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*Original Article*

### African Pianism: An Educator View.

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#### Date Published: **ABSTRACT**

04 April 2022 The quest for solving the impending challenge that hampers the performance of

**Keywords:** pianism style is one of the major concerns of most piano instructors that embraced

*African Pianism,* the concept of African pianism. The identified difficulty stands as contributing

*Teaching* factor downplaying the promotion of African identity via the use of the piano.

*Approach,* Generally, this has stimulated lots of debates at different levels, which calls for

*difficulty,* urgent attention to reposition and promote African pianism. The thrust of this paper

*Western Pieces,* is not to re-sound the identified difficulty, but to investigate and propound

*Music Students.* applicable approaches that could be used as fundamental procedures for correcting

the intricacy of this challenge. The Taro Yamane sample size theory was adopted.

Questionnaire were administered to music students from two Universities in Nigeria

used as case study, interviewing piano instructors from these institutions,

interviewing Christian Onyeji, a prominent African pianism composer in Nigeria

and Meki Nzewi, a renowned, personate and promoter of African music. The

findings reveal that there is a big gap between the music students and their

knowledge of their indigenous music and culture. Also, most music students do not

have any prior theoretical nor practical knowledge of piano playing before coming

to study music, and the ratio balancing of the choice of selected piano pieces given

to the students is more of Western oriental pieces than African oriental pieces.

However, the suggestive approachable measures to tackle the said problem include,

route learning method which, should dominant the teaching method for pieces in

African pianism style, African pianism pieces should be the dominant pieces to be

given to students learning to play the piano in the departments of music in Nigeria.

Composers should compose short pieces in the African pianism style/techniques

and make them available for instructional materials. Nevertheless, the proposed

suggestions in this study will serve as an eye opener to the need for redirecting and

promoting the teaching and playing of African Pianism in the department of music in Nigeria.

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## INTRODUCTION

This paper attempts a discourse of the problem of music students' inability to interpret African pianism pieces. The imperativeness in understudying the factors that leads to this predicament stands as an irrefutable act that cannot be over looked, but that needs urgent attention and profound corrective measures. Thus, the corrective measures should be tailored towards promoting of African identity. To uncovered the said problems, the performative ability of students of the department of Music, Faculty of Humanities, University of Port Harcourt and the department of Music, Faculty of Arts, Ignitius University of Education were used as case study. Basically, the applicable knowledge, dexterity and interpretative abilities of these students were viewed through the current situation and happenings under the teaching and learning of piano studies. By looking at the practicable acquaintances of students on the general concept of African pianism. It is pertinent to note that this study did not base any of its investigation on what ought to be and what ought not to be the standard and entry requirement(s) into the department of music or the study of music as profession in Nigeria. The identified challenge was addressed base on the investigations and findings of facts collected, collated, analysed and interpreted via the application of questionnaires and interviews carried out on the study.

## ABSTRACTIVE VIEW OF AFRICAN PIANISM

African pianism is one of the remarkable techniques created for the purpose of developing, sustaining, and propagating the African creative identity in the world of art music. The conceptual view of African pianism as a creative approach has been explained from different philosophical perspectives by diverse scholars, who generally agree that it is a compositional technique which captures the rhythms of African indigenous musical instruments on the European piano (Euba, 1967; Nketia 1974; Agawu, 1995; Omojola 2001; Onyeji, 2008, Boamah, 2012; Bolaji, 2019). The import of using a musical instrument of European origin as a tool for representing the figurative image of African idioms stands as the bedrock in the creation of the terminology "African pianism"; as established by Euba in the 1960s. Nketia (1974) posits that African pianism goes beyond just using the European piano to imitate the indigenous African rhythms. He adds that it is a compositional style in the hands of African art composers that should not be tied to any specific school of thought; rather, it should aim at exploring the potential of African tonal usages. Similarly, Agawu (1995) opines that the concept of African pianism depends strictly on the acceptability and existence of a body that will be called "African Piano Music".

Speaking on African pianism and the potential functionality of pianos as a drum instrument, Onyeji (2016) explained the perception of drummistic piano composition as an interrelated style that is linked with the African pianism. He states that:

*... this concept, specifically, highlights the potential of the piano as a drumming instrument. In my study of the instrument, I found very close relationship between the piano and the performance behaviors of drums of Africa. Stimulated by the works of Uzoigwe and myself I attempted a theoretical discourse of the concept in IJME 26 (2) (2008) as an approach to teaching piano composition in Africa, emanating from the strong drumming tradition of sub-Saharan Africa (p. 60).*

In line with the above submission, Bolaji, (2019), acknowledges that without any pre-understanding of the percussive nature of the piano, a typical African child/person would approach and interpret the potential functionality of the Western piano playing at first contact as a drum instrument. He referred to this phenomenon as the drum-able rhythmic nature that constitutes the cognitive thinking, content and natural musical expressions as embedded in Africans. Thus, this spontaneous interpretation of the piano in the same manner as a typical African membrane instrument, is positioned within the natural music cognitive features and practices of a typical African.

The dominant objective of this study as stated above, is the educative approach to viewing the problem of music student's inability in interpreting piano pieces written in African pianism style. Hence, it is pertinent to state that the achievement of the corrective approaches in this study will stir further studies that will promote African identity via the concept of African pianism.

### **African Identity Via Art Music**

One of the major intellectual quests of the 21st century Africa arts music composers was to find and propound new creative approaches to the modern style of composition, anchored on, and exhibiting the African identity. Using Nigeria as a reference point, remarkable efforts were made through diverse approaches to composing and interpreting

new musical pieces written for vocal and instrumental music, adopting, and expressing the African indigenous idioms. Omojola (1995), opines that this was part of the clarion call by the first generation of Nigerian art musicians/composers, including T. k. E. Philips, Fela Showande and Ayo Bankole etc. As the study and expansion of Nigerian art music continued with the second-generation scholars, the genre gained a wider acceptability in the Nigerian society as a field of study. Additionally, efforts were made to build on the foundational efforts of the first generation of the Nigerian art musicians. This in the pursuit and discovery of a unique identity toward bringing the indigenous music of Nigeria, in particular, and African in general to global limelight. This pursuit was carried out through the new creative styles and intellectual creativity in adopting the unique identity of Nigerian art music in composing for the pianoforte. This was termed African pianism, a compositional style that expresses the predominant use of traditional African musical elements for the pianoforte, as propounded by Akin Euba, in 1964. The basic nature of this style explores and adapts the derivative indigenous rhythms through percussive nature of the piano. Onyeji (2016) opines that the ideological concept, exploration and adaptation of African indigenous drums and percussive rhythms through arts composition got its early exposure through the musical gospel pianoforte works of Akin Euba. Furthermore, Onyeji asserts that, the proclamation of Akin Euba is basically addressed to the art music disciples who believe in the fusion of European and African elements, in pursuit of the African identity. Among the early works of Akin Euba with African pianism technique is *Waka Duru and Igi Nla So*. In the same vein, Oluranti (2012) opines that, ...the piano compositional works of Joshua Uzoigwe (1946 – 2005), Gyorgy Ligeti (1923 – 2006) and Akin Euba (b.1935 - 2020), absorb and demonstrate the aesthetics of African traditional musical elements in different ways, and present the concept of African pianism. Fundamentally, the adaptive approach and the process of replicating African indigenous instrument on the piano were promoted in diverse piano works of these art musicians. This highlight demonstrates the stimulating ability, symbolic, and textural nature of piano instrument in representing other indigenous instruments within the perimeter of its functionality.

Euba (1993) asserts that the concept of African pianism is primarily defined by the piano works of African composers. This also includes works by non-African composers, in which African elements are featured. He adds that Africanisms employed in neo-African keyboard music include (a) thematic repetition (b) direct borrowing of thematic material (rhythmic and/or tonal) from African traditional sources (c) the use of rhythmic and tonal motif which, although not borrowed from specific traditional sources, are based on traditional idioms (d) percussive treatment of the piano, and (e) making the piano 'behave like African instruments. It is relevant to note that, the fundamental subject matter of African pianism is the thematic rhythm of an indigenous instrument(s). Thus, the specific goal of using the piano to imitate the aesthetic nature of indigenous African musical instruments is to capture the traditional thematic rhythmic materials embedded in the indigenous instrument(s).

### **Piano Playing in Nigeria**

Following the historical trend of Western arts music in Nigeria and the emergence of identity within the context of Nigerian arts music, one could say categorically that piano playing as an art form was introduced by Missionaries, among other Western musical idioms. Idolor (1994) informs us that the Christian Missionaries established their visit on the soil of Nigeria in 1472, 1555 and 1841, while western art music was seen as a dominant factor and tool they used in their introduced mode of worship in Nigeria. Omojola (1995) states that the mid - 19th century witnessed the introduction and establishment of new musical idioms with the art of piano playing inclusive. Likewise,

Okafor (2005) and Akpakpan (2006) respectively, state that the historical antecedent that introduced piano playing in Nigeria is also traceable to the European trade activities. On his part, Ogisi (2007) states that the introduction of art music in Lagos in the 1880s came along with the art of piano playing. This was seen at different activities of the "returnees" (ex-slaves) who were at the limelight of stage performances in different concert halls, particularly in Lagos. All these antecedents established the root of Western styles of music and practices in Nigeria.

It is not a new assertion that the introduction of this Western musical idioms has transfused important influences on most of the Nigerian musical genres. Hence, it is evident that the Western art music serves as one of the major phenomena that has given Nigeria indigenous music a platform of showcasing, sustaining, and documenting past and present historical musical activities within and outside the shores of Nigeria. Nzewi (1997) noted that the foundational structure laid by the European-American pioneer ethnomusicologists has given Africans a solid foothold in knowing, building, and re-building the state of African music generally. Streamlining this submission within the Nigerian art music context, the advent of arts music gives an in-depth insight and significant turnaround to the investigation of diverse Nigerian musical genres. This has proven to be of great benefit to the Nigerian art musical genre and the socio-cultural states of its popular musical genres.

Furthermore, it is clear that the act of piano playing in Nigeria was first seen as a phenomenon used in accompanying hymn singing within the circumference of European mode of worship in Nigeria. This has registered and formed part of the existing norms within the Christian religious worship in Nigeria today. Also, the piano/keyboard instrument has gone beyond the circle of religion, becoming a dominant instrument in most styles of popular music in Nigeria.

### ***Piano Playing in Formal Educational System in Nigeria***

Idolor (2001) submits that piano playing as an art form gained an established ground in the formal educational system in Nigeria with the introduction of music as one of the major subjects offered in the earliest mission schools, such as Teacher Training Colleges and Colleges of Education in 1843. Thus, Ukeje (1979) and Idolor (2001) state that the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S) missionaries in Onitsha established the first day school and the post primary school was situated in Ogbomosho; while the Wesley College Ibadan and the Zik Grammar school, Sapele were founded in the years 1897, 1905 and 1943 respectively. All these schools had the formal teaching of European art music that was literally taught in their programme of studies. Idolor in his submission acknowledges that most of the

schools within the missionary and colonial eras established the foundation of studying Western art music, of which piano playing is a predominant part, in Nigeria. He affirmed that the European concept of music dominates the entire contents of the music taught since they are the main draftsmen, organisers, and facilitators of their music. Thus, this serves as the reference point that promotes the act of piano playing within the formal educational system in Nigeria. Similarly, the establishment of a department of music in the first Nigerian University, University of Nigeria Nsukka, in the year 1960, and its official kick-off in 1961 contributed immensely to the development of piano playing in Nigeria. This stimulated the transformation and standardization of the teaching and learning of piano playing in the higher institutions across country.

Bolaji (2015) assert that the study of piano remains a major and compulsory course/subject under the applied music studies, for all the students in the departments of music in Nigerian Universities. He emphasizes that piano studies serve as one of the major courses that students must pass before graduation in most department of music in Nigerian Universities. This underlining factor reveals the importance of the teaching and learning of piano playing as to the art music profession in Nigeria.

### **ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS**

The re-affirmation of the dominant objective of this study is the investigation into the difficulty of students in interpreting pieces composed in African pianism style. Though, African pianism stand as one of the major phenomenon's that promotes and propagates the prodigious African identity globally. This has helped to viewed the integral indigenous heritage of Africa through a well presentable musical medium. Nevertheless, it is pertinent at this juncture to state that the study did not used any entry behaviour of the students on the piano to exonerate

the findings. Likewise, the study did not base its justification of the student problem on if having grade five theory of music and grade eight certification in piano playing before gaining admission into the department of music. The study based its investigation on the current facts and circumstances happenings as regard the concept of African pianism. This study was carried out at the end of the first session of the year one students. This is to ascertain if the African Pianism is being introduced at the entry point of students, under applied studies.

The questionnaire was administered randomly to the 80 selected music students in the department of music from levels 1, 2 and 3 of the Department of Music, Faculty of Humanities, University of Port Harcourt and Department of Music, Faculty of Arts, Ignatious Ajuru University of Education. The level four hundred students were left aside based on the fact that they are out-going students already. Basically, following the investigation carried out in this study, questionnaire was administered to a total number of 35 students in level one hundred (100 level) of the two Universities, while the total number of 25 students of level two hundred (200 level) responded to the questionnaire as well; and the same questionnaire were administered to the total number of twenty students (20) of level three hundred (300 level). Fundamental questions were raised in the questionnaire in order to know the in-depth understanding of the students on the subject matter. Six piano instructors were interviewed from the two Universities used as case study. Constructive open-ended questions that were prepared and channelled towards unravelling the major factors behind the subject matter of this study were asked from the instructors. Also, one of the current prominent African pianism composers in Nigeria was interviewed, and a renowned scholar and personate promoter of African music was interviewed respectively.

**Table 1: The Basic Understanding of Music Students on the Concept of African Pianism**

Question	YES		NO	
	f	%	f	%
1. Do you know what African Pianism means?	28	35%	52	65%
2. Have you ever played any piano piece(s) that is written in African Pianism style before?	14	17.5%		
If your answer to question No. 2 is yes, did you find the piece(s) difficult to play?	10	12.5%		
<b>Western Pieces</b>			<b>African Pianism Pieces</b>	
Which type of piano pieces(s) did your piano instructor introduce to you at your first contact on the piano.	76	95%	4	5%
<b>None</b>			<b>African Piece(s).</b>	
If your answer to question No. 2 is yes, how many pieces in African pianistic style do you play in a semester?	The highest is two	2.5% per-semester.	78 students were not given African pianism piece in a semester.	97.5%

65.% students responded that they did not know what an African Pianism piece meant. Meaning that, the whole concept behind the compositional style that makes use of the derivative indigenous musical rhythms on the Western Piano instrument is unknown to the above percentage of students. While the remaining 35% gave a positive assertion that they have the conceptual knowledge of African pianism. Though, the specific entry point at which African pianism as a concept was introduced to the

35% of students differs, since the students were of different levels and instructors.

The subject matter of this study was addressed from the root so as to gained clearer perspective into the genesis factor. This was archived by looking at the percentage ratio of the student from each level of the 80 students with the knowledge of African pianism style. The table below gave the clear picture.

**Table 2: Why should music students lack knowledge of the concept of African pianism?**

		f	%
Year One	The number of Year One Students without the understanding of African pianism.	30	37.5
	No. of Year One Students with the understanding of African pianism.	5	6.25%
Year Two	The number of Year Two without the understanding of African pianism	16	20%
	No. of Year Two Students with the understanding of African Pianism.	9	11.25%
Year Three	The number of Year Three students with the understanding of African pianism	6	7.5%
	No. of Year Three Students with the understanding of African Pianism.	14	17.5%

From the indices of the percentage ratio above, it is established that the higher percentage of students that lacks understanding of the concept of African pianism lies in the foundational level, the year one. This implies that students were introduced to the study of piano instrument using the Eurocentric perspective and its musical materials as the main

and only teaching aid. Also, the derived result from the statistic table above shows that there is more absence of the teaching of African pianism pieces at the introductory level of students in the department of music. This will be ascertained in the next data analysis table, looking extensively beyond the theoretical knowledge, but extent of the

practicability learning experience gotten by the students. However, in view of the established fact above, it could be said that this automatically contributes and serves as a major factor among other factors that led to the poor performance of students in African pianism pieces in the department music. It is worthy of note and to mention here that, the purposiveness of this study is not to juxtapose what speculation of piano materials to be used and which ought not to be used in teaching the piano

instrument. But the trust of the study is to identify, unravel and propound corrective measures that can be used to address the identified predicament of students on the said subject matter. In the same vein, the view of the study posits that, despite the fact that European piano instrument is not an African indigenous musical instrument, the indigenous musical content(s) should not be laid aside, but it should be giving higher consideration in the teaching of piano study.

**Table 3: Have you ever played any piano piece(s) that is written in African Pianistic style before?**

	f	%
No. Students with Yes.	14	17.5%
No. of Students with No.	66	82.5%

66 students have not played pieces written in African pianism before.

The statistical data gotten from the student responses base on question No. 2 of the questionnaire unravelled that 82.5% of the students had never played any African pianism piece before, as of the time this study was conducted. The percentage ratio of this result centred on the practical aspect and not just the general theoretical knowledge. Of a truth, in the academia milieu in Nigeria, this should raise and create a questionable mark in the heart of any Nigerian art musician/educator that seeks the promotion of indigenous musical heritage both within and outside the Nigeria locale, using piano instrument as a

medium. This because in comparing the percentage differences of students that have played African pianism piece(s) before, and to those that have not played it, there is huge difference of 65% between the two categories of students. The implication of this is that, the 17.5% of the students that responded positively were not up to one-third (1/3), of the 82.5% of students that responded negatively. This is crystal obvious that curricular content of piano studies as a course need to be looked into in order to redirect the perspective choice of pieces when selecting and giving piano pieces to the student(s).

**Table 4: If your answer to question No. 2 is yes, did you find the piece(s) difficult to play?**

	f	%
No. of Student with Yes	10	12.5%
No. of Students with No	4	5%

The percentage ratio of students that gave (YES) as their answers prior to the question No. 2 of the questionnaire were higher than the percentage ratio of students that gave (No) as their answer. Meaning that these particular students had challenges in understanding and mastering the techniques needed to interpret and play African pianistic pieces. This challenge could have emanated from their very first year (100 levels) or as they progress in their studies, since the total number of students that are having difficulties spread a-crossed all the three levels of studies. In the same vein, based on the results presented above, the course of it could also be

linked to the lack of inadequate tutelage on the subject matter. The actual under-lining factor behind this was unravelled from the data collected on the question No. 5 of the questionnaire of this study. The assertion of the 4 students that gave (No), as response to question No. 3 of the questionnaire shows that these few students found pieces written in African pianism style very easy to play. It is worthy to note that the ability of these students to play the African pianism pieces effately could be as the result of the early introduction of African pianism pieces to them at their first contact with the piano. This could as also be as a result of their

individual efforts in addition to the proper tutelage given by their instructor(s). Or, it could be that this particular set of students had prior knowledge of piano playing before gaining admission into the department of music.

Hence, if 12.5% students of the sum-total of 17.5% that stated yes, have played pieces written in African pianistic styles before, it implies that 5% of students were able to play around the “so called

identified difficulties” that others could not summon. Another reason that might generate the above result of large set of students that are finding it difficult to play African pianism pieces could be that, they were not introduced to this style of piano playing at their first contact with the piano instrument.

**Inappropriate/Wrong Selection and Assigning of Piano Pieces to Students**

**Table 5: Which type of piano pieces(s) did your piano instructor introduced to you at your first year.**

	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
Number of Western Pieces	76	95%
African Pieces	4	5%

Following the above result gotten from question four (*Table 5*); this indicates that the use of Western musical materials on the piano has been the predominant musical materials used by most piano instructors/educators in teaching piano instrument to the students. With all indications, the choice of piano pieces given to students right from their hundred/entry level contributes to the fundamental issue behind the poor performance of students in

playing African pianism pieces. Meaning that, the generic root of this problem could be associated with the contributions and role played by the piano instructors. However, this study identify that the piano instructors need to disconnect their ideological perception from the colonial mentality and embrace and identify with the promotion of African identity.

**Table 6: If your answer to question No. 2 is yes, how many pieces in African pianistic style do you play in a semester?**

	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
Number of African Pianism Pieces Given.	The highest is two (2) Per- semester.	2.5%
Number of Student without any given African Pianism.	78	97.5%

Putting into consideration the percentage ratio of students that got early exposure to Western musical pieces against the African pianistic style at their first contact on the piano under apply studies stand as an underpinning factor that must be address. Having 95% of students being exposed to Western pieces on the piano shows that the act of re-colonization is still in its full operation within the educational system in Nigeria. In view of this, the promotion of African pianism became a downplayed phenomenon, while Eurocentric style of piano pieces receive high concentration and priority over the African pianism pieces. It is important at this juncture to re-emphasis that, giving Western piano piece to students is not the problem, but placing more priority and training of the students on how to interprets Western musical

pieces over the African pianistic style stand as the born of contention of the study. Simply put, African pianism pieces should take full priority over the Eurocentric pieces within the Nigerian art music practices.

**Instructor/Music Educator Views**

In unravelling the root course(s) behind the predicament of students’ inability in interpreting pieces written in African pianism style, the philosophical viewpoints of each three selected piano instructors from the two Universities used as the case study are constructively presented accordingly. More-so, the insightful views of these piano instructors reveal and point to the fact that the



functional role(s) and sustainability of the performance of pieces written in African pianistic style should not be downplayed in the department of music by the music educator/instructor. In interviewing an outstanding African music scholar, (E. M. Nzewi personal communication, September 22, 2019), opines that, any piano instructor in the department of music in Nigeria ought to stand as the true custodian that will transmit the musical heritage of Africa culture from the primordial perspectives into the modern platform via the teaching of Western piano. Specifically, the transmission of this musical heritage should build on the educative experiences gotten from the cradle stage of a child within the socio-cultural milieu of its culture, into the systemic learning of Western education. Usually, the end point of the indigenous educational trainings from the childhood experiences through the adulthood stage will transform and equipped an African child for the day-to-day societal participation and challenges of future. Funteh, (2015), buttresses this fact that African culture and some other cultures in the world have a wellbeing systemic educational structure that educate a child from birth through adulthood, through various institutional structures that help to form and shape such a child for the societal tasks that lies ahead. Thus, the growth of an African child encompasses the holistic and systemic educational learning through various indigenous institutions which could be used as windows of knowledge into the divers Western learning segments. Likewise, Smith (1940) states that, the mastery of African rhythms among others indigenous oratures of Africans, forms the fundamental knowledge that the Western education can rest on. Putting this philosophical idea side-by-side, the teaching and learning of African pianism, it could be said categorical that the knowledge gained from the formidable understanding of African oratures should stand as a platform that the Western arts music can be built on. Agawu (1995), align with the above ideological view that potent understanding of African rhythm is highly required of any African musicians that will want to engage in the composition of African piano. Meaning that the understanding of African rhythm is a necessity phenomenon for the composition, teaching, and learner of the African pianism.

Speaking of the promotion of African pianism on a global platform, (E. M, Nzewi personal

communication, September 22, 2019), states that, Western musical knowledge can be used as an exponential tool for the purposeful global propagation of the richness and the humanism compendium embedded in Africa musical heritage. Furthermore, he notes that the promotion of this within the Western educational system of learning by the educator/instructor will re-structure and re-direct the mind-set of the students towards the knowing and appreciating their cultural heritage against the much imbibing of Western musical idioms. Drawing from the over 50 decades (50 years) outstanding experience of Nzewi in the teaching and mentoring of scholars as well as academic interactions at various levels, he opines that the reverse is the case while looking at the present states and what is obtainable in most department of music in Nigeria. He argues that, since the Nigeria's independence in 1960, most music educators/instructors in Nigeria still operate on, and use the colonial mentality in their approaches in teaching the students. In his opinion, this is a wrong method of disseminating knowledge to students on the issue(s) that should promote the interest of Africanism. Although, he identifies that most music students, just like the average child in Nigeria, have no prior knowledge of the musical heritage of their cultures before getting into the learning of the European music. More vacuum is being created to absorb and promote the Western musical idioms, that eventually stands as the bedrock and norm of the musical expression among the students.

Base on the aforementioned, (E. M, Nzewi personal communication, September 22, 2019), draws a conclusion that the promotion of African pianism pieces may not receive its full acceptability until effective correction erupts and occurs through a mental-shift in the cognitive believes and approaches of both the music educators/instructors generally, in the department of music in Nigeria. To this effect, then, will the intentional act of promoting and solving the predicament of students' inability of interpreting piano pieces written in African pianism style would be achieved. Additionally, he notes that without this in place, concentration will ever be more on the giving and the promotion of Western piano pieces to students in the department of music in Nigeria.

At a personal communication, with C. Onyeji on May 4, 2020, one of the current prominent Nigerian African pianism composers affirm the need to look into the idle situation that should be consider before a candidate will be admitted into the study of music. He asserts that the quandary of music students' inability to interpret African pianism pieces cannot be judge based on the knowledge and the proficiency of the students on the piano. But he argues that the idle situation and standard for any candidate that want to study music in having certain pedigree of knowledge in music both in theoretical and practical proficiency need to be revisited. To this end, he states that the acquisition of the pre-knowledge of any Nigerian student will base and will be drawn from the indigenous musical cultures in Nigeria. Onyeji (2015), buttress that the holistic act of professionalism of Nigerian art music have continuum collective responsibility first to promote the basic interest of Nigeria and African in general. Furthermore, he agrees to the fact that the necessity and promotion of the teaching and learning of African pianism concept ought to be consider positively and sustain in the department of music. This is to the fact that, it will expand and promote African identity from the nationality perspective to the global platform. In unravelling the availability of instructional materials that can be used for the teaching of African pianism as a unit under applied studies, (C. Onyeji, personal communication, May 4, 2020), states that there is need for composers to wake up to salvage this problem by composing more instructional African pianism piece. Also, he acknowledges that the teaching of African pianism at the entry level of the student will not be out of place, as the case may be (C. Onyeji, personal communication, May 4, 2020).

The submission given by (C. Nakofi, and G. Albert, personal communication, November 25, 2019) correspond with the above view of Nzewi on the huge gap that exist between the music students and their indigenous musical heritage before coming into the department of music. Thus, they established the fact that the fundamental and simple rhythmic patterns that an average music student ought should have learnt and known while growing up through the effective participation in the socio-cultural musical activities in the society are lacking. They attribute the cause of this to the negative impacts and effects of the westernization that has crippled

into the indigenous system in Nigeria. They affirmed that, rather, than learning and knowing the indigenous musical heritage which could be accessed from the knowledge and practices of diverse traditional music of various institutions, the western idioms and styles, dominates and stands at advantage in the cognitive knowledge of an average Nigerian music student. This stand as a major fundamental and disconnecting factor that separates most of the music students from knowing the nitty-gritty that forms the inclusive elements that governs the basic rhythmic structures in African music.

The act of given students' pieces written in African pianism style at their first year and at first contact on the piano instrument, (C. Nakofi, and G. Albert, personal communication, November 25, 2019), states that none of their piano students gets to experience this at first year. The introduction of it comes to be in the second year after ensuring the teachings and understanding of some simple rhythmic structures that are within the gamut and practices of African musical cultures. Similarly, (S. M. Nnodim and J. A. Abu, personal communication, January, 2020), states that, every music instructor/educator have roles to play in ensuring the proper teaching and the understanding of the concept of African pianism. Though they both aligned their submission with that of Nakofi and Albert on the fact that piano students do not get acquainted with African pianism pieces in their first year. The justification of this is not different from the fact that the basic indigenous knowledge of the students is lacking. Nonetheless, they confirm the introduction of African pianism pieces to the identify students with prior knowledge and potent skills on Western art piano playing before coming into the department of music. Furthermore, the high relativeness of the practicability of such students in this category on the piano will determine the actualization of getting a piece(s) in African pianism style.

(Evangeline, personal communication, January, 2020), opines that, the concept of African pianism is a different and total concept that most Nigerian music students do not seems to come across throughout their four years of learning. Thus, she states that, the identified difficulty of students' inability to play piano pieces written in African pianism style lies within the school of thought of the

instructor/educator itself. Meaning that, the piano instructor/educator that do not receive and believe in the concept of African pianism cannot see the needs to promotes African identity via this means. To this end, she aligns her submission of not given students pieces written in African pianism style at the first-year level. Also, she added that, the dilemma of students does not lie in the inability to interpret piano pieces that are composed in African pianism style alone, but it cut across any other musical pieces that is built on African rhythmic structure generally. Consequently, she notes that the faulty foundational platform of students as regards the African rhythms stand as a major obstacle that affect the progressive learning of the students on this subject matter. Similarly, Nnodim (2019), Nakofi (2019), Albert (2019) and Jeremiah (2020) aligns together on the fact that, the predicament stands as a notable factor that is common among all the music students from years one to three. Although, on is part, Albert (2019), opines that, despite the identify challenge, some students were able to overcome the said difficulty as they progress in the course of their studies.

### Interview Findings

This study has identified the inability to interpret pieces written in African pianism style as a major predicament of music students in Nigeria. At this juncture, it is important to note that other factors contribute to the said predicament. One of the major factors as identified by diverse instructors interviewed is the lack of adequate instructional materials written in African pianism style. Nnodim (2020), Nakofi, (2019), Albert (2019), Jeremiah (2020) and Evangeline (2020), consent to the fact that there are insufficient instructional materials on African pianism style that could be used in teaching the students. Stating clearly on this point, Nnodim (2020), suggests that, art composers should re-direct their creativity to the creation and involvement in creative ethnomusicology as this will promote the concept of African pianism. Speaking on the need to address and promote African pianism via creative ethnomusicology, Euba (2002), propound the theory as an avenue to investigate into specific music type of a tradition through a systematic procedure in order to bring out systematic result(s). Stating it specifically that the end point of such investigation will produce and promote the

awareness of the indigenous knowledge that constitutes such traditional music investigated. Generally, the ideological view of composing useful instructional pieces in form of African pianism *etude* will not be out of place. This in the sense that, knowing the poor foundational knowledge of students in African rhythms before gaining admission into the department of music, the view of having different and shorts African pianism style *etude* pieces will be of a great help.

The relevant and necessity of the promotion of African pianism in department of music prove to be a relative act within the province of the instructors. This implies that, each instructor has opportunity and control to determining the kind of pieces each student will play in a semester or session. Generally, the submission given by Nakofi, (2019), Nnodim (2020), Albert (2019), Jeremiah (2020) and Evangeline (2020), point to the fact that, there are no specific or stipulated policy guiding instructors on the compulsion of giving African pianism piece(s) to students. To this end, this study is avocation for having a clear and well documented policy(ies) to address the type, nature, and the promotion of African pianism pieces in every semester and session, as part of the pieces that will be giving to students. Additionally, having a laid down policy(ies) should not be on the subject matter of African pianism alone but, it should encompass a well-structured and standardized compilation of piano pieces for each level from years one to years four. The act of putting this in place will help in having a cross uniformity standard in the placement and assigning of piano pieces to student according to the stipulated and agreed required standard of each level of studies. In view of this, the conceptual act of using piano pieces written in African pianism style as part of the major pieces that should be giving to students in piano study course will be a norm and highly relevant in the teaching of piano. Conclusively, this study is advocating that any phenomenon that will promotes and propagates the indigenous culture of Africa should be advocated for. This implies that having African pianism is a worth well project that instructor/educator should embraced and promote as part of the teaching aid on the piano.

### Suggestive/Approachable Procedures

The following approachable measures stands as suggestive procedures that can be used to avail the identified predicament. It is of recommendation that policies that will guide the appropriate promotion of African pianism pieces against the Western oriental piano pieces must be put in place. This does not mean that Western oriental piano pieces should not be use in the teaching and learning of piano in the department of music, but, that the stipulating polices should be engrained to ensure the appropriate ratio balance of choice of piano pieces' selection that will be given to students in each level of studies under the applied music. The teaching and learning of African pianism pieces should be encouraged and if possible, made compulsory at the first year of the students learning. This will serve as one of the basic corrective measures of any deficiency the student maybe having before coming in for the study of music. In line with these corrective measures, art composers should shift their attention from the composition of other types of musical works, to creative ethnomusicology. By so doing, the in-depth researches into the indigenous musical culture of the geographical locale where the department of music is situated should be promoted through diverse compositional works in African pianism style. Additionally, different stages and simple beginner pieces in African pianism and etudes should be composed by art composers for the use of instructional materials. Nevertheless, rote learning method should be employed in the teaching of African pianism pieces in the department of music

### CONCLUSION

This study has X-ray the factor behind the challenge of music students in interpreting African pianism pieces. Two Department of Music from two University in Nigeria were used as a case study. Also, six piano instructors from the two Departments of Music were interviewed differently in order to ascertained conclusive findings and give explicit suggestive solutions. Additionally, a prominent Nigerian African pianism composer, and a prodigy scholar of African music was interviewed so as to have and established a concrete finding.

Finally, any basic phenomenon and theory that will sustain and promotes the indigenous culture of

African ought to be embraced and given high level of attention and acceptability. The sustainability and propagation of African pianism should be a dominant potent call that will be promoted in all department of music in Nigeria under the piano studies.

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