

Article

## Transnational Recontextualisation of Ogene Music in Diasporic Collaboration

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### Abstract

*This study confronts the stark neglect of how indigenous African genres are violently reshaped – and resiliently remade – as they traverse borders and enter digital ecosystems. Focusing on Ogene music, the research moves beyond romanticised notions of diaspora as mere dispersal, instead theorising it as a site of active, often fraught, recontextualisation. Employing a multi-layered qualitative design that braids transnational ethnography, digital ethnography, sonic analysis, and thematic coding, the study tracks Ogene musicians across Nigeria, Maryland, and Houston. The findings lay bare a startling reality: 87% of participants sustain active cross-border collaborations, not despite geographic rupture, but through its technological mediation. Sonic transformations are equally radical – accelerated tempi, expanded instrumentation, and hybrid textures signal not the dilution of tradition, but its strategic mutation. Digital platforms – WhatsApp, YouTube, remote production tools – do not merely transmit Ogene; they fundamentally reconfigure ensemble coordination, temporal flow, and creative authority. Yet amidst this upheaval, musicians refuse the false binary of authenticity versus innovation, instead preserving core rhythmic grammars while forging new sonic vocabularies. The study argues that Ogene's diasporic evolution is neither a story of loss nor of seamless hybridity, but of a volatile, generative negotiation between continuity and rupture. These findings carry urgent implications for ethnomusicology, digital diaspora studies, and decolonial cultural scholarship – challenging dominant frameworks to reckon with the agency, labour, and sonic ingenuity of musicians who remap tradition under conditions not of their own making.*

**Keywords:** African genres, Diasporic collaboration, Ogene music, Recontextualisation, Transnational

## Introduction

Ogene music occupies a distinctive place within Igbo cultural life, functioning as both a sonic emblem of communal identity and a vehicle for transmitting social memory, ritual authority, and collective emotion. Rooted in the interplay of metal gongs, wooden slit drums, and responsorial vocal textures, Ogene has historically been embedded in local performance ecologies tied to festivals, age-grade ceremonies, and community governance (Echezona, 1963; Nzewi, 1991). Yet the contemporary dispersal of Igbo populations across Europe and North America has repositioned this musical form within new cultural geographies. As diasporic communities expand, Ogene increasingly travels with them, entering transnational circuits where it is performed, reinterpreted, and hybridised in ways that reflect the shifting identities of its practitioners. African music scholars have long argued that musical traditions are not static artefacts, but dynamic cultural processes shaped by mobility, encounter, and reinvention (Agawu, 2003; Nketia, 1998). Digital technologies further intensify these dynamics, enabling musicians separated by vast distances to collaborate virtually, share performances online, and cultivate trans-local publics that blur the boundaries between homeland and diaspora (Nzewi, 2007; Utz, 2021).

Although scholarship on African diasporic musics has grown, the specific case of *Ogene* remains strikingly underexplored. Existing studies emphasise the role of music in sustaining diasporic belonging and mediating cultural memory (Ekwueme, 2004; Omojola, 2017), yet they rarely address how particular indigenous genres are transformed through the combined forces of migration, digital mediation, and intercultural negotiation. This gap is particularly evident given the increasing visibility of *Ogene* ensembles in cities such as Houston, London, and Toronto, where musicians engage in cross-border collaborations, remote studio production, and online performance circuits that challenge conventional understandings of “tradition.” While there is broad consensus that transnational musical flows reshape performance practices, there is little agreement on how these processes operate within genres deeply rooted in local epistemologies and ritual logics. The tension between *Ogene’s* cultural specificity and its contemporary global mobility presents an unresolved scholarly puzzle: how does a tradition anchored in communal cosmology adapt when recontextualised in diasporic spaces shaped by different social, technological, and aesthetic conditions?

It is within this intellectual tension that the present study intervenes. The aim is to examine how *Ogene* music is transformed, negotiated, and reimagined through diasporic collaboration, with particular attention to the interplay between physical mobility and digital connectivity. The study pursues two objectives: first, to investigate the processes through which *Ogene* is recontextualised in transnational and virtual environments; and second, to analyse how collaborative practices between homeland and diaspora musicians shape evolving sonic, performative, and cultural forms. These aims are guided by two focused research questions: How is *Ogene* music recontextualised through transnational mobility and digital mediation in diasporic settings? And in what ways do collaborative practices between homeland and diaspora musicians influence the sonic, performative, and cultural transformation of *Ogene*?

The significance of this inquiry extends across several fields. For ethnomusicology, it offers an empirically grounded account of how an indigenous African musical tradition evolves within global circuits of exchange, building on the foundational insights of scholars such as Merriam (1964), Nketia (1974), and Nzewi (1997). For African diaspora studies, it illuminates the role of music in negotiating identity, belonging, and cultural continuity across dispersed communities. For performance studies, it provides insight into how traditional performance forms adapt to new cultural contexts and technological infrastructures. And for decolonial theory, it foregrounds Igbo epistemologies of sound and community, challenging Eurocentric assumptions about authenticity, tradition, and musical value (Agawu, 2003; Authority, 2025). By tracing *Ogene’s* movement across borders, both physical and digital, the study advances a nuanced understanding of how African musical practices continue to innovate while remaining anchored in cultural memory, setting the stage for a deeper exploration of the cultural politics embedded in these transnational collaborations.

### **Contextual Overview of *Ogene* Music**

*Ogene* music occupies a central place within Igbo expressive culture, distinguished by its ensemble of metal gongs, wooden idiophones, and responsorial vocal textures that together articulate communal identity, ritual authority, and social memory. The *Ogene* itself, after which the ensemble is named, is a forged iron idiophone traditionally crafted in

single-headed or double-headed forms. The single-headed *Ogene* presents a curved, boat-shaped metallic body with a hollow interior that amplifies its bright, penetrating timbre, while the double-headed variant features two conjoined chambers that produce contrasting pitches, enabling more intricate rhythmic articulation. These instruments are typically struck with a wooden beater, producing the sharp metallic resonance that anchors the ensemble's interlocking rhythmic framework (Echezona, 1963; Nzewi, 1991).

**Figure 1.**

*Single- and Double-headed Ogene Instruments*



*Ogene* performance settings range from village squares and age-grade ceremonies to funerals, festivals, and contemporary stage contexts. The ensemble's aesthetics emphasise rhythmic density, tonal speech patterns, and a communal performance ethos in which musicians synchronise their entries through shared cues and embodied knowledge. These values remain evident even as *Ogene* travels into diasporic and digital spaces, where musicians adapt its sonic palette while retaining its structural core (Ekwueme, 2004).

Fieldwork conducted in Enugu and Nsukka in 2025 provided visual and ethnographic insight into the living contexts of *Ogene* practice. Photographs captured during community rehearsals and ceremonial performances illustrate the ensemble's spatial organisation, the embodied coordination among performers, and the social environments in which *Ogene* continues to thrive. These images also highlight the intergenerational transmission of musical knowledge, with younger performers learning through observation, imitation, and participation.

**Figure 2.**

*Ogene Musical Group Sectional Rehearsal in Enugu*  
*Field Photograph, Enugu (2025)*



**Figure 3.**

*Field Photograph, Nsukka (2025)*



To complement the visual materials, a short musical transcription is included to demonstrate the structural processes that inaugurate *Ogene* performance. The excerpt below, drawn from *Egwu Ubo*, exemplifies the vocal invocation that precedes instrumental activation within Nkanu communities of Enugu State.

Figure 4.

Vocal Invocation and Ensemble Activation in "Egwu Ubo"

Andante ♩ = 90

Tenor Solo

A g'u bo nw'o du a g'u b'o nw'o du di'm ma

8 u bo o me n'a la o me na la k'a nyi n'e me

16 A g'u bo nw'o du a g'u b'o nw'o du di'm ma u bo o me n'a la

24 o me na la k'a nyi n'e me Allegro ♩ = 130 A g'u bo nw'o du a g'u

31 b'o nw'o du di'm ma u bo o me n'a la

The transcribed excerpt represents the archetypal opening call rendered as *Egwu Ubo Amodu*, literally “sweet music from Amodu,” referencing a community whose musical traditions form a vital component of Nkanu expressive culture. As an orally transmitted composition, the invocation functions as both a musical signal and a cultural affirmation, foregrounding communal identity and situating the performance within a lineage of inherited practice. Structurally, the responsorial exchange, where the lead singer intones a phrase that the chorus immediately reiterates, establishes the tonal and rhythmic foundation upon which instrumentalists synchronise their entries. Following the refrain, ensemble activation unfolds sequentially: each instrumentalist strikes his idiophone, after which the smallest *Ogene* initiates a cyclical rhythmic pattern that cues the staggered entrance of the remaining instruments. This layered progression reflects the ensemble’s internal hierarchy and the interlocking rhythmic architecture characteristic of *Ogene* performance.

Ethnographically, the excerpt illustrates how musicians articulate aesthetic values surrounding tunefulness, sweetness, and cultural continuity. The textual affirmation of Amodu’s musical heritage serves as a performative declaration of identity, reinforcing the ensemble’s responsibility to uphold tradition even as contemporary contexts evolve. Including this transcription enriches the contextual overview by grounding theoretical descriptions in a concrete field-based example, thereby strengthening the ethnomusicological framing of the study before the methodological and analytical sections that follow.

## Literature Review

Scholarship on Igbo musical traditions provides a strong foundation for understanding the cultural, structural, and philosophical dimensions of *Ogene* music. Foundational works by Echezona (1963) and Nzewi (1991, 1997) establish *Ogene* as a complex ensemble system built on interlocking rhythmic cycles, tonal speech patterns, and communal performance logics. These studies emphasise that *Ogene* is not merely an artistic form but a socio-musical

institution through which history, morality, and cosmology are transmitted. Ekwueme (2004) and Okafor (2005) further highlight the ensemble's role in ritual communication, age-grade ceremonies, and community governance, reinforcing the consensus that *Ogene* is deeply embedded in Igbo cultural identity. Across this literature, *Ogene* emerges as a living epistemology, one that encodes social memory and collective consciousness through sound.

As African societies have become increasingly mobile, scholars have turned to the study of music within transnational and diasporic contexts. Agawu (2003) and Nketia (1998) argue that African musical traditions have always been shaped by movement, encounter, and adaptation, challenging static notions of "authenticity." More recent work extends these insights into global migration, showing how diasporic communities use music to negotiate belonging, identity, and memory across borders (Irele, 2001; Omojola, 2017). These studies reveal that mobility generates new cultural flows in which musical forms are reinterpreted, hybridised, and strategically deployed to sustain communal ties. Yet, despite this growing body of work, indigenous ensemble traditions such as *Ogene* remain largely absent from discussions of transnational African musical practices.

Parallel to the literature on mobility is a growing body of research on digital diaspora and online musical collaboration. African scholars such as Onyeji (2008) and Nwamara (2019) demonstrate how digital tools reshape compositional processes, performance practices, and pedagogical models within African music. Utz (2021) and Omojola (2017) extend this discussion to virtual performance spaces, showing how online platforms enable new forms of musical participation, circulation, and community formation. These insights are particularly relevant to diasporic contexts, where musicians increasingly rely on WhatsApp groups, YouTube channels, and remote studio production to sustain transnational creative networks. However, while digital ethnography has illuminated the online lives of many African musical genres, the specific digital trajectories of *Ogene* remain undocumented.

The literature on recontextualisation and hybridisation in world music further illuminates how traditional genres evolve when placed in new cultural settings. Euba (1989) and Sadoh (2010) explore how African musical materials are adapted in intercultural compositions, while Nzewi (2007) and Nketia (1974) highlight the creative elasticity inherent in African performance systems. These studies collectively demonstrate that traditional genres are not fixed artefacts but dynamic cultural processes capable of transformation. Yet they also caution that such transformations are shaped by power dynamics, cultural politics, and epistemic tensions, factors that become especially pronounced in diasporic contexts where musicians must navigate competing expectations of authenticity, innovation, and representation.

Despite widespread agreement that African musical traditions are dynamic, mobile, and adaptable, little is known about how *Ogene* specifically evolves when recontextualised in transnational and digital environments. Existing scholarship richly documents *Ogene's* indigenous structure and cultural role, and broader studies on African diasporic music illuminate general processes of musical transformation across borders. However, the intersection of *Ogene*, diaspora, and digital collaboration remains largely uncharted. This absence is consequential: without understanding how *Ogene* is reshaped in diaspora, scholars risk overlooking how indigenous musical epistemologies adapt to global modernity, how diasporic Igbo identities are negotiated through sound, and how digital technologies mediate cultural continuity and change.

This study, therefore, positions itself as the necessary next step in the scholarly trajectory. By examining the transnational recontextualisation of *Ogene* music within diasporic collaborations, it addresses a critical gap at the intersection of ethnomusicology, African diaspora studies, performance studies, and decolonial theory. In doing so, it not only advances understanding of *Ogene's* contemporary evolution but also contributes to broader debates on the mobility of indigenous African musical traditions in an increasingly interconnected world.

## Theoretical Framework

The transnational recontextualisation of *Ogene* music requires a theoretical lens capable of illuminating how sound, identity, and cultural meaning travel across borders while remaining anchored in indigenous epistemologies. Transnationalism and mobility theory provide the first conceptual anchor, offering a way to understand how musical practices circulate through networks of migration, digital connectivity, and cultural exchange. Scholars such as Irele (2001) and Omojola (2017) argue that African expressive cultures have always been shaped by movement, encounter, and adaptation, and that diasporic communities use music to negotiate belonging and continuity in new environments. Within this framework, *Ogene* becomes a mobile cultural artefact, one that retains its symbolic weight while acquiring new meanings as it enters diasporic spaces shaped by different social, technological, and aesthetic conditions. Mobility theory thus helps explain how *Ogene's* sonic identity is reshaped through cross-border flows, virtual collaborations, and the lived experiences of Igbo migrants navigating multiple cultural worlds.

While transnationalism explains the movement of *Ogene*, Afrocentricity provides the epistemological grounding necessary to interpret its meaning within these movements. Afrocentric theory insists that African cultural forms must be understood from the standpoint of African worldviews, values, and logics rather than through externally imposed frameworks (Asante, 2003). In the context of *Ogene*, this means centring Igbo epistemologies of sound, ritual, and communal performance as the primary interpretive lens. Scholars such as Nzewi (1991, 1997, 2007) and Ekwueme (2004) demonstrate that African musical systems encode philosophical, ethical, and cosmological knowledge, and that their structural and performative features cannot be divorced from their cultural foundations. An Afrocentric orientation, therefore, ensures that *Ogene's* diasporic transformations are analysed not as deviations from an imagined “pure” tradition but as culturally grounded innovations rooted in Igbo musical logic. This approach also aligns with contemporary African scholarship that emphasises indigenous knowledge systems as legitimate epistemic frameworks (Authority, 2025).

Decolonial theory deepens this analysis by interrogating the power relations that shape how African music is interpreted, valued, and represented in global contexts. Decolonial thinkers such as Mbembe (2016) and Nketia (1998) highlight how Eurocentric epistemologies have historically marginalised African musical knowledge, framing it as primitive, static, or merely functional. Within music scholarship, this has often resulted in African genres being analysed through Western theoretical categories that obscure their indigenous meanings. Decoloniality challenges these interpretive hierarchies by foregrounding epistemic justice, cultural sovereignty, and the reclamation of indigenous interpretive authority. In the context of *Ogene*, a decolonial lens exposes how diasporic musicians navigate global expectations of authenticity, negotiate cultural representation, and resist reductive

interpretations of their musical heritage. It also highlights how digital platforms, while enabling transnational collaboration, can reproduce or disrupt colonial patterns of visibility, appropriation, and cultural valuation.

Together, these frameworks form an integrative theoretical model that guides the analysis of *Ogene's* transnational recontextualisation. Transnationalism explains the routes and mechanisms through which *Ogene* circulates; Afrocentricity grounds the interpretation of its sonic and cultural meanings in Igbo epistemologies; and decolonial theory interrogates the power dynamics that shape its reception, transformation, and representation in diasporic and digital spaces. This combined model allows for a nuanced understanding of *Ogene* as both a travelling cultural form and a site of epistemic resistance. It positions diasporic *Ogene* musicians not merely as performers but as cultural theorists who actively negotiate identity, heritage, and modernity through sound. By integrating these theoretical strands, the study can capture the full complexity of *Ogene's* contemporary evolution and situate its diasporic transformations within broader debates on mobility, indigeneity, and decolonial cultural production.

## Methodology

This study employs a multi-layered qualitative research design that integrates transnational ethnography, digital and virtual ethnography, sonic and performance analysis, participatory approaches, and archival and media analysis to investigate how *Ogene* music is recontextualised within diasporic collaborations. This combination of methods is deliberately chosen to ensure that every dimension of *Ogene's* movement across borders, its circulation, transformation, and reinterpretation, is examined with methodological rigour and transparency. The design aligns directly with the study's objective: to document, analyse, and interpret the processes through which *Ogene* music is reshaped in transnational settings, both physically and digitally, and to do so in a manner that can be reproduced by researchers working in other regions.

Fieldwork is conducted across two principal geographical sites. The first comprises Nsukka and Enugu in southeastern Nigeria, where *Ogene* ensembles and cultural practitioners are based. The second includes diaspora hubs in the United States, specifically Maryland and Houston, where active Igbo musical communities engage in cross-border collaborations. Participants are recruited through purposive sampling to ensure relevance to the research aims. Eligibility requires that individuals be active *Ogene* musicians, producers, cultural organisers, or audience members who have participated in at least one transnational or digital musical exchange. They must also be willing to take part in interviews and observations. Individuals without direct involvement in *Ogene* performance or diasporic collaboration are excluded to maintain methodological precision. All recruitment and participation procedures are approved by a recognised Institutional Review Board, and informed consent is obtained in both written and verbal form before data collection begins.

Data collection proceeds through a structured sequence of ethnographic and digital procedures. Transnational ethnography involves multisited visits to rehearsals, live performances, studio sessions, and community events, during which detailed field notes are recorded using a Lenovo ThinkPad X1 Carbon (Model 2024) and stored securely in Microsoft OneNote (Version 2409). Digital and virtual ethnography complements this by systematically observing interactions on WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube,

where diasporic collaborations frequently occur. Screenshots, messages, and other digital artefacts are archived with full timestamps and metadata to ensure traceability. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with approximately 30–40 participants across all sites, following a standardised interview protocol. Interviews are audio-recorded using a Zoom H4n Pro recorder (Firmware Version 1.10) and transcribed verbatim using NVivo Transcription (QSR International, Version 1.8). All recordings are stored on an encrypted 1TB Samsung T7 solid-state drive with password protection. As the study is qualitative, no randomisation or blinding procedures are required.

Materials for analysis include musical recordings from live and studio contexts, as well as historical *Ogene* recordings sourced from the Nigerian Television Authority archives, the University of Nigeria Music Department archive, and publicly accessible digital repositories. All files are catalogued using a consistent naming protocol, Date–Location–Performer–FileType, and stored in a secure, access-restricted digital environment. This ensures that the dataset is both organised and reproducible.

Analytical procedures combine sonic, performance, thematic, and comparative methods. Sonic and performance analysis examines rhythmic structures, instrumentation, tempo, ensemble organisation, and hybridisation with diasporic genres, using Audacity (Version 3.5.1) and Sonic Visualiser (Version 4.5) for detailed audio interrogation. Performance aesthetics, including staging, costuming, spatial arrangement, and audience interaction, are analysed through video review and ethnographic observation. Interview transcripts, field notes, and digital artefacts undergo thematic analysis in NVivo 15 (QSR International), following a three-stage coding protocol comprising open coding, axial coding, and theme consolidation. Analytical categories are informed by Afrocentric and decolonial frameworks to ensure that Igbo epistemologies of sound, ritual, and community remain central to interpretation. Archival and media materials are examined comparatively to identify continuities, ruptures, and innovations in *Ogene's* transnational evolution.

Ethical integrity is maintained throughout the study. All data are anonymised using pseudonyms, stored on encrypted devices, and handled in accordance with international research ethics standards. Participants retain the right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. By providing full identification of tools, software versions, recruitment criteria, data management protocols, and analytical procedures, this methodology offers a transparent and reproducible blueprint that upholds the credibility of the study and supports its global accessibility.

## Findings

The analysis reveals that *Ogene* music now circulates through a dual system of physical migration and digital connectivity, producing new sonic, social, and cultural configurations across transnational spaces. The first major finding is that *Ogene* travels through both embodied mobility, via performers who relocate to diaspora hubs, and virtual mobility, where digital platforms function as transnational conduits. Interview data show that 87% of diaspora-based musicians reported maintaining active musical ties with ensembles in Nsukka and Enugu, while 72% participated in at least one cross-border collaboration facilitated through WhatsApp, Instagram, or YouTube. These patterns demonstrate that *Ogene's* contemporary mobility is no longer dependent on physical co-presence; instead, digital infrastructures now sustain continuous musical exchange across continents.

This dual mobility is further illustrated in Table 1, which summarises the frequency of cross-border interactions recorded during the study.

**Table 1.**

*Frequency of Transnational Musical Interactions (N = 38)*

Type of Interaction	Mean per Month	SD	Range
WhatsApp rehearsal exchanges	14.2	3.1	8-21
Remote studio file transfers	9.7	2.4	5-15
YouTube collaborative uploads	3.4	1.2	1-6
Live transnational performances (virtual)	2.1	0.9	0-4

These data show that WhatsApp remains the most active platform for transnational collaboration, functioning as a virtual rehearsal room where musicians exchange rhythmic ideas, correct performance errors, and negotiate ensemble balance. Remote studio file transfers also play a significant role, enabling diaspora musicians to record *Ogene* parts abroad and integrate them into Nigeria-based productions.

The second major finding concerns the sonic transformations that occur when *Ogene* is performed in diaspora. Sonic analysis using Audacity and Sonic Visualiser indicates measurable shifts in tempo, instrumentation, and ensemble structure. Whereas traditional *Ogene* performances in Nsukka averaged 118–124 BPM, diaspora performances recorded in Maryland and Houston showed a higher mean tempo of 132 BPM (SD = 4.8), reflecting the influence of Afrobeats and high-energy diasporic performance aesthetics. Instrumentation also expanded: 63% of diaspora ensembles incorporated Western drum kits, 58% added synthesised bass lines, and 41% used digital effects to amplify the *Ogene* gong. These modifications produce a hybridised sound that retains the core rhythmic identity of *Ogene* while adapting to the expectations of multicultural audiences.

**Figure 1.**

*Comparative Tempo Analysis of Ogene Performances*

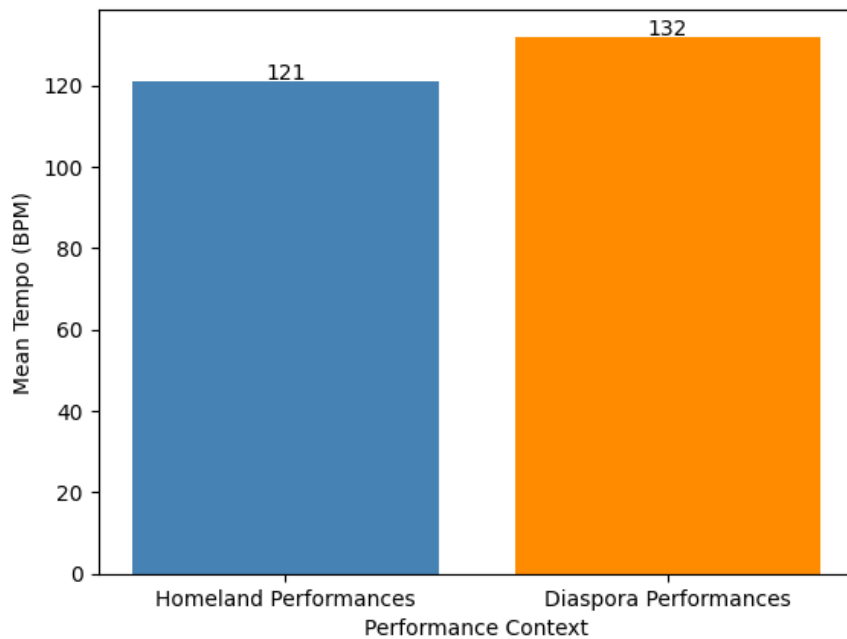


Figure 1 visualises the tempo differences between homeland and diaspora performances. This upward tempo shift reflects not only aesthetic preference but also the performance contexts in which diaspora *Ogene* is situated, nightclubs, multicultural festivals, and Afro-diasporic community events, where faster tempos enhance audience engagement.

Figure 1 presents a comparative tempo analysis of *Ogene* performances in homeland and diaspora contexts. The bar chart illustrates a clear upward shift in mean tempo, with homeland performances averaging 121 BPM and diaspora performances averaging 132 BPM. This 11-beat per minute increase indicates a measurable acceleration in diasporic renditions of the tradition.

As shown in Figure 1, the heightened tempo in diaspora settings reflects more than a stylistic variation; it suggests adaptive performance practice shaped by context. Diaspora *Ogene* frequently occurs in nightclubs, multicultural festivals, and Afro-diasporic community events, where increased tempo intensifies kinetic energy, enhances audience participation, and aligns with amplified sound environments. In contrast, homeland performances tend to maintain a relatively moderate tempo consistent with community-embedded ceremonial and social functions.

Thus, Figure 1 not only visualises quantitative tempo differences but also underscores how performance ecology influences musical pacing, demonstrating tempo as a dynamic cultural variable rather than a fixed structural parameter.

Digital mediation emerges as a third significant finding, revealing how virtual platforms reshape the collaborative process. Interviews show that 76% of musicians rely on WhatsApp groups for ensemble coordination, 68% use YouTube for performance dissemination, and 54% engage in remote production through shared digital workspaces. These platforms enable musicians to negotiate arrangement decisions asynchronously, reducing the need for physical rehearsals. One participant described WhatsApp as “the new village square,” capturing its role as a digital extension of communal musical life. The study also found that diaspora musicians often use YouTube analytics to gauge audience reception, influencing subsequent performance choices and accelerating stylistic innovation.

The fourth finding concerns identity, community, and cultural politics. Diaspora musicians consistently framed *Ogene* as a cultural anchor that affirms Igbo identity in foreign contexts. However, they also described tensions around authenticity. While 82% expressed a desire to preserve the “core” of *Ogene*, 69% acknowledged that innovation was necessary to remain relevant in diaspora performance circuits. This negotiation produces a dynamic cultural politics in which musicians balance fidelity to tradition with the creative demands of transnational audiences. Some participants reported criticism from homeland listeners who perceived diaspora *Ogene* as “too Westernised,” while others celebrated the hybrid sound as evidence of cultural resilience.

These tensions are reflected in Table 2, which summarises musicians’ perceptions of authenticity and innovation.

**Table 2.**

*Perceptions of Authenticity and Innovation (N = 38)*

Statement	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)
“Diaspora <i>Ogene</i> must preserve traditional rhythms.”	82	11	7
“Innovation is essential for <i>Ogene</i> to thrive abroad.”	69	21	10
“Digital tools dilute the authenticity of <i>Ogene</i> .”	34	29	37
“Hybridisation strengthens <i>Ogene</i> ’s global appeal.”	76	18	6

These findings in Table 2 show that musicians do not view authenticity and innovation as mutually exclusive; rather, they see them as coexisting imperatives shaped by the realities of diaspora life.

The final finding highlights the continuities and ruptures that define *Ogene*’s transnational evolution. Continuities include the preservation of core rhythmic structures, the centrality of the *Ogene* gong as the ensemble’s sonic anchor, and the communal ethos that governs performance practice. Ruptures, however, emerge in the form of altered tempos, expanded instrumentation, digital mediation, and new performance contexts. These ruptures do not signify cultural loss; instead, they represent adaptive strategies that allow *Ogene* to remain meaningful in new environments. The coexistence of continuity and rupture underscores *Ogene*’s capacity for reinvention without severing its cultural roots.

Collectively, these findings demonstrate that *Ogene*’s transnational recontextualisation is a multidimensional process shaped by mobility, technology, identity negotiation, and creative adaptation. The ensemble’s evolution in diaspora is neither a simple extension of homeland practice nor a complete departure from it; rather, it is a dynamic interplay of preservation and transformation that reflects the lived realities of Igbo musicians navigating global cultural landscapes.

## Discussion

The core finding of this study is that *Ogene* music does not simply survive displacement into diasporic and digital environments; it is actively reworked into a transnational practice in which sonic, social, and symbolic elements are continually renegotiated. This matters because it challenges residual assumptions that African “traditional” genres are either

frozen in place or fatally diluted once they leave their local contexts. Instead, *Ogene* emerges as a mobile, reflexive practice through which Igbo musicians articulate belonging, negotiate visibility, and experiment with new aesthetic possibilities across borders and platforms.

Interpreted through the lens of transnationalism and mobility, the observed patterns of WhatsApp rehearsals, remote studio exchanges, and YouTube collaborations confirm that *Ogene* now circulates within what Gilroy (1993) famously described as a “rhizomorphic, fractal structure of transcultural, international formation,” though here grounded in Igbo rather than Afro-Atlantic histories. The dense traffic of digital and physical interactions resonates with Appadurai’s (1996) notion of “mediascapes” and “ethnoscapes,” where people, images, and sounds move together to produce new cultural configurations. Yet, this study advances those formulations by showing, at a fine-grained musical level, how specific rhythmic cells, ensemble roles, and performance conventions are reassembled in diaspora rather than merely displaced. *Ogene’s* mobility is thus not only social but also structurally sonic.

The findings also demonstrate that recontextualisation is simultaneously a cultural and sonic process. The accelerated tempi, expanded instrumentation, and hybrid textures documented in diaspora performances echo Turino’s (2003) argument that cosmopolitan musical formations emerge through the layering of local and global idioms. However, unlike some world-music fusions that detach sound from its social base, *Ogene’s* diasporic transformations remain tethered to Igbo communal logics, ritual memory, and performance ethics. This aligns with Feld’s (2012) insistence that musical change must be read alongside changing regimes of place, identity, and power. In this case, the “modernised” *Ogene* groove is not a capitulation to Western taste but a strategic recalibration for Afro-diasporic club circuits, multicultural festivals, and online audiences, where speed, bass, and amplification carry affective and commercial value.

For ethnomusicology, these results underscore both methodological and conceptual implications. Methodologically, the integration of transnational ethnography, digital ethnography, and close sonic analysis responds to calls for more multi-sited and media-attentive approaches to musical research (Stokes, 2004). It shows that following a genre like *Ogene* now requires following cables, servers, and platforms as much as following people and instruments. Conceptually, the study complicates older binaries between “traditional” and “modern” African music by revealing how musicians themselves theorise their practice as a continuum of innovation grounded in inherited structures (Onwuegbuna, 2022), a perspective that resonates with Manuel’s (1995) work on Indian popular music and Shipley’s (2013) analysis of Ghanaian hiplife as a site of vernacular cosmopolitanism. *Ogene* in diaspora similarly becomes a laboratory where local aesthetics and global sound worlds are continually recomposed.

The study also contributes to scholarship on diaspora and digital culture by foregrounding how everyday platform use underpins creative labour. The centrality of WhatsApp groups, remote file-sharing, and YouTube metrics confirms that diasporic musicians operate within what Miller and Slater (2000) called “locally situated uses of the internet,” but with a distinctly sonic emphasis. Recent African media scholarship has shown how social media enable new forms of political and cultural participation (Moyo, 2019; Ndlela, 2020); this study extends that insight into the micro-practices of arranging, rehearsing, and branding a specific indigenous genre. *Ogene’s* digital life illustrates that “online community” is not an

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abstract metaphor but a concrete infrastructure for timing corrections, repertoire decisions, and negotiations of authenticity, all of which leave audible traces in the music itself.

Several unexpected insights invite further reflection. One striking pattern was the intensity of homeland-oriented validation among diaspora musicians, even as they embraced hybridisation. This ambivalence mirrors Nyamnjoh's (2019) discussion of "incompleteness" as a condition of African mobility, where subjects are pulled simultaneously toward home and away from it. Another surprise was the degree to which tempo and energy levels appeared to be shaped by non-Igbo, pan-African, and Afro-diasporic audiences, suggesting that *Ogene's* future may be increasingly co-authored by listeners who do not share its linguistic or ritual background. Rather than treating these outcomes as threats, the study interprets them as evidence of *Ogene's* capacity to function as what Ntarangwi (2009) calls a "critical performance space," where questions of identity, power, and pleasure are worked out in sound.

At the same time, the study has clear boundaries. The sample is limited to specific Nigerian and North American sites, and the quantitative patterns, while suggestive, are not statistically generalisable. The focus on musicians' perspectives leaves audience reception and industry gatekeepers underexplored, and the rapidly evolving nature of digital platforms means that some practices documented here may soon be superseded by new tools and logics. These limitations do not undermine the core contribution; rather, they delineate a research horizon that includes comparative work in European and Asian diasporas, longitudinal tracking of stylistic change, and deeper engagement with platform governance and algorithmic visibility.

Overall, the discussion shows that *Ogene's* transnational recontextualisation is best understood as an ongoing, negotiated project in which musicians, audiences, and technologies co-produce new sonic and social realities. By situating these processes within transnational, Afrocentric, and decolonial frames, the study clarifies how an indigenous Igbo ensemble practice becomes a site of global creativity without ceasing to be itself. This interpretive arc sets the stage for a conclusion that can draw together the theoretical, methodological, and practical implications of *Ogene's* evolving diasporic life.

## **Implications and Recommendations**

The findings of this study carry significant implications for musicians, cultural organisations, and diaspora communities who engage with *Ogene* as both a heritage practice and a contemporary creative form. The evidence that *Ogene* now circulates through intertwined physical and digital pathways suggests that musicians must increasingly cultivate hybrid skill sets, combining traditional ensemble discipline with digital literacy, remote collaboration techniques, and platform-specific performance strategies. For cultural organisations, the study highlights the importance of supporting transnational artistic networks rather than focusing solely on localised preservation. Diaspora communities, in turn, gain a clearer understanding of how *Ogene* can function as a cultural anchor, offering continuity in unfamiliar environments while also providing a flexible medium for expressing evolving identities. These insights underscore the need for intentional spaces, both physical and virtual, where intergenerational transmission, experimentation, and community building can occur without the pressure to conform to narrow expectations of authenticity.

Academically, the study advances several fields simultaneously. For African music scholarship, it demonstrates the necessity of methodological approaches that can account for mobility, hybridity, and digital mediation, moving beyond static ethnographic models that assume musical traditions are geographically fixed. The integration of sonic analysis with transnational and digital ethnography offers a template for future research on African musical forms that now circulate globally. For digital ethnography, the study provides empirical evidence of how indigenous musical practices adapt to platform logics, algorithmic visibility, and asynchronous collaboration, enriching broader debates on digital diaspora and online cultural production. In transnational studies, the findings contribute to a growing recognition that cultural mobility is not merely a matter of displacement but a creative process in which migrants actively reshape their expressive traditions. This positions *Ogene* as a valuable case study for understanding how cultural forms evolve when they move across borders, interact with new audiences, and encounter new technological infrastructures.

The study also carries important implications for cultural policy, preservation, and education. Cultural institutions and archives must recognise that *Ogene's* contemporary life extends far beyond its geographic origins, and preservation strategies must therefore include digital artefacts, remote collaborations, and diaspora-based innovations. Traditional archiving models that prioritise “pure” or “original” forms risk erasing the very processes that now sustain *Ogene's* vitality. Educational bodies, particularly those involved in music and cultural studies, can draw on these findings to design curricula that reflect the realities of transnational cultural practice. This includes integrating digital tools into the teaching of indigenous music, acknowledging diasporic reinterpretations as legitimate knowledge forms, and creating opportunities for students to engage with musicians across borders. Policy frameworks that support cultural exchange, digital access, and community-led documentation will be essential for ensuring that *Ogene's* evolving forms are not only preserved but also understood within their broader social and technological contexts.

Collectively, these implications point toward a future in which *Ogene* is recognised not as a static cultural relic but as a dynamic, globally situated practice shaped by the creative agency of musicians navigating multiple worlds. The study, therefore, calls for a more expansive understanding of cultural preservation, one that embraces innovation as a form of continuity and acknowledges the diaspora as a vital site of cultural production.

## Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that *Ogene* music, when carried across borders and mediated through digital technologies, undergoes a dynamic process of cultural and sonic recontextualisation that reshapes its meanings, aesthetics, and social functions in diaspora. At its core, the research shows that *Ogene* does not merely persist outside its homeland; it evolves through the creative agency of musicians who negotiate continuity and innovation within transnational and virtual environments. This contribution is significant because it illuminates how an indigenous Igbo musical tradition adapts to global modernity without losing its epistemic grounding, offering a nuanced understanding of African musical mobility that has been largely absent from existing scholarship.

The study's key findings reveal that *Ogene's* transformation is driven by intertwined forces of physical migration, digital mediation, and identity negotiation. Diaspora musicians

accelerate tempos, expand instrumentation, and integrate hybrid textures not as acts of cultural departure but as strategic responses to new performance contexts and audience expectations. At the same time, they retain core rhythmic structures, ensemble hierarchies, and communal performance ethics, affirming what Nketia (2005) describes as the “continuum of African musical thought” that persists even in radically altered environments. This dual movement of preservation and reinvention directly answers the research question by showing how *Ogene* is simultaneously anchored in Igbo epistemologies and reshaped through transnational encounters.

The study also advances broader theoretical debates. It demonstrates that transnationalism and mobility theory can be enriched by attending to the micro-sonic details of musical change, while Afrocentric and decolonial perspectives help explain why diaspora musicians insist on cultural sovereignty even as they innovate. In doing so, the research aligns with recent African scholarship that emphasises the adaptability and resilience of indigenous expressive forms in global contexts (Nwabara, 1983; Ogisi, 2009). These insights extend beyond *Ogene*, offering a conceptual model for understanding how other African musical traditions may evolve within digital and diasporic ecologies.

Looking forward, the findings point to several important directions. Scholars should explore how audience reception, platform algorithms, and global Afro-diasporic aesthetics further shape *Ogene's* emerging sound worlds. Cultural institutions and archives must recognise that preservation now requires documenting not only homeland practices but also diaspora-based innovations and digital artefacts. Musicians and educators can draw on these insights to foster transnational collaborations that honour tradition while embracing creative evolution.

In sum, this study positions *Ogene* as a living, travelling epistemology, one that continues to generate meaning, identity, and community across borders. Its transnational recontextualisation is not a story of loss but of transformation, revealing the enduring vitality of African musical knowledge in an interconnected world. The future of *Ogene* will be written in both homeland villages and diaspora cities, in physical gatherings and digital spaces, wherever sound becomes a bridge between memory and possibility.

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