

The impact of Princess Banke Ademola's radio programmes on art music promotion in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of Princess Banke Ademola's radio programmes on promoting art music in Nigeria. Through a comprehensive analysis of her radio shows, interviews, and archival materials, this research investigates how her programmes have contributed to the development and popularisation of art music in Nigeria. Findings reveal that Ademola's radio programmes has played a significant role in promoting Nigerian art music and cultural heritage, by showcasing talented Nigerian musicians and artistes, providing a platform for art music education and appreciation, and contributing to the growth and development of Nigeria's music industry. Despite facing structural and institutional challenges, her innovative approaches and dedication helped create a wider audience for art music in Nigeria. This research provides valuable insights into the role of radio in promoting art music and cultural heritage in Nigeria. It underscores the importance of Ademola's contributions to the development of Nigeria's music industry and her legacy as a pioneering figure in art music broadcasting. The findings have implications for music promotion, cultural policy, and art music development in Nigeria, highlighting the need for further research into broadcasting's role in promoting art music and cultural heritage in Africa.

Key words: art music, Banke Ademola, broadcasting, composers, music promotion, radio programming

Introduction

Art music, also referred to as classical music, school music, or serious music, constitutes a genre distinguished by its formalised structure, notated composition, and a pronounced focus on aesthetic intricacy. In contrast to popular and folk music genres, art music necessitates an elevated degree of technical proficiency and interpretive profundity in its performance and appreciation. In Nigeria, art music has developed through a unique blend of European classical traditions and indigenous musical idioms, with composers and performers striving to define a distinct national identity through music. In this context, radio broadcasting has historically served as a powerful medium for cultural education, information dissemination, and artistic promotion. Since its inception in colonial Nigeria, radio has played a crucial role in shaping public taste, preserving local traditions, and introducing audiences to global artistic expressions. Especially during the post-independence era, radio became a central tool for nation-building, offering a platform where music, language, and cultural narratives were shared across ethnic and social boundaries.

One of the most remarkable figures who has utilised the radio medium extensively for the advancement of art music in Nigeria is Princess Banke Ademola. Through her pioneering radio programmes, she promoted musical literacy, created awareness of Nigerian and Western art music, and provided a rare public platform for art musicians to be heard in a society where popular music genres often dominated the airwaves. Despite her significant contributions, scholarly attention to the impact of Ademola's work remains engaged. Fela Sowande, Bode Omolola, Godwin Sadoh, Christian Onyeji, Alvan-Ikoku Nwamara, and Ayo Oluranti have written extensively about art music in Nigeria, but none of them has paid attention to art music broadcasting, especially examining the contributions and impact of Ademola in promoting art music on radio. The gap overlooks how radio has preserved cultural heritage and fostered new musical forms and audiences. In the light of the foregoing, this study examines the role Ademola's radio programmes played in the promotion and perception of art music in Nigeria. By exploring the content, outreach, and reception of her broadcasts, this research seeks to evaluate how her work contributed to the visibility of art music, influenced public engagement, and impacted the broader cultural policy and preferences within Nigerian musical life.

Literature review

Nigerian art music is a musical genre that incorporates elements of traditional Nigerian music, crafted through a literary lens. This genre is further distinguished by its integration of traditional Nigerian musical instruments such as talking drum, *ṣẹkẹrẹ*, and *agogo*, in conjunction with Western instruments such as piano, guitar, and violin, among others. The genre is known for its unique harmonies, complex rhythms, and lyrical melodies, often with themes inspired by Nigerian culture, folklore, and Christianity. Nigerian art music has its roots in traditional Nigerian music, influenced by various ethnic groups and European classical music. It is sometimes regarded as indigenous music composed in European media.

The impact of radio programmes on art music promotion in Nigeria has been significant. Online radio has emerged as a viable medium for popularising and sustaining art music broadcasts (Ayokunmi, 2024). Music broadcasting on radio contributes to national development by serving as a platform for promoting principles of justice, unity, and social change (Okpeki et al., 2023). The history of Nigerian art music composition spans three generations, with extensive scholarly research covering various aspects such as piano, vocal, choral, and orchestral works (Sadoh, 2010). Music education also plays a crucial role in sustainable development by transmitting musical skills across generations, promoting creative abilities, and contributing to intellectual and emotional development (Ogunrinade, 2015). These studies collectively highlight the importance of radio programmes and music education in promoting art music in Nigeria and fostering national development.

Nigerian art music has a rich history and diverse narratives that reflect the country's cultural heritage and colonial past. Nigerian art music has its roots in traditional music, which has been influenced by various factors, including European classical music, Christianity, and cultural exchange (Omibiyi-Obidike, 2001). Nigerian art music began to take shape in the early 20th century, with the introduction of Western musical instruments and notation systems (Sowande, 1967). This period saw the emergence of composers who blended traditional Nigerian music elements with European classical music techniques. One notable figure from this era is Fela Sowande, who is considered the father of modern Nigerian art music (Omojola, 2001). European classical music had a significant impact on the development of Nigerian art music. Many Nigerian composers were trained in European classical music traditions, which they incorporated into their works (Nketia, 1974). This blend of styles resulted in a unique sound that reflected Nigerian culture and identity.

Church music played a crucial role in shaping Nigerian art music. Many Nigerian composers were influenced by Christian hymns and choruses, which they incorporated into their works (Omibiyi-Obidike, 2004). The church also provided a platform for Nigerian musicians to develop their skills and showcase their talents. Over time, Nigerian art music has continued to evolve and grow, with composers experimenting with new styles and techniques (Onyeji, 2011). Today, Nigerian art music is a vibrant and diverse field, with composers drawing on a range of influences - from traditional music to contemporary styles. The history of Nigerian art music is a complex and multifaceted narrative that reflects the country's pluralistic cultural heritage and colonial past. Understanding this history is essential for appreciating the significance of Nigerian art music and its contributions to the country's overall cultural identity (Akpabot, 1975).

Nigerian art music has a rich history, and several pioneers have contributed significantly to its development. These composers have played crucial roles in shaping the country's musical identity and promoting cultural heritage.

Fela Sowande

Fela Sowande is widely regarded as the father of modern Nigerian art music. He was a composer, organist, and pianist who blended traditional Nigerian music elements with European classical music techniques. Sowande's works include compositions for solo piano, choral music, and orchestral pieces, showcasing his unique style and contribution to Nigerian art music.

Samuel Akpabot

Samuel Akpabot was a Nigerian composer and musicologist who made significant contributions to the development of Nigerian art music. He was known for his fusion of traditional Ibibio music with European classical music techniques, creating a distinctive sound that reflected Nigerian culture. Akpabot's works include compositions for solo instruments, chamber music, and orchestral pieces.

Other notable Nigerian composers who have made significant contributions to art music include Ayo Bankole (a composer and organist known for his sacred music compositions), and Joshua Uzoigwe who, as composer and musicologist, explored traditional Igbo music and its fusion with Western classical music. Another notable composer and musicologist is Godwin Sadoh who has written extensively on Nigerian art music and composed works that blend traditional and Western styles. These pioneers of Nigerian art music have made significant contributions to the country's cultural heritage and musical identity. Their works have promoted Nigerian culture and traditional music, developed a unique blend of African and Western musical styles, inspired future generations of Nigerian composers and contributed to the growth and development of art music in Nigeria. They have played vital roles in shaping the country's musical identity and promoting cultural heritage. Their contributions have had a lasting impact on the development of art music in Nigeria, and their legacy continues to inspire new generations of composers and musicians.

Nigerian traditional music is deeply rooted in the country's cultural heritage, with each ethnic group contributing its distinct musical styles and instruments. For instance, the Yoruba are known for their complex drumming patterns and rhythmic chants, while the Igbo celebrate with lively highlife music. The Hausa are known for their melodious traditional songs, often accompanied by the *goje* and *kakaki*. These traditional music styles do not only entertain but also serve as means of communication, storytelling, and cultural expression. Themes from indigenous music usually form the motifs for Nigerian art music that are included in the repertoire used by Banke Ademola in her radio programme on Classical music.

Radio has played a significant role in promoting art music globally, and its impact is multifaceted. By broadcasting art music programmes, radio stations increase their audience reach, provide cultural enrichment, and support emerging artistes. Radio broadcasting allows art music to reach a wider audience beyond traditional concert halls and music festivals. According to a study by the International Music Managers Forum, radio remains a vital platform for music promotion, with many listeners discovering new artistes and genres through radio broadcasts (IMMF, 2019). Radio art music programmes can contribute to cultural enrichment by showcasing diverse

musical styles, historical contexts, and cultural influences. Research by the National Endowment for the Arts highlights the importance of arts and culture in shaping community identity and promoting social cohesion (NEA, 2019). Radio provides a platform for emerging art musicians to gain exposure and build their audience. A study by the Music Managers Forum UK found that radio airplay is crucial for emerging artistes, helping them gain recognition and build their fan-bases (MMF UK, 2018).

Despite the benefits, radio faces challenges in promoting art music, including competition from digital platforms and changing listener habits. However, radio also offers opportunities for art music promotion through online streaming, podcasts, and targeted programming. Radio plays vital roles in promoting art music by increasing audience reach, providing cultural enrichment, and supporting emerging artistes. While challenges exist, radio remains an essential platform for art music promotion and discovery. Radio broadcasting has played a significant role in promoting art music in Nigeria by showcasing local talent, preserving cultural heritage and fostering national unity. Radio stations have provided a platform for local artistes to showcase their music, promoting cultural exchange and national development.

Today, Nigeria has a thriving radio broadcasting industry with over 200 radio stations, including public and private stations. The industry has undergone significant changes with the advent of digital broadcasting and the deregulation of the broadcasting sector in 1992. Nigerian cultural policy plays a significant role in shaping the country's music industry development. The policy aims to promote national identity by affirming authentic cultural values and heritage, building a national cultural identity while acknowledging the diversity of ethnic groups (Federal Ministry of Information and Culture, 2017). This approach recognises the importance of culture in shaping national identity and promoting social cohesion.

Several institutions and structures are responsible for implementing Nigerian cultural policy. The Ministry of Culture and Social Welfare is tasked with formulating and executing national cultural policies, financing national cultural organisations, and managing international cultural relations (Federal Ministry of Information and Culture, 2017). The National Council for Arts and Culture develops and promotes Nigerian cultures, interacting with private and public organisations to achieve its goals (National Council for Arts and Culture, n.d.). Additionally, the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria and the Nigerian Television Authority play crucial roles in broadcasting and promoting Nigerian music and culture.

Despite the importance of cultural policy, the music industry in Nigeria faces several challenges. Funding for cultural activities is mainly dependent on the federal budget, with limited private sector involvement (Adebowale, 2018). Piracy, poor promotion, and distribution networks also hinder the growth of the music industry (Onyeji, 2019). However, Nigeria's rich cultural heritage, (with over 250 ethnic groups), presents opportunities for diverse musical styles and genres. The growth of cultural industries like broadcasting, publishing, and film has contributed to music industry

development (Adebowale, 2018). The Nigerian music industry has experienced significant growth in recent years, with pop music being a major driver of this growth. Nigerian pop music, influenced by traditional styles, has gained popularity globally (Onyeji, 2019). The industry's growth has also been driven by the increasing popularity of digital platforms and social media. However, there is a need for specialised training programmes to develop the skills of music industry professionals, including producers, promoters, and managers (Adebowale, 2018).

Nigerian cultural policy has contributed to the growth and development of the music industry. However, addressing challenges like funding, piracy, and distribution is essential to further support the industry's potential. With the right policies and support, the Nigerian music industry can continue to thrive and make significant contributions to the country's economy and cultural identity. Art music education and appreciation are vital components of Nigeria's cultural heritage and musical development. The country's rich cultural diversity and musical traditions provide a unique foundation for art music education and appreciation. Art music education is essential for preserving Nigeria's cultural heritage by teaching traditional music styles and techniques. It also contributes to the development of musical skills and appreciation among students, helping them understand and appreciate their cultural identity and musical traditions. For instance, Fela Sowande incorporated Nigerian melodies and rhythms into European classical forms in his compositions, such as "Oyigiyigi" and "Folk Symphony". This blend of styles showcases the potential of art music education in promoting cultural heritage.

However, art music education in Nigeria faces several challenges. Many schools and institutions lack the resources and facilities needed to provide quality art music education. Additionally, Western classical music often dominates music education, potentially overshadowing traditional Nigerian music. There is also a need for more trained musicians and music educators to teach and promote art music especially in schools. To promote art music appreciation in Nigeria, several strategies can be employed. Organising music festivals and concerts that showcase Nigerian art music can help promote appreciation and interest. Developing music education programmes that incorporate traditional Nigerian music can also help students appreciate and understand their cultural heritage. Furthermore, engaging with local communities and promoting art music through outreach programmes can increase appreciation and participation.

By addressing the challenges facing art music education, and promoting appreciation through these strategies, Nigeria can preserve its rich musical traditions and cultural identity. The works of composers like Fela Sowande serve as a foundation for the development of modern Nigerian art music, reflecting the country's cultural environment, upbringing, and training. Their contributions continue to inspire future generations of Nigerian composers and musicians.

Findings and discussion

Brief Biography of Princess Banke Ademola

Princess Banke Ademola (born in 1945), is a distinguished figure in Nigerian broadcasting and music education, whose career has spanned over four decades. Her professional journey began in 1969 when she joined the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) (formerly Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation), and was assigned to its music department under the supervision of Christopher Oyeshiku. She engaged with a wide array of musical genres, including classical, jazz, highlife, and indigenous African music. According to her, this experience laid the foundation for her contributions to public broadcasting and cultural preservation in Nigeria (personal communication, November 21, 2024). Throughout her career, Ademola demonstrated a remarkable capacity for innovation and leadership within the broadcasting sector. In 1996, she was transferred to FRCN Ibadan (Premier 93.5 FM), where she launched the programme 'Popular Classics', which helped in furthering public appreciation of classical music. Before this, she had served in the music department of FRCN, Lagos, where she collaborated with notable music professionals like Mr. Kehinde Okusanya, thereby contributing to the station's reputation for musical excellence.

Her contributions culminated in her appointment as Executive Director of FRCN National Station, Ibadan; she held this position until her retirement in March 2006 after 37 years of meritorious service. During her tenure, she championed high-quality programming and professional ethics, and her leadership was instrumental in raising editorial and artistic standards. In recognition of her exemplary service, she was awarded the Elizabeth R. Award for Excellence in Public Service Broadcasting (one of the highest international honours in her field) by the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association (CBA) in November 2003.

Ademola's legacy is not confined to broadcasting only. She has made profound contributions to music education in Nigeria. As a long-serving educator at the Musical Society of Nigeria (MUSON) School of Music, she played a pivotal role in nurturing young musical talents. Serving as Director of the MUSON School of Music, she continues to provide strategic leadership and academic direction, significantly influencing the development of Nigeria's classical and contemporary music scenes (Okonkwo, 2018).

In addition to her educational leadership, she was appointed General Manager of Gateway Radio in April 2006 by Otunba Gbenga Daniel (as Governor of Ogun State). Under her stewardship, the station pursued a vision of professionalism and innovation, strengthening its public service mandate (Ogun State Broadcasting Service, 2006). Ademola is also known for her involvement in religious and community initiatives. As Music Director at the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries (MFM), she integrated musical excellence into worship, thus promoting spiritual growth through the arts. In an interview, she emphasised the influence of early mentorship and a strong passion for music in shaping her career. She reflected on the formative role of the FRCN music department, and highlighted the importance

of preserving African musical heritage through education and the media (Ademola, personal communication, November 21, 2024). Ademola remains a celebrated pioneer in both the media and music education. Her multifaceted career continues to inspire generations of broadcasters, musicians, and educators. In a predominantly male-dominated field, her professional achievements and contributions stand as a testament to perseverance, vision, and excellence.



Fig 1: One of the researchers with Princess Banke Ademola in her office at the MUSON Centre, Onikan, Lagos.

Promoting Nigerian art music and cultural heritage

Ademola's radio programmes showcased Nigerian art music, highlighting its unique characteristics and promoting cultural heritage. This helped to preserve traditional music and cultural practices, promote Nigerian identity and cultural diversity and encourage appreciation and pride in Nigerian art music. Although she used *Badinerie* for flute by J. S. Bach as the signature tune of her Popular Classics on Premier 93.5FM, she still aired several Nigerian art music, alongside western classical music, just like the Concert Hour in Lagos. Her shows featured classical music, the stories behind them and the descriptive analysis of the music. Piano music, orchestral music such as symphonies, chamber music, solos and choral music were featured on the show from indigenous and western composers such as Fela Sowande, Ayo Bankole, Akin Euba, Sam Akpabot, Joshua Uzoigwe, T.K.E. Philips, Rev Ola Olude, Laz Ekweme, etc. Some of the Nigerian art music works she aired include: *Ya Orule* for piano; Nigerian Suite for piano; Christmas Sonata for piano; The Passion Sonata for piano; English Winterbirds for piano; Fugal Dance for the piano; Toccata and Fugue for organ; and Three Toccatas for organ. Others are vocal works are *Baba Se Wa Ni Omo Rere* (Father make us good children) for female chorus and chamber orchestra, Sonata No 2 in C (Passion), Song Cycle for Bass Baritone, *Beni Arunkarun Kan Ki Yio Sunmo Irere*, Three Part Songs for female choir, Three Yoruba Songs for bass and piano, Christmas Comes But Once a Year, and *Keresimesi Odun De*. Further her repertoire of musical works included The Children of the Sun, Choral Fugue, Cantata in Yoruba *Jona* (for soprano solo, speaker in English, drum, piano, tambura and

orchestra), Canon for Christmas, Little Jesus, Art Thou Come, *Eru O b'Omo Aje*, God Rest You Merry, Lullaby, Be Prepared (Girls Guide's Jubilee Song), Ten Yoruba Songs for voice and piano, Angels from the Realms, *Ore-Ofe Jesu Kristi* (The grace of Jesus) for unaccompanied choir, and *Adura fun Alafia* (Prayer for peace) for voice and piano composed by Ayo Bankole.

From the works of Samuel Akpabot, she aired some orchestral works such as, Overture for a Nigerian Ballet for small orchestra, Scenes from Nigeria for small orchestra, Three Nigerian Dances for string orchestra and percussion, *Ofala* Festival for wind orchestra plus 5 African instruments, Cynthia's Lament for soloists, wind orchestra and 6 African instruments, Nigeria in Conflict for wind orchestra and eight African instruments, and choral works such as, Jaja of Opobo folk opera in Efik, English and Ibo, Two Nigerian Folk Tunes for choir and piano, Te Deum Laudamus (Church anthem) for choir and organ, Verba Christi cantata for 3 soloists, chorus and orchestra.

The signature tune of her Concert Hour on Gateway Radio was *Akinla*, a string ensemble composition of Fela Sowande. Other works of Fela Sowande that she aired are his organ works, such as Kyrie, Oyigiyigi, Gloria, Ka Mura, Prayer, 1958, Ricordi, Obangiji, Joshua Fit de Battle of Jericho, Yoruba Lament, 1955, Jesu Olugbala, K'a Mo Rokoso and Oba Aba Ke Pe. Sowande's choral works aired are The Wedding Day for S.S.A. with piano, Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child for S.A.T.B. a cappella, My Way's Cloudy for S.A.T.B. with piano, De Ol' Ark's a-Moverin' for S.A.T.B. a cappella with tenor solo, Same Train for S.A.T.B. a cappella, Steal Away for S.A.T.B. a cappella, Roll de Ol' Chariot for S.A.T.B. with piano and rhythm.

All I do for S.A.T.B. with piano and rhythm combo, Goin' to set down for S.A.T.B. a cappella with soprano solo, Couldn't Hear Nobody Pray for S.A.T.B. a cappella with soprano solo.

Promoting all these indigenous compositions reveals her passion for propagating Nigeria's cultural values, traditions and day-to-day experience.

Providing a platform for art music education and appreciation

Ademola's radio programmes served as an educational platform, promoting art music appreciation and understanding among listeners. This helped to develop musical literacy and appreciation, foster a love for art music among Nigerians and encourage cultural exchange and understanding. Programme presenters were mandated to go for fieldwork in order to gather information and repertoires for their shows. They started by going out across the country to record all sorts of Nigerian music, script them and broadcast them on radio. The station's library was also stocked with valuable and relevant books, documentaries and audio recordings which served as resources for broadcasters.

Some persons were assigned to air piano music, while she was assigned Concert Hour, and that was a notable beginning of classical music and, precisely, Nigerian art music broadcast on the radio. The mandate was to research the history behind the music, what inspired the composer to write the music and the significance of the music. The management insisted on thorough research with facts and figures. Consequently, the airing of classical music with the pictorial description of the works and their background information made listeners like classical music. Ademola referred to her encounter with Kobam (a notable Nigerian pop artiste and MTN Neft ambassador around the year 2020), who said, "You made me like classical music because the story you used to tell made the music so alive". Concert Hour was a show that many people always looked forward to listening to back then on Radio Lagos. Many listeners of her shows testified that she was their music teacher on the radio. Aspects of musicology, such as African music, the history of Western music, basic music appreciation, forms and analysis of Western and African music, etc., were being taught whenever she was trying to describe pieces to be aired during her shows.

Contributions to the growth and development of the Nigerian music industry

The study highlights the importance Ademola's contributions to Nigerian art music and cultural heritage, underscoring her legacy as a pioneering figure in art music broadcasting. After many years, the interest in promoting classical music created by her Popular Classics gave birth to another programme entitled Indigenous Classics on Diamond 101.1 FM, Ibadan. In 2017, this radio show was introduced to the then station manager, Mr Paul Anthony by Ayokunmi Olaoluwa through Mrs Foluke Owolabi. Indigenous classics featured works of early and recent prominent Nigerian art music composers, such as Fela Sowande, TKE Philips, Ayo Bankole, Akin Euba, Joshua Uzoigwe, Akpabot, Lazarus Ekweme, A.V.E. Mereni, Meki Nzewi, Bode Omojola, Okechukwu Ndubisi, Adam Fiberisma, Ayodamope Oluranti, Oladayo Oyedun, Alvan-Ikoku Nwamara, Abel Adeleke, Olusoji Stephen, Owoaje Tolu, Seun Owoaje, Christian Onyeji, Ekeule Jude, Deola Amudipe, Ayowole Busuyi, Dotun Olayemi, Dotun Adelekan, Femi Adewoyin, 'Tunji Dada, Ayokunmi Olaoluwa, Gbenga Obagbemi, Seun Akin-Ajayi, Sunday Ajayi, Niran Obasa, John Aina, Yemi Akinpelu, Bidemi Oresanya (SAN), Wole Adetiran, and Rotimi Oloasibikan, among others.

The legacy laid by Ademola is such that it sustains the promotion of art music in Nigeria. This is crucial in order to enhance the economic sustainability of art music composers, performers and producers. Reber & Chang (2000) state that "the media influence the audience's world views, teaching them common views, roles, and values." This implies that the mass media do not impose on the masses but impress their choice on their minds. Listening to radio or watching television programmes opens the subconscious and/or conscious minds of listeners to whatever is being broadcast. As many who tune in, the media send into their hearts the same message/information, which helps in forming their opinions, views about life, taste of music, general philosophy, values, and interests. The awareness and validation that her programmes received placed art music as strong and productive force,

enabling listeners to retain the genre in their hearts, thereby strengthening the country's music industry.

Conclusion

The key findings of this study demonstrate the significant impact of Ademola's radio programmes on promoting Nigerian art music and cultural heritage. The study provides valuable insights into the role of radio in promoting art music and cultural heritage, highlighting the importance of preserving and promoting cultural diversity and creativity.

Recommendations

The legacy of Ademola should be revived and retained in radio broadcasting. The Association of Nigerian Musicologists (ANIM) and other music professional associations should be concerned about the promotion of Nigerian art music. Art music composers should endeavour to make their works available to the people in the media in order to help popularise their art. Media stations across the country should broadcast programmes that promote Nigerian art music. Music graduates should be allowed to have their place again in the media houses. The National Broadcasting Commission should issue an order that the Music department should be restored in Nigeria's broadcasting houses.

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