here...I like here. It’s madness to live in one place and be carrying [an] umbrella because it is raining in Ohio. [Instead], let those in Ohio carry umbrella. I am in Imo state, Nigeria. It is not raining here. I’m not going to wear sweater because somebody in Chicago is wearing sweater. And I am not going to speak Queen’s English. So, that is it. That is just localisation: bringing it so close to the people and most importantly, most importantly, making the music for the market! Because if you make fantastic music that they give you award for in America, and the film does not sell here, nobody will bring another film for you. I don’t think I’ve ever won an award for anything. I have never. If I have, I don’t know.

R: [Laughter] *This is really fascinating. You’ve said a couple of things there, which I will like us to unpick, yeah. First, you’ve talked about the identity process for you: whom you’re localising for, why, how, and what. You’ve talked about language and I want to pick on that a bit. What is it about the...your choice: your preference for the vernacular and the Pidgin English in the soundtrack? Is this something that the producers themselves approve of, or you force it on them? Um, do you defend yourself when you have to do this?*

SO: The first person...the first thing that determines the preference of the soundtrack is the marketer because he is the one paying.

R: *So, you mean that the marketer actually prefers this?*

SO: Most times the marketer wants the soundtrack in Igbo even when the film is completely [in] English because they believe Igbo has more... It [Igbo] is able to express more feel...more feelings to a larger number of people. Alright? And usually, when you cry in Igbo people connect with you faster than when you cry in English. When you cry in English they say that you are guilty [and] you have tried to deceive them. But when you cry in a heart-breaking way in Igbo – saying the local [word like] *Ewo!* people can connect with it easily. And don't forget that I am a mass communications graduate. The linguist may bother, or the grammar person may bother about the rightness of the grammar. But I am looking for the thing that communicates the feeling the most. So, that's it.

R: *So, what in your opinion gives Nollywood film music its identity, as a sum of what you are saying?*

SO: Well, one, it is Nollywood not Bollywood or Hollywood. Anything Nollywood has the shadow of Hollywood under it. Even the cars you see in Nigerian films I can bet you less than 1% of them are made in Nigeria. [Yet] are they not all seen in Nollywood film[s]?

R: *They are.*

SO: So those are the... I think what gives it its identity is... it has a Nollywood identity: the lingual identity, the style identity. All right?

R: *The style...um, let me just pick up on the style. Um, in 2014, I saw a film in which you produced the soundtrack. It is called Baby Oku. And I realised that that film is an international co-production – call it Nolly-Holly (between Nollywood and Hollywood cast). And what I discovered there is that in spite of the fact that the film itself was shot in America – employing a mixed cast of Nigerians and Americans – you stuck to your guns. What I mean is, you stuck to your style of prefiguring the storyline. So, what I want to understand is this resistance...this resistance, because for me it is. You are showing resistance: local resistance to external or foreign influence, yeah. Um, how [stutters] do you defend this? I mean, how did you do it? Let's talk about that film, for instance. How did you defend the use of that style?*

SO: I think it's very simple. There are two...um, like you said, it is a dual-faced thing. Let the Hollywood people do their Hollywood thing and speak their English and let the Nollywood people do their thing and speak their local whatever. That's one. I... I felt it is a blend. And besides, the person in America, Mercy Johnson [the film's protagonist] or Baby Oku... Baby Oku is not an American. Lying down in garage doesn't make you a car. And being in McDonalds doesn't make you a burger, does it? Um...so, it seems it is a film of two...of dual identities. So, both identities can live together and flow. I mean...yeah as far as I am concerned.

Then most importantly, until for many years...ideally I should lay the music myself, you know, when I do music for a film, all right I should lay it myself. But it costs a lot of money to get me to come and lay it.

R: *What do you mean by 'lay the music yourself'?*

SO: Laying the music means putting the real music score into the film. So, most times you make a song... for instance, you see, in a story a woman's husband dies in scene 14, and in scene 15 she is crying. You now make a song for scene 15 but the editor now goes ahead and lays it on scene 13. What has he done? He has already told the story of the film. It's not Stanley Okorie that...because the story of a film (even the foreign ones) must tell about... [Stutters] the story about films in the...about birds in the sky cannot be talking about dolphins in the sea. It [the music] has to be related to the film, you know. So, what happens is that most times the editors – some callous editors – lay this film...this song that is supposed to have been sung after the husband has died...they now lay it before the husband dies. So that already tells you that the husband is going to die. It is not Stanley Okorie's, you understand. So that's number one. Most times you find out that what I get is the rough cut, it is not the final cut. So, I may make the music for scene 15. But by the time the producer and director see the film, there is no more scene 15. So, that music made for scene 15, which they have paid me for, will not be wasted. They can play it at scene 12; after all, the woman's husband will die [laughter].

R: *Interesting. Interesting. I have another question for you please and, this bothers on technology. What technology was available to you in the past for the purpose of film music production, and what do you have now? And how have these um... equipment and technologies affected your craftsmanship of soundtrack and, therefore, the identity? In other words, I am wondering if in the process of creating an identity for Nollywood soundtrack the foreign technologies that you have been using have influenced it. You know you started by saying [that] you use the xylophone and local instruments...*

SO: Yes.

R: *...can you just tell me how these things influence, if there is any influence at all?*

SO: Technology, especially in music and film, is to make things better. A more expensive camera is to do what...make the picture close to what? To life! If the camera makes the thing green when it is blue, is it [right]? It's not. So, technology as far as I am concerned in music is for you to make a piano still sound like a piano, make my xylophone still sound like xylophone, [and] make my local oja [flute] sound like my local oja. Once I get that...[Stutters] now, the technology I have makes it easier for me to record with ease. It makes it easy. The quality of the sound is much better. But that's it. Every other thing technology can do for us now is give us more features to make our sounds more true to life. Yeah. But in the end a xylophone has to be a xylophone.

R: *My other question is: the software that you use, do they have these sound samples that are of the local instruments; do they have it? And if they don't, how do you...how do you mediate?*

SO: Number one, don't forget [that] all the things used in Nollywood (from equipment to cars, to even cameras), none is made in Nolly...Nigeria, in Africa. I hope you know. So, indirectly, we are sustained by what happens over there [the Global North]. So, we cannot be, we cannot run faster than the back that is carrying us.

R: *Is that a limitation?*

SO: It's not a limitation. Limitation is...limitation is... Something becomes a limitation when you say it is a limitation. I don't need high fidelity to record my normal music. I don't need the best of...I don't want the best of studios. Will my xylophone sound like a xylophone? Fine. Will the voices come out nice and clear? Fine. Will it sound decent? Fine. If, if the best technology equates to the best sales, fine! Then we go for technology. But it is not equating to it *na*. It's not really equating to it. I'm not saying technology is not important but...we just... People want the natural sound and the natural feel. Use whatever technology or software you want but make them [the people] connect with it. That, that works for me. Um...I use a lot of technology – every new software that comes [out] I have in my studio. But it just helps me work easier, you know, work better. But that's just as far as it goes.

R: *OK. Thank you. Um, many Nollywood soundtracks are vocal music – music with words. What can you tell us about [the] choice of text and tunes in the course of a single production? Why, why are they textured music? Why, why, why?*

SO: OK. Texted as in they have lyrics?

R: *Yes.*

SO: Why wouldn't they have lyrics? You are here talking that Africans talk a lot. Nobody has time for your instrumentals. Your instrumentals... Are you trying to make the people watching the film sleep? A couple of times I have done movies with instrumentals – with serenades for certain places. All right. But that's as far as it goes. Don't forget: the people who appreciate jazz and instrumental music...they don't watch our movies o!

R: *Really?*

SO: And if you sell to only them the marketers will not [re]cover their monies. The marketer wants the greatest goods for the greatest people [and] for the greatest profits. And no matter how gifted a musician you are, if he [the marketer] doesn't see... they still patronise me because a lot of the movies [soundtracks] I've done have become hits. My songs have made some of the films hits! That is why I am still in this business. If you think...you think...[*chuckles*]. If they are not hits do you think you will be talking to me now?

R: *Oh, no.*

SO: So... I know the people who buy. And when it comes to soundtracking, there are three things: one, know the film; know the owner of the film; and know... No. Know the film... I mean, three things is: know the film and the owner of the film; know what the film requires; and know what the market expects. That is the most important thing. If you do what the film requires and you don't do what the market expects, you will have your marketer very upset because he will not recover his money. But I have cases where people have gone to buy films and said, "Ehn, the song in the film is like this..."

R: *In other words...*

SO: They use the song to recognise the film. That is why I am still in business.

R: *Excellent! Excellent. So, do you have... Talking about your style now because you say you're still in business, so I have to ask you this question. Do you have a compositional mind-set and routine you adhere to as a film-song practitioner in the industry? In other words, what would constitute the ideal soundtrack of a Nollywood film for you? Will it be the one that conveys a Nigerian identity?*

SO: It has to convey a Nigerian identity. It is a Nollywood film now. [*Mumbles*] But to start with, I do not know the Bollywood identity. I can't say 'namaste'. Ehen...it can't be Chinese identity. The only identity I know is the only one I have. All right. So, that is the only one I can convey. And the only face you can smile, is it not the one you own? Are you going to smile with another man's face? So, I like most...you see, the Chinese have a strong identity in everything they do. I hope you know. Even the Indians and the rest of the world. It's just us [Nigerians] that seem to be so crushed of spirit that we don't stand up for our own African identity. But I think all that is slowly changing, you know. The music, the music, like the shirt... The music is to the film what the shirt is to the body – it must fit and look good. The music is to the face...the music is to the film what the make-up is to the face. The girl won't be wanting to look beautiful and you are making her up like a clown or like Father Christmas. Most importantly, the marketers: for me the marketer... when somebody brings a job to me, my first question is: what do you want? Do you want us to do what you want or what the film wants? The marketer may just say, *Do me a good film or do me a good song, but I want it in Igbo. I want it fast, or I want it slow. All right. I want it in Pidgin.* Or the marketer now gives you... [*Digresses*] Many people don't know what they want, but they know what they don't want. Most times in life you know what you don't want but you cannot say exactly what you want.

R: *So, this is where you come in?*

SO: That is where I come in. When I know what you don't want, it just helps me cross out the rubbish. Ahem. Don't also forget [that] the faster the song is produced, the better for me so that I can take up another job.

R: [*Laughter*]. *OK. Ahem...are you concerned about the influences of foreign films and their respective soundtracks on local content production? If so, what are your concerns and how do you go about negotiating such influences?*

SO: I have no concerns at all. It is a free-for-all thing. Anybody who makes movies is free to either use a local composer or bring somebody from... or bring John Williams. You know John Williams? He's the guy who makes music for James Bond films. It's John Williams, init? Or Andrew Lloyd Webber – you know Andrew Lloyd Webber? Or you bring that guy...there is this guy who makes music for Bollywood films uh... I don't really care. If you want me to do the job, come let's talk; pay me and I'll deliver. And whatever influences you want, after working with me, if you decide to throw it away...fine. You know, I have had my, my, uh...I've had my hits, and I want more hits. That's all.

R: *I'm just going to press you a little more on the matter of influences. Again, going back to Baby Oku um... when, when you were consulted to provide soundtrack for that film, were you aware that it was going to be a Nolly-Holly: I mean it was going to be a Nollywood–Hollywood co-production?*

SO: Yeah, yeah.

R: *Did you have to go into any form of discussions about the style of the soundtrack? And was there any resistance to how you write soundtracks? Or this was just: "look, as long as it is Stanley Okorie, there are no questions to be asked. He is going to provide you with it; you just take it"?*

SO: Fortunately, I know the person that owns the Baby Oku film. He is my oga [patron]. And he sent me a text and said, 'Your money has been paid. Make it local – local, local...very local.'

R: *[Laughter]. I see there's an understanding. The collaboration is interesting to um... So, you seem to have very good collaboration with the producers and the marketers?*

SO: Yeah, yeah. A lot of them are my friends too. And when somebody does music and it helps your film sell well, it is friendly, "innit"? But when it stops selling, it becomes unfriendly. Ahem, I've done some...that is not to say that all the marketers are my friends o... there are some...um, there is this situation which is very strange, very, very strange.

R: *Tell me about it.*

SO: Somebody brought a film to me, and told me what he wanted. After watching the film, I sent a text to him. I said, 'Send me your account number let me transfer the money back to you'. The person said, 'Why?' [and] I said 'I can't do what you want. I will the music of this film in Igbo'. The guy said 'What?' He sent me the account and I paid the money back.

R: *Why?*

SO: He wanted me to do the film in English...the song in English. And I know that in English it won't work.

R: *What do you mean by 'It won't work'? I mean, are you saying that it won't tell the story?*

SO: It won't bring out the emotions. It won't bring out the feel, you know. My people say, *Lies are better told in English; the truth sounds best in Igbo/ vernacular*. So the guy said... I sent the money back. The guy sent the money back to me about two weeks later, and said 'Do it in Igbo but if I don't like it you will refund me my money.' I said, 'Fine.' To cut a long story short, when I finished doing it, he now called me and said 'Refund me my money. I don't like the song. I don't like music. I just don't like anything.' I just kept quiet. A month later, I saw money from him again – another money o from him again. This time, twice the amount. He said, 'I am sending another film. Please, make it Igbo'. [Laughter]

R: *Amazing.*

SO: You know what? That film was the largest selling film of 2013.

R: *What was it called?*

SO: Err... was it *Cry of a Mother*, or something? It was the largest selling film. Actually the people...the title of the song was *Akwa Nwa*. So, people call the film *Akwa Nwa*. But the title of the song is 'Cry of a Mother'... 'Tears of a Mother'. The guy just sent the film to me yesterday, and just sent me a three-letter word – I B O, Igbo. I want it in Igbo.

R: *Thank you so much. Ahem, just a few more and um... Do you think that there should be a union or organisation of soundtrack producers – just as you have the Actors' Guild of Nigeria? Is there any such organisation for soundtrack producers? If there isn't, shouldn't you by now come together so [that] you identify yourselves?*

SO: Yeah, we have identified ourselves but unfortunately that is the bad side of the local thing. Everybody wants to do his own thing. I know Abbe Eso at one point tried to get people around. He called me and a few people but you see I'm in Umahia. But that doesn't mean we cannot group. I don't know what finally happened to it because at that point I left for China, or was it China... I don't know which country I visited. And I was away for a long time. So I didn't know ...I didn't know how long...I don't know if that thing worked. At a point, it was a sort of union they wanted to do: one. They wanted to be...they were quite ambitious o. They said they wanted the music producers and composers for films to get royalties. That would have been wonderful.

R: *So, why did the move not take off?*

SO: I don't know. I don't know. Why do things just not work here? I don't know. It's a 'Nigerian Factor'. Everybody looked at it, I didn't believe in it because I know the marketers who are my friends will say, 'Ah, ok we will pay him, we will pay the director, we will pay the... by the time we pay all these royalties, how much... Why don't they just shoot their own films and pay themselves royalties?'

- R:** *I want to talk about your style again; this time, the musical style and um...the genre – you mentioned highlife and things like that. Would you say that the musical elements you deploy in Nollywood soundtracks are randomly so? In other words, what is the relationship between musical style and thoughts on genre in Nollywood soundtrack? What is the relationship?*
- SO:** I don't know, I don't know. The first one confused me; the other one confused me even more.
- R:** *OK. Let me...*
- SO:** But I understand what you mean. I just have my style. One, I have my natural, God-given, artistic identity and signature. Two, I have been able to create my own template for the kind of music I want to play such that when you hear it (some people hear it, and they have not written the credits o), they just say 'That's Stanley Okorie'.
- R:** *That is what I want you to talk me through. Do you...*
- SO:** I can't explain that.
- R:** *I mean, how do you have a preference for, say, highlife or...?*
- SO:** I have a preference for highlife.
- R:** *How do you combine the genre you prefer, and the way you go about choosing the elements that will give this style? That's what... I really want to know what the Stanley Okorie style is.*
- SO:** Yes. Only God can explain that because I didn't...Stanley Okorie style was not created by Stanley Okorie – largely you know. I discovered it. But what I can, what I can tell you is that I have my preference for the local things. I like it local because that's where I am. Well, acting local but still thinking international...
- R:** *Hmm.*
- SO:** ...you know. But...I know, why will I want to play international music? I can't compete with them there. But if they come here to my own local *dis ting* ['thing'], I will grind them. I will grind them like crayfish. [Laughter] em, so my st... I have a preference for local music [but] that's not to say that I can't handle foreign [film] music projects.
- R:** *Yeah.*
- SO:** I can produce foreign music very, very well, you know, when I have the time...when I have the jobs, I do that. But the style comes to: one, the God-given preferences; two, my choice of instruments (of course, my preference... ones value determines ones choice, alright, ones choice determines ones action), so you know I will always go for the local stuff. Then I've found that there is

something I've been doing which is peculiar to me, which is working, and which a lot of people are copying.

R: *What is that?*

SO: What is that? It's just being able to sound local. Sing the film in a language that won't be too low for angels and too high for humans. So, that's it.

R: *And that is what explains your preference for vernacular and Pidgin or a mix of both?*

SO: Or a mix of both; a mix of both because now we have localised... When film started, remember too that the music must evolve in Nollywood the [same] way the stories are evolving. When Nollywood started, it was always stories about rich people – the kind of things that happen... classic. But now we are seeing a lot of grass and bad road. Aren't you seeing [that] the stories are now more local?

R: *Yep.*

SO: Yes so, how can the music... The music follows the trend of the stories. There was a time when...when the films were all comic...largely comedy, everybody went comedy the music must follow. There was a time it went epic, everybody went epic. There was a time it went...glamour: big cars and big houses and phonetics, everybody had to go. Now, it has come local to the village – with the drunkard and the village child, and the street urchin and the miscreants, and the, and the, and the corrupt elders. So, it [the music] must go that way.

R: *It's amazing that you have said this. This brings me to the next observation. Now we have, or it appears Nollywood has two schools of thought:*

SO: Mm umh...

R: *There is the New Nollywood and there is the Old Nollywood. And we are told that the New Nollywood tries to match global expectations both in the quality of the production, the story it tells, and the soundtrack...it has. To which of these schools of thought do you belong? And do you really think that the identity of Nollywood soundtrack should be...um...is worth preserving? And if it is worth preserving, should it...how do you wish to do so, given the rise of what is called New Nollywood?*

SO: New Nollywood... ahem, I don't really know. I don't belong to any group. I belong to the market. I belong to the person who is buying the film. That's the group I belong to. If you make New Nollywood and nobody is buying it, that's... My allegiance is to the man who spends [the] money he would have used to buy sardine and bread or *garri* [cassava flour] and *ofe* [soup] to buy our film. That's my allegiance – to him. The New Nollywood can be high flying, the Old Nollywood can be conservative; I don't mind. Conservative...being too conservative is not good because new ideas cannot come in. And then being too outlandishly 'New Nollywood' and trying to be American, you will never be American. You will only hurt your feelings: you will never be American. Don't

forget [that] I'm a Canadian citizen. And when I'm in Canada I don't speak like this. I speak like them. And I know that they have, there is still a certain level of being...coming from the Third World, alright. You are still from the Third World, and there is this ethnic pride and this um...how do you say it? In Canada there is something they call Canadian Experience, [and] regardless of where you come from, no matter how good your results are, if you don't have Canadian Experience it is rubbish. And, there's a way they...it's unspoken but it's there. Discrimination...it's even in London, I mean it's unspoken but it's there. So, why would you want to compete with them? You are playing in a game where the enemy is the referee and has made all the rules! He's the referee and the rules are his. So, you can give a goal and he says no, you don't score goals when I'm not in a good mood. So, would you ever win? You'll never win. So, I belong to the third class of people, which you are talking about, which is the Silent Market, which are the people who consume these things.

R: *And this is why you have stuck to your style...the identity which...*

SO: My style...when I say local, I am not saying...TuFace's music is international but his words: are they not local?

R: *Yeah, yeah...*

SO: A blend of the local and the international because you can never be American. Obama still is not American, you know.

R: *Well, that's debatable.*

SO: Oh ok! It's debatable...but George Bush is completely American. But in Obama's own it is a little debatable because he can't wash away the Kenyan blood there. So, what are you saying? I'm...I'm, I'm, you must have an equal balance. And don't forget: this love for my local stuff did not happen when I was here; it happened when I was abroad. All right?

R: *Ahem, I have to thank you, Stanley, for the time you've spent with us. And I shall call on you if I need further clarification on any issues that we have talked about today. Thank you very much.*

SO: All right. Thank you too.

Interview 2

Shadrach John, interview with the author, held in Lagos, Nigeria on 6 August 2015.

R: *Hello, and welcome to this very important research on Nollywood. I am here with Shadrach John. He is a foremost Nollywood soundtrack producer. He has written a lot of soundtracks for many films, and he has graciously accepted to grant an interview right here in Blackwell Entertainment Studios where he does some of his jobs. Welcome sir.*

SJ: Thank you very much.

R: *For a start, could you just tell us how long you have been in soundtrack production, and how you got into it.*

SJ: Soundtrack production has been – for me, I’ve been in it for 10, 15 years – and I dabbled into it, so to say – because I sing, basically that is what I do. So, I was in Jos, doing this singing, so I got to Lagos to do one competition called ‘*Lekki SunSplash*’ and eventually I came 3rd, and that was what brought me to Lagos. They said ‘*come to Lagos, come and do an album*’ – when I got here, of course, I was disappointed, because all the promises that were made, nothing came to pass. My colleagues who had been here heard my voice and said ‘*your voice is good for commercials*’ so, eventually, whilst doing jingles and radio commercials, I now decided that when the movie thing [industry] started coming up in the late 1990’s... someone said ‘I would like your voice in this movie’ – I think it was called ‘*Living in Bondage*’ ... and that was how I now came in as a singer. So, a producer will call me and say ‘*I want you to sing this song I’ve written*’, and I would get paid for that. Along the line, I discovered that I could also input my own product, my creative compositions, in terms of music production. So, I went into that fully – around 2005 – and started doing it myself – produce, write, design the sound – which is what we are basically, sound designers – we design sound for movies. But we refer to it as soundtracks or music score, and there is a difference between soundtrack and film music score – people don’t really know. Film music score is when the music and its components are meant for that movie alone – the soundtrack, the moods, you know, everything is meant for that one movie. That’s film music score. Soundtrack is where you have different artists bringing in their stuff – you bring in stuff from different artists and put it together for that movie. So what we basically do is actually film score, you know, we design the sound for a movie.

R: *Alright. So, you mean, you do not produce musical scores for Nollywood soundtracks?*

SJ: No, that’s what we...

R: *Just make the distinction clear, between sound design and the film score. So, do you produce musical scores for Nollywood soundtracks? And if so, are such scores available and accessible?*

SJ: Of course, I design – why I said sound design is, you know, it’s a new term – you know, film music score or soundtrack producer is a general one – but professionally speaking, sound design is a new term for music people. Whether you are doing it for film or - when you create that sound, you design it – that is the creative process – you now bring it out, give life to it.

R: *So you are a sound designer for Nollywood?*

SJ: Yes, I’m a sound designer, but let us refer to it now as Nollywood movie soundtrack producer, for clarity, so that people will understand it. But the sound design thing is just chipped in there for professionals. It is a new term – it is not commonly used.

R: *OK, then. May I ask you, what is the relationship between musical style and thoughts on genre in Nollywood soundtracks? So, for instance, would you say that musical elements are randomly deployed in a single soundtrack repertoire?*

SJ: Um, you know... OK, let me simplify it. Genre is also style. Genre is a particular kind of music; you have R&B, reggae, highlife and the rest of them. In the Nollywood world, so to say, all these come in to play. It depends on the kind of story and the kind of movie. I happen to have done a romantic movie. There's a particular style that you use for that one, which is pop R&B. Then you have the comedy, and that is basically highlife... highlife, dramatic style, because you are going to talk about the story, you know, it has to be funny. You have to bring in the comical part of it. Then you have the crime [genre], the action movie – that has to do with either reggae or sometimes rap music. Then you have the indigenous stories; we call them the epic stories. It has to do with culture... sometimes we incorporate our cultural beats.

R: *Folk music?*

SJ: Yes. For instance, loads of movies from Nollywood is actually told from the Eastern point of view; the Eastern perspective.

R: *When you say 'Eastern', is that Eastern Nigeria?*

SJ: Eastern Nigeria, yes, because a lot of the players are actually Igbo. In fact, 99.9% of the players in the Nollywood movie industry are Igbos. So, when they tell these stories, they tell the story from that perspective. So, sometimes there is need for us to use some cultural stuff to depict or to tell, to interpret the movie musically.

R: *Thank you. So, this, call it a template that you have just highlighted – are these your template or this is the standard in the industry? So, for instance, the association of highlife genre with the film genre called comedy; the association of R&B with drama, with romantic films...is this your template, or this is a set template in Nollywood for soundtrack producers?*

SJ: I would say more or less my template – because, although we learn from each other, maybe something must have been done in the past – maybe that kind of movie has been done in the past with that type of music – let's say, highlife for instance for comedy stuff – maybe the producer of the movie might actually say to you '*so and so movie was done in time with this style of music, could you please do the same thing, or a similar thing?*' So, based on that, I think a style was now created and developed. So, if you give me a comedy movie for instance, with a certain theme, I could ordinarily just use highlife music or style to interpret it; likewise, other genres.

R: *You just said something about the activities of your colleagues in the industry –*

SJ: Yes.

R: *Just very quickly, are there persons who are formally schooled in film music practice within Nollywood, and is there a union or an association of those of you who are recognised practitioners, so that you discuss the development of approaches?*

SJ: It is an on-going process. We are still erm, working on it, but we meet now and again; we talk, discuss the way forward. But we have not formally registered it; because we have been having issues with people not cooperating. There are rules – let's take for instance, charges, the economics aspect of it – where you say, for instance, if we say '*charge so and so amount for so and so kind of movie*' – and then when the chips are down, maybe because of the hardship of the country, or one challenge or other, the person will now go back and instead of charging what we agreed, will charge 50% and still deliver; I don't know how. So, the next client, when you tell the client that '*this is the fee*', the client will say '*no, [previous] person charged this [less than current charge]*' and that person could be probably be someone that we respect, one of the pioneers that we look up to – so the thing has put us in disarray right now – but a few of us are coming back together to see what we can do again. We met a couple of months ago, first of all took out a name – to see how we can take it to the next level. But that is the challenge we are facing, because it is affecting us. Other [disciplines] have their guild. For instance, when the former President doled out some money for the Nollywood practitioners, we [soundtrack producers] didn't get a dime, because according to them, we don't have a guild; ordinarily, that shouldn't be a problem, because you know that we are there, as a body, even if we don't have a – we are not registered – you should have given us what belonged to us... but because of greed...something like that... so, that's the challenge we are facing right now. But we are working on it, so we hope to get somewhere.

R: *Let's move this a bit forward. What are the limitations you face in sound recording for Nollywood films? Are those constraints cultural, technological and/or economic?*

SJ: Hmm [laughs] we face a lot of challenges. But let me break it down to the economic one; which has to do with money. Unfortunately we don't earn what we should be earning, because the people that pay, their mentality is – I wouldn't say it is – I don't want to use derogatory language, but I would just say that they are not well informed...you understand? These are businessmen. They are basically, traders, they buy and they sell, so you know, if you want to succeed in business, in buying and selling, you have to make sure that you... value. Sometimes, you could actually sell the fake for the price of the original. [laughs] So, they don't pay us.

R: *OK, so how does that affect the creative process?*

SJ: It affects it because we are limited to using what we have at hand to see whatever it can—how far it can take us. For instance, in terms of quality, thank God for the innovations, inventions and all that—technological advancement right now. So we have software that can give us very good sound. So, in terms of sound quality, yes, that has improved. But the input – even the creative input – in fact, we are amazed at what we even achieve, eventually.

R: *Why so?*

SJ: Because, given the working condition.

R: *Tell me some of those.*

SJ: I don't think an American for instance can survive. First of all, this money thing – do you know that we don't even get up to \$1,000?

R: *Per work?*

SJ: Per work.

R: *Does that mean that the industry does not value the musical perspective?*

SJ: They know that it is important, do you understand? But they don't value it. Because they believe that they can actually go to the library, and just get some sounds, and—let me imitate some of my clients that will call me 'Chadlack' – '*Chadlack, is it not odnally [ordinary] sound that I want you to put in this movie? What is so special about it?*' [laughs]

R: *So, that is also cultural. It means that the people don't quite appreciate –*

SJ: Yes, they don't appreciate it.

R: *Does that explain why the soundtrack is the way it is?*

SJ: It does, because they don't pay you well.

R: *And you have technology to ...*

SJ: And you have technology, yes. For instance, if you don't pay me well, I might not go to the best studio, and the people I'm going to be working with, the singer, the orchestrator, the engineer, I won't be paying him what he or she deserves to be paid. So there is this reluctance in giving your best, because you are not happy. Having said all that, for me it is something I enjoy doing, so I try to put in the best that I can, irrespective of the fact that I am not working with what I should be working with. I don't have enough money, you know. Another thing is time. I am not given enough time. I could be called up, and—shall I go on?

R: *Yes.*

SJ: I could be called up on a Monday, and the person says '*Chadlack, I need this job by Wednesday. Can you deliver?*'

R: *So, you have just 2 days?*

SJ: I have *just* 2 days to watch the movie or read the script, write the music, book a studio, sing, produce – and not just the songs alone, but also the moods.

R: *Amazing.*

SJ: The moods are the tension, the action, the sadness...to interpret a scene – a very tense scene – so I have *just* 2 days to do that. And if you don't accept the job, they take it to someone else, probably charging a lesser amount of money. And because of the economic challenges in this country, as a family man, I need to feed the family.

[Laughs] So, I just grab it, and say ‘OK, don’t worry’. And I just do...it’s tedious, sometimes. So, those are the challenges we have. So, all the 3 things you’ve mentioned—technology, cultural, economy—everything affects the... but thank God we still come out with something average. And it’s getting better...it’s getting better.

R: *OK, so how then do you source materials for your soundtrack? Given these constraints...how do you source materials for your soundtrack?*

SJ: Materials...you mean...

R: *Say, you are given a script now...*

SJ: Hmm.

R: *You are asked to produce the soundtrack in 2 days...2 days! Talk me through that process. How do you start and finish?*

SJ: [laughs]

R: *Meanwhile, you could show us something, if you [please].*

SJ: It’s a process. You know, you give me the script for instance. OK, these are – I just brought some, how we get it – [gestures to papers on table]. For instance, this is how I get the preview... I just did this, ‘*Madam Flavour*’, last week. It has Patience Ozokwor [Nollywood actress] in it. This is what they give me as a preview copy. And this title here [Madame Flavour] could change.

R: *Hmm.*

SJ: This is probably the working title [laughs] so if you go looking for it [in stores], you might not find it, unless they decide to retain it. Because I did something that might make them retain it... I put the name of the film in the song. So, that might be a – I wanted them to retain it, so I put the name – because we don’t usually put the name – that was then, but now, we don’t anymore.[gestures to another film] I just did this one 2 days ago. This one is called ‘*Peace of Mind*’. This is a preview copy, you understand? Sometimes...

R: *Is it possible to hear what you’ve done?*

SJ: Yes I could play – I think I have something on ‘*Peace of Mind*’. ‘*Peace of Mind*’ is...

R: *Just talk me through the creative [process] – what informed the choice of, for instance, choice of style, choice of genre? Just take me through – talk me through it.*

SJ: For instance, ‘*Peace of Mind*’ is er – it’s a contemporary story; it’s urban but at the same time it’s cultural. So, I watched it, and after watching it, I was able to pencil down a few things; basically, the songs... I think I wrote something on this [brings out notepad] it’s in Igbo.

R: *So this is how you work?*

SJ: Yes.

R: *You scribble these words [referring to Shadrach's notepad] – what are these words?*

SJ: This is Igbo, because the producer, or the EP, the person that owns this movie...

R: *Who's the EP? Executive Producer?*

SJ: Yes, he wanted us to do an Igbo song. In fact, we co-wrote this. It's [called] *ego*; it's about money. When there's money in the family, there's peace in this part of the world. When there's no money, there's chaos. And that's what the movie is all about. So, after watching it...

R: *You put down these thoughts?*

SJ: Yes, these thoughts.

R: *So, these will form the text for the soundtrack?*

SJ: Yes. These is more like the—these are the lyrics for the soundtrack.

R: *Fantastic.*

SJ: I will play you what I did. So, I had a week to do this, and I wrote 3 songs; 3 tracks for this. [gestures to first track] This is in English, '*downfall of a man*', for the same movie, '*Peace of Mind*', and that's how we—it's very crude for us over here, we don't do all this music notation thing, or write all this—because some of us are not schooled.

R: *You are not trained?*

SJ: We are not trained. Everything you see is raw talent, from experience, you know.

R: *Maybe that is why there is no film score, because the score is basically notated music?*

SJ: Yes, you understand, we have people that read music, they can actually do these things, but because of the money, they are too...their professionalism...it's an insult to their professionalism, to bring themselves this low.

R: *So, in other words, you are saying, in terms of working structure, you get a rough cut –*

SJ: Either that or a script.

R: *Or script from the producer—and you work alone?*

SJ: [laughs].

R: *I want to understand if, for instance, you have a trained musicologist, somebody who can score the music, do you work with that person, or not? This is just you? It's a single artist endeavour? You produce everything? Because, bear in mind, you started by saying you have just 2 days to deliver the soundtrack*

SJ: Yes.

R: *So, I'm really curious to know how—who else works with you –*

SJ: [laughs] Not all the time though, but basically, 2, 3 days, maximum a week. You know, what happens is that I do the writing, you know, and then I also orchestrate it.

R: *What do you mean, orchestrate it?*

SJ: You know, orchestration is, you know, playing it, producing the music...bringing everything together...playing the drums, the piano, the guitar.

R: *Oh, you mean the instrumentation?*

SJ: Instrumentation, yes that's it, you orchestrate it. That's part of the production setup. So after that, then sing. Sometimes, I get a colleague, or maybe there's another person that plays very well, to also orchestrate for me. Then, I also sing. So, I sing most of it myself. Because they would recognise the voice. So, if they [EP] don't hear the voice in the movie, they'll ask you 'what happened? You didn't do this thing...?'

R: *So, in other words, you are saying, the marketer or producer who has contracted this job to you, is looking out to hear your voice in the recorded music?*

SJ: Yes, because that is what they know. 'oh, that song, that voice'....but there are stories that are hinged on something that has to do with women. So, in cases like that, I have to get a female singer...

R: *Like 'Ekaette Goes To School'.*

SJ: Yes, get a female singer to interpret that – to sing it, after writing – you understand.

R: Yes.

SJ: But to a large extent, we don't let them know these things, because if we do, they'll even pay us less. Because what you will hear is 'but you do everything now; are you not going to be the one to do this' — but ordinarily, I should pay for orchestration, should pay for writing, should pay for composition, should pay for singing, you understand—but because these things are not possible, that's why I am – because I like to spread the wealth... so, the most I do now is pay the studio – I work in my studio, but I don't do everything there, because quality matters to me, you know. There's a particular quality I can get, but I go to a studio, where I can get top-notch. So, I pay this, I book the studio, I pay the engineer, you understand, I also pay one or two miscellaneous and all that. So, it's not an easy thing for us. Imagine being given 2 days to do this. So, which means, if I get it on a Monday, I have to watch it by Monday. And, bear in mind that these movies are...we are not talking about 1 hour, 2 hours... 5 hours, because it will be broken into parts, maybe part 1 – 4, part 1 to 8...

R: *And there must be a soundtrack for [every part]?*

SJ: Because of what they pay – because they’ll pay you the same amount they’ll probably pay if you are doing part 1 and 2. So what I do is – the most I do is, I produce 2 songs and the moods. So, those 2 songs, I use the first song for part 1, part 2, then use the second one for part 3 and part 4. That’s what I do.

R: *In other words, you become economical with the creative process, because of the time constraint. You were going to play us something in connection with the one [film soundtrack] you just finished.*

SJ: Yes...let me see [ruffles through papers and PC] I did something...

R: *So, this is the soundtrack you just prepared for – which of the films now?*

SJ: Well, I titled it ‘Downfall’ – let me just cue it – I titled it ‘Downfall’ because it doesn’t have a title yet. OK, it has a title, ‘Peace of Mind’ that’s the title of the movie, but the title of the song is Downfall’ [plays soundtrack]. OK, let me play the Igbo song [plays Igbo song].

R: *Yeah, you might have to lower the volume a little...*

SJ: [Shadrach lowers volume]

R: *So, this is...?*

SJ: So, this song is in Igbo, an indigenous language...it’s talking about money. When there is money in the family, the family is happy. When there is no money, there’s chaos. So, that’s the typical family in Nigeria. I just did this the day before yesterday.

R: *So this is telling the Nigerian story?*

SJ: Basically, [yes].

R: *Now, that brings me to a very important question. Why do you use texted music, I mean, music with words, like this one? Why is that so predominant in Nollywood?*

SJ: It’s a style that has been coined, let’s just say by the founding – let me just stop this [stops music] – well, I think it’s something I came into...whoever started the thing, the founding fathers unfortunately.

R: *Are you speaking about Stanley Okorie?*

SJ: Stanley and I started about the same time, but he Stanley is respected by those guys because he understood their mentality, and as a very sharp man, he now got into their – I don’t know how he did it – but he just understood their mentality – and they now loved him so much. And he also played a very important role, because he also brought a style – like the comedy style, for instance, it was Stanley that actually started it.

R: *What you mean is the art of foretelling the narrative with the song?*

SJ: Foretelling, yes, in a comic [way].

R: *So, he introduced that?*

SJ: He introduced that thing, basically.

R: *Would you say that, that has become what is more or less the Nollywood approach to soundtrack?*

SJ: Erm, no. Because comedy is a different style altogether. We have urban movies, we have the epic, and you know comedy is about laughter; it's fun, so you are allowed to do a lot. You can tell the story, you can do all that. You can even talk about the funny parts of the movie in the song, so that when you are listening to it, you are laughing – it brings out that side of you... But most serious movies, we don't – in the past, we used to do it, we used to sing the story.

R: *Yes, that's why I'm interested, because most of the films I've seen, up until the last 3 years, show that what we call prefiguring – the use of the soundtrack to foreshadow the scenes, the narrative – has been very prevalent. And that has drawn interest from academic circles, because compared to Hollywood – Hollywood doesn't do that –*

SJ: They don't. They don't even have the – what do you call it – like feature films – there are no songs, there are no written text, like you said –

R: *Texted music?*

SJ: Yes, there are no texted music. It's basically sound.

R: *So, what we want to understand is, why have you sustained that style? Does it give an identity of some sort? And if it does, what in your opinion is that identity based on?*

SJ: OK, let me give you an example with the Indians, the Bollywood industry, because they are known with their love songs. No matter how tough that movie, there's gonna be a scene where they are in some garden or some bush, singing and running around bushes and all that. It has become their style. So, if I'm watching a Bollywood movie, I'm probably waiting for it, because I love their songs, so I'm waiting for that. No matter how tough that movie is, even in horror movies, they have that thing there. So, that was what I, what informed, I now thought that – there was a forum where I had to say something about it – people are complaining that we have a style, we sing the story, we do this – but it has become a style for us. Nollywood movies are basically home videos. They are not particularly feature films, they are not motion pictures, they are not cinema. It's only recently that we started doing movies for cinema.

R: *That's the new Nollywood –*

SJ: Yes, the new Nollywood; and with that they don't use, you might not hear songs *per se*, just sounds, like I did one or two [new Nollywood soundtracks], where they didn't want text music, they wanted just sound. But this is home video. And, make no mistake about it, no matter how poor the production quality is, no matter how criticised

we get, the thing has put us at #2 in the world today. After Hollywood is Nollywood. Bollywood used to be #2, now we've taken over.

R: *Do you think that at the rate you are going, you could take over entirely and be number 1?*

SJ: If we were number three, now we are number two, anything can happen – and we become number 1. But it's just that, it makes it interesting...that's why we stand out... 'OK, it's a Nollywood movie, OK, they will sing the story now, don't worry' –

R: *So, in other words, if I may interrupt you...*

SJ: Yes.

R: *This ability to sing the story, like you have just said, creates the Nollywood ID – the Nollywood identity?*

SJ: In a funny way, yes. In a strange way, yes. But, that is not to say that we are not trying to improve. Like you said – like, I don't particularly write, you know, I don't sing the movie. In my songs, you will not hear anything about the story, I generalise, [and] I do what you call I call it a synopsis.

R: *Song synopsis?*

SJ: Song synopsis, you understand. It just gives you an idea, but it doesn't tell you the story, so it can stand on its own as a song too, and if you also want to watch the movie, I think the song can – I don't like using my songs – I don't play it at the beginning of the movie. Before you hear any song, the story must have been established. When I now play that song on a scene...probably...like this one I just played to you – the man was rich, everybody loved him, his in-laws loved him, the mother-in-law especially, he was a king, the wife was trying to kill him with love, and all that. The moment he lost his job, they all turned against him. The mother-in-law became – he actually saved her life – she became the number one enemy – started mocking him – so the guy was sad. So when you play this song for instance, on a scene, after the situation has been established, you play it on a scene where he is walking alone, down the road, crying or something, and you play that song, if you are watching that movie, and you understand the lyrics, you will feel the impact.

R: *Yes. So, for you, the need for the text, the need for music with words, vocal music, is established by the communication, the emotions that it carries with it?*

SJ: Yes.

R: *Is this because or in spite of the targeted audience? Why can't the sound without text serve to convey the emotion?*

SJ: We are very emotional people, as Africans, as Nigerians. We are very emotional. We identify with sorrow, happiness, you know, all those strong emotions. And by the time you have texted song, probably saying one or two things about what the person is going through, the Nigerian or the African connects with it better. Because you are

watching – there are no dialogues in that scene – he’s just walking down the road, crying – maybe he went to look for a job, and there was no job, so he’s just thinking about how he is going to get home, you know, his wife would probably laugh at him, his mother-in-law is there, waiting to mock him, and he’s got his file, and you are saying something like ‘oh, what a world’ – you know, just our normal style.

The Nigerian, or the African, will connect with that scene better, because that is the story of our lives in this part of the world, that’s what we go through every day. So, there is someone somewhere, a lot of people who will connect to it.

R: *With that music in the background?*

SJ: Yes, and the scene, and whatever it is the music is talking about.

R: *So, in that case, language is key here in the music?*

SJ: Language is key.

R: *So, can you say something about the preference for vernacular and the Nigerian English, what we call the pidgin English. Why is there a strong preference for both vernacular and pidgin? Why can’t these soundtracks be sung in proper English, for instance?*

SJ: Unfortunately, in this part of the world, education is down there [gestures to the floor]. Not – in fact, a whole lot of the populace are not educated.

R: *A good number of persons are not?*

SJ: Are not educated, yes.

R: *And these are the persons these films are targeted at?*

SJ: Yes, they are the ones that actually go and buy the films. That is why the thing is – it’s happened to the musical aspect of it – you know, there used to be R&B, Nigerians singing R&B, you know strict R&B, reggae songs and all that, but these songs were targeted for the elite, and they don’t buy. They’d rather buy the American or British ones.

So, the Nigerian said ‘look, I want to make money, I have to eat’, so they now said ‘OK, let me speak to the people, the oppressed people, who are in the majority’, you understand. So, basically, the Nollywood movies – although, interestingly, the elites are also, partakers right now, they watch, maybe to laugh or, I don’t know, it’s interesting, they are hooked on it. You go to some homes in Ikoyi, the highbrow areas, they’re watching Nollywood movies. This so-called new Nollywood, is just to tell the world that ‘look, when it comes to the real thing, we can do it’ but the original Nollywood is not going anywhere. That is what people watch in Russia, because I get calls from Siberia, Canada... I have people that call me from the UK, from America, you understand –

R: *And they are watching the home made Nollywood, not the new Nollywood?*

SJ: Yes! They are watching the home made Nollywood, because you know, it's a lonely place out there, let's take for instance an Igbo man in Brussels, probably the only black person in that place. He's so lonesome...nobody...you know over there people don't care...people care, but people are not - not like we do here – we look out for our neighbour here. Over there, he's so lonely, and he gets his hands on a Nollywood movie, where they speak his language, where they portray his culture – man, it's amazing! That is why the thing is so powerful over there, because it's largely watched by Nigerians over there.

R: *In the diaspora?*

SJ: Yes.

R: *So, are you concerned about the influences of foreign films and their respective soundtracks on the local production here? If so, what are your concerns, and how do you go about negotiating such influences? What I'm asking is, from watching Hollywood films, and the expectations of a percentage of the population in Nigeria, who would like Nollywood soundtracks to imitate Hollywood soundtrack, are you concerned that there are influences from overseas that could affect what you have described as the Nollywood style, or the identity?*

SJ: Erm, yes. Well, you know, having said all that I've said, as a professional, there is a part of me that yearns for how it should be done, for the thing to be done properly. But...

R: *What do you mean by properly? You mean, you want to imitate Hollywood?*

SJ: Hollywood, yes. Because the people that criticise, that's their standpoint. That's the standard, you understand. I know what they're talking about, because I'm a professional, and also, I'd want to do something like that, because they started it – it's their thing, we are copying them, basically. But, I'm also concerned, because this is our own thing, this is us. Identity is so important. So, I want us to still retain – even if we don't do – like for instance, I don't tell stories, but there's also, I make sure that I put in that thing, that Nollywood thing, that will also give us that identity. Of course, I want us to – OK, thank God we have the new Nollywood that will show the world 'OK, we can also do this, at this standard' – but the Nollywood that started this whole thing, that gave birth to the new Nollywood, you understand, in my heart of hearts, I want it to stay, because that's what's even paying the bills for me right now. These so-called new Nollywood guys, some of them think that we are so used to the local Nollywood, they shy away from us. Only one or two who know that these guys can also deliver this quality, this standard, they still come, and we do stuff.

R: *In other words, you are saying that, the advocates of new Nollywood look outside of Nigeria for professional contributions to the films? For instance, they look away from people like you to foreigners for the soundtrack –*

SJ: Not necessarily foreigners, but people who are not – the new breed – people who are not part of the old Nollywood.

R: *I see. So, in other words, it's OK to say that there is 2 schools of thought here, concerning approaches to soundtrack in Nollywood – the one that is of the old Nollywood, traditional Nollywood, traditional approach, and the one looking outwards, globally, looking towards Hollywood for the template. In that case, what can you tell us about the decision process – so in an international co-production, say Nolly-Holly, where you have a mixed cast, and it's both produced by people in Nigeria and people in the US or Europe, how do you negotiate or work around the possibility of ceding what will give you your identity in such a production?*

SJ: Well, you know culture is not necessarily about text, but also sound.

R: *Yes, tell me about that.*

SJ: So, the sound for instance the African sound is quite unique. If you watch, you know any, even productions by the Hollywood producers that has to do with Africa, there are certain sounds they use to identify Africa – the *big toms*, the *marimba*, the *flute* – they use all that to identify – because that's Africa, those are African instruments – that's where the compromise comes in now. So, since you wanna do away with singing about it, you want to get to that level [*raises hand in a gesture of elevation*] when it has to do with Africa, or something that has to portray culture, they use things like that –

R: *As cultural markers?*

SJ: Yeah, cultural markers. Then if you have a singer in the States, you could use a hip-hop or R&B thing, just to identify – in fact, that's what sound is all about – you call them markers.

R: *Yes.*

SJ: Explaining, depicting, trying to explain a scene, or supporting a scene. If I am doing a soundtrack that has to do with the North –

R: *Northern Nigeria?*

SJ: Northern Nigeria, yes – I'd have to do something, I'd have to play something northern, once we are over, maybe the scene is, because I do that too, you know, get the *karango*, get the *boge*, you know, their instruments, you know, and do something with it, to identify that part of the country.

R: *Yeah, but the... but [at] a broader level of argument, it is not enough to just use certain instruments because of the cultural area where they are known to come from.*

SJ: Yes.

R: *You'd have to say more about how you combine... what is it in the harmony or the melody or the rhythm that really situates the music in that culture area? Because of course somebody can sit somewhere in Canada for instance, and introduce a few of these instruments in the soundtrack and ... but does that necessarily give it the Nigerian identity?*

SJ: Well, Nigeria is not just one tribe, so if you are looking at it on a broader perspective, if for instance, it's a *collabo*, you know, a Nolly-Holly, there won't be any need to identify a particular tribe. You'd just generalise – like I said, African instruments that are generally used are basically *big toms*, *marimba*, the *flute* – you understand – once you have that, automatically the white man will say 'oh that's African', because the sound of the instruments that he has identified is African

R: *And the way the sounds are combined?*

SJ: Yeah, the way the sounds are combined basically has to do with the beat, the style – for instance, you have what you would call, erm, in music you have the 4-over-4 beat [*beats palm to illustrate*]

R: *Four-Four time?*

SJ: Yes. Then you have the 3-over-4 [*beats palm to illustrate*]. And the 3-over-4 is basically African.

R: *Really?*

SJ: Yes. 3-4-time is basically African. Most of our stuff, you know, have that [*drums beat with hands on thighs*] – that's 3-over-4.

R: *No, that's 12-8.*

SJ: No, that's 12... That's 8...that's like triple 8 – yes, yes, that's 8T, which is also 3-over-4, [*drums beat with hands on thighs*] you know triple 8, or 8T, as we call it, so you know, that's basically African.

R: *So, so, so you have mentioned something important as one of the elements that go into the musical sound to give it the African identity, and you have said it is in the rhythm.*

SJ: And the rhythm is Nigerian

R: *How is the rhythm, Nigerian?*

SJ: Like this 8T, the beat I just described now, is basically synonymous with Nigeria.

R: *That's the compound quadruple time?*

SJ: Yes, yes.

R: *It's compound quadruple.*

SJ: Oh OK. [*laughs*] Those are the [*laughs*] – well you guys are scholars.

R: *I understand. You are talking about the compound quadruple time.*

SJ: [*nods and laughs*] Aha, beautiful. I've pronounced that now. [*laughs*] So, but generally speaking, in whichever rhythm you put it, once you have the *big toms*, once you have the *flute*, once you have the *marimba*, or the *kalimba* – once you have those instruments, automatically, Africa has come into the scene. You understand ... so even in documentaries, if you watch *Animal Kingdom*, if you watch *NatGeo Wild*, national geographic channels, when they – those animals that are found in Africa, the moment they start showing those animals, the beat changes. You start hearing big toms [*gestures beat with head and hands*], you know, things like that. Those instruments are African instruments, so you know that's probably what comes into play, you know, on a broader level, when it's a *collabo* between Nollywood, Hollywood, or – you have to give that overview – there has to be, like, an encompassing kind of beat –

R: *Interesting.*

SJ: Except when you wanna now say, OK, subject it to Nigeria alone – then we now start talking about the various ethnic groups' peculiarities.

R: *So just a few more ... so, do you at any point think about how the film's soundtrack might accurately represent the identity of Nigeria? Is that something you think about every time you have a soundtrack to produce, or just once in a blue moon? In other words, this identity, is it paramount in your thoughts for every time you have to work on a soundtrack?*

SJ: Yes, for export purposes. In the past, you know, it's all about, you know, OK, pay the bills... As a creative person, money shouldn't be an issue ordinarily, but due to the situation of this country, you know, paying the bills has become priority. And I'm talking about common things, like food, transportation, health, education ... normal things that the government should have provided, or are still trying to provide. When you have to think about your next meal ... a creative person doesn't need all that. Imagine an environment where all these things are there – where you have power – you have all these things in place ... my God, you don't even think about money, you don't think about paying bills, you just create. So, it's basically all about paying the bills, unfortunately. It is just that the talent is there, and the professionalism is there, so we go the extra mile to try and put in our best. So lately, because of export, for export – because I know that our movies now go out a lot, based on the calls I get from outside the country – so I try to, you know, up the game a little, in terms of quality, you understand, make it a bit more sophisticated, but it depends on the movie too, because we have indigenous movies here that are – like most of these films are shot in the East [of Nigeria] – as I speak with you today – Asaba, Onitsha, in the Eastern part of Nigeria, and that's where their market is. So, when [*laughs*], let me shock you – sometime last year, I was chatting with a producer or an EP – he wanted to give me a job to do for him – he told me that on the jacket of that CD – if you don't have greenery or anything like a green background where you have bushes, it's not gonna sell.

R: *So, in other words, pictorially, the people want to they want to see aspects of their culture represented there?*

SJ: Represented there! And if you do a very modern movie for instance, it's not gonna sell!

R: *This is interesting.*

SJ: So right now, what we do lately, in fact, most of the jobs I do lately, I have to either make the chorus singing in vernacular, then the verses in English, or pidgin, or I mix it up. It's now a fusion of English/vernacular. Or I sing vernacular all the way.

R: *And do you think there is anything wrong with that? Don't you think that in itself points to an identity that people want to retain, as against the criticisms that the elite Nigerians may have poured on this style? I guess my question now is – why can't that become the Nigerian standard? Why must it look to Hollywood?*

SJ: That is the problem with us. We are always copying, you understand, that's why even today, culturally speaking, our culture is eroded. It's going ... because we wanna copy ... look towards the Western culture. And they are messing us up ... because the values of the African, you understand, have gone down the drain. It has affected homes. An elder will come in here, and a young child will be seating on a chair, and barely greets the elder. The African culture says to you "get up!" [*claps hands in emphasis*] "Sir please sit down", *after* you must have greeted him respectfully. So this thing has affected us. So these guys that think they know too much, they will come and say 'no, this and that'. Whereas the guy, the EP, he is a businessman, basically someone who wants to buy, and who wants to, you know, make his money. They [EPs] are not professionals per se, the guys behind these things. So, they want something that will make sales; something commercial. The only issue I have with it is that it is, you know, it has been restricted to a particular part of the country. Although people are still buying ... other tribes are still...

R: *Involved?*

SJ: Involved too, but you know, if you watch a Nollywood movie, 90% of the names are Igbo names.

R: *Is that intentional?*

SJ: It's intentional, because the market...

R: *Drives it?*

SJ: Basically, yes. Especially in the East; the movie market – Onitsha, Asaba – sometimes the marketers dictate who appears in the movie, or who does what in the movie. Some guy might come and say "oh, did Shadrach sing in that song?" and if you say "no" then it's not selling again [*waves hand dismissively*] and he'll go look for the one that has Shadrach in it. Or, let's talk about the actor – there was a time when their faces [actors] were not good anymore in the market. So these guys will come and look at the thing [film] and say "oh, this guy [actor] is faded". So, the marketer will now say "oh, this is guy [actor] is not representing." By the next movie, he will tell you "we wanna see so-and-so person in the movie". So, the market first.

R: *The market dictates – decides most of these things?*

SJ: Decides most of these things. They meet in Onitsha, like before I get jobs, they [marketers] must have sat to talk about it, and said “OK, Shadrach did that job and he was fantastic; why don’t we give this to him, he can do it”. Let me shock you. There was a time when, after *Akinukwa*, that comedy movie, I became a comedy soundtrack producer, for about 2 years. [laughs] Somebody will make an urban movie, and say “let me give it to Shadrach” and they [marketers] will say “no, no, no, Shadrach is a comedy soundtrack person.” That was how – I’m telling you, I just kept getting it [comedy soundtrack requests] because of *Akinukwa*. Until 1 or 2 guys said “but Shadrach started with urban thing [soundtracks], so he can do it [urban soundtracks]”. Now, they now know that I’m versatile. The latest one now is epic, indigenous stuff. They want it [soundtrack] in Igbo. And Stanley too, because he understood that [marketers’ needs] - most of the epic movies, Stanley is the king, because he was able to read them, and he now used his er – Stanley is a very intelligent person – you’ve met him.

R: Yes.

SJ: He is a genius, you know.

R: Yes.

SJ: I respect him. Although it [respect] is mutual, according to him, but we are very tight and all that. I think he is all that, he thinks I’m all that, so I don’t know [laughs]. Stanley is a very sharp guy ... very intelligent! So he will just study the situation and then go down there. When Stanley did his first album, we were all mocking him. That was when R&B was, you know, the ‘in’ thing – you had to sound like the American, and he was sounding like this [shakes head dismissively]. Stanley ignored all of us. When he plays the [soundtrack], we were ashamed of it ... except those of us who are close to him, who were – I chose my words very wisely, I didn’t condemn him – I said “well, it [Stanley’s soundtrack] is a good local vibe.” But Stanley bought a car from that thing [sales of the soundtrack]. You understand? Got a house, a flat, in *those days* [snaps fingers to emphasise accomplishment]. And that was how he started. So that’s why I respect him. He had pioneered some things, without even knowing that he did. So he understood them [marketers], all the local stuff. But the danger of that thing is reputation, you start repeating yourself – you start sounding alike. That’s what they [marketers] are saying now, about Stanley ‘all his movies sound the same’.

R: *Why? He’s the... I mean, he has created a style. You know, the thing with style is – you either stick to it, and be known by that style, or you do not, and you are forgotten.*

SJ: Those guys [marketers] are crazy. Just because of that style, they are saying ‘oh, he is sounding the same.’ I suffered the same thing. ‘Oh, Shadrach, it’s *that* same style’. But they [marketers] forgot that they told me “let it sound like *this*” or “it must sound like that.” In fact, we are guided by them. They tell us what to do, basically, consciously or unconsciously, you understand. So when I’m dealing with a client, I study his mentality, so I’m gonna do it [soundtrack] according to how he wants it. So, be sure that you might hear some of my jobs, and think “is this Shadrach?”, as it [will be] completely different, you understand. But at the end of the day, it is a style, like you said, and it is working for us, and I think we should just refine it a little, you know, up the quality a little, and then maintain it.

R: *And just on a last, final note – when you say, “refine it a little”, what aspects of it need refinement? Why can’t it just be exported the way it is? Because it stands sharply distinctive from Hollywood and Bollywood so “refinement” here needs to be defined. What exactly do you mean, sir?*

SJ: Refinement depends on the movie. For instance, we have the new Nollywood, who are trying to represent us on that level [*raises hand in a gesture of elevation*] -

R: *Pro-West?*

SJ: Exactly, that’s what I mean. Whereas we over here...

R: *The local?*

SJ: The local ones, are, in terms of musical quality, you understand, for instance, these guys [marketers] are so cheap that, they’d rather go to some roadside studio and get something knocked together, instead of coming to people who are experienced, and who can give them something good. So you hear some soundtracks, which sound like cartons, you know this tin, whatever ... somebody is just hitting the tin [*uses hands to imitate drumming sound*] and then you hear some very scary voice singing, you understand. So, it saddens me. And some of these movies *actually* get *there*. The people see it over there, and that is where this criticism is coming from; that’s the angle it is coming from. I bet you, you will not watch any of Stanley’s stuff, my stuff, or Austin’s stuff, and not see some form of quality, whilst retaining the...

R: *The local content?*

SJ: The local content, yes. In fact, Austin does more of crime. He is known for crime. That’s his style, basically. His clients are...

R: *Producers of crime films?*

SJ: Yes. Crime, action movies. That’s Austin.

R: *So it would appear that you people have divided yourselves into genre specific soundtrack producers. So, for instance, you have ably identified Stanley as ?*

SJ: Epic [*laughs*]

R: *Yes, epic and comedy. Austin – crime, action films. And then you are?*

SJ: I am more versatile, because I need to pay the bills.

R: *So, what is common to all of you, in terms of style? What cuts across? You all source materials locally?*

SJ: Yes.

R: *You all try to give it the Nigerian-ness, in how you compose the music?*

SJ: It depends on the movie. Like the action films for instance, that Austin does, they are not exactly indigenous per se. It's like crime, like urban –

R: *So even in that urban approach, does he not rely on Nigerian hip-hop, Nigerian popular music? Does he use pop music of the West?*

SJ: We are not allowed to use...

R: *Pre-existing music?*

SJ: Yes, anymore, because we could get sued. So we have to create music. Exactly. The only thing that we probably do, what we do is the 'moods', sometimes we buy.

R: *What is this 'moods'?*

SJ: 'Moods' are for instance, sorrow, tension, [and] suspense – these are mood music.

R: *OK*

SJ: To interpret a scene, in particular, action. Sometimes we buy them [moods], sometimes we create. But I basically create, you know, compose them, based on, you know, if it's cultural, you have to create something cultural. If I want to interpret a scene where they are fighting, you should hear the *konga*, you should hear, if it's in Eastern Nigeria [the film], you should hear the *ekwe*, you should hear the *uju*, even in that scene –

R: *And if I may take you [up] on that – because I have seen some of these films in which you produce the soundtrack, where they [actors] had to fight and you used local instruments, rather than the sound samples from some of the imported software?*

SJ: Hmm [nods]

R: *By contrast, in Hollywood, where people have to fight, they simulate the sounds of punches, but in your case, you go local, and you use local percussion instruments?*

SJ: Yes.

R: *Why do you do that: because I think that also speaks to identity?*

SJ: Yes, at first. It was actually more in error – we couldn't source the ... we couldn't get our hands on these sound effects.

R: *Oh, OK.*

SJ: So we had to improvise, but now that we can get them... they are all over the place. So, like the punching, when someone punches you hear the punch, when someone kicks, you hear it [kicking sound], so we have those ones now. But in the past, we had to create. A punch is a punch. I don't think there is any need for cultural identity when it comes to the sound of a punch, or a kick, or a slap. A slap is a slap. But, before, because we couldn't get these effects, what I had to do is record it live. So, I slap

something, and I record the slap. If I'm looking for a – *[laughs]* – in fact, there was one comedy I did, the guy was just farting all over the place – I had to simulate this. I got a friend who farts at will *[laughs]* got him into the studio, and he was farting, and I was recording *[laughs]*.

R: *Wonderful! [laughs]*

SJ: That's how I got the farting sound. But right now, you have them, you can get them as sound effects.

R: *So, you were limited by technology at some point?*

SJ: Yes, we were. Greatly, greatly so. So, we had to - even if you watch some of the old Nollywood productions, you will hear some of the...

R: *Locally sourced effects?*

SJ: Yes. But there is something we do now – even if it is a local movie, we fuse it with a modern sound. Like, you could have a string instrument flowing in the background while you have something like the *marimba*, for a tense scene, where there is a heated argument – that sound under – because it's local, so there has to be something local, there has to be something cultural about it.

R: *Do you have some sample you could play us?*

SJ: *[turns towards computer screen]* What I have is basically songs... I didn't come with moods. I didn't know we were going to be talking about moods. Moods are not really, you know ... moods are not... people don't talk about them that much. People don't really care. But they forget that when you are watching a scene, probably watching a heated argument or quarrel, without knowing it, the thing that is making you enjoy that scene or is making you feel the strength of that scene, is that sound under... that sound, that *[hums like a bee buzzing]*.

R: *The drone?*

SJ: Yes, the drone of some sort, under. That's what is actually... because, to your subconscious, it is a subliminal feeling that you are not aware of, but it's there. It is only for us who are – who do it – we listen. When I am watching a movie, be it Hollywood, Nollywood, Bollywood – subconsciously I'm listening to the sound, because that's what I do. But the layman is concerned with the picture, basically. That is why, even abroad, the man doesn't know anything about the music. It's the story, the actor. But that sound helps. That is why the identity thing, our style, that is why we stand out. That's why the Indians stand out. Because there is something about the Indian movie 'oh, they must dance and sing'. There is something about the Nollywood movie 'oh, they will sing it, they will talk about, they will sing about that thing, they will sing the story.'

R: *[laughs] Interesting!*

SJ: But the Hollywood movie is – is about the picture quality, the sound, the actors, the camera and all that, but the sound is – for instance, you are into it [*gestures towards interviewer*], that's why you probably take note when you are watching a Hollywood movie. But the lay person doesn't really listen to that. But he knows that there is something under there... He is more concerned with the movie, the story.

R: *Let me just quickly take you on that one. We have established that what is important in Nollywood productions are the dialogue and the soundtrack. The motion of the camera, which is a strong element in Hollywood films, is not the case in Nollywood. So, in other words, you can be in your kitchen and watch a Nollywood film with your ears, by listening to the dialogue and the soundtrack.*

SJ: Of course.

R: *That is an identity marker on its own. Now, the question I want to ask is – is this deliberate? The decision to emphasis dialogue and soundtrack – to marry those two elements such that you don't need to follow the movie with sight – is that deliberate, or [was] it by accident?*

SJ: It's by accident.

R: *But it looks like it has stayed over the years, and become a very intentional act?*

SJ: Yes, because people... thanks to the critics.

R: *Thanks to the critics?*

SJ: Yes [laughs]

R: *Interesting.*

SJ: Because they were the ones that pointed it out, and said 'do this, do that' and then we discovered that this thing [prefiguring] has become a style because even at a particular point in time in the comedy area, I mean the stage comedians, the stand-up comedians, they mock us. They would say "take for instance, you are watching a Hollywood movie, maybe the er,, what do you call that thing? I think it's the preview.

R: *The preview?*

SJ: Yes, the preview – you would hear something like "another one from Fox Pictures" blah, blah, blah, but when it comes to a Nigerian one, you would hear the soundtrack first [sings] '*Uche is going to school... yes ooo, Uche has gone to school! And teacher go flog am today!*' [laughs] so they [comedians] mock us, they actually laugh at us, but we are giving them something to get paid for. So, I for one, saw that it has become an identity thing. That's why we are going to hold some sort of symposium or something, sometime this year, where all the players and professionals will come together and talk about their various...

R: *Issues?*

SJ: Yes. I'm going to... in as much as we want to be Hollywood, I'm going to emphasise the fact that identity is so important. Let us retain, let us maintain this thing we do. It has become ours. Let us own it, you understand, because if not for the way it is, nobody would have recognised us [*pauses*] so how come with the way we were or still are, we are number 2 in the world? Why? We were number 3 [globally], but we overtook the Bollywood movie [industry], and now we are number 2. Who knows if we might overthrow Hollywood? [*laughs*] So, which means, this is working for us. Some actors come and they criticise [us], but this was where you [the actors] came out from, you sprouted from this old Nollywood. So, what I mean by fine-tuning, I'm talking about pictures. Because when the quality is good, picture quality, camera angles, and the technical aspect of it, when we up our game, and which we are doing... if you watch the recent so-called Nollywood movies, the local ones, the picture quality is better, because they use very good cameras now, the latest cameras. The sound is better because they use location mixers now, to record audio, and they wear this microphones you clip on, they wear those now, so the sound is better, the picture is better, even the edit, everything is better.

R: *Is the soundtrack also [better]?*

SJ: The soundtrack is better because we now have software that generate – that we can get refined tones from, so they sound very good.

R: *Including local instruments?*

SJ: Yes, even local instruments. You know, these white guys are wizards. They came here and took everything, [*laughs*] and now they are selling it back to us. So, they have samples of the *talking drums, udu, marimba, flute*, all the – every type of African instrument you can think of... and refined them, so they sound very good. So when you are sequencing, or when you are putting the beats together, when you use those tones, it gives it quality. Then, the mixing too is better. You have software for the voice, to sound cleaner and stronger, so in terms of quality – so by the time you have that, and you still maintain our normal story, not like telling the whole story, because when you tell the story, some people [film producers] make the mistake of playing the soundtrack as an opener, you understand? So, we don't do that anymore.

R: *OK, so now the style of prefiguring has moved from prefiguring from the onset, to allowing the story to be told, to evolve, and then begin to foretell the thing [story] from somewhere in the middle?*

SJ: Yes, we do that. But what I do is, I don't tell you the story. Although there are some scenes I could decide to write a song for, like erm, there was one [soundtrack] I did where the girl was obsessed by this guy, she just loves him, you understand, loves him to death... she is a maid... she was brought in as a maid, she fell in love with the 'man of the house' and became obsessed. It was so strong and so powerful that I decided to write a song for that scene. There is a montage where she was grabbing pillows and dreaming of the guy, so when you put that kind of song there, '*I'm obsessed by you, I can't eat, I can't sleep, you are in my dreams, it's your face that I see*' that kind of thing – when you put that kind of song in that scene, it makes a lot of sense. The story now jumps back at you. It makes more sense. You identify with it some more, you understand. So, I don't know what they are talking about really [*laughs*] because we are emotional people, like I said.

R: *Yes.*

SJ: So, it's us, the way we express – we are very intense when we express, you understand –

R: *Yes.*

SJ: Your expression now has been watered down a little because you are there [UK], so the way you speak – the typical Nigerian is almost aggressive, shouting [*laughs*] I happened to be – my father was British trained, so I became a gentleman somehow [*laughs*] but the typical [Nigerian] – you see my guy, he is a gentleman too, but you see the action... that's us, when we want to display an emotion, we display it. We want to cry, we cry. We want to get angry, we get angry. Whatever we want to do, we do it! [*laughs*] You are a Nigerian, so you know what I'm talking about.

R: [*laughs*] *Yes, I do, I do.*

SJ: So when we do these things in our movies, it's working, you understand. But the critics can say whatever they want to say. We are doing our bit to up the quality, the picture, sound, and all the other components.

R: *More importantly, you are staying true to your identity?*

SJ: Yes! That is what I advocate. The new Nollywood, well, what they are doing is not bad either. They are showing the world that look, we can also do it the Hollywood way. But what about the Nigerian way? Isn't that why Hollywood took note? That these guys [Nollywood] are wonderful... everything about the Nigerian movie – you write the script, you shoot the movie, you release the thing in a month... in fact, some people, like the Yoruba movies, they can produce 5 movies in a month. It's dynamic. It is an amazing feat! [*laughs*] I'm telling you. That was why they [Hollywood] took note. In 2 weeks, you are done with your movie. You shoot, you edit, you do music and you release the thing. So its... I think we should stick to it... improve quality, but stick to the identity ... it is important to me. New Nollywood can come and say they want to be Hollywood, no problem, but I am both for the local and the foreign, make no mistake about that, in case one of them gets his hands on this thing [interview], and thinks that I'm pro-local and anti-foreign.

R: *We understand what you are saying. In the global village, we need to retain our own identity. That's what you are saying.*

SJ: Yes.

R: *On that note, thank you very much. Thank you very much Shadrach, it's been a pleasure. I will call on you again if I have further questions, things I need you to clarify.*

SJ: No problem.

R: *Thank you very much.*

SJ: It's been an honour, an honour really, to be interviewed by a British-trained [scholar], because what you are doing right now has never been done, so it's really great, thank you.

Interview 3

Austin Erowele, interview with the author, held in Lagos, Nigeria on 10 August 2015.

R: *Good afternoon, Austin, and welcome to this research interview.*

AE: Yeah, good afternoon.

R: *My name is Peter Sylvanus and I am from City University, London. I am currently undertaking research in film music particularly film music within the Nigerian film industry. You are one of those who have made some mark, and we have decided to talk to you. But before we go ahead, kindly tell us how long you have been in film music practice and how you got involved in the business.*

AE: OK. Thank you. My name is Austin Erowele. I am a movie soundtrack producer in Nollywood. I don't know.... how I got involved? Actually, I think I got involved by chance. First of all, music has always been a part of me; even when I was growing up (right from a very tender age of 11, 12) I had been writing my songs as that time. So, I grew up with knowing that music is something that I wanted to do on life. But of course as with a typical family background – 'African family background', you are never encouraged to do music. Music is looked at as one profession that is for the no-good-doers; as in the no-gooders or whatever...the...

R: *...the never-do-wells?*

AE: Yes, the never-do-wells. Yes, same goes for sports; as in back in those days your parents will never hear you say you want to become a footballer. What's that supposed to mean? So, just like that I...I grew up [and] faced a lot of troubles with my dad [who] never wanted me to do anything about music. It was just, you know, silent there in me as I went to schools. [But] by the time I finished my secondary school and was to go to university, I now saw a chance of actually living out that dream because I started getting this little freedom away from home. Back then I joined musical groups [and] the TuFace of today...we used to be in the same [music] group in Jos – the university of Jos where I went to. So we formed a few bands around and we rocked the system. I was actually doing my music thing then without my parents knowing about it. So, after then...

R: *What year was this?*

AE: That was between 19...let's say 1995...1993/94 and 1995, I'm not too sure [about] the particular year when we were doing all these musical stuffs; but I know that I left [in] 1997. I left the university of Jos in 1997. So by the time I got back to Lagos I became like a free man – I became like a bachelor. But due to the problems I faced whilst growing up – in terms of me actualising my dream – it affected me psychologically. I became sort of introverted. I became shy. Otherwise, I should be in the mainstream doing secular music and stuff. But I find myself not being able to do that. But somehow, along the line, I discovered the movie industry. It was actually one

of my cousins that (during one of my holidays in Lagos) had told me to come down...that 'what am I doing at home?' [and] I should come down [*pauses to take a phone call*]. So, my cousin told me to come down for an audition that I was at home doing nothing. So, I went down for the audition and was surprised that the extra role that was given to me, I was paid five thousand naira (20 US dollars). At that time five thousand naira was [a] big deal...I was like 'what?'

R: ...*this was in the mid 1990s?*

AE: That was er...1997 – around 1997. So I was surprised that I could just get paid five thousand naira for standing before a boutique... so that drew me into the movie industry. So, when I entered I was doing all these extra roles here and there, you know. Then I now discovered that there is a part of the movie industry where they... I watch movies [and] I see music...people singing and all that. I was like these songs are wack[y], I can do better songs than these: you know I've been writing songs. So, this has been a part of me; I was like let me see if I can get into this department. So, I went about it: I was going from one film producer to the other [and] they would tell you 'OK, write something'. I will do and come [back] and before I knew it that was it! I got my first err..CV. I did a job for one Fidelis Duka who (I think) is the current president of the director's guild of Nigeria.

R: *Fidelis Duka?*

AE: Fidelis Duka. So, he gave me my first break. There was er...a production he did [called] *Images*. *Images* was about HIV and stuff. So, I was given the opportunity to do something. He reluctantly gave it to me. It wasn't like he gave it to me; it was [more] like 'Ok, let me see what you can do. Go and write up something'. And I came back... When I came with my friends, I had a little...some of my friends, we formed a little group and we rehearsed together and stuff. So, when I came back to the office, he called all the people – all the staffs: those that work with him, his PAs. They all came around his office. Then he said 'Guys, I want you to listen to theses guys [to] see what they can do: juts listen to them'. By the time we finished rendition, they were carrying us up like this [*in the air*], you know. So, it was wonderful. That was the first one. We...I had not gone to produce it [soundtrack]. It was just the voicing – raw voicing [and] he just gave me the contract.

R: *Interesting. So that's how you...?*

AE: Yes. That's how I started.

R: ...*and this was in nineteen ninety um...?*

AE: Yes, 1997.

R: *You say the title of the film was?*

AE: 'Images'. It is a soap opera about HIV, the problems of HIV and stuffs.

R: *Do you own and work in your studio, or do you work outside of your own studio?*

AE: Back in those days, we used to work in various studios. You could choose a studio. You put other things into consideration – the producer, the engineer, the fee especially! It's the fee especially that determines, because you know, some production houses will charge more, some studios will charge less. So, the fee sometimes... because you are working under a very small budget, so to say, so you are trying to cut costs. So, we didn't really own our own studios. Like, this studio is not my own. This is where we produce, but when it comes to scoring – you know, producing is different from scoring – scoring is where we make use of the music that we produce, and we attach them to the raw movie, that had no musical input. That, I have my own studio for that. But, for this audio studio, I don't have audio studio where I produce. So, I use other studios.

R: *So, you just talked about scoring, and I just want to ask – do you produce musical scores for Nollywood sound tracks, and if so, are such scores available to see?*

AE: Yes...

R: *In the conventional musical notation?*

AE: Well, of course we do produce scores for movies, but the problem we are facing is that of having to get it right. You know, you listen to sounds like Bollywood and even Hollywood. You see the quality of sound that comes from them. That has become the problem here. We can't achieve that quality of sound sometimes and I think it is part of that, people looking down on music as something that is viable, you understand? So, because of that, people don't pay attention. When you listen to the moods or incidentals that we produce here, they are mainly very light. They are not really complex and strong enough, for you to really feel it. Just to make a 30 second mood or incidental, it takes a lot, you know. The only person that came close to doing a very good instrumental or incidental for movies – I don't know whether you know his name – his name is Cobhams Asuquo.

R: *Hmm, yeah, the blind...*

AE: Yeah, we used to work together. He is the only person that I respect when it comes to that. I, for one, am basically a songwriter. I write my songs, I produce, but when it comes to – I am not into producing the moods and incidentals. I have people – other producers – that do that for me.

R: *And, just to go back to that question – by musical score, we are talking about the sheet music – the music with all the conventional European music notation styles, where you lay out, if you are writing for a big orchestra and band or something like that – so when I ask if you produce the musical scores for the film, it is like asking for the script of the movie, where the –*

AE: I know what you are saying. You are talking about the cue sheet or something like that –

R: *Yeah, the notation – do you produce that?*

AE: The thing is that over here, we don't practice that. Here, let me say, we are still somehow backwards when it comes to movie soundtrack production. We don't do that. We do this on our own individual abilities. We manually score these sounds. We manually lay them to it, by just watching the scenes, trying to pick out the right moods,

or producing the right moods that will go with that scene. We don't have like a score sheet. I know its being done over there. They do it properly. But we don't have that. Everything we do, we try to do it on our own. So, it means you must have a special ability to be able to interpret a scene, and get the right moods or incidentals that you need for that particular scene. So, that's how it works here – for now. Probably, if we have assistance from the government, and most of us who are into the business are given some proper enlightenment, education so to say – probably we would begin to arrange ourselves and align with the – you understand?

R: *Right. So, this brings me to the next question – about limitations. What are the limitations you face in sound recording for Nollywood film? Are those constraints cultural, technological, or economic, or all of the above?*

AE: Well, they are both economic and technological, yes. You know, over here, money seems to be a big deal. It is also cultural as well, because it starts with the recognition – people accepting music to be something tangible, something good, something that – so it starts with that first. Without that recognition, without people putting that importance in music, there is no we could get any kind of appreciation from anywhere. So, it starts with that. So, first of all, people need to see music as something that is very viable. That's talking about cultural now – so, you see it's not in our culture. We need proper orientation, so that – educate people, allow people to be let them see that music is something that can also be very useful to the society – that can be accorded the same importance that you accord other arts. So, that's one problem, the cultural aspect of it. Now the economic aspect of it is about money. The pay for – I don't know, it's crazy – so the producer is working under a tight budget.

R: *Yes.*

AE: And music, or let's say soundtrack production, is the very last in the line of production. So, by the time they get to the soundtrack area, they will tell you – oh man, we've exhausted our budget, we don't really have much, please can you just manage this – so, you see, that affects you as a soundtrack producer. You can't do much; you can't pick the right kind of people to work with you. Those who are very good in what they do, are much more expensive than others. So it affects you one way or the other, in decision-making, and probably in the output of your production – because probably you will want to use certain artists that actualise what you are doing, but you can't afford those ones, because the money - and you yourself, you need to make something out of it. So, that's where the economic issue comes in. then, the other one...

R: *Technological?*

AE: Technological. Just like I mentioned before, we are really – like what you see right here is just everybody. I even think that we need to do a proper surgery, in the music industry. Just that the music industry is a bit easier, because all they have to do is just come, make any kind of music, anything you know. You can just start singing about the song, start singing about –

R: *You are talking about the Nigerian pop music industry –*

AE: Yes. Now, it is easier for them. Just come to the studio and do something, and you master it and go. But the soundtrack is different, because whatever you are doing, you have a subject that you are working towards. So you must move towards that particular subject matter that you want to talk about – that's the script, the story. So, it becomes very problematic for us. So, that's, technologically, we are really backwards. So, I'm hoping that if we could get some group of engineers, some group of producers, even songwriters, and put them through some kind of training, to the level that these ones over there in Europe and America – then we could come back here and improve the industry. As simple as that. But nobody is looking into that. Nobody is seeing that area as something that is viable. So it is really killing us here. Those are just the 3 things that I think of.

R: *Thank you very much. So the next question is – in sourcing music for your soundtrack, what do you primarily look out for? What factors help you decide how you would approach the soundtrack of a particular film?*

AE: OK. Like, first of all, if you got to be into the soundtrack industry, you must be more than an average musician. In fact, you must be talented. When I say talented, I mean you must be talented. Especially more of a songwriter because it is the ability to interpret the script and write the song about the story in the script. You know, people try to write songs in various ways. Some just go – I don't know how to explain it. You are writing the song. It is not like you are telling the whole story. People tell the whole story in movies. So, that's not it. So, you must come from that background that you know much more about music. Much more than the average musician or artist that is singing. So, with that, you find out that the problems we are facing when it comes to soundtrack production, if you have that background knowledge, you find out that you will be able to take out some of all these issues and problems that we are facing right now. Please, you asked a question before. What was that question again?

R: *I asked what you source, what you look out for. I guess, I am talking about the creative process – a film's rough-cut is sent to you?*

AE: OK, the creative process. OK, fine.

R: *What informs your choice of sounds and genres, and things like that?*

AE: OK, first of all, a producer calls you or contacts you for a soundtrack production. As a soundtracker you should request for either – back in those days they used to give you a script, but if they give you a script, you must be very very intelligent – you try to visualise the script, as you are reading the script, you try to visualise – it's like you are playing the movie –

R: *What year was this, please?*

AE: No

R: *Can you just guess what year?*

AE: Even at that, since 1997, even they still do it till now. I still do it too.

R: *You are given the script?*

AE: Yes

R: *Without the rough cut?*

AE: Yes, so with the script, you read the script. By the time you've read the whole script, you've already had the knowledge of the whole movie – how the movie started, how it ended, the whole story. Good. Now, that is done sometimes if the producer is very impatient. You know, he couldn't wait for them to finish the editing before handing it over to the soundtrack producer to do. So, he wants the music to be ready, so that as they are finishing the editing, he is scoring and producing. So, everything is being done very fast here. Normally, most of them, especially nowadays, they know that it is proper to give the soundtrack producer a preview copy, because when they give you a preview copy of the movie the way it is, you really get to see the aesthetics. So that, like in a script, the whole story, they might not describe the locations and stuff to you, so, in your mind, you are thinking about a glamorous story. You are thinking about houses, penthouses, nice houses, people living in clean environments. Meanwhile, in actuality, the setting is very rural. So, by the time you go ahead and produce something for that glamour whatever, and you want to score it, when you get there, you see oh-my-goodness. So, that's why it is good for you to actually see the movie. I myself, I insist on seeing – 'let me have a preview copy'. By the time they finish, they will dub out a preview copy for you on CD, so you can watch.

R: *So when they give you the preview copy, how do you go from that to the final product that comes out?*

AE: OK, fine. From the preview copy, I have seen the movie. The next thing is to talk money. We discuss money with the producer. If we agree, we go. If we don't agree, that's it. But once we agree, then we get to conceptualise the theme song: because over here, we do theme songs. Over there, they do all kinds of – they might not even do a theme song, they use songs from artists –

R: *Yes.*

AE: Or they could contract an artist to do a theme song for them. But most of the theme songs don't really reflect, I don't know, in Africa here, we want our songs to have some kind of relevance to the movie, you understand? So, once you conceptualise that, the theme song, sometimes it depends on the producer – he could have maybe one, two, three theme songs – the more theme songs, the more money. That's where the money is actually. Each song, you have people singing, so you must pay for those songs. So now, once that is done, you've conceptualised your song. Then, the moods and incidentals, you also conceptualise. You've seen the movie, so you know, OK, this is an epic, or this is traditional, this is glamorous, this is city life. You can now produce or conceptualise the kind of moods you need. There are some angry moods, some...

R: *...different emotions?*

AE: Emotions, yes. Sorrowful, you know, running here and there, you know, fast tempo, mid-tempo, all kinds of things. So, you put all these things down. But you know,

we don't do it as you having a score sheet, you know, where you time everything, we don't do that –

R: *Yeah, cue sheet.*

AE: Yes, we don't do that practice here.

R: *So, no cue sheet?*

AE: No cue sheet

R: *So what we have is your rough – your page or sheet somewhere where you write?*

AE: Yes.

R: *OK, the kinds of sound samples you need?*

AE: Yes. Sometimes, you take the mood, like you are scoring a particular scene. Maybe the scene is like a minute. That's why you must have some extra ability to do some particular things. The sound itself that you want to put there is let's say, some 30 seconds. But you need some skills to copy that sound, double it, and merge it in such a way that when you are watching it, you won't know that there is a cut, or a jump between – it will look like –

R: *looped?*

AE: Yes – it's not even a loop – but even if it's a loop, ok fine, you make it smooth, yes fine. If you could do that, you pass. Some little tricks we employ here and there just to...

R: *You go from that point, what follows?*

AE: I'm talking about conceptualising right now

R: *Yes.*

AE: Then, we get down to writing. So, I write my songs. I write all my songs.

R: *Do you decide at that point the genre of music you will use?*

AE: Oh, definitely. Immediately you've seen it, you already know, ok, this is R&B, I will need a rap kind of beat to go with this. Or this is mid-tempo, I need a solemn feel for this movie. The movie has a lot of emotional feelings to it, from the beginning. So, this is where you get to – that's where the conceptualisation comes in. So, you write the song that will blend with it. So, once that is done, you take everything, you come to this kind of audio studio, you have engineers, you have producers, you have singers, you have everybody all around you. Then you begin to work. Then, by the time you've finished all these various aspects, you take them all, and move to another studio.

R: *You begin to work – that’s an interesting phrase. You begin to work – do you give – how do the singers and the other persons you’ve talked about, from where do they work with you? Because all the while, it sounds like everything is coming from you?*

AE: Good

R: *So, is there no material you share to them or something? How do you work?*

AE: Well, begin to work means ok, I come in, since I have prepared everything –

R: *No music score?*

AE: No music score. I come in – the songs, the singers – ok, this particular song, I want a female to sing this song, or I want a male to sing this song, ok? You give that particular female – I pre-record the songs. I record them on a tape. I have a phone here, that I record my songs

R: *You sing into the...?*

AE: Yes, just some rough cut. Ok, let me see if I can play you something here.

R: *Interesting*

AE: Don’t mind the voice. I do sing, but –

R: *It’s alright.*

AE: So, the lyrics are there. I have written them. They are also – I write the lyrics, and I record the song with the lyrics, the written lyrics –

R: *In your own voice?*

AE: Yes. So, once the singer comes, I give the singer the phone. When she comes in now, you will see, that’s what’s going to happen. I will give her the phone, and she will listen to it.

R: *And try to memorise?*

AE: Yes, she will listen to it. Not like she will memorise it, but just know the song. You will still take the script over there to...

R: *...the lyrics?*

AE: You will still take the lyrics to the booth to sing. So, you just, you know the melody, you know how it goes, you just know the song, but of course, if you take out – you can’t put it in your head, you can’t know it immediately, you just know the song. So, once you get over there, as you are going through, you know what to sing. So, that is for the singer. My engineer is there, the producer is there...

R: *To mix the sound?*

AE: Yes. He is monitoring everything, and we are working together. He is more of a technical person. Also, he makes his own input too, his own suggestion – ‘ok, why don’t you do it this way’ – so while we are taking the voices – this is for voicing now, this is what I came to do here. But if it is for production, you will have the piano and stuff here, playing and sequencing the beats, produce all the instrumentals first, put them all, arrange them all, you know? Then, before we now begin the voicing, this voicing, because I am coming, I have already done the instrumentals of all these stuff before, so all I want to do now is just put the voice in it. Then, he is going to take it. He is not going to mix here. He is taking it to his own studio, where he is going to mix and send it to me through – sometimes through CD, sometimes – but first of all, he sends it to me, maybe through WhatsApp, I will listen to it. If there is any.... He makes the correction, till we get the final stuff. This is just my own way. I don’t know how others do theirs. This is how I do my thing. Anything I am telling you here is how I operate. I don’t know how other sound trackers do theirs.

R: *Interesting.*

AE: Yes

R: *So, do you at any point, think about how the film soundtrack might accurately represent the identity of the culture area, in this case, the Nigerian culture? Or, does it not matter to you that Nollywood soundtrack should be distinguished from the soundtrack of other cultures?*

AE: Yes

R: *Because you have talked about genres that you use. You have talked about materials from Nigerian pop music scene. I just want to know – why that conscious approach?*

AE: You know, over here, there is what they call stereotype. The first few films you did, probably the prominent films that you’ve done, people see that you are very good in doing local, percussive, very traditional stuff. Now, the next producer wants to do, and he is looking for someone. He makes enquiry, and they say ‘ah, give it to Shadrach, Shadrach we know him very well, when it comes to those comedy, local comedy that we do over here.’ So, those kinds of jobs go to him. But when it comes to glamorous movies and stuff, it comes to me. But the problem we are having here is, we need to have an identity, to say, this is Africa. Africa is black nation, and percussive instruments are things that you use in knowing that this is Africa. We own, we have, if they want to say who owns the rights, we are supposed to own the rights of percussive instruments, because right from, back in those days, it is always this talking drums, all those *ekwe*, we have been using percussive instruments right from time. So, this is supposed to be our main background feel for any movie we are doing.

R: *But, is that so?*

AE: It is not so. It is not so because we are being influenced by the Western world. So, a lot of producers, they want to make films like... Hollywood films. Glamorous things! They watch these things, and ... in fact, our life, see Africa has lost a lot. Almost everything in our lives is coming from the US. We are being influenced by the West so much. So, our identity, our cultural identity is being eroded by things like this. So, that’s why you see a lot of producers will come in, and instead of doing traditional movies,

epic movies, movies that have local languages, they want to compare with... when you go to cinemas these days, you see all these wannabe kinds of movies everywhere. Everybody wants to be like, what's her name, I keep forgetting, all these stars anyway, American stars and stuff.

R: *So, my question then is, having identified this problem, how are you facing up to it, from your perspective as a soundtrack producer?*

AE: Yes, well, first of all, we are here to make money. So, I won't because, you are giving me a glamour film, I will say, no, I am trying to represent Africa, I won't do your film, give me traditional film, that's African. No, I still want to make money. So, what I try to do is, I infuse a bit of percussive instruments, so that we can have a fusion, a blend between the foreign kind of sounds. So, you still have that element, that African element in the scores, the songs.

R: *Talk to me about the African element. Can you be more specific? How do you combine the sounds, because it is not enough to say: "well, now we can hear percussive instruments in the soundtrack, and therefore it is African"? We want to know, is there a particular compositional style that makes, that really pins it down to the culture here in Nigeria? Or, is it in the text? Is it in the text, the lyrics? Where does it, really?*

AE: I think it is... it is not basically in the lyrics. If you are doing a glamorous movie, you want to make it as glamorous as possible. So, you don't want to start using local words in a movie that is supposed to look like a Hollywood movie. So, I think it is more of the instrumentation. Our instrument, you can sing foreign music on percussive stuffs... if you lay them on percussion, you know what I mean?

R: *Do you have an example you edited? Just to have an idea of what you mean?*

AE: Let me see if I can see – ok, this one has – this one, we added a little bit of traditional – you can see, it is basically, you understand? Let me search for another one. This one doesn't have – there is still the African feel to it. You notice that there is less percussive instrument in this. But you see the feels, the flutes and all that, because I wanted it to be emotional. So, you could just feel it.

R: *Talk to me about the use of text, vocal music (because it has been established that much of Nollywood soundtrack is texted music—music with words). Is that a deliberate attempt to stylise film music in this part of the world? Why do you use vocal music?*

AE: That is the African thing about it. Even if you watch our movies, we use a lot of high-sounding incidentals. Somebody makes a reaction; you hear a sound. These are the things that make us unique. Like, over there, you can watch a movie, you won't get to hear those incidentals – like, surprise hits and stuff. But, over here, you will hear that a lot, in all the movies. If you don't do that, it is like you have not really done anything. So, those sounds are very unique to us. That is what makes our own production – if you talk about Bollywood, everybody knows theirs is – they do a lot of musicals, they dance a lot in their movies – but over here, we don't do that. We vocalise our songs a lot, because we want the- we are used to telling – back in those days, we tell folk tales, stories, so we grew up with these kinds of things. So, you can't make a song with no vocals in it. It is like you didn't do anything. So, to them the producers, they will be like 'guy, you've not done anything, what's the theme song? There is no theme song.

This is not how we do. I want a theme song.’ So, you must vocalise your sound. Anybody that does anything without vocalising, you know that this person is trying to copy the Hollywood thing, like I told you, we are being influenced. So, people are trying to tilt, trying to do things that will be on that picture. Everybody wants to make their movies so glamorous. Because of that, some are beginning to copy everything that Hollywood do in their movies. You know, everything. They don’t vocalise, most of them don’t vocalise their stuffs. Especially, but even, if you check the black movies, the movies that are made for the blacks, you see they use a lot of vocalised songs in it, because they are blacks. They are still tied to this African thing, you understand? So, it’s part of us. We can’t run away from it.

R: *And on that note, do you think that that could become representative of the Nigerian style in film music, or there is need to develop a Nigerian style, or Nollywood style?*

AE: Well, I don’t think, because we are talking about culture here. So, if you want to develop another style, that is out or away from what our culture says, then it won’t work. So, whatever we do, it has to come down to culture. So, it’s part of us. We are used to vocalising, and I think that is what makes us different. We vocalise, and use a lot of – we are very reactionary. Have you seen a black man when he is annoyed? He is very aggressive. We are very aggressive people in real life. So, even in our music, you could see it there – the aggressiveness. There is so much shouting, there is so much talking, movement, action, action. We don’t like all this dull... like, you can watch some foreign movies – very dull and quiet, flat! There’s nothing – you could just go to bed. But, we like to hear sounds – people just making noise here and there – and then you put all those sounds – noise!

R: *I see*

AE: That’s how we...

R: *So, when you put all you have said together – the choice of genre, the decision to ensure that the music is textured music, and the choice of, like you said, mood sounds – sounds that will represent the action from the film – do you think that is the standard format for Nollywood film music? So, supposed I wanted to write a soundtrack for a typical Nollywood film – what’s the prescription, that’s what I want to know? How would you prescribe? What and what must go into it?*

AE: I think the thing is, we should not run away from those things that make us unique, or make us different from other movie producers. We should still stick to them, but we could improve. By the time we improve technically, in all the aspects of movie production, then we will have a better production, that people will look into our movies and be like, mehn, this is good, this is great, this is wonderful. We could start by – we overdo things sometimes – like, during scoring of movies, you apply sounds almost everywhere.

R: *Randomly?*

AE: Randomly, and you know, it makes a mess of the movie. Sometimes, the sound becomes too loud, and you can’t even hear the actors again. Sometimes you use all these incidentals in places that are not appropriate. So many things happen like that.

So, if we have some form of education to streamline these things, to make it organised, you tutor people, when they are having dialogue, it is not necessary you put sounds all the time there, when it gets to this place – we need these kinds of things to bring us up to standard, yes. That's the problem we are having in this area.

R: *Interestingly, you have answered the question I would have asked – but, let us go back to that question I asked you. Say, I am an apprentice under your tutelage, as a respected soundtrack producer here in Nollywood, and I come to you, and I say, I have been given a film to score, or rather write a soundtrack for. I just need the format. How do I go? So, for instance, would you say to me, ok, begin by sourcing the sounds samples for the moods or the emotions? Would you also say that I should make sure it is vocalised? That's what I want to know. What would you prescribe?*

AE: I think it would start with, first of all, if you are coming to me, you must be talented. You must have it! You can't just be an average person, and you want to do a soundtrack, because whatever I am trying to put you through, you won't get it.

R: *Is the reason you have to be talented because there isn't any formal school for film music training out there?*

AE: When I mean talented, well, talent could be learnt. There are certain acquired – but I am talking about inborn, you understand. There are some people that, they might just learn how to play keyboard – maybe within a month, but you see they are better than someone who has been playing keyboard for years! That is it. Now, for soundtrack production, I think the key is first of all, you must be a songwriter, because since the key is, like you said, we vocalise our stuffs, so it begins with you being a songwriter. So, if you cannot write a song, where you apply the vocalisation, then what are we saying? So, if you are an instrumentalist, that means you have to employ somebody else to vocalise it for you. But then, if it is coming from you, you are making sure that everything about the soundtrack is you. You understand? You conceptualise, you write the songs and stuff. So, first of all, the guy must be able to write a song. Once you could do that, then in areas of getting the moods and incidentals, we have producers who are very good instrumentalists. You could work with them to produce those incidentals. We have vocalists, people who sing, all these ones you could get from outside. But the one that has to come from you as a producer is the basic concept, which is the song itself, since we base most of our stuff on vocalisation, so it comes from you. Now, once that is done, that's it.

PS: So, how about the medium, the text? Should it be vernacular, pidgin, or –

AE: It depends on the movie. If the movie is done in the vernacular, obviously you need to do your stuff in vernacular. If it is done in a very glamorous setting, you could do that, but you could also infuse something, don't just make it foreign all the time, don't make it glamorous. Always infuse something to make it African, you know, those things we talked about. The instrumentation, even the...

R: *...percussion?*

AE: Yes, percussions and stuff. You could also add some vocals, you could use, like the song I played, you could hear the chorus in Igbo dialect, but the main song in is English. So, these are the things that could make it, you know, this is Africa, this is

coming from Africa. If you remove all those things, you don't have anything. You might as well say, ok, this is coming from India or coming from Europe. So, these are the things that make us different. You know, anything that makes you different is something that another person will find intriguing. If you don't find anything intriguing in what I do, then that means it is not different. It is just the same thing. And you will just – you will say it is not even as good as the ones that they do over here, so you know.

R: *In a nutshell, what in your opinion gives Nollywood film music its identity?*

AE: well, just like I said, our style of using percussive instruments and the vocalisation of the theme songs. All the time, always, in fact in some productions, you will hear songs almost everywhere! They don't mind repeating the same song from beginning to end, so that that's just us, you know, those are the things that give us our identity. But it should be done in moderation. It should be streamlined, it should be, done in such a way that it becomes very palatable for people to watch.

R: *And it has also been observed that those songs are more or less the song synopsis of the film. In other words, the songs tell the story?*

AE: Yes!

R: *So, that is also a precondition?*

AE: Yes, it is, but the problem is, that is why I was talking about being streamlined. You know, you can't tell the story with your song, otherwise once someone listens to it, he already knows where the story is going, he already knows the end of the song, he knows everything.

R: *But that in, itself, can be the thing about Nollywood that gives it its uniqueness. Because there are people who I have spoken to, for instance, Stanley Okorie, who is strongly in support of this style, because of the targeted audience, who mainly are not elites? So, if you want to... do you have a different or counter-opinion?*

AE: Of course, because take for example, you are a movie producer, you make a movie and you employ a soundtrack producer to make a soundtrack for you. What's the essence of making the movie? Is it not for people to sit down and watch the movie from beginning to end, and get the full benefit of the movie? Now, the sound tracker comes in, and he tells the whole story, in the song. And you probably place the song in the beginning of the movie, and people are watching – they have already seen the progression of the movie – he leaves the film! What makes movies interesting is suspense. If there is something that is interesting, and will make you want to watch the next scene, it becomes a beautiful movie. You find out people can sit down and watch it from beginning to end. So, if there is nothing that will make you want to watch the next scene, then people are going to get disinterested. So, by seeing everything in the movie through your song, it's a no-no. So, you have to be diplomatic. You have to be very intelligent.

R: *So, are you saying you don't do it?*

AE: I don't.

R: *So, how do you – what – because I have listened to some of the soundtracks you have produced. The songs narrate – they give – you call them theme songs, but they have a direct relationship with the storyline. So, how do you distance yourself from?*

AE: I don't – like when you listen to – especially comedy films, they talk about the whole thing. What I do, if you listen to my songs very well, you will realise that yes, this movie is talking about a girl who lost everything, lost family, the girl went through a lot – like when we did the orphan, the story about a girl who went through a whole lot of things and stuff, and eventually she gained back most of those things she lost at the end of the movie. Now, the approach is, fine, you write something emotional, you don't necessarily have to tell that particular story. You could pick a particular portion of the story. You could just say something about emotions, not really going directly into the sequences, into the various plots of the movie. Now, you are trying to do two things at the same time. You are giving them a theme song that is very relevant to the movie, but at the same time, is not revealing everything that is in the movie. So, you create your stuffs in such a way that people don't get to hear everything or know everything about the movie, but they get to feel where you are going.

R: *They have a sense of...?*

AE: Yes, it carries them along. They want to see – ok, this girl is suffering – this song is talking about suffering, but the song is not talking about suffering in a particular direction, do you understand? It is talking about suffering on a very plain general level. You can take that song and apply it to another story that is also about suffering. You take that song, and apply it to another story, that is also talking about somebody suffering. That same song, and it will go.

R: *In other words, the Austin Erowele approach is that the soundtrack, albeit worded, is, I mean, lends itself to other application. So, it is not film-specific – it is not tied to a particular film?*

AE: Thank you, yes. It could be generalised.

R: *In other words, has second hand value?*

AE: Yes. You can't really pinpoint, you can't really talk about any character in a particular movie, in a song. You just, you just talk about the subject. Talk about the subject matter in the movie. If it is an action movie, you talk about 'men I am bad, I'm this, I'm that'. You are not talking about the actor - we don't know what the guy is doing – but you are talking about something that is bad, something that is, you know - even the moods, the instrumentation, the scoring of the music, you will know that this film is going to be hot. Or you see a rap, when you see hard-core rap, you know that something is going to happen. But it is not like you are telling them the whole story.

R: *This is really interesting, because you have a different take on what we call pre-figuring.*

AE: That is why I say we need some level of education, some enlightenment. Those other ones that are going to replace us, they will have this orientation and know how to

produce things that will be very general. Don't start pointing everything, telling us the whole story in your song.

R: *So, am I right to say that you are talking about refining the art of prefiguring in Nollywood soundtrack, but not necessarily looking away from the culture to imitate Hollywood?*

AE: Yes.

R: *You are talking about refining that style?*

AE: Exactly

R: *Interesting. That's excellent. That's very interesting. Have you had this discussion at the level of fellow practitioners? For instance, have you... do you have a body of...?*

AE: That's also part of the problem we are having.

R: *Where you may discuss these thoughts, and fashion a way forward for the industry?*

AE: Yes, like I said everything is being done individually. We used to – we tried severally to have a Guild, but I think that is also part of the thing that is affecting us. We are not being included in the Nollywood whatever – all the legacy they are enjoying right now, they don't include us there.

R: *They don't include the soundtrack composers?*

AE: They say we don't have a Guild.

R: *So, why don't you get one?*

AE: We tried severally, it's like whenever we fix meetings, some people will be in the studio working. But we are still working on it. We are still working on it.

R: *What do you hope to call the association?*

AE: We coined that name – Movie Soundtrack Producers Association –

R: *Movie Soundtrack Producers Association of Nigeria?*

AE: Something like that, yes. There was another name - Movie Music Producers Association of Nigeria. We have not really – actually, we want it so we can make it broad, since it is not really—like, some of us, I think I am actually the only one that does mainly soundtrack production for movies. Like Shadrach, he does jingles for other stuff.

R: *Hmm, but I have seen his name on films.*

AE: No, he does do films, but...

R: *Oh, apart from providing music for film, he does other stuff?*

AE: Yes

R: Ok, but you are just solely in soundtrack –

AE: Soundtrack production and scoring of movies. Some people do their music elsewhere, but they bring to me to score. Because scoring in itself is another art totally. Since we don't do online scoring, like scoring with a score sheet. So, its – we are doing everything with our own self – individual ability.

R: Let me just quickly take you back to something you said earlier on, about influences – foreign influences. Are you concerned about the influences of foreign films and their respective soundtracks on local content and production? And if so, what are your concerns, and how do you go about negotiating such influences? You have said that there is pressure from using Hollywood soundtrack as the standard. So, talk us through that influence.

AE: We are being influenced by the West.

R: *In what ways are you being influenced?*

AE: Everything. Our life

R: *In terms of the soundtrack?*

AE: Like, in soundtrack –they produce better quality moods and incidentals.

R: *Isn't that down to technology, which I see you have here? You are using imported?*

AE: That's what I'm telling you. Even from – we don't have – everything here is coming from the West.

R: *Yes*

AE: So, we are so – we can't run away from it.

R: *So, are you saying the technology constrains you because it is not – you don't own it?*

AE: No, the thing is that, we use the technology. It is good to use the technology. We could use the foreign influence on our stuff. The thing is that, over here, we are very deficient in producing our own local moods and incidentals –

R: *The local sounds?*

AE: Yes, yes. Our sounds are not of high quality. Our sounds are just there. And they are not rich enough. They are just there. And sometimes they just play on one chord and that's it. But over there, you see they do a lot of mix. It's like you are doing a full – just maybe a song of 2 seconds, but when you see the amount of work done for that particular thing, you will be surprised. Over there, they are very advanced. So, we could make use of their technology. All we need is for us to be upgraded.

R: *How? How do you want to be upgraded?*

AE: Like I said, if maybe they could sponsor some of us - sponsor us, let us study how to achieve – like, let's say you want to achieve a whoosh sound, how do you make those things? You see an explosion, boom! We don't have those things. Those are where we are lacking –

R: *Technically.*

AE: Yes, technically. But in terms of all these ordinary songs, those ones are easy, we could just be doing those ones. But you see, we can't run away from the West. Like I said, what we need to do is to enhance what we have. That's all. And that's through education. If we don't get that support from the government, or from wherever, we will still be where we are. We will even go down.

R: *Just two more questions and we will wrap this up. Very quickly, how long does the typical soundtrack of a Nollywood film take to complete and why?*

AE: Ok, I will speak for myself. All the while, I have been speaking for myself.

R: *Yes, of course.*

AE: It depends on the movie, and then you also take into cognizance the length of the movie. Some of our movies are very long. Some are 4 hours, 6 hours, 8 hours. So imagine making a score – you know, scoring - laying sound to – so it will take you more time. Like, for me, on average, a week, and that includes writing the song, coming to the studio, producing it, and scoring it.

R: *Have you done anything less than a week before? Maybe as a result of pressure from the Executive Producer or Marketer or because we are also aware that some films are shot in one week? So, at what time do you complete?*

AE: You know why it takes – mine – those that come to me know that I take my time in scoring. I score my sound myself. Apart from writing and producing it, I still score myself. Nobody does it for me. And I take my time. And why it takes me time is – first of all, I work on the audio of the movie itself. I have to balance up the audio. If you take some of our movies and you watch, you have to be with your remote control. Because all of a sudden, it goes high, and you bring it down. It goes too low, and you bring it up. So, you are always fighting with the volume.

R: *So, you double as sound editor?*

AE: Well, yeah, I am just doing that for myself. If I don't do that, how will my sound come out?

R: *You take ownership of it?*

AE: Yes, so I have to correct that, you know, balance it up so that it becomes level. If it is too high, I bring it down. If it is too low, I raise it up. I balance it up, before I could now lay my sound. So, by the time everything comes out, everything, you just sit back

and relax and watch the movie. So, our major problem again is, now that I have gone to balancing, that's where we have the biggest problem in the industry. Audio! Although it's not really in the music, but it's affecting me, because if your audio is bad, my music will be bad as well. So, the audio of the movie – you know, we shoot in very strange conditions – not that it is strange, but very worrisome conditions – generator problem here, noise everywhere, sometimes you watch some movies, and you see all kinds of sounds, unnecessary sounds there, and we are not equipped, we don't know how to remove all those – that's why I was asking about this stuff, how are you going to remove – that means, I trust that you guys have all the technology, and you know what to do, but we don't. So, it affects us. So, if the audio is not clean, it affects us. You won't enjoy it. I think it comes from yourself, as a person. If you are someone who, how can I put it? If you have taste for good things, if something is pleasing to your ear, if you like what you are doing, you take ownership. You are working with someone else, but this is my job. You put yourself into it. The passion and everything, you know. It's not really about the money, because if it is about the money – look, these are just some of the things I – everything here are songs and moods and incidentals – I have where I log moods and incidentals – so, I work a lot, for how much? For peanuts. So, this is like I said, I have been into music from childhood, so this is all I know how to do.

R: *And you want to do it well?*

AE: Yes, I want to do it well, not minding whether I get paid well or not.

R: *Finally, because you hinted that you also double as a sound editor for yourself. The question is, who are those involved in the creative environment of film music production? So, for instance, are there lyricists, choreographers, arrangers, sound editors, etc. who work together with you, or any other soundtrack producer in the production process? Or, do you do all these things yourself? And what are their roles? What is the role of such persons?*

AE: Basically, let me say I do 80% of the whole thing.

R: 80%?

AE: Yes, I do 80%

R: *Did you just say 80%?*

AE: Yes, I did just say

R: *So, in other words, you are probably the lyricist. You write the lyrics?*

AE: Exactly

R: *You are the arranger?*

AE: Exactly

R: *You are the sound editor?*

AE: Exactly

R: *You're probably the vocalist?*

AE: Yeah, I still do – you heard my voice here – I sing as well

R: *You do the instrumentation?*

AE: Instrumentation, that's where I could get someone to produce for me, someone to play instruments for me. Sometimes, especially if you are that good, like Cobhams—Cobhams is a master, and he knows how to interpret my songs. Then, the engineer, you see him here. The other one is if I need a female to sing, maybe I get someone, like the girls arriving now, will sing for me.

R: *And do you think, working that way, doing 80% of the work, ensures the Nigerianness – the identity we have just tried to capture of the soundtrack? Or do you feel that, if there were more persons given specific roles to play, it might affect the identity in one way or the other?*

AE: No, actually if we can have people who are specialised in these areas, it will be nice for the work. But, the thing about soundtrack, me I'm just – it's not like I am saying I am a perfectionist, but I like being in charge of every step of the way, because the credit goes to me. So, if any department there is faulty, it still goes back to me. So, I have to be in charge of every single part. If I had people who could do it, I would just supervise them. But, in a place, in our station, there's no money. So, you find that one person tries to do it all. Even editors, they score sound. Editors that have no business with scoring sound, you see them scoring sound, because everybody is trying to make some more money. You tell the producer, I have sounds, and these are sounds that I must have left in your studio when I came to work last time. Now, the editors will take it, and they will be using it to score. And because they are not professional, they will use the same sound for this movie, that movie, every movie that comes their way. So, they will be keeping that money. That money is supposed to go to the sound tracker. So, they are short-changing the sound trackers here and there. They are the ones actually making us not – they didn't tell you that? They should have told you – Stanley and Shadrach.

R: *Well, it is ok that it's coming from you. So, on a very final note, I am interested in knowing what the Austin Erowele style is. I just want to know – in what ways do you consider your approach to soundtrack production for locally produced films different from say, the one produced by Stanley Okorie, or the one produced by Shadrach John? How do you – how can one readily say, oh, that is Austin Erowele, for instance?*

AE: I am very melodic. My songs, they don't have, all my songs are very melodic. So, and I try, I'm very versatile. I can do all kinds of music. I could do afrobeats, afropop, whatever. You bring the comedy; I will go down low. You go to traditional, I will do that. You come to glamour, I will do that. So, it makes me in a position where I could do whatever I want to do, and – but you know, because of that stereotype thing I told you about, they see that you are very good in all these glamorous.

R: *They try to pin you to a particular genre of film?*

AE: Yes, so I get this - let's say 70% of my jobs are glamorous movies and stuff. So, they try to pin me in that direction, but you still try to see how you bend, you adjust, so that you don't lose that your identity in Nollywood. There must be some input in African feel to it, to make you really different. I think, between me and the other sound trackers, my major strength is in scoring. It is in scoring.

R: *And by scoring, you don't mean scoring from the academic sense i.e. music notations?*

AE: Yes, not that.

R: *You are talking about sound design and sound sampling?*

AE: And placing the sound for the movie.

R: *You are talking about spotting?*

AE: Ok, that is spotting?

R: *Yes*

AE: Oh, it is spotting? Good. Let me say that is my major strength. And they know it. Some of them, most times, even they will give them jobs to do, you know, they will still bring their songs. They will give me their songs and give me their movie to spot. So, I do the spotting, and I am very good at that. And it takes a special ability. It is not like – I don't know – there is no school anywhere where they offer those courses –

R: *Yes*

AE: So, it is something that you develop with time as you enter into the business.

R: *You were self-taught?*

AE: Yes, as you watch foreign movies, you begin to get that natural instinct. You know, you play the sound, you connect, you spot, you know. So, that's just it. So, there are so many things to it.

R: *And it... I'm thinking because for you to carry out spotting properly, you must have something that guides you, like the cue sheet. The cue sheet tells you where you want to lay this music. So, you started earlier by saying you don't have a cue sheet?*

AE: Yes.

R: *So, how do you guide yourself?*

AE: We do logging. There's what we call – I call it logging. I log. Some of them are here.

R: *So, this logging is something you have written down somewhere, to explain something?*

AE: ok, so this is camera log. This is the movie that was done by Desmond Elliott. So, these are the moods and incidentals. So, this is my own logging. This is the description of the moods and incidentals. The moods, they – my description – I am describing the moods here. So, it becomes easier for me, while I am spotting. As I'm spotting, once I get to, this crying scene, I go through my description. You notice some of them you see calypso, you see soft instrumental, you see jazz feel, you see lights feeler, you see organ instrument. So, I name them by myself. I use them appropriately once it comes to the film. If I'm looking for a solemn feel, I just go to the places where – ok, see solemn feel here, I pick it up, I play it. There are several solemn feels. It is not just this one. There are several of them. So, if I use this, and I see it is not too appropriate, I will try the other one. Sometimes, its got to be with your feeling. You must feel good about it. You must like it and say ok, this is ok. This is good. You play it again and again, and you are satisfied that this is good, and then that's it. So, we do our manual logging. You say it is –

R: *Cue sheet?*

AE: Cue sheet. I still do cue sheet. But then, I must have finished the spotting, before I start doing the cue sheet. That's how we do it here. So, if we have some kind of encouragement, some kind of incentive, some form of orientation, education, we could advance and migrate to that level where we could compete favourably—technically and otherwise with these other guys. But here, this is Africa. everybody is just trying to do things—I am living out my dream, in a way. I am supposed to be a recording artist. But because of my parents and all that, I still find myself doing music. So, my dad, even now he feels like, if I had known, I would have allowed this guy to do what he wants to do. So, that's it. So, it's not easy. It's not easy.

R: *Thank you very much Austin. We shall now go into an observation session, where we would see what you do, very briefly. You are here to record something for a film, yes?*

AE: So, that means you are going to wait, because now the girls are going to come, just like I told you. I'm going to give them the songs. They will have to start learning the songs.

R: *That is exactly what I'm interested in capturing.*

AE: Ok, fine

R: *Thank you very much, sir.*

Interview 4

Yemi Alade-Lawal, interview with the author, held in London, UK on 3 December 2014.

R: *OK, good day Yemi.*

YA-L: Yeah, good day good day good day

R: *It's a pleasure to be here*

YA-L: Nice to meet you too. How are you?

R: *I'm very well, thank you. As you know, this is about Nollywood film music, and there's been a lot going on in the industry. Just for a start, would you like to introduce yourself, sir?*

YA-L: Oh wow. My name is Yemi Alade Lawal, and I'll just say I'm a creative, you know. I work in music, film, television, so anything to do with creating content on those mediums, that's what I do.

R: *Brilliant. So how long have you been in film music practice?*

YA-L: Well, you know, just very recently, actually. It's something new to me. I started with trying to do sync placements, where you put music into films as a manager of an artist, that's what I do.

YA-L: That's my day job. I'm a manager of talent. I manage artists. So, I started with trying to put sic / sync music for games, for television, for films, and then I ended up kinda like becoming a music supervisor, which is rather unexpected, but that's another story.

R: *OK, and do you know if there are any persons who are formally schooled or trained in film music practice within Nollywood?*

YA-L: I'm not very conversant with Nollywood and the way it's set up. As a matter of fact, because I'm very new to music supervision, I don't even know if you go to school for that, because I certainly didn't. My school was on the job, learning all the parts, you know, from licensing to contracts, negotiations of fees and all that kind of stuff. I learned that on the job. I didn't know that prior. What I wanted to do was place music in a film, and that's it; and then the rest came with the experience of doing the job. I just don't really think you could go to school to be a music supervisor, maybe you can, but I don't even think they do in Nollywood. If they did, or if they do, then wow [laughs] they have to go back and retrain.

R: *Ha, interesting that you say so. Recently, there's the film 'Half of a Yellow Sun' and I noticed that you took charge of the music there. You were the music supervisor?*

YA-L: Yeah.

R: *How did you become involved with the production of 'Half of a Yellow Sun', please?*

YA-L: OK, well, so *'Half of a Yellow Sun'* was directed by Biyi Bamidele, and when he had this idea about 7 years ago, after the book had come out, the auction / option had been made, he had written a script for it, and the script was approved by the publisher, and they found a producer, but they were trying to raise money. And, at that point in time, because it was a very independent idea production-wise, he pulled me in, thinking that *'I [Biyi Bamidele] am a first-time director, I want to do a lot of first-timers'*, you know, first-time writer... he just wanted to surround him with a bunch of first-timers, so it would have been my first time jumping in to do the kind of things that he wanted. It was just because of my background as a manager, and the fact that I had a lot of music around me, and he thought *'you can just do my contracts for me and whatnot'*, so that's the reason why he put me into music supervision, and I think it's just kind of like, really, I would say, a little bit—I won't call it logical, but I would say it makes sense for a talent manager to do music supervision, if they've got the time for it. I certainly do music supervision not for an everyday job. So I won't wake up in the morning looking for the next film, looking for the next producer to convince to do their movie, but right now I've done 2 movies back to back, and I get recommended for stuff. I have to look at it, and see if it fits into the time that I've got, and then I do it. Yeah, that's how I got involved. It was an independent project, and the director wanted someone independent-minded, and someone who could share the same vision for music, or taste for music, and that's how I got involved.

ES: *Fantastic, so how did you go about the production of its soundtrack?*

YA-L: Well, 7 years in the making, *'Half of a Yellow Sun'* So, we ended up with a score and about 15 cue music in the whole project, but in the beginning, we were just trying to put some music into a film, and because obviously the idea was to do something really low-budget, I mean, you call it a Nollywood movie, and if it's a Nollywood movie, it's a very big-budget Nollywood movie, because it cost £8 million. But, um, and the music budget was north of £200,000, so you know, it wasn't light. But we started with trying to – the director's vision, as the project evolved, and got closer to shooting, he wanted a score. He wanted a full classic cinematic score, because also the idea was, he wanted to write a film that was a dated movie, so even though the war is a very touchy subject, and very sensitive to a lot of Nigerians, he wanted it to be—you know, maybe mask it—so he wanted to...he wanted something really sweet and romantic, and at the same time, something that sets the African music cinema in a different light. He wanted a full score a la - let's say, who are the big film score guys out there—what's his name again—very Hollywood like.

R: *He wanted something Hollywoodesque?*

YA-L: Yeah, he wanted something big like that.

R: *That's a very interesting point you've raised there. That the director, in the course of the collaboration, wanted something a la Hollywood, in terms of soundtrack.*

YA-L: Right, but with an African—how do you say it—if you listen to the soundtrack of *'Half of a Yellow Sun'* or even if you listen to the score of *'Half of a Yellow Sun'*, the main theme of the song, the theme song that you will hear through it, is the anthem—the Biafran anthem, *'Finlandia'*, so the bastardisation of that is what we call it,

because we just kind of like, messed it up. The way it came about, you know, we had a lot of different people; Ben was my original guy for the music period, because his music is cinematic. He does that as an artist, as a recording artist -

R: *That's Ben Fosket, yes?*

YA-L: No, that's Ben Onono. He's the one that... he's the composer. Ben Onono and Paul Thompson, they are the composers of the score here. So the whole idea was to – well, what sold me to Ben was the fact that Ben played that 'Finlandia' track in such a – it just had an emotional feel – and we were just sitting in Ben's house, hearing a grand piano, we had all these conversations, and we watched a demo of 'Half of a Yellow Sun' that they had shot to go get some money. And at the end of the day, he just played 'Finlandia', and it was really awesome, and that sold me to the idea of 'yeah, I need this kind of music, and I really want it big.' And big is like, having a live orchestra and getting it done properly, as opposed to just having it just with live strings and whatnot.

R: *I guess, that takes me right into the other question I was going to ask, which in some ways, you already have begun answering, but maybe you might want to say a bit more. I mean, how did – I mean, the plot of 'Half of a Yellow Sun' is a sensitive one, like you already mentioned, because it touches on the civil war?*

YA-L: Yeah

R: *How did this inform your choice of music for the soundtrack? I mean, just going through the list of songs, I mean, before you arrived at what became the soundtrack, what were the other options available to you?*

YA-L: Well, a lot of trial and error, you know, so what we wanted was music from the period, so the period in time here was 1960 – 1969, so that's the period in time. So we had that 9-year period to pull music. And as we were looking at it, we felt that in Nigeria in the 60s, music was coming from all over. American music was coming to Nigerian radio, and we also had music from all over Africa – Congo, Ghana, you name it – it was just a collage of music, it was beautiful, and there was not a – how do you call it – basically the music was very rich, you know, and that's what the director wanted. He wanted music from that era, and he wanted music that he knew we could hear on the radio in those days. So, that's what we did. We just went in search of that kind of music. We were looking for new music like highlife music, because obviously for scenes where you had dialogue, you needed something that had instrumentals, and that was a problem. A lot of African music – they sang all over the whole place, and there was no instrumentals, and when you were looking for the license to work, it was kind of difficult to chop the track, or recreate them. I mean, we could have re-created some of the tracks actually, but erm, the most important thing was just the fact that, for instance, you couldn't get a Victor Olaiya track or you couldn't get and/or... track that was just devoid of vocals, and just have 10mins, no, 1min of instrumentals. No, there was just none of that. None of that existed. Unless you wanted to loop a little particular section, which wouldn't really be very endearing, so they made us expand our search to a global one, and that's why we end up having smooth jazz cues in there. You know what? I actually – I was just trying to figure out – I can't even remember the songs – I was going to make a mental note of the songs I have on the soundtrack. Do you have it?

R: *Yes*

YA-L: If you do, then I could talk about some of that. But basically, that's how it was. But you know, with music, in order for it to stick, you have to try it out. You might have a vision of it, and then you play, and when you play, you try and see if it fits, and if it fits, you now go on to the next stage of negotiating and trying to get it at a fee that works for the budget that you have. So, the 14 cues that we ended up with, basically, were the ones that we could work with, and worked well for us. So, we had songs like *'Naughty Little Flea'*, *'A Night in Tunisia'*, *'Un Poquito de Tu Amore'*, *'Corcovado'*, ... we had songs from Miriam Makeba, we had *'Hail Biafra'* – we had 2 Nigerian cues in there – so, we had *'Hail Biafra'* and *'Bere Bote'*. We looked at a few library songs, and the director liked that, and it was a straight licensing arrangement, so very easy. We had a song called *'Simini Yaya'*, we had *'Funeral Ceremony'* ... so the way we got the songs were just, erm, like *'Funeral Ceremony'* is a library track, so it just kind of like, worked.

R: *OK, so basically, erm, you were working strictly with the vision of the director?*

YA-L: Yeah, strictly with his vision. I could submit songs to him. We went through tons of songs, you know with these kinds of things, you just don't pick a song, and it sticks, for various reasons. The licensing might not work for it, the fees might not be right – so that's it, really.

R: *OK, but weren't there other factors, for instance, that decided how you'd approach the soundtrack of 'Half of a Yellow Sun'? Weren't there any other constraints, any other factors? So, for instance, having come to some sort of agreement on the repertoire with the director, were there other constraints?*

YA-L: Well, yes. Obviously, budget is always a big problem. For instance, the jazz cues that we had – *'Naughty Little Flea'*, *'A Night in Tunisia'* – we had to find a band that was not the main – so, I had to do the clearance on the publishing, and then look for another company that had the – that had, erm, replicas that were very close to the originals of the master recording side, and that's what we used to keep the cost down. So budget was a big problem. So, once I was able to clear publishing, I was a little bit creative with how I could get the master recording done. So, basically, we found a guy called Tony Kofi and his quintet. They had a song, and they had it jam-packed. So, that's how we were able to get it within budget. So really, the most important thing was budget. That was the biggest factor in getting or not getting a song. We tried to use a song called *'No Satisfaction'*, which was a Rolling Stones track from the 60s, I think '63 to be precise, but we couldn't get it, because they wanted more money than the budget of the movie; after months of negotiation, we couldn't get it, we had to settle for *'Santa Baby'*, which is Eartha Kitts', which was rather apt at the time. But, you know, that song came to us in a Starbucks. Sitting in a Starbucks over Christmas and hearing *'Santa Baby'* [hums the song] and we just thought 'wow! Look at that. That's kind of romantic and it's about Santa. It's not Christmas time, but when you watch the scene in the music, it just kind of works.

R: *In fact, it did fit.*

YA-L: Yeah, it did. Plus, it's a little – the sensuality of the song, the style of delivery, Eartha Kitts, you know what I mean. So, it kind of really works. So, the choice of songs came a little bit organically in that sense, but I was with the film before principal photography started shooting, and I was with the film till the very last day that the film got locked and delivered. When the picture got locked, that's when I really kind of got off. But I got off, in terms of searching for the music. But then I had to do the back-end of it, which is just contracts, and stuff like that, sorting that out.

R: *It's really interesting that you talk about relevance of the music to the narrative of the film. Which brings me to the matter of representation and identity. Did you at any point think that the film soundtrack might accurately or not accurately represent the identity of the country you were trying to [depict]? Did it cross your mind?*

YA-L: No, I mean, as I said, music, number one, has no boundaries. So these songs had filtered through the airwaves of Africa at that period in time. So what was important to us was to be true to that period. And this was true. I mean, you could actually turn the radio, WNBA or whatever the radio station was in those days. At the time Biyi was living in... and he used to hear Nigerian radio. So, no we felt like, it showed the rich diversity of the kind of music that we consumed at the time. And the fact that all music came through from different parts, and we consumed it. And then we exchanged it backwards, because if you listen to some old jazz songs, you go 'ah, I heard... do a version of this, and I'm hearing James Brown' – so there is that crossover effect a lot, because someone would have heard a ref and then recreated that ref in a different way from the radio. And then you think 'oh man, that's Miles Davis' but no, it's actually somebody else from Miles Davis that heard the same thing, but you know, has done a version of, or got inspired by it, and kind of progressed it, you know. So no, I didn't really think that. But we did deliberate about the music, and you know, we were very bent on – I mean, the jazz cues that we had in there, the '*Naughty Little Flea*' and '*A Night in Tunisia*', we would have used the likes of Victor Olaiya, E. T. Mensah and whatnot, very easily but because we couldn't find brilliant music – music that just allowed – and then, also because it was very difficult to look for clearance, who owned the rights, and multiple claimants to the rights... so, it made it easier to just, when you lock up a song in a film, and you don't own the rights, you pay someone else litigation for nothing. So, you don't want that. So we tried to make sure that we didn't have any of that happening on this film.

R: *So basically, this was a combination of indemnity and, access and availability. And that's why you went for the songs you went for?*

YA-L: Without compromising on what we wanted to hear, though. So, it was just – all the songs at the end of the day, ticked the box correctly, because we deliberated on – in some cases, we had 3, 4 songs. I'll give you an example. The film opens up with Miriam Makeba's '*Naughty Little Flea*', but '*Naughty Little Flea*' wasn't meant to be the opening song. '*Naughty Little Flea*' was meant to be in the middle somewhere. But it was just after you sat down and you edited the film, and you watched the film again and again, and we realised that number one, we wanted to open with something strong that was from the continent, and number two –

R: *From the continent, or from Nigeria itself?*

YA-L: No, from the continent, because as I said, the music then coming from the radio was from the continent and beyond, so there was no point in looking for just a Nigerian song. Again, it's a global story, because the story [*'Half of a Yellow Sun'*] is a love story, but set in Nigeria, [against] the backdrop of the [civil] war. So, we didn't want to shoot ourselves, I mean, I'm sure the director didn't want to shoot himself in the foot by just being banal and looking for just Nigerian music. And I'm probably talking to you now because you find the soundtrack a little bit more interesting and out of the box. So that was the way we did it – what's obvious, but what's real, what's true, what's representative and does it work? So it had to fit, and we had to be able to pay for it. Affordability – very important! [*laughs*]

R: *OK. I just want to press you a little more on something. Do you think that there is need – I mean, first of all, is there a Nigerian style in film music, as produced in the homeland? And is there a need to develop a Nigerian style in film music, from your personal opinion?*

YA-L: Yes, I do believe that we need to develop a style, but you know, look, this world is suffering from homogeneity right now. So everybody wants to conform to the status quo. So, if Hollywood is the benchmark, you are looking to almost copy that, but just make it sound more African, which is in a sense – when you watch Nigerian films, or when you watch Nollywood movies, they have that annoying music that goes with it, sometimes. Nollywood movies have a song, you should watch – I've got a video to show you, of a girl complaining about what happens in Nollywood. Erm, basically, they have the songs. And if the scene is like, the mother, the son has just left the child, the mother has just run away somewhere, when they play the music, the music will just tell the story again of what has just happened, and it can take another 10mins, when you are expecting it to just move on. I guess maybe I live in the West, so my sensibilities are like 'come on, move on', whereas in Nigeria, in Nollywood, people are like 'OK, cool, so that's what's going to happen', and 10mins later you are still thinking 'OK', and then you are running your own little commentary behind it, whereas the pace outside is a little bit faster. So maybe we are trying to adapt to what's happening, or mirror what's happening in Nollywood, but you know, I guess, at the end of the day, cinema will be seen as a standard, music in films will be of a standard, and of a quality, and eventually the Nollywood music will kind of mirror that or follow that, which is what's happening now anyway, with the new films. I think *'Half of a Yellow Sun'* has set the precedent for some filmmakers to make sure that they have strong music content in their films, because they now know that it can be done. And yes, Nigerians still have rich music, and there is a style, and we just need to incorporate it somehow. But in such a way that it's not too overpowering, because what I mean, is when they place this music in these Nollywood films, it's so overpowering, and a little bit annoying. So that's the style, and if are living outside of that territory, then you may not really dig it. Having said that, I've watched Nollywood movies in Jamaica, and boy! They don't complain about the music. They like the stories, they like the music, and they feel it. So, in a way, you could say, if it ain't broke, don't try to fix it. I'm for style, I'm for authenticity, I'm for – we all can't sound the same or be the same, so in a way, yes, I think we should develop our own style.

R: *OK, still on style, would you say you've developed one yourself, or is there some style out there that you think can be modelled for Nollywood?*

No, because you see, I'm not a creative like that. I'm just a pen and paper guy. I just listen to stuff, I like it, and I think 'oh, this sounds really good, we could really use this', and I try to convince people, or convince the director this is the right one. I think people like Ben Onono and Paul Thompson, they are like more creative, and they will be the ones to say what things should sound like, and how it should sound, but for instance, '*Finlandia*' was used for the Nigerian anthem.

R: *The Biafran anthem?*

YA-L: The Biafran anthem, sorry, the Biafran anthem. And that was done in Ben's style, and he called it the bastardisation of '*Finlandia*'. So he played it backwards, upside down, but we could still hear the fact that it's '*Finlandia*'; but he just played it in his own style. See, that's another thing that was very good about this film. Ben Onono being an Igbo guy, from the region, parents involved in the war – it's fresh to them – so that's why he convinced us, by the time he played the bastardisation of the Biafran anthem, we loved it, because we thought 'wow', it was very gripping. And, yeah, it's the centre part of the film, really, and it cost me a lot of money.

R: *So, 'Half of a Yellow Sun' is the outcome of a co-production process between Nollywood and British interests. How did it affect your work as the soundtrack producer or music supervisor?*

YA-L: Nah, it didn't affect me at all.

R: *There were no influences?*

YA-L: No influences at all, and the only person I spoke to, yeah I had probably the easiest job. I was very happy with what was going on with Ben and Paul, with what they were doing. Producers don't know music. Film producers might know a bit of music, but you don't know music, because if you don't play music, you don't know music, period. So, we had to leave it to the creatives to create, and the producer needed to get on with producing stuff, and the director needed to get on with making sure the picture was right, and every department just delivered their own parts. My job was basically to make sure that Ben had the free reign to do what he wanted to do. But obviously, where the director and producers are not happy, and I'm telling you, the BFI, they didn't want a score.

R: *BFI – British Film Institute?*

YA-L: Yeah, British Film Institute. They didn't want a score. I don't know if I can put this into your stuff [research], because it's a little politics.

R: *No, it's all right, it's all part of answering the question about interests / influences.*

YA-L: Right. They didn't want a score because the way they saw African movies was very different. See, this is the difference here. This movie was done with a score because Biyi wanted it to make a statement, when you see things like '*Hotel Rwanda*', they were just cues, and there's a certain way in which Europeans see African music, or African people. This was a film that was pretty much a Nigerian story, directed by a Nigerian, music supervised by a Nigerian, composed by a Nigerian – so it had a lot of Nigerian influence in it. So nobody wanted – and the creatives, they knew what they

wanted – so Biyi knew what he wanted, but sonically, he didn't know how it was going to be. So it was up to Ben to interpret that and make it come alive for him. And my job was to protect Ben to deliver what he could deliver for the picture, and within the budget that they were working on. So, that was it really. No influence, in a sense. European people – the BFI had a different view.

R: *What was their view?*

Well, they just wanted, they just didn't see the need for a score, they thought it was just a waste, they felt you could just get to just do a couple songs here and there, and then it would fit. These things do happen, where, I hate to say the word, the pre-colonial view of Africa, and we wanted to make a point, that we understand film, and our films can have score, they can be expansive, they can sound nice, and they can have an African feel to it. They didn't understand it, though, but we fought for that. I didn't have to fight for that, to be quite honest, I just carried on with my job. The director and the producers were fighting and fighting and fighting. But the more and more we got closer to testing the film – actually, when we tested the film, the first thing that came out from one of the – the thing they scored the biggest, from the first test of this film in Shepherd's Bush, was the music. And I think that shut the BFI down. At that point in time, they stopped complaining about the music.

R: *So, they complained about the music?*

YA-L: Well, they just didn't see – I wasn't privy to the meetings, but I used to hear 'oh, they don't want a score' – so I used to –

R: *So, they complained about all these cues?*

YA-L: Oh no, they didn't complain about those ones. They were OK with the cues, but it was the score, the orchestrated stuff, they didn't want that. They thought you could just put some live instrumental music and it'd be OK. So maybe it's a budgetary kind of thing, or maybe they feel like we don't deserve a score, but the director thought 'we are going to make this grand, we are going to make this sweet, we are going to make it tight, and we are going to make it African as well'. So, that's how that came about. But, having said that, it's so funny, because the BFI only paid 15%, so it's like 75% Nigerian money, and 15% British money, so it's really a Nigerian production. And I think that shut them up as well, towards the end. It's like 'look, this is our film, we got the money, so you better back off'.

R: *It's some amazing stuff you are giving off here, sir. So, with that, having said that, the next logical question to ask is – is the soundtrack really and if not, why?*

YA-L: OK, cool, I had nothing to do with that, because then it got political, and it got messy, and it wasn't properly planned. So, the producers from Nigeria, they decided that they were going to do a soundtrack that they were going to release, but they didn't have an outlet for it. You have to see that soundtracks don't really do well these days. It's been a long time you've heard a soundtrack from a movie do really well. I think 'Titanic', 'The Bodyguard', maybe some Quentin Tarantino movies had memorable soundtracks, but the soundtrack business is not really there like it was before. Maybe it will come back again, so to put money to marketing and promoting a soundtrack was the next phase, and that's a separate budget. That's a separate business altogether. And so, they didn't really want to take it on. Well, they didn't want to pay me, should I say?

[laughs] I would have done it, but they didn't want to pay me, so I just left them to their devices, and you will see, in Nigeria they had D'Banj release a song called 'More Than You', which they called a part of *'Half of a Yellow Sun'* that never even made the picture. Onyeka Onwenu and Flavour did a song that never made picture, but they were using that as part of their marketing tool to market this [the film] in Nigeria. But, it was just a gimmick that they probably used. So, is it properly – I've never seen a CD of this soundtrack, if that's what you are asking for. We don't have a CD for this. I think in Africa, they tried to do a "soundtrack release", with songs that were not in the picture

—

R: *Basically, to market the film?*

YA-L: To market the film, yes. And they were using it as a way – by using D'Banj, Flavour, Onyeka Onwenu, they were the flavours of the month in Nigeria – so, they were trying to use them [the artists] as an association to the film. But it was a shame because in the beginning, we had an idea of having Asha and Nneka singing original song to close the film. Scheduling, budget, was a problem. We had even Cobhams Asuquo, we were going to get him to produce the song. So, we really, I mean we were going for Nneka, because she is an Igbo girl from the region, so we wanted her. Asha at the time, because Asha is just kind of like the girl next door that people liked. And we thought, if we put 2 big female Nigerian artists on one song, produced by a Nigerian guy, that might just kind of work. But, as I said, scheduling and budget didn't work, so we didn't have that. Then we thought big again. We went for Seal, but when you think big, and people get record labels and managers and whatnot involved, and the budget goes out of the window, blows out of the roof. And I think the Seal thing, he was going through a divorce with his wife, so it made it difficult to nail him to watch the film, and then to get him to agree to it. I think we could have sorted something out with Seal, if we could have got him to watch the film, but it just didn't happen. He changed management the minute he was getting through a divorce, and his whole thing just changed, so we didn't have Seal in the end. In the end, we had the Sibelius song, again, and it worked really well.

R: *Yeah, I get the Sibelius song, because it was an adopted song for the Biafran people at the time, so even if it was a song composed by a European, it had been owned by the Biafrans. It was culturally relevant -*

YA-L: Absolutely.

R: *You did say something about the BFI, and not wanting orchestrated material. I was going to ask – the soundtrack itself contains a selection of songs and music that had been arranged, orchestrated in London by British players and performed by the English Session Orchestra. Was this a deliberate decision not to work with Nigerian musicians and not to record in Nigeria?*

YA-L: No, it wasn't. As a matter of fact, number one, I must say this now, today, so it's 3 years ago we did *'Half of a Yellow Sun'*. Today, it probably would be easier to work with orchestras in Nigeria because they are better developed, and I'm looking at a film that I'm working on now with Nigerian orchestra. But at the time, it would have been a huge project to do. No studios in Nigeria, so we did, we did this with the English orchestra at the Admiral Studios, and we didn't have days to do this. We had a whole

long day to get this soundtrack all in, to record this whole soundtrack, get the people in, and get the work done pronto. Next door to us was 'Phantom of the Menace', and they were actually shut down. So they had a studio, and there was nobody there. The whole day that we were there, as a matter of fact, they were on a 2-week break. So they were paying for a space for 2 weeks that nobody was using. We only had 1 day. Imagine we were to do this. OK, I'll backtrack a bit. When I was doing some scenes for the film, we wanted some original, we had a song called 'Independent Cha-cha', right, for the independent scene. Remember the independence scene at the beginning of the film?

R: *Yes.*

YA-L: Where we had... where we were going to put music in there, we had a song called 'Independent Cha-cha', we did a remake of it, it was very 60s guitar, sound as well, sonically it had to sound 60s, you know, nothing modern. And to record that in Nigeria, it took me 2 weeks. One song! So, at that point in time, we realised that 'look, it would cost us more to do this in Nigeria, and a lot less to do it here [United Kingdom]'.

R: *It was simply down to the economics?*

YA-L: Yeah, and the Nigerian musicians were way more expensive than the English Session players. [*exclaims*] I learnt a thing or two.

R: *Tell me about it.*

YA-L: I did, man. I could just say to you that a bass player in Nigeria would charge twice the amount of money a bass player who has got loads of experience in this kind of work, would charge in the UK. It's as simple as that. And then the fact that you are coming into town – you've got Nollywood movie – Hollywood movie, that's what they call it, they don't even say Nollywood. They just say 'ah, this Hollywood movie' – Why? 'Because it's got Thandie Newton, it's got Chiwetel Ejiofor, Anika Noni Rose, so they [film producer] have money!' It's just that kind of thing. So they [Nigerian music producers] got greedy with it. So, after about 2 songs, it got shut down. That was the end of my vacation!

R: *Very interesting! OK, so how's your work in 'Half of a Yellow Sun' been received so far? I mean, in what ways would you consider it different from locally produced soundtracks and what is your opinion on Nollywood soundtracks generally?*

YA-L: Well, I can just tell you this. The work we did for 'Half of a Yellow Sun' music has definitely set the standard for how filmmakers now want their film to sound.

R: *When you say filmmakers, are you referring to those in the diaspora, or those in the homeland?*

YA-L: So, Kunle Afolayan, Kunle Afolayan is a Nigerian based... Tunde Kelani, Kunle Afolayan, all these guys, they want their films to have good music. There's this guy, they call him the King of Nollywood, I can't remember his name. I'm good with faces, but not with names... I'll have to check. He's a director. But, you know, they all want their movies to have a different kind of feel, and...

R: *When you say ‘this kind of feel’ you are talking about the one that is outward-looking towards Hollywood in style, or...?*

YA-L: I guess, you know, it’s like having a meal, a good meal, but they don’t want it on a garbage can. They want to have it on a decent plate at least, an IKEA plate, even if you can’t get a china plate from Harrods. They want it on an IKEA plate, so it looks good, but it tastes awesome. So, a good meal served on a garbage can is not appealing, which is what has been the status quo. Now, they are trying to move it along. OK, let’s get the cutlery right, let’s tweak it here and there, you know, it’s still music, but let’s make the quality better. Let’s make the presentation also better.

R: *So, on that note, if I understand you, you are saying that they’ve got issues with the technology, the creative, and the know-how?*

YA-L: Well, yeah, technically, even if they have the technology – because they do have some studios in Nigeria, maybe not the kind of [xxx] studios or Admiral Studios, but they don’t even have technicians who could run the board properly for them. So, when they do that primary work in Nigeria, they probably have to bring it out of Nigeria to get it fine-tuned. So, technically, in Nigeria, sound engineers need to be trained, to make that industry a little bit better. But I think, you know, that’s what it is. People create the music with their producers in a small studio, and then they bring it to the UK, or they take it to Europe or wherever they can get it done properly for them, but eventually there will be the opportunity for people, especially those who can afford it, and who have the budget for it, eventually there’ll be a time where Nigerian films will be shot in Nigeria, the music will be done in Nigeria, and the music will be fantastic coming out of Nigeria.

R: *And by fantastic, you mean quality?*

YA-L: Quality, yes. The music is always nice.

R: *What about the creative part of it? Do you think there’ll be a time when the bulk of the music will be sourced from the Nigerian musical culture?*

YA-L: Well, I guess it depends on the movie, though, doesn’t it? Because if it’s a contemporary – if for instance – I’ll tell you this – since *‘Half of a Yellow Sun’* I did another movie called *‘Gone Too Far’* and it’s a BFI film, and it’s set, it’s like a *‘Kidulthood’*, *‘Adulthood’*, - have you heard of *‘Kidulthood’*?

R: *No.*

YA-L: OK, it’s a UK hip-hop urban movie, and it has Noel Clarke. A girl called Bola Agbaje, she wrote a play called *‘Gone Too Far’*, and it won a Laurence Olivier, and it turned into a film, and we are doing the second one, but the film – it’s an urban film, set in London, about a Nigerian family, two Nigerian brothers, separated and then meeting in London. A day in the life of two mothers meeting in London. Great story. And we used African beats, you know, we used Afro beats. Again I worked with Ben on this, because Ben is my guy, you know, classically trained. So in terms of getting scores or getting cues or getting music made, he understands that. So I worked with Ben on this as well, as a composer, and then we built music around this. And then we

sourced all the West African music. So, we had a song called ‘*Azonto Decale*’, we had people from Congo, Cameroon, Nigeria and Ghana on one track. I think in terms of the creative side of getting the music done, content-wise, that’s not a problem. It’s just making sure that content sounds good, you know what I mean. So, Wizkid can do ‘*Pakurumo*’, and it sounds good, but it’s not mixed right. So it’s the mixing and the mastering, it’s just the technical bit that just needs to be tight.

R: *Just to further that talk of quality... do you think that Nollywood films, I mean film music, possess qualities that are commercial and homogenous to the culture of the Nigerian people? And if you agree, what are those qualities?*

YA-L: Well, yes, but no. it depends on the audience, because some sophisticated audience in Nigeria, what we call ‘the returnee audience’, they are not really impressed with the level of music or the quality of it in the films. They think it can be better, because they’ve watched ‘*Pretty Woman*’, they’ve watched European movies. So, they have that expectation in a Nollywood film. But people who are local, they are very conversant with and used to that kind of sound, you know, and so, as a matter of fact, music is the least problem that they have. It’s the storyline that they are more worried about. They don’t care about the music in that kind of sense. So, for the local, for the overwhelming, for the people that really make it count, that make a ‘*Jenifa*’ big – what would make a ‘*Jenifa*’ a big movie, is not me and you. Local people don’t really care.

R: *And of course, they are the ones who buy?*

YA-L: Who buy the stuff, yes, who consume the stuff.

R: *So, in that sense, it is commercial. That’s why you said yes in the first instance –*

YA-L: So, yes, in the sense that it is very relevant, they know it, and that’s what they consume. They don’t know any different. Whereas people who are coming in from a fusion culture, they are definitely critical of it, and would like to see it be of a European standard, or a Hollywood standard.

R: *OK, so in your opinion, since you’ve seen a lot of these locally produced films?*

YA-L: I’ve seen some.

R: *OK, would you say that the music is only randomly deployed in soundtrack repertory, or – what’s your take – do you think that the local soundtrack producers really think through?*

YA-L: No, they don’t, because if you watch some soundtrack movies in Nigeria, they’ll have ‘Boys 2 Men’, and you go ‘wow! They didn’t even clear that’ – because if ‘Boys 2 Men’ should catch them [laughs] So, because the movie is not going to go beyond the boundary of VCR or DVD, and even I guess if ‘Boys 2 Men’ tried to find the director, they probably wouldn’t be able to find him, so they get away with murder, in that sense, for the ones who will be brave enough to use international music. I’m beginning to see a little bit more of that, where people use cues from the songs they know. But you know Nigeria has new modern artists, and for the contemporary stuff, they are not short of music.

R: *Pop music?*

YA-L: Well, so called hip-hop industry. Inasmuch as it's not monotonously sounding the same. I was almost going to work on a project called '*Sugar*' which a HIV, MTV project, with Biyi, who also directed that. But the music that MTV ended up using were all the contemporary stuff coming out of Africa, and it was pan-African music, which is very similar to the way we went with this '*Half of a Yellow Sun*', you know, just pan-African, pan-world, look all over the world, look for the best songs, the most representative for the scene, that is reasonably, you know, if you turned on your radio in 1963-1969, you would hear it on the radio. So, that's how that is.

R: *You talked about scores, film music scores. And I was just going to ask, have you got the, you say you produced a score for 'Half of a Yellow Sun' – is that available and accessible? How can one?*

YA-L: Well, you know what, it is available, I don't know about accessible. Again because if we'd done it right, we might have put a score album out. But we don't have a score album to give you. But I don't have it [*laughs*]

R: *...and will you give me, if I ask you, sir?*

YA-L: Oh well, I have to get... the film company has to clear it. It's a long process, and I don't think – I'm not very good friends with the producer at the moment – so I don't know if she will approve me, but you know, we can do some bootlegging.

R: *Because it will be nice to see the score and analyse it. So, what are the limitations you faced?*

YA-L: As a music supervisor?

R: *Yes.*

YA-L: Budget. Music is all over the place.

R: *...and do you think that's also the case in the homeland, in Nigeria?*

YA-L: No, sometimes, it's laziness. It's like 'oh, what can we use? Oh yes, let's just put that there'. And it's a quick fix business. It's not really well thought about. And that's what I'm trying to say to you. Methodically, people are now trying to say 'we just can't make this film and not put the right spices in it'. So the music is a little bit of a spice and we need to spice it right. So, that is beginning to change. I think, we are in 2014, the next wave of films that you see come out of Nigeria, if it's done by what we call the new Nigerian cinema type of guy, which is also Nollywood, but they are just trying to say that 'you know what, this our cinema is going to be as good as [Hollywood], we are not just going to put it together, shoot it in 10 days, and then that's it. We are not cheating the audience anymore. We are going to give the audience something to go 'wow' about.'

R: *I like the fact that you mention the new Nigerian cinema. Who are those driving that ideology?*

YA-L: Well, I think there is a guy called Wale Ojo, that likes to think that he is a part of the New Nigerian cinema, but I think, if you think about Kunle Afolayan, he is probably a New Nigerian cinema type of person, Tunde Kelani is probably a New Nigerian cinema type of person – because they really want to take their filmmaking to the next level. They want to do films that will break critically and maybe commercially internationally. And we are talking box office release here. We are not talking straight to DVD, VCR. So, they want to make a statement, and with the people who want to make a statement, that's what they are really, you could call them the New Nigerian cinema, but it's still the same. It's Nollywood, but of course there's still a stigma with the Nollywood thing, which is very local, not well done, you know, a race to finish, kind of approach.

R: *I don't know if you've seen the movie called 'Ije: the journey'. It's a co-production, but it was basically shot in the US, and back in Nigeria – a 2010 production?*

YA-L: No.

R: *The soundtrack was quite interesting, it had interesting stuffs there. They used folk music.*

YA-L: From Nigeria?

R: *Yes, Igbo folk music. So, I just want to take you up quickly on that. Do you think...?*

YA-L: But you see, that was...see 'Ije', you have to think about the premise [of the film], which is the director is trying to –

R: *And this was a young lady who went in search of her older sister, who left home for the US, presumably for greener pastures, and got there and got into problems with immigration and everything, and the long and short is that she went through a torrid time there, trying to get to the sister...ended up in a court, and ended up in the arms of an American attorney...the story ends well anyway. So, 'Ije' is the Igbo word for 'journey'. So, that journey from home to America is what was captured.*

YA-L: OK, but they used purely folk music from Nigeria?

R: *Yes*

YA-L: That's really nice.

R: *What's your take on that? Do you think that serves for identity?*

YA-L: Well, you know what, I think if it fits the purpose, then of course, I'm definitely down for that. It's making a statement, and again you know what, how do you say this, you know, some people pay attention to music in cinemas, in film, sorry, some people don't... but if it drives the film, and it sits well in the film, then yes, why not. So I'll be happy to watch an Ogunde film, '*J'aiye simi aiye*', you know those films of Ogunde's, the music was local music, and I believe even '*Bisi the...*', I don't know if you've seen that.

R: *No.*

YA-L: It was the last Nigerian film shot on 33 millimetres film before now. I don't know what people shoot on now, maybe 32, 33, 35 or whatever. But that was the last Nigerian movie shot on 33. And you know, great soundtrack, very Nigerian.

R: *It's amazing. So, on the whole, do you think the business of soundtrack production is lucrative, and therefore competitive?*

YA-L: No, there's no money in it.

R: *I mean, from the perspective of Nollywood, where it seems the field is very wide?*

YA-L: Well, you know what, listen, it could work in Nollywood, because in as much as there's an evocative soundtrack, and the music there is really, really, cool, but who's going to market that? If people are going to market that, and say 'hey, listen, this music is from this film, this is amazing', then yeah, you might get, there's room for what they call a niche, in an emerging market, that kind of craze can happen, whereas here [UK], that craze is dead. It could start in Nigeria, in Africa. The guys I manage, called the 'FOKN boys', we have a film, 2 films, 'Cozov moni', you could watch it online on YouTube. It's all original music. It's actually a musical, from beginning to the end.

R: *A musical?*

YA-L: No dialogue, non-stop music from the beginning to the end. The first movie, 45mins, 52mins all in all. The second film, feature-length, 90mins...um, but the second movie, instead of it being just 2 guys having the dialogue all through, they have people come in, in the second movie, and take it to the next level. So, instead of me and you having the dialogue all the time and rapping, because it was a pidgin hip-hop musical...

R: *Nigerian pidgin?*

YA-L: No.

R: *What pidgin?*

YA-L: Ghanaian pidgin. This is the first pidgin musical, and you need to watch it.

R: *I will have a look at this. So, we are winding down now sir, and I just have one or two more questions for you, sir. So, just as a follow-up to the last question, how does the Nigerian society see film music practitioners like you? In other words, what kind of social identity do you have? You already have said that the profession is not lucrative, and...?*

YA-L: No, I didn't say that. If you are a music supervisor, and that's what you do, you can do well out of it –

R: *OK, in Nigeria, because it's an emerging...?*

YA-L: Well, in Nigeria, if you are tied in, because look Nollywood, they bang out loads of movies every week, so yeah, it could be a good source of income, if you could pull

off the music and put in the work. But then, if you want to have quality, it might not be as lucrative, because not all the films are necessarily with a big budget, or the kind of budget that will get you the music that you want.

R: *So, with that in mind, what kind of status does the soundtrack practitioner –*

YA-L: He is just a glorified guy that just...look, I didn't do it for the money. I probably did it for the credit, you know, mostly, it was a decent cheque, but it wasn't a life-changing cheque, you know, and they never are. So, unless you have loads of it going on at the same time, then it can be life-changing. So, did it more for the credit, did it more for the project, because *'Half of a Yellow Sun'* is a critically acclaimed book internationally, that's won awards and whatnot. So, doing the music is... here's the thing, I tell you what, I have many people in Nigeria who claim to be the ones who did the soundtrack for *'Half of a Yellow Sun'*.

R: *For real?*

YA-L: Yeah. So all these new Nigerians...

R: *That's plagiarism.*

YA-L: Oh, but look, in Nigeria, there's so many things that go down, anybody can say they did anything, but if you do your research, I'm sure you saw my name on it.

R: *Yeah*

YA-L: But those people who said 'oh, I did the music', and then you go out, and then you go out and you say 'oh, that guy, he did the music', but music supervision, I'm not the composer, but we had a great team. So, I'm part of that, that team, but also that movement of wanting to do good quality work in Nigeria, or in African cinema. So, in that sense, the struggle continues.

R: *Just one last question, sir. Many Nollywood soundtracks are vocal music. What can you tell us about matters of rehearsals and performances in the course of a single production? If you've worked with –*

YA-L: Well, you see, the thing is this, right – if you're having dialogue, and you have music singing through it –

R: *Vocal music?*

YA-L: Then, it makes no sense. I told you that was the challenge I had, which is, we couldn't find music that had 45 seconds of pure music, you know, instrumentation. We just couldn't find any, you know, and when you found one, you just didn't know who owned it, or where [the owner] was, so they could give you a copy, you know what I mean, and then if you use it, you run the risk of litigation at the end. So, yeah.

R: *What's the way forward? What's the way out of that?*

YA-L: Well, I mean, we just need to archive better, we need to create with intention, you know. As I said, the creatives were there, you know, some of the best musicians in the Central West African hub. It's not creativity, they were not lacking that, it's just [the creatives should] create in a such a way that it can be kept, it can be documented, and it can be part of our stories for years to come, and it's something we don't do really well. So, archiving is a big big problem. And then, when you make music, I bet if I say to a TuFace now, 'TuFace, you've just recorded that song, can you send me the instrumental?' – I bet he will say he hasn't even created the instrumental separately, you know. Maybe not. Maybe he would have done that. But most people don't think that having an instrumental can be embedded, and it's still as strong as having the one with the vocals. So, most people don't think along those lines. And I think the education is changing, you know, as the landscape changes, the education is changing, and people are now beginning to be more aware. But yeah, we just need to have instrumentals.

R: *So, in your opinion, there's hope?*

YA-L: Oh, absolutely. It's getting better, man. I mean, look, we're having this conversation, and everybody that I've just mentioned – Kunle Afolayan – they want to have the best movies. '*October 1st*' is a great film, I've heard, I haven't seen it yet, but the critics like it, and the buzz out of Nigeria is really good. The local feel of it is said to be good, but you know, I watched films like '*Last Flight to Abuja*' and what's his name – he's my friend too – this guy, Emeka – yeah so, and these people are all aspiring to do better work, so, and they are not trying to rest on the fact that they have done – they are like 'oh, I did that, but you know I just wanted to' – even I, I bet if I watch '*Half of a Yellow Sun*', I haven't watched it in a while, but I bet if I watch '*Half of a Yellow Sun*' now, well for me, I'm not the director, and I like the music, I must say. It's perfect music, you know, if you have the soundtrack, and you play it, it's just awesome, song after song after song it's just pretty much awesome. And it's just a shame that we never released the soundtrack for it properly, even if it was just for the African market, it would have been nice. Or even if it was internationally, digitally, you know, because we had the licenses for it, but you know, we just never packaged anything together, and we never put it out. Plus, as I said, some of the cues I had to kind of recreate, when I found Tony Kofi, I had to recreate '*A Night in Tunisia*' with him, you know, so 'this is your band, I want close enough to the original, as close as you possibly can, I want a recording of that'. And it made it cheaper for me on a master, to clear, as opposed to going to clear the original, which is again I guess a little creative way of circumventing the hoop, and making it work for yourself. But, as I said, I learnt this on the job. I wasn't taught this. It's just, you have a certain amount of money, 'here is £5, give us music'. Whoa! £5 music, where am I going to get it from? Then you begin to scratch your head, you begin to make manoeuvres, and creatively, you come up with an answer. That's what happened there.

R: *Fantastic!*

YA-L: Yeah, thank you very much. I hope that my 1 hour, 14 minutes and 54 seconds is, at least you will find 54 seconds of usefulness in it. *[laughs]*

R: *Oh yes, I will.*

Interview 5

Brownly Igboegwu, interview with the author, held in Asaba, Nigeria on 15 August 2015.

R: Good evening, Brownly

BI: Good evening

R: *My name is Peter Sylvanus, and I am a doctoral candidate at City University London, and my research is focused on the identity of Nollywood soundtrack. Before this meeting, I have spoken to some of the industry practitioners, particularly those who provide soundtrack for the different Nollywood films, and as part of a general assessment; I have decided to speak to another insider, this time, an actor. Kindly introduce yourself and tell us what you do in Nollywood.*

BI: My name is Brownly Igboegwu. I am a Nollywood actor. Presently, I am the Actors' Guild Nollywood Chairman, Anambra State Chapter, and [inaudible] Secretary, Conference of Chairmen, Actors' Guild of Nigeria. I am an actor, basically.

R: *Thank you very much. I know that as an art form, film encapsulates dialogue, drama, music, poetry, etc. how would you rate soundtrack in Nollywood films?*

BI: Well, right now, I can say there are a lot of improvements in the soundtrack, like, they [soundtrack producers] are beginning to do moods now, that tries to translate what actually is happening at that point in time [in the film] and they are trying to make the soundtrack not sound like you are telling the whole story of the movie [prefiguring]. Initially it was like that, like once you open up a movie, from the soundtrack, you know the end of the story. But now, it is no more like that. There are some improvements, and we really appreciate that. There's this level—they [soundtrack producers] have actually done research, if you ask me, and they have actually come to understand that soundtrack is supposed to work hand in hand with the story, not tell the story.

R: *Interesting. This is exactly part of the reason for this research. We have established that in Nollywood, the emphasis is not on the camera. It is on dialogue, with a lot of improvisation on the part of the actors, and you as an actor can testify to this?*

BI: Yes. The difference between a Hollywood film and a Nollywood film, basically, is that you can watch Nollywood with your ears.

R: *So, for instance, you can stay in your kitchen, and follow the film?*

BI: Mmhm [in agreement]. We understand this very well because we have been able to establish that because the camera is not the storyteller, you can then watch this thing with your ears: unlike a Hollywood film where you have to use your eyes.

R: *Where the camera is not the storyteller, some other medium becomes the storyteller, and this is where what you are talking about comes into play – the use of the music to foretell the narrative. It's very fascinating, because we call it 'prefiguring', and you say up until now, that was the norm. Do you think that gives Nollywood soundtrack a*

unique identity? Do you think it gives it something exclusive, something different from Hollywood or Bollywood?

BI: Yeah, to a reasonable extent, it is unique, but from my own judgement, it is not positively unique, because there is a term for it, prefiguring as you say. If a soundtrack tells you the story you are about to watch, then there is no point staying glued to the television to watch it. Just like you said, you can be in your kitchen, following the movie. Like, you hear the story, somebody comes out, and they say ‘*oh this girl has suffered, this one, that one, she is a virgin, she is this, she is that, and then they broke her heart*’, you already know they are talking about someone like Chioma Chukwuka [Nollywood actress] or something. And when they say ‘*na mumu, na foolish guy, this one, that one*’, you already picture in your mind, it is John Okafor [Nollywood actor] they are talking about, you know. So all those things give a sell-out, pre-empting the movie. It doesn’t depict good quality soundtracking, if you ask me, because there are a lot of things involved in making a movie – like you said, there is the camera, there is the director, there is an actor, there [are] props on set... and they [soundtrack producers] don’t just go about all these particular departments, trying to say *this is how it is*, before you see what they are talking about. So personally, I don’t really see it as making Nollywood unique positively. I see it as making Nollywood underdeveloped, but with what is happening now, I think we are beginning to come to terms with what it means to do soundtrack.

R: *OK, so are you speaking on behalf of other actors? I mean... Is this the thinking of the majority of persons that are not soundtrack producers in the industry?*

BI: If you ask me, I wouldn’t say it is just a personal opinion. I would say it is more or less an opinion of people who are watching our movies, because you come out, there is a lot of criticism, people talk to you ‘*ah, why is this like this, why is that like that*’ and you get some comedians in their comedy shows trying to make mockery of what we do, you know. They put some soundtrack [on], and they tell you ‘*OK, once you hear [sound of siren], it’s accident [scene] they want to do*’ you know, you see one Jamaican on a lonely road, only him driving, and next thing you start hearing [sound of screeching tyres]’ but who is pursuing you [the driver on the lonely road], and how are you screeching tyres? How come? What happened? Did the car’s brakes fail? So you can be in your kitchen, and hear something like that, and say “oh, it’s an accident scene” and that doesn’t really make sense [because the driver is alone on the road]. You know, there are some movies you watch, you don’t hear anybody singing any particular thing; it is mood [sounds] all through [the movie], and you still enjoy the movie, the pace, and everything. You follow the mood; the mood carries you with the movie you are watching, till the end. And you won’t watch to leave the television, you will want to stay glued, to know what is happening next.

R: *But isn’t that looking to Hollywood for the standard?*

BI: Well, as a matter of fact.

R: *My question is: where does Nollywood carve out its own uniqueness?*

BI: Our own uniqueness is in the music we are singing; in the songs. I have not seen any – Bollywood or Hollywood doing songs as soundtrack. Bollywood does singing,

as in, something like opera, kind of, related, something that looks like that, they keep singing and dancing, that's what I'm saying. The soundtracking is sung stories, some fine stories in the form of music that carries you along as you watch the movie. Some of them [songs] are very melancholic, some are very melodious, some are very, and all that, you know. So, that is the unique part of Nollywood; that is our uniqueness. But where I am against – where I don't really like – is the point where you sing soundtrack in scene 1, and someone [observer] tells you what is going to happen in the end bit [of the film].

R: *Now, just before we wrap up, isn't what you are saying symptomatic of a colonial heritage that forces you to define yourself against an otherness that is not you? So, for instance, why can't this style be what Nollywood is – why can't it be your standard? You have mentioned Bollywood; Bollywood is known for song and dance, and they've kept true to it. Everybody knows that. They have refused to change. Even your – what you call Kanywood – the Northern Nigerian [film industry] – they have imitated Bollywood in that style. Why can't this prefiguring be what is truly and fully Nigerian? Why do you think negatively...because the West – what's happening abroad is, they [the West] are fascinated by it. Why do you have a different opinion?*

BI: Probably because those abroad don't really understand the music when it's being sung. Probably most of them adore the Igbo language. I'm not trying to say the prefiguring is wrong, per se, but what I'm trying to say is, making it to pre-empt the movie, [means] you the viewer will lose interest [in the movie]. That's the part I don't like, because I'm trying to protect my business, because if you [the viewer] lose interest [in watching the film], I'll stop working.

R: *If I may just take you up on this – I spoke to Stanley Okorie [Nollywood soundtrack producer] on this very matter, because he seems to be the person who began this style [of prefiguring]*

BI: Yes

R: *And he said something very critical. He said that he works from the market to the studio, not studio to the market. In other words, he does this [prefiguring] because that is what the market wants; and many of the films he has provided soundtrack for, have helped to sell the film. And from the business perspective, don't you think this is sustaining the industry?*

BI: From the business perspective, it sustains the industry to a point.

R: *So why do you oppose it?*

BI: If it was still in vogue, if the market was still demanding it, people wouldn't go further to do some other thing; something different. I'm not saying the songs is wrong, you know, like 'The Masters', it was Stanley that did it – the story didn't...

R: *There's also 'Akwa nwa'*

BI: The story didn't like talk about the film scene by scene – like you are describing the scene with music, you understand me, there's a particular story, that's the heart of

the movie, so each time they play the soundtrack, you enjoy it, you flow, you watch the movie, you enjoy it. Stanley Okorie, he himself has improved too. He is not the old Stanley Okorie we used to know – he has added some touch of improvement, and that’s what – like I was trying to tell you – you mentioned something like ‘*are we not copying people*’ – don’t forget that Nollywood is still a baby industry – it’s still undergoing process of refinement and all that – so with time – and I know we are already there – we have our own soundtrack, we have our own pattern, we will keep shaping it and moulding it till it fits to what will be generally accepted, and we will stay there.

R: *Can you just very quickly say how the guerrilla filmmaking process affects the soundtrack? So, for instance, we have heard that a movie could move from script to screen, done and in the market within a week. What timing does it afford the person producing the soundtrack to deliver on this kind of work?*

BI: That has also given birth to half-baked soundtrack people. Oh yes, because a [film] producer wants a movie very fast and somebody will tell you ‘*cool down, I need to look at this movie, I need to compose a music that will suit the movie, I need to take my time to embellish it well*’ and the film producer will say ‘no, no, no, I don’t have that kind of time’, and someone will just jump up from the streets and say ‘*ah, don’t worry producer, I will give it to you in 2 days*’, and he [person from the streets] just goes in and crack one rubbish and come out, and they [producer] put it, and they keep selling, and people keep criticising us [Nollywood industry]. I wish there should be a guild for our soundtrack people – if they have a guild where they checkmate themselves – any soundtrack you do, you put it in the forum, or in the net, or wherever all of you [soundtrack producers] will have access to it for criticism. Now when you do half-baked soundtracks 2, 3 times, they [the guild] will be able to query you, and say ‘*no, we have put an embargo on you doing soundtracks for like 2 months, for like 3 months, for like 6 months*’, as the case may be – people will sit up. You will see that it [will not be] everybody that jumps out from the street without any musical background, nothing, because you believe you can enter studio and open mouth and sing one jargon, you come out and say you do soundtrack.

R: *This brings me to the question of requirements for soundtrack. Those I have spoken to have said that they are not really trained themselves. They are not trained. So, coming together to form a guild to censor other people – doesn’t that speak to double standards?*

BI: No, if you are not trained, and you understand – see, they say [that] identification of a problem is the first step to solving it. If you know you are not trained, and you people gather yourselves together, you go for training, you go for workshops, and you bring in people, experts, to teach you, to train you. That is when you begin to see yourself as somebody who is going to improve tomorrow, somebody who is going to do something better tomorrow – you understand me? Nobody is above training, nobody is above education. Education keeps going on.

R: *Final question, sir, final question...*

BI: OK.

R: *One of the practitioners said something, and I wish to take it up with you, since you are one of the officials of Nollywood –*

BI: Actors' guild?

R: *Yes. He said that in the last regime of President Jonathan, money was disbursed to Nollywood, and at the end of all the sharing, nothing got to those of them who produce soundtrack. Can you explain why this happened?*

BI: To be honest and sincere with you, that money that was released, I just heard it with my ear. Because there was a past regime before we came in, and we didn't meet that money. The person who was in charge, as a matter of fact, was the President of the Actors' Guild then, had issue with the court, and had been going to court, and the court struck her out. They are still going to court; so they are still going to give account of how they did the sharing and all that, so honestly speaking, I don't know even know it was done.

R: *And even when you give awards, Nollywood awards, nobody gives awards to soundtrack producers. Why?*

BI: They do, they do. OK, they do award to sound, like best soundtrack, but most of the time, the music producer takes that award, and not the person that [who] did the soundtrack.

R: *What should be done?*

BI: It should be corrected, so when you give awards, there should be a category for the 'best soundtrack person', 'soundtrack man', whatever code they use for it, not 'movie with best soundtrack' – that's the category they always [currently] have, no, they should be giving 'best soundtrack producer'. Or composer – Or composer.

R: *Thank you very much Brownny, I know you are very busy.*

BI: I really appreciate. Trust me, it's good to see you again after so many years, Peter, I appreciate this.

Interview 6

Kelvin Okike, interview with the author, held in Port Harcourt, Nigeria on 31 August 2015.

R: *Hello sir. My name is Peter – a researcher on music in Nollywood. Kindly tell us what you do...whether or not you are a marketer or retailer of Nollywood films.*

KO: OK, I am Mr Okike Kelvin Chinwenlu. Yes, I have been into this business for a while, for like 10 years plus. So, I sell movies.

R: *Nollywood films?*

KO: Nollywood films, and also Hollywood too, you understand. But staying here in Nigeria, I sell more of Nollywood movies.

R: *So, how would you compare the market, the sales of Hollywood films to Nollywood films? Do you have more persons patronising that is, buying Nollywood than Hollywood? Or is it a fair competition between Nollywood and Hollywood in Nigeria?*

KO: OK, looking at the nature of the business now, the way the movie [industry] is going, the business is going, I would say that for now, they [consumers] are still patronising Nollywood movies. But, as an entrepreneur, as a businessperson, you look at business prospects, both present and future, and you look at the necessary things that would happen in the future, after now. So, if we are to consider the future, I would confidently tell you that the way people are reacting towards the Nollywood [films], is not quite impressive. And that's because there is no regulation. There is nobody regulating the production of the movie itself. There is nothing like regulation. It seems like, people just go into the bush, act movies at will, you understand, and people are really getting frustrated – even we the sellers, the distributors, we are no longer comfortable with it, because most times, the money you should use for other things – in fact, these movies you see here come out on a daily basis, and it's annoying. Everybody is crying. It's all over, you understand, and it's even making the – even the buyers are – as I'm talking to you now, from Saturday last week, Friday, Saturday last week, up to 32 different movies were produced. And you know what it takes for you, a distributor to get such movies and sell to people...and now people that come to buy, they see so many movies and they just pick one or two, and at the end of the day, you see, people are complaining in fact – both the final consumers and we the distributors.

R: *So, is the problem with the abundance of production or the stories or the quality – what exactly – why is it a problem? Because I thought the more the films, the better the market, because you give a lot to the people. Why is it a problem?*

KO: OK, yeah, thank you, thank you. You know, there is a question you asked before now that I omitted.

R: *Yes*

KO: You asked me to compare between the sale of the American movies and the Nigerian movies. Obviously, the American movies move more, you understand, because people appreciate the storylines, you understand. The Hollywood movies are properly planned. They plan them, they make sure the storylines are something you could watch – intriguing – and that is why you see that American movies, you can watch it more than 10 times. But Nigerian films, you just watch once, and it's gone. And to we that sell here, what we say is that it doesn't have second-hand value.

R: *Interesting...*

KO: Do you understand now? It doesn't have second-hand value, because they [Nollywood film producers] just cook something anyhow, and just act something, and I don't even know what the censor's board is doing about it, you understand because there are bodies that should make sure that – in fact, there should be a standard, do you understand? Before you tell me that you are producing a movie for a country as big as

Nigeria, there should be a standard. If you watch Korean movies, people are appreciating it. Why? Because of the storyline. They use their dialect, they sell their dialect. And still when you watch it, it is intriguing. You read it [subtitles in dialect] but you are not disturbed; you are not perturbed because you are getting something fascinating, do you understand? The same thing applies to American movies.

R: *OK, so you say that the sales don't move. When people come to get the Nollywood films, are there particular films they are looking for? Do they look, for example, for films with a good storyline? And so they pick 1 or 2... Or are there other things they are looking for in a Nollywood film? Even the 1 or 2 that are selling, why do people buy them?*

KO: OK, you know in Nigeria, um... we are quite sentimental...a lot. They [Nigerian consumers] consider [a] few factors while buying. One is, the actors involved, do you understand, because experience has shown that there are some actors that act good movies in Nigeria, like Kenneth Okonkwo... you see, erm, Mercy Johnson, you understand. You know that these people, once they act [in a] movie, they are acting a very nice movie, you understand. They do those things. And obviously it is a common thing, it is universal. When you go to buy movies, whether Nigeria or abroad, you are looking for a good movie – a movie with a storyline. If it is a comedy, let it be in touch with reality. Let it make sense. Let it intrigue you. You are looking for a particular satisfaction, you understand. That is what you look for when you go for movies, generally, whether you are from India or Canada, anywhere you are coming from, you understand, you are all looking for a good movie. If it's a comedy film, you are looking for a good comedy film. If it's a romantic film, you are looking for a good romantic film. If it's an action film, you want something that will captivate you.

R: *In other words, you are saying that regardless of the level of literacy of the person, these are the things they are looking out for?*

KO: Naturally! See, there are some things that are innate. Illiteracy might just be academics, but when it comes to watching movies that satisfy you, sweet movies, I don't know if you understand... sweet movies, because a person that can't speak English or that understands pidgin English, that just has a small grasp of English, that could understand a movie, knows when a movie is making sense. That is why some films sell more than others. Because most people that consume these Nollywood movies are illiterates. That's the truth. Most people are mothers that are not educated. Because what I have seen is that many of these educated ones go for Hollywood movies, American movies. They will tell you they don't want to dull their brains, that before the [Nollywood] movie will play for 2 minutes, they have known the end.

R: *Why do you think so? Why is it so? Is it because of the soundtrack? Because we have been told that Nollywood soundtrack tells you the story before even it [the film] starts. Do you think that is good for the targeted audience, like the ones you talked about, who are already illiterate? Or do you think it works for the wrong reasons?*

KO: The truth is that everything has positive and negative aspects –

R: *From the point of [view] of a marketer?*

KO: OK, from the point of [view] of a marketer, I think it is not very proper. As in, what I mean is that, when you act a movie, there should be a level of suspense, you understand. There should be a level of suspense. That is, you're keeping the person in suspense – the person wants to know what happens next. But if I can look at a movie now, and at a glance I've known the conclusion, there is no point. So, what I'm saying now is that the draftsmen, those writers, the movie writers, should be more constructive and more, do I say, philosophical or logical, you understand. They should be more creative, let's use this word, because it is an entertainment industry. They should be more creative. While they write, they should know that we are not just in isolation. They should know that we have our counterparts, foreign counterparts. They look at movies, when you look at movies, it will now guide you as our own entertainment industry is just growing – it will guide you to make a better movie.

KO: *Let me ask you one last question. Picking up from where you have just stopped. Why do you think we should – why do you think Nollywood standard should use Hollywood as the reference? Why can't that be the standard for Nollywood, and the identity thereof? Why do you have to cite Hollywood as the yardstick for measuring standard? Why can't that be your standard?*

KO: OK, thank you. You know, as – before – there are usually role models, you understand what I mean... now, I'm not saying we should take their kind of movies, because we have our own culture, you understand, we have our own culture. But what I'm saying is that, in being logical, in the construction of the movie, that it should always make sense. There should always be an application of suspense. I don't know if you understand what I mean. You don't just stand up like that and write movies and produce, you understand. And, last but not least, they should minimise the level of advertisement. Some people just tell you that what they are watching is advertisement, because in a movie of one hour, 1 hour 30mins, you see advertisement is taking up to 30mins or 45mins. I don't know if you understand what I mean. They should minimise it! Let's make it look like other people's movies. You can't pick up a particular film, and [see] adverts, adverts, adverts, throughout the movie, and an insignificant part of it becomes the real movie – it doesn't make sense, you understand.

R: *So, just to recap what you are saying, the problem is not with the acting, it is not even with the music. Your problem is with the storyline. If there was more suspense, do you think this should be the way that Nollywood films are made?*

KO: Exactly, exactly. And then secondly, the production should be controlled, you understand. And there's something again, there's another implication. Another implication is that people only watch movies that are produced on a daily basis. As soon as they watch, the remnants are now waste, because next week, other movies are coming. Now people are looking for movies that are produced on a particular day, not even last week's movies.

R: *That's why you think this is old [points to current stock of films in the shop]?*

KO: Yes, you understand, because any movie – in Nigeria now, as far as we are concerned, any movie that has stayed a month is an old film. So you hardly go to Lagos to buy it again, because there are so many movies – for instance now, 30-something

movies came out last week. How do I buy those and then still go back to buy movies that were produced last month?

R: *That's why you said it doesn't have second-hand value?*

KO: It doesn't have second-hand value, because people come for the recent ones, and obviously it's natural. You can't see a new thing and then start dabbling into the old ones, you understand. But you see the way other movies are produced; they always give time for consumers to consume properly. So those are just my personal... those are my opinions.

R: *So, these are your thoughts as a distributor?*

KO: Yes, exactly.

R: *Thank you very much.*

KO: OK.

R: *It's been a pleasure.*

KO: You are welcome.

Filmography

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