

MUS 142

AFRICAN MUSIC 1

2 UNITS



MUS 142: AFRICAN MUSIC



CULTURE



EXPRESSION



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Course Code: MUS 142

Course Title: African Music 1

Course Credit Load: 2 Units

Series 1: Role and Function of Music in Black African Communities

Series 2: Forms and Nature of Traditional African Musical Performances

Series 3: Classification of African Traditional Musical Instruments

Series 4: Influences of External Cultures on African Music

Series 5: African Musical Instruments and Performance Techniques

Proposed Outline for Series 1

Part 1.1 Social and Cultural Roles of Music

- 1.1.1 Music in Rituals and Ceremonies
- 1.1.2 Music in Festivals and Celebrations
- 1.1.3 Music in Daily Life and Work

Part 1.2 Communicative and Educational Functions of Music

- 1.2.1 Music as Oral Tradition and Storytelling
- 1.2.2 Music as a Tool for Socialisation and Moral Instruction

Part 1.3 Political and Spiritual Dimensions of Music

- 1.3.1 Music in Governance and Leadership
- 1.3.2 Music in Religion and Spiritual Practices

Part 1.4 Aesthetic and Recreational Functions of Music

- 2.4.1 Music for Entertainment and Leisure
- 2.4.2 Music as Artistic Expression



Introduction

Music has always been more than sound in African communities. It is woven into the fabric of daily life, shaping rituals, celebrations, governance, and spirituality. Far beyond entertainment, music serves as a living archive of history, values, and collective identity. By examining its role and function, we gain insight into how African societies have used music to sustain culture and community.

The aim of this Series is to help you explore the diverse functions of music in African communities, enabling you to analyse how music operates as a social, cultural, political, spiritual, and aesthetic force.

We shall commence this Series by studying the social and cultural roles of music, focusing on its presence in rituals, ceremonies, festivals, and daily life. Next, we will examine the communicative and educational functions of music, particularly its role in oral traditions and moral instruction. Following that, we will analyse the political and spiritual dimensions of music, considering its influence in governance and religion. Finally, we will conclude by exploring the aesthetic and recreational functions of music, highlighting its role in leisure and artistic expression.

Series Learning Outcomes Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 1.1** describe the social and cultural roles of music in African communities,
- **SLO 1.2** explain how music functions as a medium of communication and education,
- **SLO 1.3** analyse the political and spiritual dimensions of music in African societies, and
- **SLO 1.4** evaluate the aesthetic and recreational functions of music as a form of artistic and communal expression.



1.1 Social and Cultural Roles of Music

1.1.1 Music in rituals and ceremonies

In African communities, **rituals** are structured practices performed to mark important life events such as birth, initiation, marriage, and death. **Ceremonies** are organised gatherings that often involve music, dance, and symbolic acts. Music in these contexts serves as a bridge between the physical and spiritual worlds, reinforcing communal bonds and cultural identity.

Fill in the blank: Music in rituals often acts as a bridge between the _____ and spiritual worlds.



Plate 1.1 Traditional initiation ceremony with music and dance

1.1.2 Music in festivals and celebrations

Festivals are communal events that celebrate harvests, victories, or religious occasions. Music in festivals is often characterised by **polyrhythms**, which are multiple rhythms played simultaneously, creating a rich and layered sound. Celebrations may include singing, dancing, and instrumental performances that express joy and unity.

Fill in the blank: Festivals often feature music with _____, creating a layered and vibrant sound.

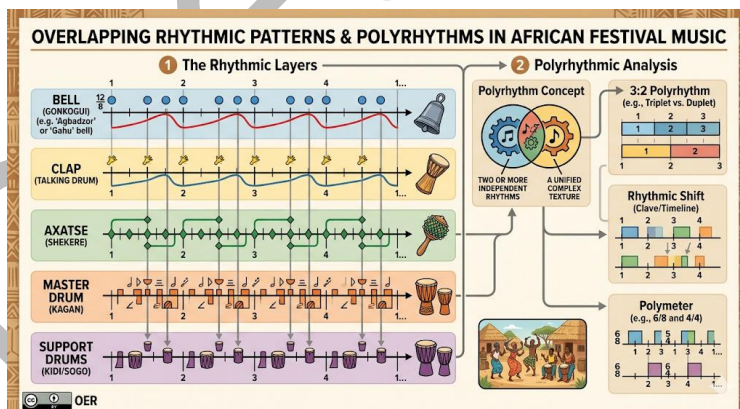


Figure 1.1 Polyrhythmic structure in festival music



1.1.3 Music in daily life and work

Music is not confined to special occasions, it permeates everyday life. **Work songs** are sung during farming, fishing, or building activities. These songs provide rhythm to coordinate group tasks and reduce fatigue. In domestic settings, **lullabies** soothe children, while market songs attract buyers. The presence of music in daily life demonstrates its functional role in enhancing productivity, communication, and emotional well-being.

Fill in the blank: Work songs help to coordinate _____ tasks and reduce fatigue.

EXAMPLES OF AFRICAN WORK SONGS					
1. Region & Language	2. Song Name/Type	3. Specific Work Context	Musical Style/Characteristics	Socio-Cultural Function	6. OER Source Example
West Africa/ Yoruba	'Èlò 'odò?' (Where is the river?)	Collecting river water	Call-and-response, strong pulse	Community solidarity, easing burden	'Yoruba Work Songs' OER
East Africa/ Swahili	'Wimbo wa Lima' (Farming Song)	Planting and sowing seeds	Repetitive, steady tempo	Rhythmic coordination, synchronized labor	'Tanzanian Agricultural Rhythms' OER
South Africa Zulu	'Shosholozo' (Go Forward)	Moving a train carriage	Powerful a cappella, cappella, marching	Motivation, group identity	'South African Mining Music' OER
Central Africa Lingala	'Wimbo wa Ujenzi' (Building Song)	Carrying materials for a new hut	Energetic, fast rhythm	Maintaining pace, morale boost	'Congolese Construction Chants' OER
North Africa Berber	'Azetta' (Weaving Song)	Operating a hand loom	Intricate, sustained tones	Enhancing dexterity, creative expression	'Atlas Weaving Traditions' OER

Box 1.1 Examples of daily work songs in African communities

Pilot questions 1.1

1. Which life events are commonly accompanied by music in African rituals?
2. What musical feature is most associated with African festivals and celebrations?
3. How do work songs contribute to productivity in African communities?
4. What role does music play in soothing children in domestic settings?
5. Why is music considered a collective language during festivals?

1.2 Communicative and Educational Functions of Music

1.2.1 Music as oral tradition and storytelling

In African societies, **oral tradition** refers to the transmission of history, values, and cultural knowledge through spoken word, song, and performance. Music plays a central role in this process, acting as a living archive that preserves collective memory. Storytelling through song allows communities to pass down myths, legends, and historical accounts across generations. The rhythm and melody make these stories memorable, ensuring continuity of culture even without written records.



Fill in the blank: Oral tradition ensures the transmission of _____ across generations without written records.



Plate 1.2 Storytelling through song in African oral tradition

1.2.2 Music as a tool for socialisation and moral instruction

Music is also a powerful medium for **socialisation**, which means the process of teaching individuals the norms, values, and behaviours of their community. Songs often contain moral lessons, warnings, or encouragements that guide behaviour. For example, children's songs may teach respect for elders, honesty, or cooperation. In this way, music functions as an informal educational system, shaping character and reinforcing social cohesion.

Fill in the blank: Songs used for socialisation often teach values such as respect, honesty, and _____.

AFRICAN SONGS: MORAL LESSONS AND CONTEXTS		
1. Region & Language	2. Song Name/Type (Meaning)	3. Context & Moral Lesson
West Africa/Yoruba	'Èlò l'odò?' (Where is the river?)	Context: Women collecting water Lesson: Perseverance, community
East Africa/Swahili	'Mbeju' (Seeds)	Context: Farming/Planting Lesson: Working together for future
South Africa/Zulu	'Shosholozo' (Go Forward)	Context: Mining/Train Labor Lesson: Teamwork, moving together
Central Africa/Lingala	'Moto na Ngambo' (Fire across)	Context: Village gathering Lesson: Consequences of gossip
North Africa/Berber	'Azetta' (Weaving Song)	Context: Operating a hand loom Lesson: Patience and dexterity

Box 1.2 Examples of moral lessons in African songs

Pilot questions 1.2

1. What is oral tradition, and how does music contribute to it?
2. Why is storytelling through song important in African communities?
3. How does music function as a tool for socialisation?
4. What kinds of values are commonly taught through children's songs?
5. Why can music be considered an informal educational system?



1.3 Political and Spiritual Dimensions of Music

1.3.1 Music in governance and leadership

In African societies, music has historically played a role in **governance**, which refers to the systems and processes of leadership and decision-making. Songs may be used to praise leaders, criticise injustice, or mobilise communities for collective action. Praise songs reinforce authority and legitimacy, while protest songs express dissatisfaction and call for change. In this way, music becomes a political tool that reflects the voice of the people and influences leadership.

Fill in the blank: Praise songs reinforce authority and _____, while protest songs express dissatisfaction.



Plate 1.3 Music as a tool of governance and leadership

1.3.2 Music in religion and spiritual practices

Music is deeply connected to **spirituality**, which refers to the practices and beliefs that link individuals to the divine or supernatural. In African religions, drumming, chanting, and singing are used to invoke spirits, communicate with ancestors, and create sacred atmospheres. Religious rituals often rely on music to guide participants into states of meditation, healing, or possession. Music thus serves as a medium through which communities express faith and maintain spiritual continuity.

Fill in the blank: In African religions, drumming and chanting are used to invoke _____ and communicate with ancestors.



1.4.2 Music as artistic expression

Music also serves as a form of **artistic expression**, which means the creative use of sound to convey emotions, ideas, and identity. African musicians often experiment with rhythm, melody, and harmony to produce unique styles. Artistic expression through music allows individuals to showcase talent, creativity, and innovation. It also provides a platform for cultural pride, as communities present their distinct musical traditions to the wider world.

Fill in the blank: Artistic expression in music allows individuals to showcase _____, creativity, and innovation.

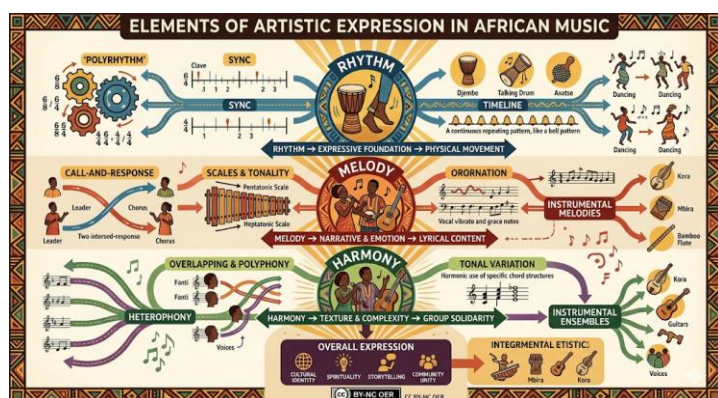


Figure 1.3 Elements of artistic expression in African music

Pilot questions 1.4

1. What role does music play in leisure activities in African communities?
2. How does entertainment music strengthen social bonds?
3. What is meant by artistic expression in music?
4. Which elements of music are commonly used for artistic expression?
5. Why is artistic expression important for cultural pride?



Series Summary

This Series has explored the vital role and function of music in African communities, showing how it is deeply woven into social, cultural, political, spiritual, and recreational life. We began by examining how music supports rituals, ceremonies, festivals, and daily work, then moved on to its communicative and educational functions such as oral tradition, storytelling, and moral instruction. Following that, we analysed the political and spiritual dimensions of music, including its influence in governance, leadership, and religion. Finally, we considered music as a source of entertainment and artistic expression, highlighting its aesthetic and recreational value.

By engaging with these topics, you should now be able to describe the social and cultural roles of music, explain its communicative and educational functions, analyse its political and spiritual dimensions, and evaluate its aesthetic and recreational contributions. These abilities directly reflect the Series Learning Outcomes and provide you with a strong foundation for understanding the broader significance of music in African communities.

Glossary of Terms

- **Artistic expression:** The creative use of sound to convey emotions, ideas, and identity.
- **Ceremonies:** Organised gatherings that involve music, dance, and symbolic acts to mark important events.
- **Entertainment:** Activities designed to bring enjoyment and relaxation, often involving music and dance.
- **Governance:** Systems and processes of leadership and decision-making within a community.
- **Lullabies:** Songs sung to soothe and calm children, often used in domestic settings.
- **Oral tradition:** The transmission of history, values, and cultural knowledge through spoken word, song, and performance.
- **Polyrhythms:** Multiple rhythms played simultaneously, creating a layered and complex sound.
- **Praise songs:** Songs that celebrate and reinforce the authority and legitimacy of leaders.
- **Protest songs:** Songs that express dissatisfaction and call for social or political change.
- **Rituals:** Structured practices performed to mark significant life events such as birth, initiation, marriage, and death.
- **Socialisation:** The process of teaching individuals the norms, values, and behaviours of their community.
- **Spirituality:** Practices and beliefs that connect individuals to the divine or supernatural.
- **Work songs:** Songs sung during communal labour to coordinate tasks and reduce fatigue.

Concept Check Questions [Series 1]

Objective questions



1. Which term refers to the transmission of cultural knowledge through song and performance? (Linked to SLO 1.2)
2. What musical feature is most associated with African festivals? (Linked to SLO 1.1)
3. Which type of song reinforces authority and legitimacy of leaders? (Linked to SLO 1.3)

Short-answer questions

4. Explain how work songs contribute to productivity in African communities. (Linked to SLO 1.1)
5. Describe one way music functions as a tool for moral instruction. (Linked to SLO 1.2)

Long-answer questions

6. Analyse the role of music in governance and leadership, providing examples of praise and protest songs. (Linked to SLO 1.3)
 - o Basic response: Music reinforces authority through praise songs and challenges injustice through protest songs.
 - o Value-added response: Outstanding learners may discuss how these songs influence collective action, shape political discourse, and serve as historical records of leadership.
7. Evaluate the aesthetic and recreational functions of music in African communities, considering both entertainment and artistic expression. (Linked to SLO 1.4)
 - o Basic response: Music provides enjoyment, relaxation, and creative expression.
 - o Value-added response: Outstanding learners may explore how artistic expression fosters cultural pride, innovation, and global recognition of African traditions.

Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 1]

- Rituals: Birth, initiation, marriage, and death.
- Festivals: Polyrhythms.
- Work songs: Coordinate group tasks and reduce fatigue.
- Domestic settings: Lullabies soothe children.
- Festivals: Music acts as a collective language.
- Oral tradition: Transmission of history, values, and culture.
- Storytelling: Preserves myths, legends, and historical accounts.
- Socialisation: Teaches norms and values.
- Children's songs: Respect, honesty, cooperation.
- Informal education: Shapes character and reinforces cohesion.
- Political tool: Mobilises communities and reflects public voice.
- Praise vs protest: Praise reinforces authority, protest challenges injustice.
- Religion: Essential for rituals and spiritual connection.
- Ancestors: Music invokes spirits and communicates with them.
- Leadership: Music influences collective action.
- Leisure: Provides enjoyment and relaxation.
- Social bonds: Strengthened through shared entertainment.
- Artistic expression: Creative use of rhythm, melody, harmony.



- Elements: Rhythm, melody, harmony.
- Cultural pride: Expressed through unique musical traditions.

References and Attributions [Series 1]

- Plate 1.1: Suggested AI prompt “Generate an image of an African initiation ceremony with drummers and dancers in a village setting.” Search string: “African initiation ceremony drumming OER image.”
- Figure 1.1: Suggested AI prompt “Create a diagram illustrating polyrhythms in African festival music.” Search string: “African polyrhythm diagram OER.”
- Box 1.1: Suggested AI prompt “Generate a table of African work songs with contexts and functions.” Search string: “African work songs examples OER.”
- Plate 1.2: Suggested AI prompt “Generate an image of an African storyteller singing with a drum in a village setting.” Search string: “African oral tradition storytelling OER image.”
- Box 1.2: Suggested AI prompt “Generate a table of African songs with moral lessons and contexts.” Search string: “African songs moral lessons OER.”
- Plate 1.3: Suggested AI prompt “Generate an image of an African leader being praised with music and dance in a community setting.” Search string: “African leader praise song OER image.”
- Figure 1.2: Suggested AI prompt “Create a diagram illustrating the role of drumming and chanting in African spiritual rituals.” Search string: “African spiritual rituals music diagram OER.”
- Plate 1.4: Suggested AI prompt “Generate an image of African community members dancing and drumming during leisure time.” Search string: “African leisure music drumming dancing OER image.”
- Figure 1.3: Suggested AI prompt “Create a diagram illustrating rhythm, melody, and harmony as elements of artistic expression in African music.” Search string: “African music artistic expression diagram OER.”



Course Code: MUS 142

Course Title: Tonal Harmony

Course Credit Load: 2 Units

Series 1: Role and Function of Music in Black African Communities

Series 2: Forms and Nature of Traditional African Musical Performances

Series 3: Classification of African Traditional Musical Instruments

Series 4: Influences of External Cultures on African Music

Series 5: African Musical Instruments and Performance Techniques

Proposed Outline for Series 2

Part 2.1 Vocal forms of performance

- 2.1.1 Solo singing traditions
- 2.1.2 Group and choral singing
- 2.1.3 Call-and-response technique

Part 2.2 Instrumental forms of performance

- 2.2.1 Percussion-based traditions
- 2.2.2 String and wind instruments in performance
- 2.2.3 Ensemble playing

Part 2.3 Dance and movement in performance

- 2.3.1 Role of dance in musical expression
- 2.3.2 Symbolism and cultural meaning of movement

Part 2.4 Contexts and settings of performance

- 2.4.1 Community-based performances
- 2.4.2 Ceremonial and ritual performances
- 2.4.3 Recreational and entertainment settings



Introduction

In the last Series, we explored the role and function of music in African communities, highlighting how music shapes social, cultural, political, and spiritual life. Building on that foundation, we now turn to the forms and nature of traditional African musical performances. These performances are not only artistic expressions but also vital cultural practices that embody the identity and values of African societies.

The aim of this Series is to help you examine the diverse forms of African musical performances, both vocal and instrumental, and to analyse how dance and context contribute to their meaning and impact.

We shall commence this Series by studying vocal forms of performance, including solo singing, choral traditions, and call-and-response techniques. Next, we will explore instrumental forms, focusing on percussion, string, and wind instruments as well as ensemble playing. Following that, we will consider the role of dance and movement in musical expression, paying attention to symbolism and cultural meaning. Finally, we will conclude by examining the contexts and settings of performance, from community gatherings to ceremonial and recreational events.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 2.1** describe the main vocal forms of traditional African musical performance,
- **SLO 2.2** explain the instrumental forms of performance and their cultural significance,
- **SLO 2.3** analyse the role of dance and movement in African musical expression, and
- **SLO 2.4** evaluate the contexts and settings in which African musical performances occur.



2.1 Vocal Forms of Performance

2.1.1 Solo singing traditions

In African communities, **solo singing** refers to performances where a single individual leads with voice, often accompanied by instruments or performed unaccompanied. Solo singing is used to express personal emotions, narrate stories, or deliver messages. It is common in praise songs, laments, and storytelling traditions. The singer's voice becomes the central instrument, carrying both melody and meaning.

Fill in the blank: Solo singing is often used to express _____ emotions or narrate stories.



Plate 2.1 Solo singing in African tradition

2.1.2 Group and choral singing

Choral singing involves a group of singers performing together, often in harmony. In African traditions, group singing is a communal activity that reinforces unity and shared identity. It is used in ceremonies, festivals, and daily life. Choral singing may feature layered voices, with different groups singing complementary parts to create rich textures. This collective performance highlights the importance of community participation in music.

Fill in the blank: Choral singing reinforces unity and shared _____ within African communities.

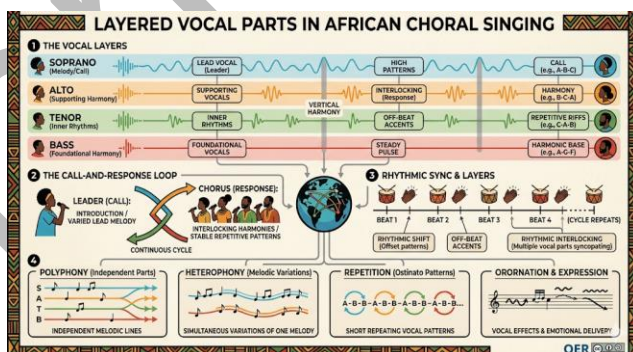


Figure 2.1 Structure of choral singing in African traditions

2.1.3 Call-and-response technique

The **call-and-response** technique is a musical form where a leader sings or plays a phrase (the call) and the group replies with a corresponding phrase (the response). This technique is widespread in African music and symbolises dialogue, participation, and interaction. It is used in work songs, religious rituals, and entertainment. Call-and-response ensures that music is not a passive experience but an active exchange between performer and audience.

Fill in the blank: Call-and-response symbolises dialogue, participation, and _____ in African music.

AFRICAN CALL-AND-RESPONSE SONGS: EXAMPLES, CONTEXTS, AND FUNCTIONS				
1. Region & Language	2. Song Name/Type	3. Specific Context	4. Structure Example (Leader/Chorus)	5. Primary Function
West Africa Yoruba	'Èlú l'odò?' (Where is the river?)	Women collecting water.	Call (Leader); Response (Chorus)	Community solidarity, easing labor burden
East Africa Swahili	'Mbeju' (Seeds)	Sowing seeds.	Planting instruction; Acknowledgment chant	Synchronizing group labor, rhythmic flow
South Africa Zulu	'Shosholoza' (Go Forward)	Moving a train carriage (Labor)	Dynamic call; Power response	Team coordination, morale boost, strength
Central Africa Lingala	'Azetta' (Weaving Song)	Hand loom weaving	Pattern description; Echo rhythmic part	Teaching technique, maintaining focus.
North Africa Berber	'Moto na Ngambo' (Fire across)	Wedding celebration	Praise of couple; Shared joy chant.	Festive atmosphere, celebrating milestone
West Africa Mande	'Kulu Kulula' (Listen Well)	Village storytelling	Question about a character; Audience reply.	Oral history transmission, active listening

Box 2.1 Examples of call-and-response in African music

Pilot questions 2.1

1. What is solo singing, and in what contexts is it commonly used?
2. How does choral singing reinforce community identity?
3. What is the structure of call-and-response in African music?
4. Why is call-and-response considered interactive?
5. Which types of songs often use solo singing?

2.2 Instrumental Forms of Performance

2.2.1 Percussion-based traditions

In African music, **percussion** refers to instruments that produce sound when struck, shaken, or scraped. Percussion traditions are central to African performance, with drums, rattles, and bells providing rhythm and structure. These instruments often symbolise communication, as drum



patterns can convey messages across distances. Percussion also plays a vital role in ceremonies, festivals, and dances, guiding movement and creating energy.

Fill in the blank: Percussion instruments such as drums and rattles provide _____ and structure in African music.



Plate 2.2 Percussion traditions in African music

2.2.2 String and wind instruments in performance

African traditions also feature **string instruments**, such as the kora and lute, and **wind instruments**, such as flutes and horns. String instruments are often used for melodic storytelling, while wind instruments add tonal variety and are common in rituals and celebrations. These instruments complement percussion by adding depth and texture to performances. Their use demonstrates the diversity of African musical traditions beyond rhythm.

Fill in the blank: String instruments like the kora are often used for melodic _____ in African traditions.

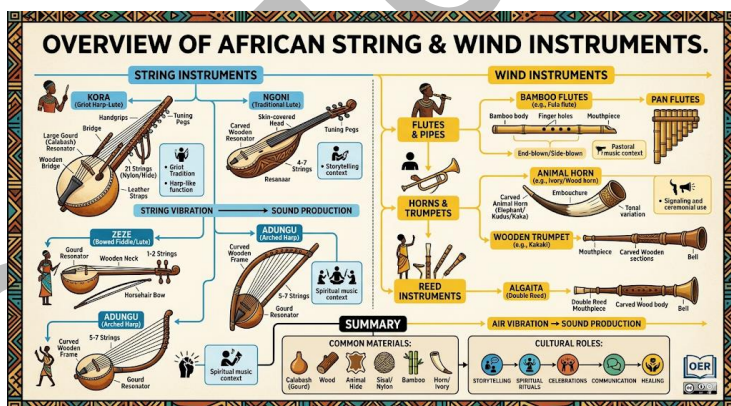


Figure 2.2 African string and wind instruments



2.2.3 Ensemble playing

Ensemble playing refers to performances where multiple instruments are played together, creating layered soundscapes. In African traditions, ensembles often combine percussion, string, and wind instruments, with each contributing a unique role. The interplay of instruments reflects community cooperation, as performers must listen and respond to one another. Ensemble playing is common in festivals, rituals, and recreational settings, symbolising unity and collective creativity.

Fill in the blank: Ensemble playing reflects community _____, as performers must listen and respond to one another.

Region & Culture	Ensemble Name/Type	Instruments Used	Key Performance Contexts	Socio-Cultural Function
West Africa (Mande)	Kora & Griot Praise	Kora (Harp-lute), Balafon (Xylophone), Talking Drum, Voice	Community Fest, Praise Song for Chief, Storytelling	Oral History, Social Bonding, Entertainment
East Africa (Buganda)	Ganda Xylophone Group (Amadinda)	Amadinda (12-key Xylophone), Bass Drums, Flutes	Ritual Ceremony, Chief's Court, Social Gathering	Group Unity, Cultural Pride, Rhythmic Coordination
Central Africa (Gabon)	Bwiti Harp Ensemble	Ngombi (Mouth bow), Drums, Rattles	Bwiti Healing Ritual, Community Gathering, Spiritual Ceremony	Transcendence, Group Therapy, Spiritual Focus
South Africa (Shona)	Mbira Ensemble (Mbira dza Vadzimu)	Mbira (Thumb Piano), Hosho (Shakers), Talking Drum, Voice	Ancestral Spirit (Bira) Ritual, Home Gathering, Ceremony	Spiritual Communication, Ancestral Connection, Harmony

Box 2.2 Examples of African instrumental ensembles

Pilot questions 2.2

1. What role do percussion instruments play in African music?
2. Name two examples of African string instruments.
3. How are wind instruments used in African rituals and celebrations?
4. What is ensemble playing, and why is it significant?
5. How does ensemble playing symbolise community cooperation?

2.3 Dance and Movement in Performance

2.3.1 Role of dance in musical expression

In African traditions, **dance** is inseparable from music. It refers to rhythmic bodily movement that accompanies sound, often performed collectively. Dance is not only aesthetic but also functional, as it communicates emotions, reinforces rhythm, and symbolises cultural identity. In many communities, dance is used to express joy, grief, or spirituality, making it a vital extension of musical performance.



Fill in the blank: Dance in African traditions is inseparable from music and symbolises cultural _____.



Plate 2.3 Dance as an extension of musical expression

2.3.2 Symbolism and cultural meaning of movement

African dance movements often carry **symbolism**, which means actions that represent ideas, values, or beliefs. For example, certain gestures may signify fertility, bravery, or respect for ancestors. Movements are not random but are deeply rooted in cultural meaning, often passed down through generations. Dance thus becomes a language of its own, complementing music by conveying messages that words alone cannot express.

Fill in the blank: Dance movements often carry symbolism, representing ideas such as fertility, bravery, or _____.

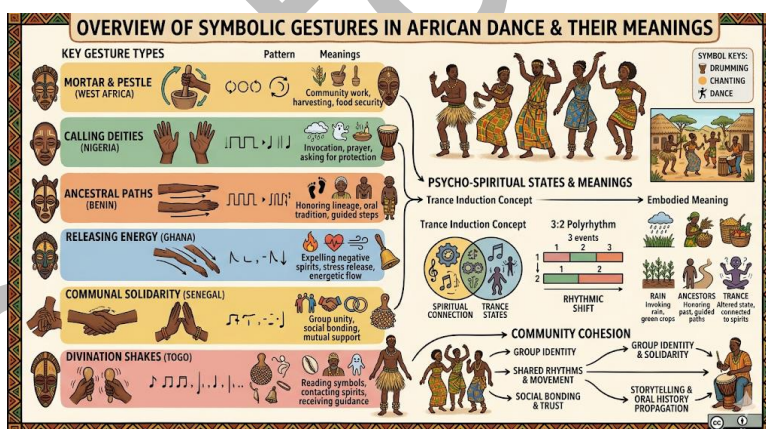


Figure 2.3 Symbolic gestures in African dance traditions



Pilot questions 2.3

1. Why is dance considered inseparable from music in African traditions?
2. What functions does dance serve in musical expression?
3. Define symbolism in the context of African dance.
4. Give one example of a symbolic gesture in African dance.
5. How does dance complement music in conveying cultural meaning?

2.4 Contexts and Settings of Performance

2.4.1 Community-based performances

In African societies, **community-based performances** are musical events that take place within villages, towns, or neighbourhoods. These performances are often informal and open to all members of the community. They serve to strengthen social bonds, celebrate achievements, and provide entertainment. Examples include market-day singing, communal drumming, and storytelling sessions accompanied by music.

Fill in the blank: Community-based performances are often informal and open to all members of the _____.



Plate 2.4 Community-based musical performance in an African village

2.4.2 Ceremonial and ritual performances

Ceremonial performances are structured musical events tied to important cultural or religious occasions, such as weddings, funerals, or initiation rites. **Ritual performances** are more sacred, often involving music to invoke spirits, honour ancestors, or mark transitions in life. These



performances are highly symbolic and follow established traditions passed down through generations. Music here functions as a spiritual and cultural anchor.

Fill in the blank: Ritual performances often involve music to invoke spirits and honour _____.

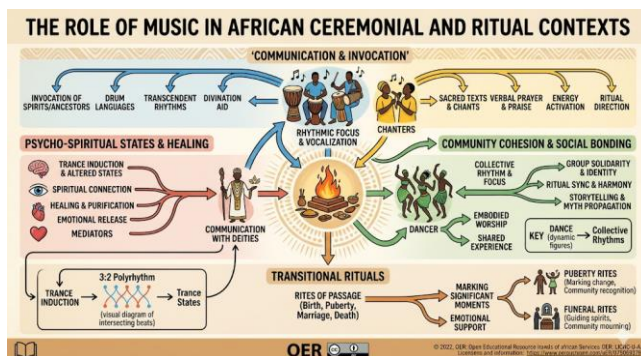


Figure 2.4 Music in ceremonial and ritual performances

2.4.3 Recreational and entertainment settings

Music also thrives in **recreational settings**, where it is performed for enjoyment and leisure. These include dances, concerts, and informal gatherings. Entertainment performances may feature both traditional and modern instruments, blending old and new styles. Such settings highlight the adaptability of African music, showing how it continues to evolve while maintaining cultural roots.

Fill in the blank: Recreational performances highlight the adaptability of African music by blending old and _____ styles.

EXAMPLES OF AFRICAN RECREATIONAL MUSIC & PERFORMANCES				
1. Region & Culture	2. Performance Type	3. Instruments Used	4. Performance Context	5. Socio-Cultural Function
West Africa (Mande)	Community Circle Dance	Djembe, Balafon, Voice, Rattles	Evening Gathering, Social Event	Community Bonding, Relaxation, Rhythmic
East Africa (Buganda)	Ganda Court Entertainment	Amadinda (Xylophone), Bass Drums, Flutes	Traditional Court, Public Celebration	Cultural Pride, Rhythmic Coordination Entertainment
Central Africa (Gabon)	Evening Gathering (Bwiti)	Ngombi (Mouth bow), Drums, Rattles	Community Storytelling Post-ritual Social	Social Solidarity, Oral History, Moral L
South Africa (Zulu)	Recreational Ukwenza (Performance)	Gubu (Drum), Rattles, Voices	Post-Harvest Festival, Social Assembly	Celebration, Collective Sync, Fun

Box 2.4 Examples of recreational and entertainment performances

Pilot questions 2.4

1. What is the purpose of community-based performances in African societies?
2. How do ceremonial performances differ from ritual performances?



3. Why is music considered a cultural anchor in rituals?
4. What role does entertainment play in recreational settings?
5. How do recreational performances demonstrate the adaptability of African music?

Series Summary

This Series has examined the forms and nature of traditional African musical performances, highlighting how they embody cultural identity and communal participation. We began with vocal forms, including solo singing, choral traditions, and call-and-response, then moved on to instrumental forms such as percussion, string, and wind instruments, as well as ensemble playing. Following that, we explored dance and movement, focusing on their role in musical expression and symbolic meaning. Finally, we considered the contexts and settings of performance, from community-based events to ceremonial and recreational gatherings.

By engaging with these topics, you should now be able to describe vocal forms of performance, explain instrumental traditions, analyse the role of dance and movement, and evaluate the contexts in which African musical performances occur. These abilities directly reflect the Series Learning Outcomes and provide you with a comprehensive understanding of how African music is performed and experienced.

Glossary of Terms

- **Call-and-response:** A musical form where a leader sings or plays a phrase and the group replies.
- **Ceremonial performance:** Structured musical events tied to cultural or religious occasions such as weddings or funerals.
- **Choral singing:** Group singing in harmony, often used to reinforce unity and identity.
- **Community-based performance:** Informal musical events open to all members of a community.
- **Dance:** Rhythmic bodily movement accompanying music, often symbolic and expressive.
- **Ensemble playing:** Performance involving multiple instruments played together to create layered sound.
- **Percussion:** Instruments that produce sound when struck, shaken, or scraped, such as drums and rattles.
- **Ritual performance:** Sacred musical events involving music to invoke spirits or honour ancestors.
- **Solo singing:** Vocal performance by a single individual, often used for storytelling or emotional expression.
- **String instruments:** Instruments such as the kora or lute, used for melodic storytelling.
- **Symbolism:** Movements or gestures in dance that represent cultural ideas, values, or beliefs.



- **Wind instruments:** Instruments such as flutes or horns, used to add tonal variety in rituals and celebrations.

Concept Check Questions [Series 2]

Objective questions

1. Which vocal technique symbolises dialogue and interaction in African music? (Linked to SLO 2.1)
2. Name one percussion instrument commonly used in African traditions. (Linked to SLO 2.2)
3. Which type of performance is tied to sacred rituals and ancestor worship? (Linked to SLO 2.4)

Short-answer questions

4. Explain how choral singing reinforces community identity. (Linked to SLO 2.1)
5. Describe the role of wind instruments in African celebrations. (Linked to SLO 2.2)

Long-answer questions

6. Analyse the role of dance in African musical expression, giving examples of symbolic movements. (Linked to SLO 2.3)
 - Basic response: Dance reinforces rhythm and expresses emotions, with gestures symbolising cultural values.
 - Value-added response: Outstanding learners may discuss how dance functions as a language, conveying messages about fertility, bravery, or respect for ancestors.
7. Evaluate the different contexts of African musical performance, comparing community-based, ceremonial, and recreational settings. (Linked to SLO 2.4)
 - Basic response: Community-based performances strengthen bonds, ceremonial performances mark cultural events, and recreational performances provide leisure.
 - Value-added response: Outstanding learners may explore how these contexts overlap, showing the adaptability of African music across social, spiritual, and entertainment domains.

Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 2]

- Solo singing: Used to express personal emotions, narrate stories, or deliver messages.
- Choral singing: Reinforces unity and shared identity.
- Call-and-response: Structured as leader's call and group's response.
- Interactive: Because it involves dialogue and participation.
- Solo singing contexts: Praise songs, laments, storytelling.
- Percussion: Provides rhythm and structure.
- String instruments: Kora and lute.
- Wind instruments: Used in rituals and celebrations for tonal variety.



- Ensemble playing: Multiple instruments together, symbolising cooperation.
- Ensemble significance: Reflects community cooperation.
- Dance inseparability: It complements music and symbolises identity.
- Dance functions: Communicates emotions, reinforces rhythm.
- Symbolism: Represents ideas and values through movement.
- Example gesture: Fertility or bravery gestures.
- Dance complement: Conveys meaning beyond words.
- Community-based performances: Strengthen social bonds and celebrate achievements.
- Ceremonial vs ritual: Ceremonial marks cultural events, ritual is sacred and spiritual.
- Ritual anchor: Music invokes spirits and honours ancestors.
- Entertainment role: Provides enjoyment and leisure.
- Recreational adaptability: Blends traditional and modern styles.

References and Attributions [Series 2]

- Plate 2.1: Suggested AI prompt “Generate an image of an African solo singer performing with a drum in a village setting.” Search string: “African solo singer traditional OER image.”
- Figure 2.1: Suggested AI prompt “Create a diagram illustrating layered vocal parts in African choral singing.” Search string: “African choral singing diagram OER.”
- Box 2.1: Suggested AI prompt “Generate a table of African call-and-response songs with contexts and functions.” Search string: “African call-and-response songs OER.”
- Plate 2.2: Suggested AI prompt “Generate an image of African drummers performing at a community festival.” Search string: “African drumming festival OER image.”
- Figure 2.2: Suggested AI prompt “Create a diagram illustrating African string instruments like the kora and wind instruments like flutes.” Search string: “African string wind instruments diagram OER.”
- Box 2.2: Suggested AI prompt “Generate a table of African instrumental ensembles with instruments and contexts.” Search string: “African instrumental ensembles OER.”
- Plate 2.3: Suggested AI prompt “Generate an image of African dancers performing with drummers in a village square.” Search string: “African dance drumming OER image.”
- Figure 2.3: Suggested AI prompt “Create a diagram illustrating symbolic gestures in African dance and their meanings.” Search string: “African dance symbolism diagram OER.”
- Plate 2.4: Suggested AI prompt “Generate an image of villagers gathered for communal drumming and singing in an African village.” Search string: “African community drumming OER image.”
- Figure 2.4: Suggested AI prompt “Create a diagram illustrating the role of music in African ceremonial and ritual contexts.” Search string: “African ritual music diagram OER.”
- Box 2.4: Suggested AI prompt “Generate a table of recreational African performances with instruments and contexts.” Search string: “African recreational music performances OER.”



Course Code: MUS 142

Course Title: Tonal Harmony

Course Credit Load: 2 Units

Series 1: Role and Function of Music in Black African Communities

Series 2: Forms and Nature of Traditional African Musical Performances

Series 3: Classification of African Traditional Musical Instruments

Series 4: Influences of External Cultures on African Music

Series 5: African Musical Instruments and Performance Techniques

Proposed Outline for Series 3

Part 3.1 Idiophones (self-sounding instruments)

- 3.1.1 Types of idiophones (e.g., rattles, bells, xylophones)
- 3.1.2 Functions and contexts of idiophones

Part 3.2 Membranophones (drums and skin instruments)

- 3.2.1 Varieties of African drums
- 3.2.2 Social and ritual uses of drums

Part 3.3 Chordophones (string instruments)

- 3.3.1 Examples such as kora, lute, and bow
- 3.3.2 Role of chordophones in storytelling and performance

Part 3.4 Aerophones (wind instruments)

- 3.4.1 Flutes, horns, and whistles
- 3.4.2 Symbolic and ceremonial uses of aerophones



Introduction

In the last Series, we explored the forms and nature of traditional African musical performances, highlighting how music is expressed through voice, instruments, dance, and context. To deepen our understanding, we now turn to the classification of African musical instruments. This classification helps us appreciate the diversity of instruments and the unique roles they play in African societies.

The aim of this Series is to introduce you to the main categories of African musical instruments and to equip you with the ability to identify, describe, and analyse their functions in cultural and performance contexts.

We shall commence this Series by examining idiophones, which are self-sounding instruments such as rattles and xylophones. Next, we will explore membranophones, focusing on the varieties of drums and their social and ritual uses. Following that, we will study chordophones, including string instruments like the kora and lute, and their role in storytelling. Finally, we will conclude with aerophones, such as flutes and horns, considering their symbolic and ceremonial significance.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 3.1** define idiophones and explain their functions in African musical traditions,
- **SLO 3.2** describe the varieties of membranophones and analyse their social and ritual uses,
- **SLO 3.3** identify chordophones and explain their role in storytelling and performance, and
- **SLO 3.4** evaluate the symbolic and ceremonial uses of aerophones in African communities.



3.1 Idiophones (Self-Sounding Instruments)

3.1.1 Types of idiophones

In African traditions, **idiophones** are instruments that produce sound by the vibration of their entire body without the use of strings, membranes, or external air. Common examples include rattles, bells, xylophones, and clappers. These instruments are often made from natural materials such as wood, metal, or gourds. Idiophones are widely used across Africa because they are simple to construct and versatile in performance.

Fill in the blank: Idiophones produce sound by the vibration of their entire _____ without strings or membranes.



Plate 3.1 Examples of African idiophones

3.1.2 Functions and contexts of idiophones

Idiophones serve multiple functions in African communities. They provide rhythm in dances, signal messages in villages, and accompany rituals and ceremonies. For example, bells may be used to mark the beginning of a ritual, while rattles add texture to choral singing. The **xylophone**, a wooden idiophone, is often used for storytelling and entertainment, producing melodic patterns that support oral traditions. Idiophones thus play both musical and social roles, reinforcing communication and cultural identity.

Fill in the blank: The xylophone is often used for storytelling and _____ in African traditions.



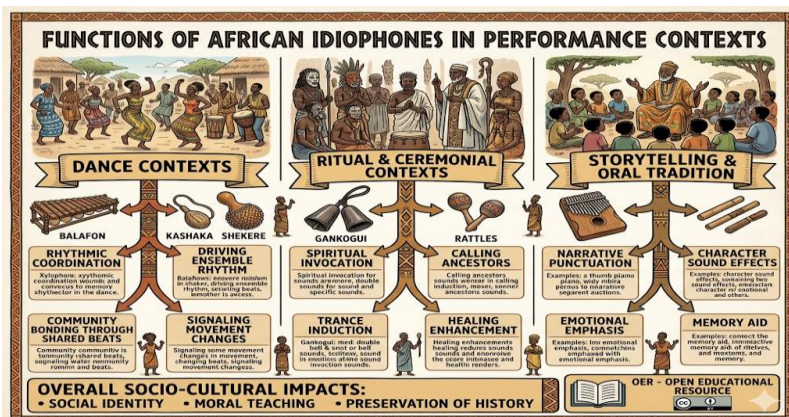


Figure 3.1 Functions of idiophones in African communities

Instrument	Common Materials	Primary Performance Contexts
Balafon	Wood (bars), Calabash/Gourd (resonators), Leather/Hide (straps)	Storytelling, community festivals, praise singing, dance accompaniment.
Agogo Bell	Metal (iron or steel)	Timekeeping in percussion ensembles, ritual ceremonies, dance.
Shekere	Dried Gourd (calabash), beads/shells (net covering)	Rhythmic drive in ensembles, dance accompaniment, song support.
Slit Drum	Wood (carved log)	Communication (message transmission), ceremonies, rituals.
Rattles	Shells, seeds, tin, animal horn, wood	Dance, ritual trance induction, timekeeping in song.
Mbira	Wood (soundboard), metal/bamboo (keys/tines)	Ancestral spirit rituals (Bira), meditative music, song accompaniment.

Box 3.1 Selected idiophones and their uses



Pilot questions 3.1

1. What are idiophones, and how do they produce sound?
2. Name three examples of idiophones used in African traditions.
3. In what ways are idiophones used in rituals and ceremonies?
4. Why is the xylophone important in storytelling traditions?
5. How do idiophones reinforce communication in African communities?

3.2 Membranophones (Drums and Skin Instruments)

3.2.1 Varieties of African drums

In African traditions, **membranophones** are instruments that produce sound by vibrating a stretched membrane, usually animal skin, when struck. The most common examples are drums, which vary in size, shape, and construction across regions. Some well-known types include the **talking drum**, which can mimic speech patterns, the **djembe**, a goblet-shaped drum played with bare hands, and the **bass drum**, which provides deep rhythmic support. Each drum has a distinct tone and cultural significance, often reflecting the identity of the community that uses it.

Fill in the blank: Membranophones produce sound by vibrating a stretched _____ when struck.



Plate 3.2 Varieties of African drums

3.2.2 Social and ritual uses of drums

Drums are more than musical instruments; they are tools of communication and symbols of authority. In many African societies, drums are used to send messages across distances, announce important events, or summon people to gatherings. In rituals, drums accompany dances, prayers, and invocations, helping participants connect with spiritual forces. The rhythm of drums guides movement, sets the pace of ceremonies, and creates a sense of unity among participants.



Fill in the blank: In rituals, drums accompany dances, prayers, and _____, helping participants connect with spiritual forces.

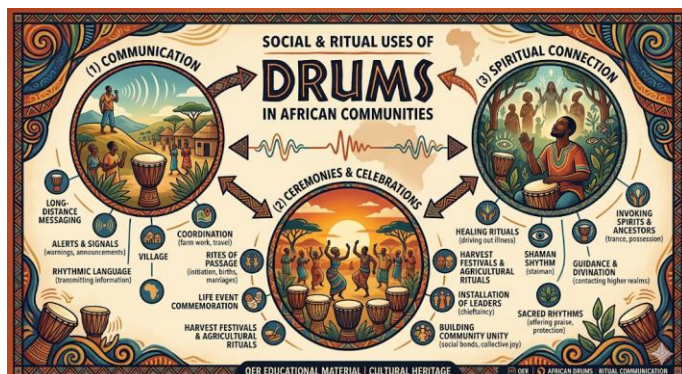


Figure 3.2 Functions of drums in African communities

AFRICAN DRUMS: FEATURES & CULTURAL ROLES (OER)			
DRUM NAME & IMAGE	KEY FEATURES & CONSTRUCTION	SOUND CHARACTERISTICS	CULTURAL USES & SIGNIFICANCE
TALKING DRUM (Gangan)	Hourglass shape, animal hide heads, squeezed to change pitch	Mimics human speech, complex tonal range	Message transmission (long distance), royal ceremonies, praise singing
DJEMBE (Jembe)	Carved from single piece of hardwood, goatskin head, intricate rope tuning (mali style)	Deep bass note, sharp slaps, rich overtones	Community celebrations (weddings, harvests), dynamic dance accompaniment, unity symbol
BASS DRUM (Dunun / Doundounba)	Large cylindrical wooden body, two thick hide heads (cow), struck with sticks	Low, thunderous, resonant deep tones, driving rhythm	Provides foundational rhythm for drum ensembles, large communal dances, ceremonial processions

Box 3.2 Selected African drums and their cultural roles

Pilot questions 3.2

1. What are membranophones, and how do they produce sound?
2. Name two examples of African drums and describe their features.
3. How are drums used as tools of communication in African societies?
4. What role do drums play in rituals and ceremonies?
5. Why are drums considered symbols of authority in African traditions?

3.3 Chordophones (String Instruments)

3.3.1 Examples such as kora, lute, and bow

In African traditions, **chordophones** are instruments that produce sound through vibrating strings, which may be plucked, struck, or bowed. Common examples include the **kora**, a 21-



string harp-lute from West Africa, the **lute**, which has a resonating body and is used in storytelling, and the **musical bow**, a simple string instrument played with a stick or sometimes by mouth resonance. These instruments are often crafted from natural materials such as gourds, wood, and animal hide, reflecting the resourcefulness of African communities.

Fill in the blank: Chordophones produce sound through vibrating _____, which may be plucked, struck, or bowed.



Plate 3.3 African chordophones such as the kora

3.3.2 Role of chordophones in storytelling and performance

Chordophones are closely linked to oral traditions and performance. The kora, for instance, is often played by **griots**, who are traditional storytellers and historians in West Africa. Through melodic patterns, chordophones accompany narratives, praise songs, and historical accounts, making them essential tools for preserving culture. They also feature in entertainment, adding melodic richness to ensembles and solo performances. In this way, chordophones serve both artistic and educational functions.

Fill in the blank: The kora is often played by griots, who are traditional _____ and historians in West Africa.



Figure 3.3 Functions of chordophones in African traditions

AFRICAN CHORDOPHONES (LUTES & HARPS): FEATURES & PERFORMANCE CONTEXTS			
CHORDOPHONE TYPE	FEATURE ILLUSTRATIONS	DETAILED CHARACTERISTICS	PERFORMANCE CONTEXTS & CULTURAL ROLES
KORA (21-String Harp-Lute)		21 strings, calabash resonator, resonator - Leather tuning calabash - Leather tuning, playing - High clear sound	Griot tradition, storytelling, praise-singing, royal ceremonies
AKONTING (Plucked Lute)		- Plucked lute - Often three strings - Wooden body - Long neck	Folk songs, social gatherings, dance accompaniment, daily entertainment
BOW HARP (Adungu)		- Arched frame - Multiple strings - Soundbox (gourd or wood)	Spirit invocations, healing rituals, communal dances, praise for gods
SINGLE-STRING FIDDLE (Goge)		- Single string - Hide resonator - Bowed sound to and some	Ritual music, possession dances, ensemble playing, entertainment

Box 3.3 Selected chordophones and their cultural roles

Pilot questions 3.3

1. What are chordophones, and how do they produce sound?
2. Name three examples of chordophones used in African traditions.
3. Who are griots, and what role do they play in performance?
4. How do chordophones contribute to storytelling and oral traditions?
5. Why are chordophones considered both artistic and educational tools?

3.4 Aerophones (Wind Instruments)

3.4.1 Flutes, horns, and whistles

In African traditions, **aerophones** are instruments that produce sound by vibrating air within a tube or cavity. Common examples include **flutes**, made from bamboo or reed, **horns**, often crafted from animal horns or metal, and **whistles**, which are small but powerful in sound. These instruments are valued for their ability to carry sound over long distances and for their distinctive tonal qualities. Aerophones are frequently used in ceremonies, dances, and storytelling, adding variety and richness to musical performances.

Fill in the blank: Aerophones produce sound by vibrating _____ within a tube or cavity.



Plate 3.4 African aerophones such as flutes and horns

3.4.2 Symbolic and ceremonial uses of aerophones

Aerophones often carry **symbolic meaning**, representing authority, spirituality, or communication. Horns may be blown to announce the arrival of a chief or to signal the start of a ceremony. Flutes are sometimes used in initiation rites, guiding participants through symbolic transitions. Whistles may accompany dances, adding sharp accents to rhythms. In these contexts, aerophones are not only musical instruments but also cultural symbols that reinforce identity and tradition.

Fill in the blank: Horns may be blown to announce the arrival of a _____ or to signal the start of a ceremony.

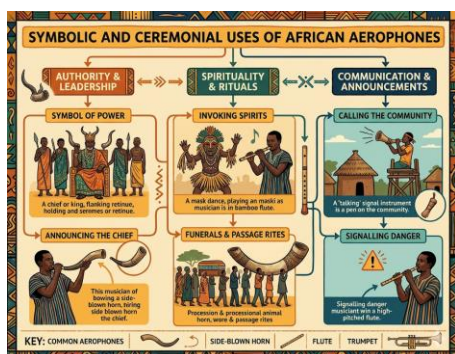


Figure 3.4 Symbolic and ceremonial uses of aerophones

INSTRUMENT CATEGORY	ILLUSTRATIONS & EXAMPLES	PRIMARY MATERIALS	CEREMONIAL USES	SYMBOLIC MEANING
FLUTES (Vertical/Transverse)		BAMBOO, REED, WOOD, GOURD	Invocations of spirits, coming-of-age rites, healing rituals	LINK TO ANCESTORS
HORNS (Side-blown/End-blown)		ANIMAL HORN (KUDU, ORYX), ELEPHANT TUSK, METAL, METAL, WOOD	Announcing royalty/chiefs, royal funerals, call to war/peace, ancestral communication	SYMBOL OF AUTHORITY
TRUMPETS (Natural/Composite)		METAL (Brass, Iron), WOOD CORES WITH HIDE, GOURDS, ANIMAL HORN TIP	State ceremonies, military signals, court music, festival processions	VOICE OF SPIRITS
WHISTLES & FIPPLES		CLAY/CERAMIC, WOOD, BONE, SEED PODS, METAL	Signalling danger, alerting communities, rhythm in dances, hunting magic	COMMUNITY SIGNAL

Box 3.4 Selected aerophones and their cultural roles

Pilot questions 3.4

1. What are aerophones, and how do they produce sound?
2. Name three examples of aerophones used in African traditions.
3. How are horns used in ceremonial contexts?
4. Why are flutes important in initiation rites?
5. What symbolic meanings are associated with aerophones in African communities?



Series Summary

This Series has explored the classification of African traditional musical instruments, showing how they are grouped according to the way they produce sound. We began with idiophones, which are self-sounding instruments such as rattles and xylophones, then moved on to membranophones, focusing on drums and their social and ritual uses. Following that, we examined chordophones, including string instruments like the kora and lute, and their role in storytelling and performance. Finally, we studied aerophones, such as flutes and horns, highlighting their symbolic and ceremonial significance.

By completing this Series, you should now be able to define idiophones and explain their functions, describe the varieties of membranophones and analyse their uses, identify chordophones and explain their role in oral traditions, and evaluate the symbolic and ceremonial importance of aerophones. These abilities directly align with the Series Learning Outcomes and provide you with a structured understanding of how African instruments are classified and valued in cultural contexts.

Glossary of Terms

- **Aerophones:** Instruments that produce sound by vibrating air within a tube or cavity, such as flutes and horns.
- **Chordophones:** Instruments that produce sound through vibrating strings, which may be plucked, struck, or bowed.
- **Djembe:** A goblet-shaped drum played with bare hands, common in West Africa.
- **Griot:** A traditional storyteller and historian in West Africa, often accompanied by instruments like the kora.
- **Idiophones:** Instruments that produce sound by the vibration of their entire body, such as rattles and xylophones.
- **Membranophones:** Instruments that produce sound by vibrating a stretched membrane, usually animal skin, when struck.
- **Musical bow:** A simple chordophone consisting of a string stretched across a flexible stick, played with resonance.
- **Talking drum:** A drum capable of mimicking speech patterns, used for communication in African societies.
- **Xylophone:** A wooden idiophone used for melodic storytelling and entertainment.

Concept Check Questions [Series 3]

Objective questions

1. Which category of instruments produces sound by vibrating strings? (Linked to SLO 3.3)
2. Name one example of an idiophone used in African traditions. (Linked to SLO 3.1)



3. Which drum is known for mimicking speech patterns? (Linked to SLO 3.2)

Short-answer questions

4. Explain how membranophones are used as tools of communication in African societies. (Linked to SLO 3.2)
5. Describe the role of aerophones in ceremonial contexts. (Linked to SLO 3.4)

Long-answer questions

6. Analyse the functions of idiophones in African communities, giving examples of their use in rituals and storytelling. (Linked to SLO 3.1)
- Basic response: Idiophones provide rhythm, signal messages, and accompany rituals and storytelling.
 - Value-added response: Outstanding learners may explore how idiophones symbolise cultural identity and reinforce oral traditions across regions.
7. Evaluate the role of chordophones in African oral traditions, focusing on instruments such as the kora and lute. (Linked to SLO 3.3)
- Basic response: Chordophones accompany griots in storytelling and add melodic richness to performances.
 - Value-added response: Outstanding learners may discuss how chordophones preserve history, transmit values, and blend artistic and educational functions.

Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 3]

- Idiophones: Instruments producing sound by vibrating their entire body.
- Examples: Rattles, bells, xylophone.
- Ritual use: Bells mark rituals, rattles add texture.
- Xylophone: Important for storytelling and entertainment.
- Communication: Idiophones signal messages in communities.
- Membranophones: Instruments producing sound by vibrating a stretched membrane.
- Examples: Talking drum, djembe.
- Communication: Drums send messages and announce events.
- Ritual role: Drums accompany dances and prayers.
- Authority: Drums symbolise leadership and power.
- Chordophones: Instruments producing sound through vibrating strings.
- Examples: Kora, lute, musical bow.
- Griots: Traditional storytellers and historians.
- Storytelling: Chordophones accompany oral traditions.
- Educational role: Preserve culture and history.
- Aerophones: Instruments producing sound by vibrating air.
- Examples: Flutes, horns, whistles.
- Horns: Announce chiefs or ceremonies.
- Flutes: Used in initiation rites.
- Symbolism: Represent authority, spirituality, communication.



References and Attributions [Series 3]

- Plate 3.1: Suggested AI prompt “Generate an image of African rattles and bells used in traditional music.” Search string: “African idiophones rattles bells OER image.”
- Figure 3.1: Suggested AI prompt “Create a diagram illustrating the functions of idiophones in African communities such as dance, ritual, and storytelling.” Search string: “African idiophones functions diagram OER.”
- Box 3.1: Suggested AI prompt “Generate a table of African idiophones with materials and performance contexts.” Search string: “African idiophones examples OER.”
- Plate 3.2: Suggested AI prompt “Generate an image of African drummers playing djembes and talking drums in a cultural setting.” Search string: “African drums djembe talking drum OER image.”
- Figure 3.2: Suggested AI prompt “Create a diagram illustrating the social and ritual uses of drums in African communities.” Search string: “African drums ritual communication diagram OER.”
- Box 3.2: Suggested AI prompt “Generate a table of African drums with features and cultural roles.” Search string: “African drums cultural uses OER.”
- Plate 3.3: Suggested AI prompt “Generate an image of a musician playing the kora in a traditional African setting.” Search string: “African kora lute bow OER image.”
- Figure 3.3: Suggested AI prompt “Create a diagram illustrating the role of chordophones in storytelling, praise singing, and entertainment.” Search string: “African chordophones storytelling diagram OER.”
- Box 3.3: Suggested AI prompt “Generate a table of African chordophones with features and cultural roles.” Search string: “African chordophones examples OER.”
- Plate 3.4: Suggested AI prompt “Generate an image of African musicians playing flutes and horns in a traditional setting.” Search string: “African aerophones flutes horns OER image.”
- Figure 3.4: Suggested AI prompt “Create a diagram illustrating the symbolic and ceremonial uses of aerophones in African traditions.” Search string: “African aerophones ceremonial uses diagram OER.”
- Box 3.4: Suggested AI prompt “Generate a table of African aerophones with materials and ceremonial uses.” Search string: “African aerophones examples OER.”



Course Code: MUS 142

Course Title: Tonal Harmony

Course Credit Load: 2 Units

Series 1: Role and Function of Music in Black African Communities

Series 2: Forms and Nature of Traditional African Musical Performances

Series 3: Classification of African Traditional Musical Instruments

Series 4: Influences of External Cultures on African Music

Series 5: African Musical Instruments and Performance Techniques

Proposed Outline for Series 4

Part 4.1 Colonial influences on African music

- 4.1.1 Introduction of Western instruments
- 4.1.2 Impact of missionary activities and church music
- 4.1.3 Influence of colonial education and military bands

Part 4.2 Globalisation and modern influences

- 4.2.1 Popular music genres (jazz, hip hop, reggae)
- 4.2.2 Media and technology in music dissemination
- 4.2.3 Cross-cultural collaborations

Part 4.3 Diaspora and intercultural exchanges

- 4.3.1 African music in the Americas and Caribbean
- 4.3.2 Reciprocal influences between Africa and the diaspora
- 4.3.3 Contemporary intercultural fusions

Part 4.4 Contemporary challenges and opportunities

- 4.4.1 Preservation of traditional forms
- 4.4.2 Balancing authenticity with innovation
- 4.4.3 African music on the global stage



Introduction

In the last Series, we examined the classification of African musical instruments, learning how they are grouped and valued within cultural contexts. Building on that foundation, we now turn to the influences of external cultures on African music. This topic is important because African music has never existed in isolation; it has continually interacted with other cultures through history, trade, colonisation, and globalisation.

The aim of this Series is to help you analyse how external cultural forces have shaped African music, both positively and negatively, and to evaluate the ways African musicians have responded to these influences.

We shall commence this Series by exploring colonial influences, including the introduction of Western instruments, missionary activities, and military bands. Next, we will examine globalisation and modern influences, focusing on popular genres, media, and cross-cultural collaborations. Following that, we will study diaspora connections, looking at African music in the Americas and Caribbean and reciprocal exchanges. Finally, we will conclude with contemporary challenges and opportunities, considering how African music balances tradition with innovation and asserts itself on the global stage.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 4.1** describe the colonial influences on African music, including Western instruments and missionary activities,
- **SLO 4.2** explain the impact of globalisation and modern genres on African music,
- **SLO 4.3** analyse the role of diaspora and intercultural exchanges in shaping African music, and
- **SLO 4.4** evaluate contemporary challenges and opportunities facing African music in the global context.



4.1 Colonial Influences on African Music

4.1.1 Introduction of Western instruments

During the colonial period, African music was significantly influenced by the introduction of **Western instruments**, such as the piano, guitar, violin, and brass instruments. These were brought by missionaries, colonial administrators, and traders. African musicians adapted these instruments into their own traditions, blending them with indigenous sounds and rhythms. This fusion created new styles of performance and broadened the range of musical expression available to communities.

Fill in the blank: Western instruments such as the piano and guitar were introduced to Africa during the _____ period.



Plate 4.1 Introduction of Western instruments into African music

4.1.2 Impact of missionary activities and church music

Missionaries used music as a tool for evangelisation, introducing **church music** and hymns into African communities. Hymns were often taught in schools and churches, encouraging the adoption of Western tonal systems and harmonies. African musicians, however, infused these hymns with local rhythms and languages, creating unique blends that reflected both external influence and indigenous creativity. This adaptation laid the foundation for genres such as gospel music in Africa.

Fill in the blank: Missionaries introduced hymns and church music, encouraging the adoption of Western _____ systems.



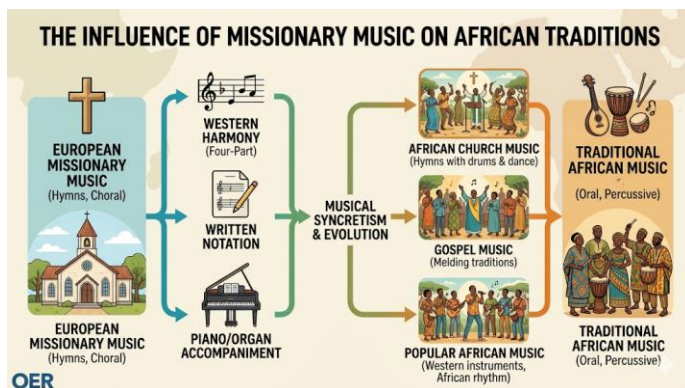


Figure 4.1 Missionary influence on African music

4.1.3 Influence of colonial education and military bands

Colonial education systems often included **military bands** and school choirs, which exposed Africans to Western musical notation and performance practices. Military bands introduced brass and percussion instruments, while school choirs reinforced Western harmony and structure. These influences contributed to the development of urban popular music and formalised training in music. Over time, African musicians blended these elements with indigenous traditions, producing hybrid genres that continue to thrive today.

Fill in the blank: Colonial education introduced military bands and school choirs, exposing Africans to Western musical _____.

COLONIAL INFLUENCES ON AFRICAN MUSIC: TYPES, EXAMPLES, & IMPACTS (OER)			
COLONIAL INFLUENCE	ILLUSTRATIONS & EXAMPLES	KEY IMPACTS	MODERN HYBRID FORMS
WESTERN INSTRUMENTS		- Harmonic changes (chords) - New tuning systems - Creation of modern popular music	Highlife, Afrobeat, Congolese Rumba
MISSIONARY HYMNS		- Choral structures - Four-part harmony - Singing in European languages or translated versions	African Gospel, Church choruses
MILITARY BANDS		- Brass sections in ensembles - Marching band rhythms - Performance at state functions	Brass band music, Urban ceremonial groups
BROADCAST & RECORDING		- Access to global music styles - Commercialization of music - Standardization of song lengths	Afropop, Hip Hop, Electronic music

Box 4.1 Colonial influences on African music

Pilot questions 4.1

1. Which Western instruments were introduced to Africa during the colonial period?
2. How did missionaries use music in their activities?
3. What role did hymns play in shaping African music traditions?
4. How did colonial education contribute to African musical development?
5. Why are military bands considered influential in African urban music?



4.2 Globalisation and Modern Influences

4.2.1 Popular music genres (jazz, hip hop, reggae)

Globalisation has exposed African musicians to **popular music genres** such as jazz, hip hop, and reggae. These genres, originating outside Africa, were embraced and reinterpreted by African artists, who infused them with local rhythms, languages, and instruments. Jazz influenced African highlife music, reggae became a voice for social justice in many African countries, and hip hop provided a platform for youth expression. The blending of these genres with African traditions created hybrid styles that resonate both locally and internationally.

Fill in the blank: Jazz influenced African highlife music, while reggae became a voice for _____ justice.



Plate 4.2 African reinterpretations of global music genres

4.2.2 Media and technology in music dissemination

The rise of **media and technology** has transformed how African music is shared and consumed. Radio, television, and later the internet allowed African musicians to reach wider audiences. Social media platforms and streaming services now enable instant global access to African music, helping artists gain international recognition. Technology also facilitates collaborations across continents, making African music part of the global mainstream.

Fill in the blank: Social media platforms and streaming services enable instant _____ access to African music.



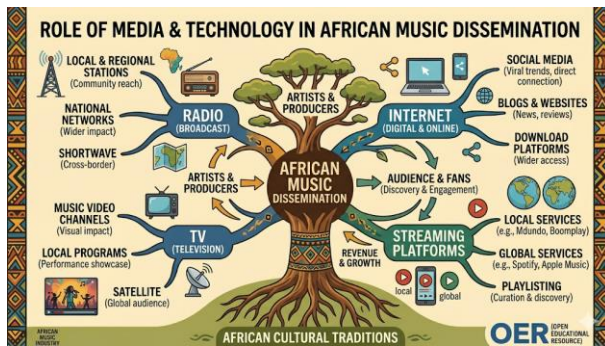


Figure 4.2 Media and technology in African music dissemination

4.2.3 Cross-cultural collaborations

Cross-cultural collaborations between African and international artists have become increasingly common. These collaborations blend African rhythms and instruments with global styles, producing innovative sounds. For example, African artists have worked with international stars in genres like pop, R&B, and electronic music. Such partnerships not only expand creative possibilities but also promote African music on the global stage, reinforcing its relevance and adaptability.

Fill in the blank: Cross-cultural collaborations blend African rhythms and instruments with _____ styles.

AFRICAN ARTISTS & INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATIONS: OER CROSS-CULTURAL MUSIC GENRES & OUTCOMES			
AFRICAN ARTIST(S) & ORIGIN	INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATOR(S) & COUNTRY	GENRES & STYLES INVOLVED	OUTCOMES & IMPACT (GLOBAL DISSEMINATION)
 BURNA BOY (NIGERIA)	 ED SHEERAN (UK)	AFROBEATS + POP SOUND CHART GLOBAL FESTIVAL	GRAMMY-NOMINATED, TOPPED GLOBAL CHARTS, MASSIVE AUDIENCE REACH
 WIZKID (NIGERIA)	 DRAKE (CANADA)	AFROBEATS + R&B/DANCEHALL SOUND TOURING	MULTIPLE AWARDS, WORLDWIDE TOURING, CROSS-CONTINENT SUCCESS
 SARKODIE (GHANA)	 IDRIS ELBA (UK)	AFROFUSION + UK RAP chart global	MEDIA RECOGNITION, FILM PARTNERSHIPS, BRAND EXPANSION
 TIWA SAVAGE (NIGERIA)	 SAM SMITH (UK)	AFROBEATS + POP/SOUL chart global	EUROPEAN MARKET PENETRATION, GLOBAL PRESS, INCREASED STREAMING

Box 4.2 Examples of cross-cultural collaborations in African music

Pilot questions 4.2

1. Which global genres influenced African music during the era of globalisation?
2. How did reggae and hip hop contribute to African social and cultural expression?
3. What role has technology played in the dissemination of African music?
4. Why are social media platforms important for African musicians today?
5. How do cross-cultural collaborations promote African music internationally?



4.3 Diaspora and Intercultural Exchanges

4.3.1 African music in the Americas and Caribbean

The African diaspora has played a crucial role in shaping global music. Enslaved Africans carried their musical traditions to the Americas and the Caribbean, where they blended with local and European influences. This gave rise to genres such as blues, jazz, samba, calypso, and reggae. These styles retained African rhythmic patterns, call-and-response techniques, and improvisational elements, while adapting to new cultural environments.

Fill in the blank: African rhythmic patterns and call-and-response techniques influenced genres such as blues and _____.



Plate 4.3 African diaspora influences in Caribbean music

4.3.2 Reciprocal influences between Africa and the diaspora

The relationship between Africa and its diaspora is not one-directional. African musicians have been influenced by diaspora genres, while diaspora artists continue to draw inspiration from African traditions. For example, jazz and blues returned to Africa and inspired highlife and Afrobeat. Similarly, reggae influenced African protest music, while African drumming patterns shaped hip hop beats. This reciprocal exchange demonstrates the interconnectedness of African and diaspora music.

Fill in the blank: Reggae influenced African protest music, while African drumming patterns shaped _____ beats.



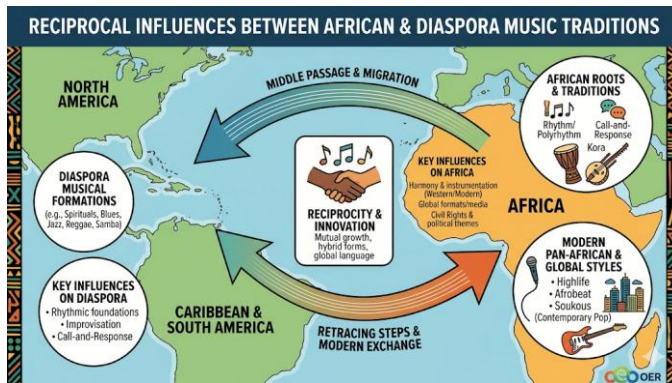


Figure 4.3 Reciprocal influences between Africa and the diaspora

4.3.3 Contemporary intercultural fusions

In the modern era, intercultural fusions have become even more prominent. African artists collaborate with diaspora musicians to create new genres such as Afrobeat, Afropop, and dancehall. These styles combine African rhythms with global sounds, appealing to audiences worldwide. Such collaborations highlight the resilience and adaptability of African music, ensuring its continued relevance in a globalised world.

Fill in the blank: Contemporary intercultural fusions have produced genres such as Afrobeat, Afropop, and _____.

AFRICAN-DIASPORA CULTURAL COLLABORATIONS & THEIR GLOBAL IMPACT (OER)			
COLLABORATION CONTEXT & REGIONS	ARTISTS & COLLABORATIONS (EX.)	GENRES CREATED & KEY ELEMENTS	GLOBAL IMPACT & OER VALUE
EARLY TRANSATLANTIC EXCHANGE	e.g., "Griot from West Africa" & "Enslaved People in the Americas"	SPIRITUALS, BLUES, JAZZ	→ CULTURAL RESILIENCE → BASIS OF MODERN POPULAR MUSIC → PAN-AFRICAN UNITY
MID-20TH CENTURY JAZZ-AFRICAN FUSION	Randy Weston (USA) & Traditional Gnawa Musicians (Morocco)	AFRO-JAZZ, GNAWA JAZZ	→ CROSS-CULTURAL DIALOGUE → JAZZ EDUCATION → MUSICAL SYNCENTRISM
AFROBEAT-FUNK/JAZZ FUSION	Fela Kuti (Nigeria) & James Brown (USA, influential) & Tony Allen	AFROBEAT	→ POLITICAL RESISTANCE → SOUND → GLOBAL FESTIVALS → AFROPOLITAN IDENTITY
CONTEMPORARY AFROBEATS-GLOBAL POP COLLAB.	Burna Boy & Dave (UK) (Nigeria) or Wizkid & Drake	AFROBEATS (Pop), AFRO-SWING	→ CHART TOPPING MUSIC → STREAMING SUCCESS → CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

Box 4.3 Examples of contemporary intercultural fusions

Pilot questions 4.3

1. How did African music influence genres in the Americas and Caribbean?
2. What are some examples of reciprocal influences between Africa and the diaspora?
3. How did jazz and blues inspire African highlife and Afrobeat?
4. Why is reggae important in African protest music?
5. What genres have emerged from contemporary intercultural fusions?



4.4 Contemporary Challenges and Opportunities

4.4.1 Preservation of traditional forms

One of the major challenges facing African music today is the **preservation of traditional forms**. With the spread of global genres and modern technologies, younger generations often gravitate towards contemporary styles, leaving traditional practices at risk of decline. However, efforts are being made through cultural festivals, academic research, and community initiatives to safeguard indigenous music. These efforts ensure that traditional rhythms, instruments, and performance practices remain relevant and accessible.

Fill in the blank: Cultural festivals and community initiatives help safeguard indigenous music and preserve traditional _____.



Plate 4.4 Preservation of traditional African music

4.4.2 Balancing authenticity with innovation

African musicians face the challenge of balancing **authenticity** with **innovation**. While it is important to remain true to cultural roots, innovation allows African music to evolve and appeal to wider audiences. Many artists achieve this balance by blending traditional rhythms and instruments with modern genres such as hip hop, Afropop, and electronic music. This approach ensures that African music retains its identity while remaining dynamic and globally competitive.

Fill in the blank: African musicians balance authenticity with innovation by blending traditional rhythms with _____ genres.



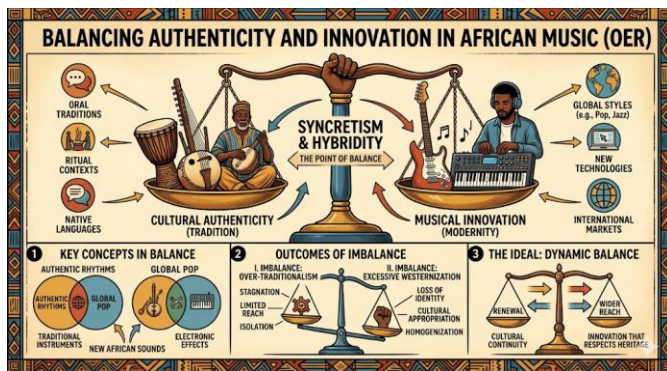
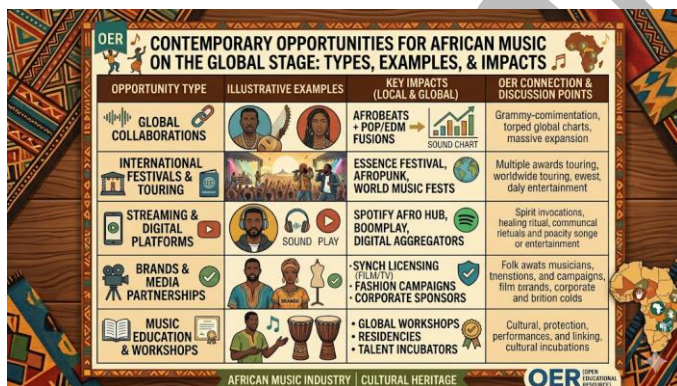


Figure 4.4 Balancing authenticity and innovation

4.4.3 African music on the global stage

African music today enjoys unprecedented visibility on the **global stage**. Genres such as Afrobeats and Afropop are celebrated worldwide, with African artists collaborating with international stars and performing at global festivals. This visibility creates opportunities for cultural exchange, economic growth, and recognition of African creativity. At the same time, it challenges African musicians to maintain cultural integrity while meeting global expectations.

Fill in the blank: Genres such as Afrobeats and Afropop are celebrated worldwide, placing African music on the _____ stage.



Box 4.4 Contemporary opportunities for African music

Pilot questions 4.4

1. What challenges threaten the preservation of traditional African music today?
2. How do cultural festivals contribute to safeguarding indigenous music?
3. Why is balancing authenticity with innovation important for African musicians?
4. How do artists blend traditional and modern genres to remain relevant?
5. What opportunities does African music enjoy on the global stage?



Series Summary

This Series has examined the influences of external cultures on African music, highlighting how colonialism, globalisation, diaspora connections, and contemporary challenges have shaped its development. We began with colonial influences, focusing on the introduction of Western instruments, missionary hymns, and military bands. We then explored globalisation and modern influences, including popular genres, media, technology, and cross-cultural collaborations. Following that, we studied diaspora and intercultural exchanges, showing how African music travelled to the Americas and Caribbean, and how reciprocal influences created new styles. Finally, we considered contemporary challenges and opportunities, such as preserving traditional forms, balancing authenticity with innovation, and asserting African music on the global stage.

By completing this Series, you should now be able to describe colonial influences on African music, explain the impact of globalisation and modern genres, analyse the role of diaspora and intercultural exchanges, and evaluate contemporary challenges and opportunities. These abilities directly align with the Series Learning Outcomes and equip you with a deeper understanding of how African music has evolved through external cultural interactions.

Glossary of Terms

- **Afrobeat:** A modern African genre blending traditional rhythms with jazz, funk, and global influences.
- **Afropop:** Contemporary African popular music combining indigenous styles with international pop sounds.
- **Authenticity:** Staying true to cultural roots and traditions in music.
- **Colonial education:** School systems introduced during colonial rule, often including Western music training.
- **Cross-cultural collaboration:** Musical partnerships between African and international artists that blend styles.
- **Diaspora:** Communities of Africans living outside the continent, whose music reflects African traditions.
- **Globalisation:** The process of worldwide cultural exchange that influences African music through genres and technology.
- **Missionary hymns:** Religious songs introduced by missionaries, often adapted into African traditions.
- **Military bands:** Colonial-era ensembles that introduced brass and percussion instruments to African societies.
- **Preservation:** Efforts to safeguard traditional African music from decline.

Objective questions

1. Which Western instruments were introduced to Africa during the colonial period?
(Linked to SLO 4.1)



2. Which global genre influenced African highlife music? (Linked to SLO 4.2)
3. What African-inspired genre emerged in the Caribbean? (Linked to SLO 4.3)

Short-answer questions

4. Explain how missionary hymns influenced African music traditions. (Linked to SLO 4.1)
5. Describe the role of media and technology in the dissemination of African music. (Linked to SLO 4.2)
6. How did reggae contribute to African protest music? (Linked to SLO 4.3)

Long-answer questions

7. Analyse the reciprocal influences between Africa and the diaspora, giving examples of genres shaped by this exchange. (Linked to SLO 4.3)
 - Basic response: African rhythms influenced diaspora genres, while diaspora styles like jazz and reggae returned to Africa.
 - Value-added response: Outstanding learners may discuss how this exchange created hybrid genres such as Afrobeat and hip hop, reinforcing cultural interconnectedness.
8. Evaluate the contemporary challenges and opportunities facing African music, focusing on preservation, authenticity, and global visibility. (Linked to SLO 4.4)
 - Basic response: Challenges include preserving traditions and balancing authenticity with innovation, while opportunities include global collaborations and recognition.
 - Value-added response: Outstanding learners may explore how African music negotiates cultural integrity while thriving in global markets, using examples of Afrobeat and Afropop.

Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 4]

- Western instruments: Piano, guitar, violin, brass instruments.
- Missionaries: Used music for evangelisation.
- Hymns: Introduced Western tonal systems and harmonies.
- Colonial education: Included military bands and choirs.
- Military bands: Influenced urban popular music.
- Global genres: Jazz, hip hop, reggae.
- Reggae and hip hop: Platforms for social justice and youth expression.
- Technology: Radio, TV, internet, streaming services.
- Social media: Enables instant global access.
- Collaborations: Promote African music internationally.
- African diaspora: Influenced blues, jazz, samba, calypso, reggae.
- Reciprocal influences: Jazz and blues inspired highlife and Afrobeat.
- Jazz and blues: Returned to Africa, shaping new genres.
- Reggae: Important in African protest music.
- Contemporary fusions: Afrobeat, Afropop, dancehall.
- Challenges: Decline of traditional forms.



- Festivals: Safeguard indigenous music.
- Authenticity vs innovation: Important for relevance.
- Blending: Traditional rhythms with modern genres.
- Opportunities: Global collaborations, festivals, streaming platforms.

References and Attributions [Series 4]

- Plate 4.1: Suggested AI prompt “Generate an image of African musicians playing guitars and drums in a colonial-era setting.” Search string: “African colonial music Western instruments OER image.”
- Figure 4.1: Suggested AI prompt “Create a diagram illustrating the influence of missionary hymns on African music traditions.” Search string: “African church music missionary influence diagram OER.”
- Box 4.1: Suggested AI prompt “Generate a table of colonial influences on African music with examples and impacts.” Search string: “Colonial influences African music OER.”
- Plate 4.2: Suggested AI prompt “Generate an image of African musicians performing reggae and hip hop on stage.” Search string: “African reggae hip hop performance OER image.”
- Figure 4.2: Suggested AI prompt “Create a diagram illustrating the role of radio, TV, internet, and streaming in African music dissemination.” Search string: “African music media technology diagram OER.”
- Box 4.2: Suggested AI prompt “Generate a table of African artists and their international collaborations with genres and outcomes.” Search string: “African music cross-cultural collaborations OER.”
- Plate 4.3: Suggested AI prompt “Generate an image of Caribbean musicians performing calypso with African-inspired rhythms.” Search string: “Caribbean calypso African diaspora OER image.”
- Figure 4.3: Suggested AI prompt “Create a diagram illustrating reciprocal influences between African and diaspora music traditions.” Search string: “African diaspora reciprocal music influences diagram OER.”
- Box 4.3: Suggested AI prompt “Generate a table of African-diaspora collaborations with genres created and global impact.” Search string: “African diaspora intercultural fusions OER.”
- Plate 4.4: Suggested AI prompt “Generate an image of African musicians performing traditional music at a cultural festival.” Search string: “African traditional music preservation festival OER image.”
- Figure 4.4: Suggested AI prompt “Create a diagram illustrating the balance between authenticity and innovation in African music.” Search string: “African music authenticity innovation diagram OER.”
- Box 4.4: Suggested AI prompt “Generate a table of contemporary opportunities for African music with examples and impacts.” Search string: “African music global stage opportunities OER.”



Course Code: MUS 142

Course Title: Tonal Harmony

Course Credit Load: 2 Units

Series 1: Role and Function of Music in Black African Communities

Series 2: Forms and Nature of Traditional African Musical Performances

Series 3: Classification of African Traditional Musical Instruments

Series 4: Influences of External Cultures on African Music

Series 5: African Musical Instruments and Performance Techniques

Proposed Outline for Series 5

Part 5.1 Techniques of idiophones

- 5.1.1 Striking and shaking methods
- 5.1.2 Rhythmic patterns and ensemble use

Part 5.2 Techniques of membranophones

- 5.2.1 Hand drumming and stick drumming
- 5.2.2 Communication and signalling functions

Part 5.3 Techniques of chordophones

- 5.3.1 Plucking, bowing, and strumming methods
- 5.3.2 Accompaniment in storytelling and praise singing

Part 5.4 Techniques of aerophones

- 5.4.1 Blowing and fingering methods
- 5.4.2 Symbolic and ceremonial applications



Introduction

In the last Series, we explored how external cultures influenced African music, from colonial instruments to global collaborations. Building on that knowledge, we now turn to the performance techniques of African musical instruments. This Series is important because the way instruments are played is as significant as the instruments themselves, shaping rhythm, melody, and meaning in African traditions.

The aim of this Series is to introduce you to the performance techniques associated with different categories of African instruments and to equip you with the ability to describe, analyse, and evaluate how these techniques contribute to musical expression.

We shall commence this Series by examining idiophones, focusing on striking and shaking methods and their role in rhythmic ensembles. Next, we will study membranophones, considering hand and stick drumming as well as their communicative functions. Following that, we will explore chordophones, looking at plucking, bowing, and strumming techniques in storytelling and praise singing. Finally, we will conclude with aerophones, analysing blowing and fingering methods alongside their symbolic and ceremonial applications.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 5.1** demonstrate striking and shaking techniques used in idiophones,
- **SLO 5.2** explain hand and stick drumming methods and their communicative functions in membranophones,
- **SLO 5.3** describe plucking, bowing, and strumming techniques in chordophones and their role in performance, and
- **SLO 5.4** analyse blowing and fingering techniques in aerophones and evaluate their symbolic and ceremonial applications.



5.1 Techniques of Idiophones

5.1.1 Striking and shaking methods

Idiophones are among the simplest yet most expressive African instruments. They produce sound when their entire body vibrates, often through **striking** or **shaking**. Striking methods involve hitting the instrument with sticks, mallets, or hands, as seen in xylophones and clappers. Shaking methods are common with rattles, where beads or seeds inside a container create rhythmic sounds. These techniques allow performers to produce varied tones and textures, depending on the force, speed, and angle of contact.

Fill in the blank: Idiophones produce sound when their entire body _____, often through striking or shaking.



Plate 5.1 Striking and shaking idiophones in African performance

5.1.2 Rhythmic patterns and ensemble use

Idiophones are central to African **rhythmic patterns**, which form the backbone of musical performance. They often provide steady beats or complex polyrhythms that guide dancers and singers. In ensembles, idiophones complement drums and other instruments, adding texture and variety. For example, rattles may accompany choral singing, while xylophones provide melodic support. Their versatility makes them essential in both ritual and recreational contexts, ensuring that rhythm remains a unifying force in African music.

Fill in the blank: Idiophones often provide steady beats or complex _____ that guide dancers and singers.





Figure 5.1 Idiophones in African ensembles

Idiophone Techniques		
Technique	Examples	Performance Contexts
Striking	- Xylophone (Balafon) - Bells (Agogo)	- Ritual Ceremonies - Traditional Dance
Shaking	- Rattles (Shekere) - Calyabash Shaker	- Folk Ensembles - Festivals & Celebrations
Plucking / Scraping	- Thumb Piano (Mbira) - Scraper (Guero)	- Storytelling - Solo Performance
Resonating	- Music Bow - Slit Drum (Log Drum)	- Healing Rituals - Spiritual Practices

Box 5.1 Selected idiophone techniques and contexts

Pilot questions 5.1

1. How do idiophones produce sound?
2. What are the two main techniques used to play idiophones?
3. Give one example of an idiophone played by striking and one played by shaking.
4. How do idiophones contribute to rhythmic patterns in African music?
5. Why are idiophones important in ensemble performances?

5.2 Techniques of Membranophones

5.2.1 Hand drumming and stick drumming

Membranophones are instruments that produce sound by vibrating a stretched membrane, usually animal skin, when struck. In African traditions, **hand drumming** is one of the most common techniques, where players use their palms and fingers to create varied tones. The **djembe**, for example, produces bass, tone, and slap sounds depending on how the hand strikes the drumhead.



Stick drumming involves using wooden sticks or beaters, often seen with larger drums such as the talking drum or bass drum. These techniques allow performers to create complex rhythms and dynamic soundscapes.

Fill in the blank: The djembe produces bass, tone, and slap sounds depending on how the _____ strikes the drumhead.



Plate 5.2 Hand and stick drumming techniques

5.2.2 Communication and signalling functions

Beyond musical performance, membranophones serve important **communication functions** in African societies. The **talking drum** is especially notable for its ability to mimic speech patterns, allowing drummers to send messages across distances. Drums are also used to signal the start of ceremonies, summon community members, or announce significant events. These signalling functions highlight the dual role of membranophones as both musical and social instruments, reinforcing their importance in everyday life and ritual practice.

Fill in the blank: The talking drum is notable for its ability to mimic _____ patterns, allowing drummers to send messages.

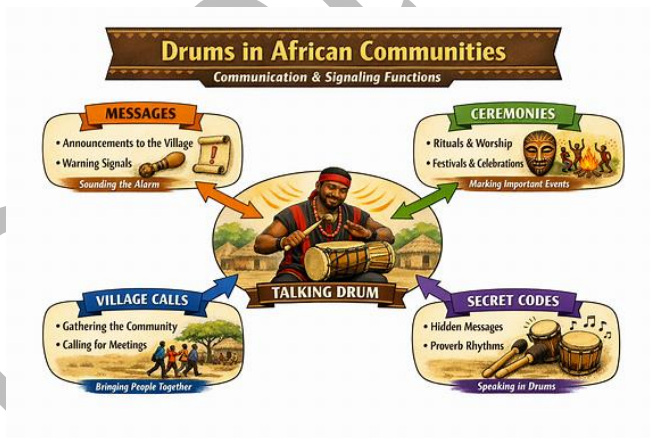


Figure 5.2 Communication and signalling functions of membranophones





Box 5.2 Selected membranophone techniques and contexts

Pilot questions 5.2

1. How do membranophones produce sound?
2. What are the two main techniques used to play membranophones?
3. Give one example of a drum played with hands and one played with sticks.
4. How does the talking drum function as a communication tool?
5. Why are membranophones important in ceremonies and community life?

5.3 Techniques of Chordophones

5.3.1 Plucking, bowing, and strumming methods

Chordophones are instruments that produce sound through vibrating strings. In African traditions, performers use **plucking**, **bowing**, and **strumming** techniques to create varied tones. **Plucking** involves pulling and releasing strings with fingers, as seen in the kora and lute. **Bowing** uses a stick or bow to rub against the string, producing sustained sounds, often with the musical bow. **Strumming** involves sweeping across several strings at once, creating harmonic layers. Each technique allows musicians to express different moods, from gentle storytelling to lively dance accompaniment.

Fill in the blank: Plucking, bowing, and strumming are techniques used to produce sound on African _____ instruments.





Plate 5.3 African chordophone performance techniques

5.3.2 Accompaniment in storytelling and praise singing

Chordophones play a vital role in African **storytelling** and **praise singing**. The kora, for example, is often used by griots to accompany oral histories, genealogies, and moral lessons. The lute and musical bow also provide melodic support in performances, reinforcing the narrative with sound. These instruments do not merely provide background music; they interact with the spoken word, enhancing its emotional and cultural impact. Through chordophones, stories are remembered, values are transmitted, and communities are united in shared heritage.

Fill in the blank: The kora is often used by griots to accompany oral histories and _____ lessons.

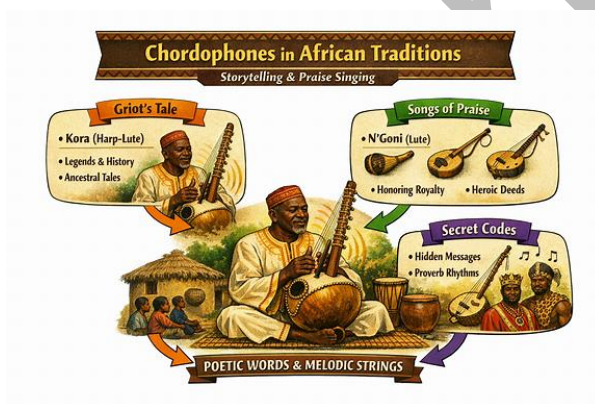


Figure 5.3 Role of chordophones in African oral traditions





Box 5.3 Selected chordophone techniques and contexts

Pilot questions 5.3

1. What are chordophones, and how do they produce sound?
2. Name three techniques used to play chordophones.
3. Which African instrument is commonly played by griots in storytelling?
4. How do chordophones contribute to praise singing?
5. Why are chordophones important in transmitting cultural values?

5.4 Techniques of Aerophones

5.4.1 Blowing and fingering methods

Aerophones are instruments that produce sound by vibrating air within a tube or cavity. In African traditions, **blowing** is the primary technique, where performers direct air into flutes, horns, or whistles. The quality of sound depends on breath control, angle, and intensity.

Fingering methods are used to alter pitch, especially in flutes, by opening and closing holes along the instrument. These techniques allow musicians to create melodies, signal messages, or accompany dances.

Fill in the blank: The quality of sound in aerophones depends on breath control, angle, and _____.





Plate 5.4 Blowing and fingering techniques in aerophones

5.4.2 Symbolic and ceremonial applications

Aerophones often carry **symbolic meaning** in African societies. Horns may be blown to announce the arrival of chiefs or to mark the beginning of ceremonies. Flutes are sometimes used in initiation rites, guiding participants through symbolic transitions. Whistles add sharp accents to dances, reinforcing rhythm and energy. These ceremonial applications highlight the dual role of aerophones as both musical and cultural instruments, linking sound with identity and tradition.

Fill in the blank: Horns may be blown to announce the arrival of _____ or to mark the beginning of ceremonies.

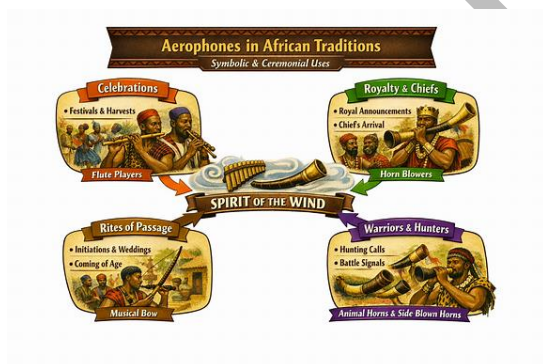
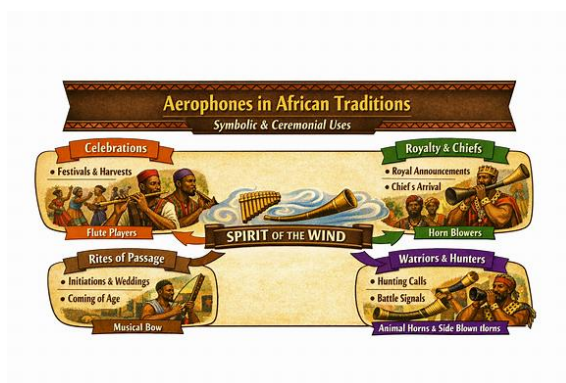


Figure 5.4 Symbolic and ceremonial applications of aerophones





Box 5.4 Selected aerophone techniques and contexts

Pilot questions 5.4

1. How do aerophones produce sound?
2. What are the two main techniques used to play aerophones?
3. Give one example of an aerophone played in ceremonies.
4. How are flutes used in initiation rites?
5. Why are aerophones considered symbolic in African traditions?

Series Summary

This Series has focused on African musical instruments and the performance techniques that bring them to life. We began with idiophones, learning how striking and shaking methods create rhythmic patterns in ensembles. We then explored membranophones, examining hand and stick drumming alongside their communicative and ceremonial functions. Following that, we studied chordophones, considering plucking, bowing, and strumming techniques and their role in storytelling and praise singing. Finally, we looked at aerophones, analysing blowing and fingering methods and their symbolic applications in rituals and ceremonies.

By completing this Series, you should now be able to demonstrate idiophone techniques, explain drumming methods and their communicative roles, describe chordophone performance practices, and analyse aerophone techniques and their cultural significance. These outcomes align directly with the Series Learning Outcomes, equipping you with a practical and cultural understanding of how African instruments are played and valued.



Glossary of Terms

- **Aerophones:** Instruments that produce sound by vibrating air within a tube or cavity.
- **Bowing:** Technique of rubbing a bow or stick against a string to produce sustained sound.
- **Chordophones:** Instruments that produce sound through vibrating strings.
- **Hand drumming:** Playing drums with palms and fingers to create varied tones.
- **Idiophones:** Instruments that produce sound by vibrating their entire body when struck or shaken.
- **Membranophones:** Instruments that produce sound by vibrating a stretched membrane when struck.
- **Plucking:** Technique of pulling and releasing strings with fingers to produce sound.
- **Stick drumming:** Playing drums using sticks or beaters.
- **Strumming:** Sweeping across several strings at once to create harmonic layers.
- **Talking drum:** A drum capable of mimicking speech patterns, used for communication.

Concept Check Questions [Series 5]

Objective questions

1. Which category of instruments produces sound by vibrating their entire body? (Linked to SLO 5.1)
2. Which African drum is known for mimicking speech patterns? (Linked to SLO 5.2)
3. Which instrument is commonly played by griots in storytelling? (Linked to SLO 5.3)

Short-answer questions

4. Explain the difference between hand drumming and stick drumming. (Linked to SLO 5.2)
5. Describe how idiophones contribute to ensemble performances. (Linked to SLO 5.1)
6. How are aerophones used in ceremonies and symbolic contexts? (Linked to SLO 5.4)

Long-answer questions

7. Analyse the techniques used in chordophones and explain their role in storytelling and praise singing. (Linked to SLO 5.3)
 - Basic response: Chordophones use plucking, bowing, and strumming to accompany oral traditions and praise songs.
 - Value-added response: Outstanding learners may discuss how these techniques enhance emotional impact, preserve history, and transmit cultural values.
8. Evaluate the importance of membranophones in African societies, focusing on their musical and communicative functions. (Linked to SLO 5.2)
 - Basic response: Membranophones provide rhythm in performances and serve as tools for communication.



- Value-added response: Outstanding learners may explore how drums reinforce authority, unify communities, and symbolise cultural identity.

Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 5]

- Idiophones: Produce sound when their entire body vibrates.
- Techniques: Striking and shaking.
- Examples: Xylophone (striking), rattles (shaking).
- Contribution: Provide steady beats and polyrhythms.
- Importance: Add texture and guide ensembles.
- Membranophones: Produce sound by vibrating a stretched membrane.
- Techniques: Hand drumming and stick drumming.
- Examples: Djembe (hands), talking drum (sticks).
- Talking drum: Mimics speech patterns for communication.
- Importance: Used in ceremonies and community life.
- Chordophones: Produce sound through vibrating strings.
- Techniques: Plucking, bowing, strumming.
- Instrument: Kora played by griots.
- Contribution: Support praise singing.
- Importance: Transmit cultural values.
- Aerophones: Produce sound by vibrating air.
- Techniques: Blowing and fingering.
- Example: Horns used in ceremonies.
- Flutes: Used in initiation rites.
- Importance: Symbolic in African traditions.

References and Attributions [Series 5]

- Plate 5.1: Suggested AI prompt “Generate an image of African musicians playing rattles and xylophones in a traditional setting.” Search string: “African idiophones rattles xylophone OER image.”
- Figure 5.1: Suggested AI prompt “Create a diagram illustrating idiophones in ensemble use alongside drums and singers.” Search string: “African idiophones ensemble diagram OER.”
- Box 5.1: Suggested AI prompt “Generate a table of idiophone techniques with examples and performance contexts.” Search string: “African idiophones techniques OER.”
- Plate 5.2: Suggested AI prompt “Generate an image of African drummers using hands and sticks to play traditional drums.” Search string: “African hand drumming stick drumming OER image.”
- Figure 5.2: Suggested AI prompt “Create a diagram illustrating communication and signalling functions of drums in African communities.” Search string: “African drums communication signalling diagram OER.”
- Box 5.2: Suggested AI prompt “Generate a table of membranophone techniques with examples and contexts.” Search string: “African membranophones techniques OER.”



- Plate 5.3: Suggested AI prompt “Generate an image of a griot playing the kora using plucking technique in a traditional setting.” Search string: “African kora griot plucking OER image.”
- Figure 5.3: Suggested AI prompt “Create a diagram illustrating chordophones used in storytelling and praise singing in African traditions.” Search string: “African chordophones storytelling praise singing diagram OER.”
- Box 5.3: Suggested AI prompt “Generate a table of chordophone techniques with examples and performance contexts.” Search string: “African chordophones techniques OER.”
- Plate 5.4: Suggested AI prompt “Generate an image of African musicians playing flutes and horns in a traditional ceremony.” Search string: “African aerophones flutes horns OER image.”
- Figure 5.4: Suggested AI prompt “Create a diagram illustrating symbolic and ceremonial uses of aerophones in African traditions.” Search string: “African aerophones ceremonial uses diagram OER.”
- Box 5.4: Suggested AI prompt “Generate a table of aerophone techniques with examples and contexts.” Search string: “African aerophones techniques OER.”

