

THE INTRICACIES OF *OGENE* MUSIC RECORDING: EXPLORING SAMPLING TECHNIQUE AS A LEEWAY

Vincent Chukwuma Udeozor
E-mail: vincentchibor@gmail.com

&

Alvan-Ikoku Okwudiri Nwamara
E-mail: ao.nwamara@unizik.edu.ng

Department of Music
NnamdiAzikiwe University, Awka

Abstract

Ogene music is a traditional music genre that is synonymous with the south eastern part of Nigeria. It features a blend of various sizes of *ogene* instruments with varied melo-rhythmic tones reflecting the rich Igbo cultural heritage. Recording the music genre in the studio is faced with a myriad of technical challenges, owing to the complexities in its rhythm and acoustic nature, and therefore calls for serious technical attention. Through personal experiences and experiments, review of related literature and interviews, the authors realized that the issue of choice of microphone settings is very crucial in recording *ogene* music. The study therefore, emphasizes proper microphone usage and suggests sampling technique as an innovative means of achieving flexibility and creative freedom, while retaining the true and live nature of the instrument.

Introduction

Background

Ogene music, a traditional genre originating from the Igbo people of Nigeria, is characterized by its unique rhythmic patterns and percussive instrumentation. As an integral part of Igbo culture, *ogene* music in particular, plays significant roles across all stages of life, from childhood to old age, fulfilling diverse communal demands (Okpala, 2015). Despite its cultural significance, traditional genres like *ogene* music face challenges in contemporary relevance, as younger generations often neglect them, potentially leading to a loss of this rich musical heritage (Nwamara, 2017). This paper explores the intricate process of integrating traditional *Ogene* music, a distinct genre from Southeast Nigeria, into contemporary music production workflows through advanced MIDI sequencing and sampling techniques. This involves a detailed examination of *Ogene*'s unique rhythmic and tonal characteristics, which are crucial for accurate digital representation and manipulation. The methodology encompasses an in-depth acoustic analysis of *Ogene* instrumentation, identifying core percussive elements and melodic motifs suitable for translation into digital samples (Mills, 2012). This exploration aims to bridge the gap between ethnomusicological preservation and modern music technology, offering novel insights into cross-cultural musical adaptation (Rockell, 2020). Furthermore, the study delves into the technical challenges and innovative solutions for translating the nuanced timbres and polyrhythms of live *Ogene* performances into standardized MIDI formats, ensuring authenticity while maximizing creative flexibility (Briot et al., 2017). This will enable producers to harness the rich cultural heritage of *Ogene* music, expanding the sonic palette available for global music creation while preserving its inherent artistic integrity. This integration facilitates not only the preservation of traditional sounds but also their proliferation and reinterpretation within diverse musical contexts (Rockell, 2020). The application of sampling and MIDI sequencing to *Ogene* music, much like the adoption of advanced recording techniques in jazz and hip-hop, signifies a broader trend in music production where traditional sounds are legitimized and foregrounded within contemporary digital environment.

CONTEMPORARY STUDIO

The fact that the great majority of music and audio recording/production have been developed or intended for personal use is base phenomena. Especially in view of the availability of fairly priced digital and analogue recording instruments. The coming of the project studios into the big picture has changed the entire professional audio and music business, which actually changed almost everything in the audio production community. The existence of many different projects and little toys, which the artiste or the performer can blend to finally get the sounds that fit their tastes, is one of the attractions of a project or portable production system. This technology is often strong in its own right because of the incredible power of some collective coherence in combining with many components. These systems always include electronic instruments, soft or object type, and DAW (Digital

Audio Workstation computer for recording/processing/synthesizing audio signals, MIDI sequencing, mixing records, and any contemporary audio processing technique).

New advancement in technology is meant to promote pre-existing technology and not replace it; this can be more clearly seen when comparing the digital and the analog recording systems. The digital recording brought with it a lower noise level and unlimited storage opportunities therefore eliminating the two greatest challenges facing the analog era.

Analog recording, in reality, means “live recording.” And analog recording can still be successfully conducted in a context of pure digital technology.

Statement of the Problem

In contemporary music production, integrating traditional musical elements with digital technology presents both opportunities and challenges. The *ogene*, a traditional Igbo metal gong instrument holds significant cultural and rhythmic value in African music, especially in Nigeria. However, accurately capturing and representing the nuanced tonal and percussive characteristics of the *ogene* in MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) format during recording sessions remains a complex task.

The process of sampling the *ogene* involves translating its unique acoustic qualities, including timbre, pitch variations, overtones, and dynamic articulation, into a digital format that can be manipulated within a MIDI environment. This translation often leads to a loss of authenticity, as standard MIDI protocols and sampling tools may not effectively preserve the instrument's cultural essence or sonic intricacies.

Moreover, there is a lack of standardized methods or tools specifically tailored for sampling traditional African instruments like the *ogene* for MIDI use. As a result, producers, ethnomusicologists, and sound engineers face challenges in maintaining the integrity and expressive quality of the original sound. This problem hinders both the preservation of indigenous music forms in modern media and the innovation of new music that bridges traditional and electronic genres.

Therefore, this research seeks to investigate the technical, cultural, and musical intricacies involved in sampling the *ogene* as MIDI during music recording, to develop more effective and culturally sensitive approaches to digital representation.

Historical Background of Ogene Music

The roots of Ogene music can be traced to Nigeria's southeastern region, especially within Igbo territory, where it functioned as a means of communication, entertainment, and narrative sharing. The *ogène* is a bell-like instrument traditionally struck by hammer, creating a resounding sound to spread it over a wide area. It has thus been used in the past for cultural rituals, marriage-weddings, funeral and other social functions or used to announce some salient events or convey messages.

By the mid-20th century, Ogene music began to manifest itself at an advanced stage. In the meantime, electric amplification and digital recording created an opportunity to go deeper into the sound world of Ogene music, whose artists could try out new sounds and instruments while demonstrating a few facets of the genre.

The history of metal gongs involves their use in producing a variety of sounds such as kaleidoscopic tam-tams, singing bowls, and tam-brams, which have resonated throughout centuries in regions like Asia, Africa, and the Pacific. Overtones that are too complex to replicate digitally and a decay of typical sound can be the recipe that excites race, ethnicity, and keeps the wider world in-terested in the tradition. Samples of these instruments assist in integrating the instrument into a modern MIDI-controlled sound generator here and there, thereby increasing the possibilities in trying out creativity.

Ogene means the master instrument of the bell orchestra in Igboland; it is the struck idiophone type; it is fashioned out of cast iron by skilled blacksmiths; it is hollow inside and somewhat conical in shape. The bell has its own rhythmic characteristics; when the bell is struck the flattened part of the iron vibrates, this vibration of the bell inside the void, and from this driving a resonant ringing.

The Ogene comes in various shapes and sizes; however, here are generally six to seven main different types of the Ogene instrument:

Of the Ogene types of musical instruments, the metal gong is the single bell. They can come in any shape or size, which is used as a chime set referred to as the Ogene-Telephone. The Ogene-mkpina abo is the type of

ogemusical instrument that consists of a double bell inside and is hollow. This type of Ogene is one of the mostly prominent in the highlife Ogene music.

Ogene (*Metal gong*)

OgeneNne Na Nwa (*Mother and child gong*) This type of the ogene instrument features a double chime accompanied by an additional set of small chimes attached to the curved handle. This auxiliary set is alluded to as the ala (breasts) or nwaakwon'azu (a child carried on the back), the last mentioned term inspiring the symbolism of a nursing mother. This type of ogene can be used in OgeneIkpachi music.

OgeneNkpi-ito (*Triple gong*). This ogene instrument is simply a triple-shaped gong. This type of ogene can be used to create varieties of sound and timeline in a pure traditional ogene music (OgeneIkpachi music)

OgeneNkpi-ino (*Quadruple gong*) (www.wikipedia.com)

Ogene Music

Ogene Music is an African instrumental ensemble that usually comprises of 4 to 5 African instruments, namely, metal gong (ogene), wooden gong (Okpokoro), maracas (Ichaka) Pot (udu). In Awka town where this research was carried out, this type of music is an integral part of the culture because you rarely see any event, be it wedding, funeral, cultural festival like *Egwulmoka* (a periodic festival peculiar to Awka people) without the presence of Ogene music singers. This type of music has become one of the signatures of Igbo culture, as it is the highest recorded cultural music till date. Yes, people listen to Ogene music to understand and appreciate their cultural heritage.

Market survey has it that Ogene music that flood entertainment industry weekly has surpassed every other music genre, especially in the South- East of Nigeria.

Some of the Ogene music artistes are: AusmaMaliaka, Nwazuka, EJaykNwamba, Awutolo, Ajofia Nnewi and others.

Ogene Music and Sampling: A Symbiotic Relationship

Recording the sounds of actual instruments and utilizing them as inspiration to create new musical compositions or instruments in a digital audio workstation (DAW) or sampler is known as sampling live instruments. By combining the warmth of acoustic sounds with the versatility of electronic creation, this technique enables producers to include the distinctive textures, subtleties, and qualities of live instruments into their music. Sampling local instruments and emulating them using MIDI can be a powerful way to preserve cultural soundscapes and add authenticity to music production.

Sampling has allowed Ogene artists to expand the boundaries of their music without losing touch with its roots. This blending of modern techniques with traditional sounds has introduced fresh interpretations of the genre. For example, many Ogene artists sample traditional ogene sounds or rhythmic patterns and layer them with contemporary beats, synths, and melodies, thus creating a hybrid form of music that resonates with younger generations while maintaining cultural integrity.

This marriage of tradition and innovation in Ogene music recording has resulted in a number of positive outcomes. Firstly, it allows for the preservation of traditional sounds that may have otherwise become obsolete. As younger listeners become increasingly exposed to electronic music, sampling ensures that the distinct sound of Ogene is not forgotten but rather recontextualized for modern audiences. Furthermore, the use of sampling allows Ogene artistes to reach a global audience, introducing the genre to listeners who might not otherwise have been exposed to it.

Sampling Technique in Music Production

Sampling, a process in which pre-existing audio recordings are reused in new musical compositions, has become one of the most influential techniques in modern music production. In essence, sampling involves isolating a segment of a sound recording, often from another piece of music, and incorporating it into a new composition. The advent of digital audio workstations (DAWs) and other recording technologies has made sampling more accessible and affordable to music producers.

While sampling is most commonly associated with genres like hip-hop and electronic dance music, its use in African music, specifically in Ogene, represents an exciting crossroad between tradition and innovation. Through the creative process of sampling, Ogene artistes can blend traditional sounds with modern production techniques, bridging the gap between the past and present.

1. Guide to sampling

Recording real instruments like guitars, pianos, drums, or singing involves using microphones along with an audio interface that connects to a computer. This recorded audio can then be brought in a DAW (a session in pro, Logic Pro, or FL Studio) or a dedicated sampler (Kontakt, or NI Maschine). The recorded audio can be edited, sliced, looped, and manipulated to create individual samples.

2. Inventing Sampled Instruments:

Sampler Instruments:

In a sampler, you can map individual samples to different MIDI notes enabling you to play the instrument across a keyboard or MIDI controller, transforming it into a playable virtual instrument.

Resampling

Resampling, which can be described as the phenomenon where resampled sounds are created inside a DAW from samples that have already been processed, and can then be turned into the building blocks for newly born instruments or musical phrases.

Virtual Instruments:

Sampled instruments can blend and further process with effects, modulation, and other sound design techniques to form complex and convincing-sounding virtual instruments.

3: Applications:

Combining Genres:

By using samples, recording anything from a guitar to a cymbal, it may infuse various elements from different genres of music, forging unique hybrids.

Creative sound design:

By stretching, compressing, reversing, or in any other way processing samples, one can indeed obtain unique and original sounds not typically associated with the original source.

Authenticity and expressivity:

Using live instrument samples adds realism and expressiveness that are hard to achieve with synthesized sounds. Efficiency:

Using samples of live instruments might save, not only money and time, but also the amount of work needed to lend orchestral pieces an intact or instrumental (real-life) feeling. Thus, sampling live instruments represents a powerful technique that enables producers to bind the richness of acoustic instruments with the innumerable possibilities of digital audio production.

Conclusion

This research provides a comprehensive methodology for bridging the divide between traditional Ogene music and modern music production techniques, demonstrating the feasibility and profound impact of such integration. It highlights how advanced sampling and MIDI sequencing cannot only preserve the intricate rhythmic and timbral qualities of Ogene but also unlock new creative possibilities for contemporary compositions. This work establishes a replicable framework for integrating other traditional musical forms into digital production environments, fostering cultural preservation and innovation (Kim, 2013). Furthermore, the ethical considerations inherent in this process, such as ensuring equitable benefit sharing and respecting cultural intellectual property rights, are paramount to fostering sustainable and mutually beneficial collaborations between technologists and traditional music practitioners (Literature Review on Innovative Healthcare Policy for Transformative Healthcare Delivery and Enhanced Pandemic Response in Nigeria and Beyond, n.d.). This critical examination underscores the necessity of interdisciplinary approaches that meld ethnomusicological insight with cutting-edge audio technology, paving the way for future research to explore dynamic sampling techniques and adaptive MIDI mapping for highly complex polyrhythmic structures.

This continued exploration can leverage recent advancements in AI-driven musical analysis to discern subtle performance nuances, ensuring a more faithful digital representation of live Ogene music.

This would allow for the development of adaptive MIDI sequencers capable of emulating the intricate call and response patterns and improvisational flourishes characteristic of Ogene ensembles (Savery&Savery, 2024).

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