

On the Uḃ-Ḃka of the Igbo: An Interview with Gerald Eze*

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ABSTRACT: Most scholarship on lamellaphones, such as the excellent work by Paul Berliner and Cosmos Magaya in *The Art of Mbira* (2019), focuses on Zimbabwean practices. However, much of the African diaspora practice in the Caribbean and Americas is related to (1) West African musical practices, and (2) the commercial marketing and distribution of the instrument to Europe and North America as a “kalimba” by ethnomusicologist Hugh Tracey (Tracey 1972; Moon 2018). This article presents an interview with Gerald Mmaduabuchi Eze, a music lecturer at Nnamdi Azikiwe University in Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria, recorded on November 1, 2021 in Enugu city. A performer and scholar, Eze presents a practical and academic knowledge of a lesser-known tradition of lamellaphone making and playing: the uḃ-Ḃka of the Igbo of southeastern Nigeria. Kubik and Cooke (2019) note that “The *uḃ-Ḃka* of the Igbo people, exceptionally for the [Central and West African] region, has metal tongues.” Contrary to the mbira, which often has the lamellae and soundboard (vibrator) placed inside a gourd resonator and held inside by the performer, makers of the uḃ-Ḃka conventionally permanently affix the vibrator to the resonator, which is made of a hollow cross-section of hardwood in the example instrument presented in this study. In our conversation, Eze touches on traditional practices including religious contexts, instrument design and tuning, his contemporary performance practices and the potential to preserve and maintain the tradition of uḃ-Ḃka playing through African-centered music education and knowledge transfer.

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1. Introduction

[1.1] I have been making lamellaphones (also known in English as thumb pianos) since 2017 and offered instrument-making workshops at the African Studies Association in 2018 and the Society for Music Theory in 2019. Most scholarship on lamellaphones, such as the excellent work by Berliner (2019) and Berliner and Magaya (2020), which focuses on Zimbabwean practices. However, much of the African diaspora practice in the Caribbean and Americas is related to West African musical practices, and the commercial marketing and distribution of the instrument to Europe and North America as a “kalimba” by ethnomusicologist Hugh Tracey (Tracey 1972; Moon 2018). As I studied the literature on lamellaphones, I became more interested in

my culture's own version of the lamellaphone, which in Igbo we call the "ubọ-aka." I had the opportunity to interview Gerald Eze, a music lecturer at Nnamdi Azikiwe University on 1 November, 2021. Eze is among a few scholar-artists who are revitalizing the instrument, another being Emmanuel Nwankwo (Ezeani 2021).

2. Overview of the Ubọ-aka

[2.1] **Example 1** shows Eze's ubọ-aka, which is made of hardwood, likely iroko, by craftsmen in Nri, Anambra state.⁽¹⁾ The ubọ-aka is a traditional Igbo musical instrument classified as a lamellaphone (Lo-Bamijoko 1987). The instrument holds a significant cultural and historical value within the Igbo music history but has gone out of use in most of the present Igbo communities. Most information I was able to collect is about the Nri community of Anambra state through the interview with Eze, an indigene of the town of Umuchu, in the Aguata local government area of Anambra. Nri is a significant historic place in the history and mythology of the Igbo people as a cultural center, particularly because of the Nri priests and oracles' leadership in *odinaani* (or *odinala*), which comprises Igbo religion and spirituality and related customs. The importance of the ubọ-aka for the Nri people in traditional practices, including prayer and meditation, is emphasized in Ezege's dissertation (1977). Eze, a current player of the ubọ-aka, provided information that contributed to shaping my exploration of the ubọ-aka. His instrument from Nri served as the model for my organological experiment. **Example 2** shows Eze holding his instrument. In Spring 2024, I produced an ubọ-aka using a laser-cutter and materials purchased on Amazon at my home in Athens, Georgia. According to Eze, the ubọ-aka has a unique construction and playing techniques that reflect its cultural importance to the Igbo. These make it a compelling subject for organological study. The fact that the literature on the ubọ-aka is sparse and its physical presence is decreasing makes this an endangered material knowledge.

[2.2] Lamellaphones are classified under the category of idiophones by Hornbostel and Sachs (1961), who describe this category as musical instruments that make their sound by vibrating by themselves following an impact, such as striking or plucking. The Igbo people have a different method of categorization. According to Lo Bamijoko (1987), "ubọ" describes an instrument that is plucked, and "aka" means hand. The name therefore means "hand-plucked" and could be confused with other instruments, such as string instruments, which are also hand-plucked. The instrument's name not only describes how it is played but also indicates how it is used. The ubọ-aka is an instrument used more for private leisure than large gatherings. Another Igbo idiophone is the ogene, which is similar to the western "cowbell". The information gathered in this research is useful for modern generation of Igbo people such as myself who often misconstrue the term "ubọ" for anything shaped and played like the guitar, like the ubọ-aákwara. In Affa, my Igbo hometown in Enugu state, I was only able to find the ubọ-aákwara with one family who have saved in their home where it is preserved it to show people as evidence of its existence. They no longer play it, as both the repertoire and occasion for playing it were long lost.

[2.3] The ubọ-aka serves as a medium of communication, transmitting the society's folkways and traditions orally from one generation to another. The music conveys information, storytelling, proverbs, and idiomatic statements, allowing the listeners to learn about the mores and norms of the society. Additionally, the ubọ-aka is a symbol of masculinity and manhood, reflecting the patrilineal nature of social organization among the Nri people. It also plays a role in socialization, as it is used for leisure and relaxation, and is associated with courtship and marriage, conveying love and expectations in married lives.

[2.4] While the Igbo have many female deities, such as *ani* the earth goddess, leadership roles within religious and musical practices are often male. This is the case with the Priests of Nri. Chukuemeka Ezege's 1977 dissertation explains the religious beliefs and practices associated with the ubọ-aka in Nri, including its use by the well-known Nri priesthood which had wide influence throughout northern Igbo land in pre-colonial times (33–44). Ezege also notes that there are folktales that warn against "over-indulg[ing] in playing ubọ-aka or other related instruments such as oja (flute), ubọ-akwara (seven string harp) which are believed to possess the power of attracting spirits" (46).

[2.5] Furthermore, the ubọ-aka has the potential for inclusion in African music education in schools, colleges, and higher institutions of learning. It can be used to teach traditional scales, melodic and rhythmic patterns, interval relationships, and the Igbo tonal language due to its eight metal keys, which, according to Eze, are linguistically tuned and representative of the Igbo traditional modal structure. As an ancient tradition of

lamellaphone making and playing, ubo-aka music may be a basis for increased understanding of the lamellaphone throughout the African diaspora, including the Caribbean and the Americas.

[2.6] However, the significance of the ubo-aka is also limited by factors such as the loss of much of its music following the death of traditional performers and the effect of social change, which has prevented modern youths from actively participating in ubo-aka music. Additionally, there is a lack of literary surveys in the field, and the history and evolution of the instrument are not well-documented. Despite these limitations, the ubo-aka remains a valuable cultural and musical artifact with deep-rooted significance in Igbo society.

3. *Why the Ubo-aka is Unique*

[3.1] Gerhard Kubik and Peter Cooke's entry on lamellaphones in *Oxford Music Online* mostly focuses on the traditions of southern and eastern Africa (Kubik and Cooke 2001). The entry does list the ubo-aka in a table of African instruments but does not describe the ubo-aka's tuning. Kubik and Cooke note that the ubo-aka is unique within the eastern Nigeria and Cameroon grasslands region for having metal tines. Therefore, this write-up provides novel information on the tuning of the ubo-aka partially based on an interview with Eze, and the recorded practice of famed ubo-aka recording artists Chief Akunwafor Ezeigbo Obiligbo. The following is an excerpt from Kubik and Cooke's (emphasis mine) entry on Eastern Nigeria and the Cameroon grasslands:

This is a cohesive distribution area with a long history. The predominant material for constructing the instrument comes from the raffia palm. The soft pith of a raffia leaf stem is used to construct its body, while the tongues are cut from the hard outer skin. The box-shaped 'Calabar' lamellaphones from the coast of eastern Nigeria generally have Nsibidi ideographs carved on them. A 'chain stitch' holding the lamellae in place is also characteristic of many instruments from this area.

The Tikar and the Vute in the Cameroon grasslands also have raffia lamellaphones. Among the Vute they are tuned in paired octaves. *The ubo aka of the Igbo people, exceptionally for the region, has metal tongues. The soundboard is firmly attached to the gourd-resonator, and has crescent-shaped openings on either side of the lamellae into which the player can put his hands.* The organological characteristics of the Bini's asologun include a metal chain laid across the lamellae to cause sympathetic resonance.

[3.2] In Nigeria, the instrument would be made of a medium hardwood like iroko (African teak wood) with iron tines. I note that Eze's ubo-aka has a gourd ring with a wood top and bottom, differing from designs shown in Ezege (1977) and described by Kubik and Cooke (2001). He also installed a piezoelectric sensor pickup for amplification and application of effects processing (which is not traditional to pre-colonial practices).

4. *Repertoires*

[4.1] Igbo ubo-aka music is an oral tradition maintained through intergenerational transmission and rote learning. However, Eze is among a small group of ubo-aka players in Anambra state who use standard music notation to record and transmit ubo-aka pieces, particularly the purpose of teaching the instrument. The transcription shown in **Example 3** is not by Eze but is that of music he played during the interview. Jonathan Eldridge II of Morehouse College prepared a transcription in standard music notation. I will be gathering more songs in the future; for now I have three. The song utilizes a minor scale, emphasizing a droning pitch of *la*, the first note of the scale. In Nigeria, *la*-minor is commonly known (not *do*-minor). Additional transcriptions are available in the Appendix for a total of three recording excerpts from the interview.

5. *Tuning*

[5.1] Eze sent me the following tuning description in 2024 which indicates F Major as the instrument's tuning. Eze's written description of the tuning and the photograph of the tine arrangement is the basis for **Example 4a** and **Example 4b**. However, the transcription in **Example 3** is of Eze's playing during the interview in 2021

and indicates an E major/C#minor tuning. The transcription was made by Jonathan Eldridge, who has perfect pitch. I note that F major and E major are one semitone apart, so maybe Eze has retuned his instrument over the past three years. The following is Eze's written description of the tuning:

The one octave ubo-aka is tuned to B \flat [mixolydian]. With notes: B \flat , C, D, E \flat , F, G, A \flat , B \flat .

Solfa⁽²⁾: d r m f s l ta [flat] d'

Or "cross/alternative mode": s l t d r m f s [hypo-ionian]

Ezeigbo Obiligbo's tuning often has the seventh note a tone to the Octave. Sometimes the third would also be flat, and this suggests similarity with blues music. Using the alternative tuning also allows me to play music with this same ubo, for instance in key E \flat using the first note, B \flat as my "soh". This style is usually preferable for me, when I play Nigerian gospel music with the one octave ubo-aka. The two octave Ubo-aka is tuned to F Major. With notes:

F G A B \flat C D E F' G' A' B \flat ' C' D' E' F' G'' A''

Generally, the tuning of the Ubo-aka can vary; it can start from any frequency and be arranged in any style the performer may want. I have taught my students the tuning principles and they are free to tune in any style they want. However, the size of the calabash and the length of the prongs determine the range that is possible from the lowest note to the highest note. Once the lowest note and the highest note is determined, arranging the prongs to any tuning of choice is more like setting the prongs in a style that enables one to express in a certain way. The kind of melodic and harmonic expressions one can produce with the cross tuning (s, l, t, d r m f s) is different from those one can produce with the standard diatonic scale (d r m f s l ta d) or the major scale variation of it which can be achieved by tuning the "taw" note upwards (d r m f s l t d').

6. Translation of *Interview*

Igbo	English
[Eze demonstrates the instrument]	[Eze demonstrates the instrument]
Carter-Ényì: Daalu nke oma. Biko gosigodu anyị iru ihe a ị kpọrọ,	Carter-Ényì: Thank you so much. Please show us what you just played,
gosigodu anyị ihu ya ka anyị fụ ya	show us the face let us see it
Kee ihe a na-akpọ ya? Kee ihe o bụ?	What is it called? What is it?
Eze: Ihe a m ji n'aka bu ubo-aka, ubo-aka	What I'm holding is called ubo-aka, ubo-aka
o bụ ngwa ndị Igbo	It's an Igbo musical instrument
Oo ihe ndi igbo ji eme onwe ha obi aṅuri- o bụ ihe ...	It's what the Igbo used to entertain themselves and be joyful in the past
Ee, o diriri n'ala igbo na mbu, o tego rii o di	It has been in existence in Igbo land, it has been long in existence
Mana emechazii o di ka o na-ana ana	But it appears it is now going into extinction
Carter-Ényì: o bụ ihe i na-ekwu kita bu na o di ya?	Carter-Ényì: From what you are saying now, is it still available in the society?
Eze: o di ya, o ka diriri	Eze: Yes, it is still very much around
Mana ndi na-eme ya, ndi na-akpo ya erizighi nne	But the players, are not many
o kwanu ya ka munwa ji mṅta ya, jiri ya na- akpaghari	That was why I learnt it, taking it to places
Na-enye ya umuakwukwo m, na-egosi ha ya	Giving it to my students, showing it to them
Naa, ndi otu egwu m ejirikwuo ya na-akpo egwu	And my band also uses it to perform live music
O nwe ebe a kpom m ka m kuzie piano, nke ndi ocha,	Anywhere I'm called to teach piano, the Western piano,
Ka m kuziere umtazi piano,	To teach children piano,
M kuzie kuzie,	After teaching the piano for some time,
O zuo, o ruo ihe di ka onwa nabu,	Once it gets to about two months,
M were ubo-aka tikwuo,	I will add ubo-aka to the lesson,

Igbo

Si ha ngwa gotere ụmụazi a ụbọ-aka,
O na-aga
Emeketego ya, ọtụtụ ụmụazị amutago ya na ọka

Ọtụtụ ụmụakwụkwọ amutagokwa ya na UNIZIK,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, ebe m na-akuzi
M werekwa ya na-aga ihe dị ka ọrụ obodo,
Ihe ndị ọcha na-akpọ community service,
N'Umuoji.
Abụrọ m onye Umuoji,
Mana e nwere m (Dr. May Blossom Brown) onye nyere m
ebe m na-araghu.
M bịa ebe ahu,
Mkpọkulota ụmụazi na akuziri ha ụbọaka
Ndị nke ahu, ụmụazi ka uche m dị na ya

Ihe m ji eme ya otu a bụ na onweghị otu ọzọ
M dee ya ede n'akwụkwọ,
M na-edekwa ya ede,
Mana m mee so i de ya n'akwụkwọ
Ọ dị ka i sị:
“Hei! mmiri adịrọ mmiri , mmiri adịrọ mmiri adịrọ!”
M nọkwa n'iru taapụ.
“Mmiri adịrọ”, meghenu taapụ ka mmiri dịrị.

M na-ewegara ya ụmụazi
Na emekwa ya n'egwu m
Na-akpọkwa ya n'egwu
Mmekata mekata, ihe dị ka ndị BBC Igbo
Ma ọ bụ ụfọdụ ndị media,
Afu ya,
Ndị na ezisa ozi,
Sị ka ha zie ndị ụwa, ka ha makwara na ụdị ihe a dị

Ndi mmadụ a fụ ya sị hee! Nke a nke a

M sị otu a na-aga
Mana ewezuga onye mụ na ya na-arụ ya
Amakwaha m ebe m fugoro ya n'ala Igbo
N'Eke-ọka n'ọka,
Ọka Sautu Lokal Gooment nke Anambra Steeti
Onweho ebe a na-ere ihe egwu ofu mkpuru

Ụbọaka dị na ya
O gosii na ndị mmadụ enwezighị ihee, uche ha adikebezi
na ya
Carter-Ényị: ọya ka o ji dịrị gị mkpa ikuziri ụmụaka?

English

And then suggest to them to buy ubọ-aka for the children,
So, it keeps going
Continuing this practice, a lot of children have learnt it in
Awka
Some students have also learnt it in UNIZIK,
Nnamdi Azikiwe university, Awka, where I teach
I also take it to impact on the community,
What the English people call “community service,”
In a town called Umuoji⁽³⁾
I'm not from Umuoji,
But someone (Dr. May Blossom Brown) gave me where to
stay at Umuoji.
Each time I go there,
I bring children together to teach them ubọ-aka
In this kind of teaching, I am more interested in teaching
the young
This is because there is no other way to sustain the practice
But if I just write it in essays,
I write essays about the ubọ-aka
But when I just write only Academic essays
It will be like saying:
“Hey! There is no water, there is no water!”
Yet, I am standing in front of the tap.
Yes, “there is no water,” so just open the tap and let the
water flow.
I actively take it (the ubọ-aka) to children
I use it in my musical ensemble
I perform it in songs
From these practices, organizations like the BBC Igbo
Or other media groups,
Would see my work,
That is, media groups that spread news,
They share it with the world, so that people know it still
exists
Then people will see it and express excitement, saying this
and that
This is how I keep progressing with the music
But apart from the person I produce the ubọ-aka with
I don't know where I have seen it in Igbo land
At Eke-Awka Market in Awka,
Awka South Local Government of Anambra State
In the markets where traditional Igbo musical instruments
are sold
one cannot find any ubọ-aka.
This shows there are not many people do with interest in
the ubọ-aka
Carter-Ényị: Is this why it is important for you to teach
children?

Igbo

Ajuju m Chọrọ iju gi ọzọ bụ enwechara ihe ndị ọzọ ndị igbo na-akpọ,

Mana kee Ihe ojiri dịrị gi mkpa ka i welite ụbọaka a, kpasaba ya?

Eze: Mm, ka ndụ m dị,

Ọ bụ ihe ndị a dị mkpa uche ndị mmadụ anaghị agakebe na ya, bụ ihe na amasi m iche

O tu a ha ka ndụ m dị

Ụbọaka a, ka m fūrụ ya izizi,

Ọ ma mma n'anya, tọkwa m uto na ntị

Mana a chọputara m na ya bụ Ife na-ewe ọtụtụ oge na ọtụtụ uchu, mmadụ imụta ya

I ma ọ bụ ihe ndị n'ee, ihe ndị n'epe mpe na-adị ka o nweghoo, ọ ragha ahu,

Ọ ya bụ Ihe ndị na-ara ahu n'uwa

M tinye uchu were mebe ya.

M fūkwa na m menwūrụ ya.

Ebe ọtụtụ ndị emeghughị ya, ka m menwūrụ ya,

Ka m meruzie nū ya gaba

O nweziri oge o ruru, m sị mba noo munwa ya na akpọzi ya,

M ga na-ebughari ya; m ga na akuzikwa, na-egosikwa ndị mmadụ

Na emekwa ihe ndi a m na-eme

Mana mūnwa gana akpọ ya

Ya bụ Ihe, o digho fecha, o digho fecha

Ama m ihe m ji ekwu;

Ọ garaadi fecha, ọ ka bụ iputa i ga na-afū ya ebe niile

O digho fecha

Carter-Ényị: O nwekara ndị ọzọ n'Afrika na-akpọ ihe yiri ihe a?

Kedū ihe a na-akpọ ya and kedū ka ha si emekọrịta?

Eze: Ndị Zimbabwe, mū na ọtụtū n'ime ha dīkwa na mma

Ndị Mbira Center na Zimbabwe,

Mū na ha na-arū ọrū eri, ee, anyị bidoro afo gara aga

Ihe a na-akpọ Mbira Festival

O nwekwa nke ọzọ ha na-akpọ Pan African Mbira Festival

Hanwa (ndị Zimbabwe) na-akpọ ya "Mbira"

Ha elego anya fū na m bụ nwaikorobia ihe a na-amasi na-akpọ ya

M ghotakwa ka esi eji igwe eji ekwu okwu (fonu na komputa) were na-ezisa ụdị egwu ụbọaka a

Ha e wee kpọtūrū m, m na ha a na-arū

Ha nwa na-akpọ ya Mbira

English

There are other instruments the Igbo people play .

why is it very important for you to showcase and promote ubọ-aka?

Eze: Mm, in the natural flow of my life

It is these important things that people's mind does not go to that interests me most

That is how my life is

when I first encountered the ubọ-aka, the sound interested me

It was pleasant to my eyes and sweet to my ears

But I found out that it takes a lot of time and commitment for one to learn it

You know it is the seemingly small or easy things

They are the things that eventually turn out to be difficult

So, I committed myself to do this

And I found out I could do it.

Since many people are not able to practice this, and I could do it

Then let me keep on doing it

At a time, I firmly decided that I will be performing it, myself

I will carry it to places, teach it, and show it to people

And continue doing all these things I do,

But I will be performing it as well

It not easy, it is not easy

I know why I'm saying it;

If it were easy, it could have been seen everywhere

It is not easy

Carter-Ényị: Are there other people in Africa who play what looks like this?

What are they called and how do they interact with each other?

Eze: I know some Zimbabwe people

The Mbira Center in Zimbabwe,

I have been working with some of them since the beginning of last year (2020)

In events like the Mbira Festival

There is also another event that is called, Pan African Mbira Festival

They (the Zimbabweans) call it (the ubọ-aka) "Mbira"

They saw that I'm a young man who is interested in this ubọ-aka music

And that I understand how to use the new media to spread awareness of this ubọ-aka music

So, they called me to work with them

They call it mbira

Igbo

Be ha, ọ dị ri'nne,
Ọ na-adjị m ka ọ dị be ha, ka Mbira ahu o dijị be ha karia
guitar.
Maka o di rinne,
Ha ejidighị ya egwu egwu
And ha na ndị mmuo na-eji ya akpakari ụka.
Ndị Shona na Zimbabwe, ha chọrọ ifu ndị nna nna ha ndị
ochie gagoro aga,
Ọ bụ mbira ka ha na etinye aka na ya.
O nwekwa ndị na-akpọ ya Kalimba, ndị Cameroon
O nwekwa ndị na-akpọ ya Ilimba (ndị Tanzania)
Nwekwa ndị na-akpọ ya, I think o na-adi m ka o
nwekwaa ndị na-akpọ ya Marimba
Mana nke doro m anya bụ Mbira, Ilimba, na Kalimba
Ilee anya, chee ka ndị a si akpọ ụbọ (ụbọaka) nke ha, ọ
dịwagaa iche
O buho otu e si ahazi, eee, ụda, ihe igwe a eji akpọ ụbọaka
anyị, ka ndị Zimbabwe si hazi nke ha
Ihe a na-akpọ tuning,
Tuning ya dijị iche n'iche
O tu anyị si hazi nke anyị dijị iche, e tu ha si hazi nke ha dij
iche
Ọ bụ ya ka o ji a bụ mgbe ụfọdụ akpọ ya Thumb Piano, ọ
ra ahu
Ị si Thumb Piano, kedụ nke i na-ekwu maka ya

Ọ bụ mbira, ka ọ bụ ụbọaka ka ọ bụ ilimba ka ọ bụ
kalimba?
Ihe a bụ afa digasi iche iche a na-akpọ. . .
O nwekwawụ ebe ihe a dijị n'Ikwere,
Ọ dij rinne
Ihe a na-akpọ ya bụ Eri Ọbọ
N'ikwere, ee, ebe wụbụ Igweocha, Port Harcourt

A na-akpọ ya rii nne
Jimi Conta, eee, Jimi Conta bụ ofu n'ime ndị ama ama
n'akpọ ya
Obo, Eri Ọbọ ka a na-akpọ ya
Nke aha kwa, ka e si ahazi igwe eji akpọ ya dij iche na
ụbọaka nke ndị Enugu, Anambra, Imo
Carter-Ényì: Gwam e tu o si bụrụ ndị Igbo bụ ndị na
akpọ ụbọaka a nunwa?
Eze: Ndị igbo. . . n'izizi afa ya bụ ụbọaka
Aka bụ aka mmadụ,
Nee aka m leenu aka m,
Ụbọ bụ ihe a na-akpọ akpọ,
Ndị Igbo nwere ụbọ-akwara
Ụbọ, nke eji akwara were kwe
Nke ahu alago laa pii

English

It is popular in their place
It appears that mbira is more popular and available in
Zimbabwe than the guitar.
Because it is found in many places
They do not play with it
And they use it to communicate with the spirits
When the Shona people of Zimbabwe want to commune
with their departed ancestors,
It is mbira that they use
Some people call it Kalimba, people of Cameroon
Some people call it Ilimba (Tanzanians)
Some others call it, I think that there are some people who
call it Marimba
But I'm sure of mbira, ilimba and kalimba
when you look to see how they play their ubo (ubo-aka), it
is unique
It is not the same way that we arrange the metal prongs of
our own ubo-aka that the Zimbabweans arrange theirs
What we call tuning.
Their tuning system is unique from ours
The way we tune ours is unique, the way they tune theirs
is unique
That is why it is confusing to generalize all as Thumb
Piano
When you say Thumb Piano, which of them are you
referring to
Is it the mbira, or ubo-aka or ilimba or kalimba?
These are different names they are called
You can also find this (ubo-aka) in Ikwere
It is popular there
They call it Eri Obo
In ikwere, the place that is formerly Igweocha, now Port
Harcourt,
It is a common practice to play it (ubo-aka/Obo)
Jimi Conta, eee, Jimi Conta is one of the popular
performers of the Eri Obo
Obo (ubo) they call the music Eri Obo
Their tuning system is also different from ubo-aka of
Enugu, Anambra and Imo people
Tell me how it is only the Igbo that play this ubo-aka

The Igbo people, first of all, it is called ubo-aka
Aka means someone's hand,
Look at my hand, look well at my hand,
Ubo means something that is plucked
The Igbo has ubo-akwara
Ubo that is made from the strings of palm tree
That one has completely gone extinct

Igbo

O teene m chọbara ya na achọ onye ga-egosi m ka ọ dị
Maka na afubeghị m k'ọ si ada na ntị
M nụ ka o si ada na ntị, egosi m ka ọ dị, ọ ga-adaba
Egosi m ka ọ dị, o ga-adaba
Nke ahu bụ ubọ-akwara
Ubọ bụ ihe a na-akpọ akpọ
Ọ bụrụ na ọ bughị ndị Igbo nwe ya ọ gaghị aza afa ahu na mbụ
Nke mbu bụ na ọ ubọaka,
Gosi na o ihe ndị Igbo were tinye be ha
Were ya na-agwa onwe ha okwu
Were ya na-anọrị ọnọdụ
Were ya na-atughari uche
Ọ bụ ndị Igbo nwe ubọaka
Carter-Ényì: E tu a nunwa i siri mata maka ubọaka a nunwa,
O nwere ihe gosiri gị e tu ndị Igbo si wee nwekọrịta ya,
With ndị ọzọ nọ n'Áfrika?
Kedụ ife o jiri bụrụ sọsọ ndị Igbo na ndị gbasara ụmụ afo
Igbo dị ka ndị a ị kpọrọ afa kita n'Íkwere,
Ha bụkwa ndị Igbo bụ ndị na akpọ ihe a
Ndị Yoruba anaghị akpọ ya?
Ndị awusa anaghị akpọ ya?
Ha nwekwe nke ha?
But ka m gwara gị gwa m ndị ọzọ na-akpọ ya,
Ị sị na ọ bụ ndị nọcha outside Nigeria
So, o nwe ihe i mutara. . . ?
O nwe ihe ọ bụ kọnetiri anyị na ndị ahu?
Eze: Haaa Ndị Yoruba nwekwara Agidibo, ha nwere Agidibo
Ee, ọ dị n'ụdị nke ya
Ọ bụkwa ofu ihe a e tu ndị Zimbabwe si nwe nke ha a na-akpọ mbira
Na Shona, na Zimbabwe, Mbira ka a na-akpọ ya
Na Yoruba, Agidigbo
Ndị be anyị nwe ya
Nke bụ eziokwu bụ na ndị gbo e jeka ije
Ndị oji ndi gbo, echiche ha tọrọ atọ
Anyị rulu ha ana.
Akọ na uche akọrọ ha.
Ọ na a bụ ha na-eje njem,
Ọ dị m ka ọ site na njem
Ka ihe a si gazuo Áfrika
Maka ndị nke wete nke ha
Ọ dị n'ụdị ha

English

For long, I have been looking for it, looking for one who will show me how it appears
Because I have not come to know how it sounds
Once I hear how it sounds with my ears, if I am shown how it is, it will be great
If I am shown how it is, it will be great
That one is called ubo-akwara
Ubo is something that is plucked
If it did not originate from the Igbo people, it would not have that name
First thing is that it is ubo-aka
To show that it something the Igbo have put in land
And they contemplate life in conversations with it
They use it for social purposes of relaxation
They meditate with it
It is the Igbo that owns ubo-aka
Carter-Ényì: From the way you have come to know this ubo-aka,
Is there anything that shows you how the Igbo people own it together, with other people in Africa?
Why is it that it is the Igbo people and those connected to the Igbo, just like those you mentioned now who are from Íkwere,
Who are also Igbo and also play this ubo
Does the Yoruba people not play it?
Does the Hausa people not play it?
Do they have their own?
But, when I asked you to tell me other people who play it, You mentioned those who are outside Nigeria
So, have you learnt anything about. . . ?
Is there any connection between us and those people (outside Nigeria)?
Eze: The Yoruba people have Agidibo, they have agidibo
Eh, it is in its own unique style
They are all the same type of instrument, the Zimbabweans call their own mbira
In Shona, in Zimbabwe they call it mbira
Yorubas call it Agidigbo
Our people also have it
The truth is that our ancestors traveled a lot
Our ancestors possessed enduring thoughts
They were down to earth.
They do not lack wisdom.
It happened that when they travel,
It seems to me that it is through traveling,
That this music spread through Africa.
Because when each community, collects their own
It is in their own unique style

Igbo

Ha agaghị eje wete ya otu ahu, wenata ya, ọ di.

Mana ihe mu a maa kowazi bu,

Ndị si na aka ndị we mụtụ.

Mana nke dolu anya

Bụ na o site na njem

Ka ihe a si gbasaa

Maka ị checkie, ị nee anya,

Ofu ihe a ka ọ bụ.

Ị nee anya, ofu ihe a ka ọ bu.

Ndị Igbo, munwa onwe m ji ụbọ a, akpakọ, ee

Mu onwem, mụ na ndị mmụọ ji ụbọ akpa.

Ị nekwa, ifu na ọ bụ ofu ihe a a na-eme na Shona, na Zimbabwe.

Ọ di m ka ọ bụ njem.

Ndị be anyị mgbe ahu, ndị gboo awughọ

Ha jee njem, ha eje kọpilụ ka ndị si eme, tọ na ya

Ọ ha jee, ha amụta, nọta n'ụnọ,

Tọ ntọ ala ya e me

Ka ihe aha dimma ha muta, bulụ nke ha, kpom kwem.

Ọ bụ ya ka ha jiri were ụbọaka, ọ bulụ nke Igbo.

Ị nekwa ya anya, ifu ihe di iche.

Ọ nwe akụkọ akọrọ m n'obodo anyi,

Na eji ya (ụbọaka) eduje ndị. . .

Anụtachaa nwanyị, ị bịa n'Umichu nụọ nwanyị

Ndị Ibughubu Umuchu ka ha si na-akpọ ya rinne mgbanwu.

Ị bịa n'umuchu nụọ nwanyị,

Abani mgbọsi ahu, makana ka mkpọtụ we benata,

Ka sound ya we na agami kwu agami,

Ụbọ ka ha ye-eji kpọlụ nwoke ahu bia nta nwanyị na ndi ọgọ.

Kpoghalia be ndị nwanyị ahu,

Egosi cha ha, ha a naa, mgbọsi n'esote ya.

Ihe ihe a pụtara bu; ọ di ụzọ ihe n'abu,

Ị jekata ije, pụtara ihe dika n'Uga, tọ,

Chi jinari gi,

Ị jisizie ike rute n'Umuchu,

Ị malugo be ndị ọgọ gi, ebe i ya-eje zuo ike.

Ị ba be ofu onye.

Ifugo ya; hotel, hospitality.

Ọ di rii na ani Igbo.

English

They do not bring it back the way it is in another place, to make it available

But what I cannot explain is,

Who learnt from the other

But what is clear enough,

Is that it is through traveling.

That this knowledge spread.

Because when you think about it,

It is the same thing.

If you observe, it is the same thing.

Igbo people, I also, holding the ubo,

I myself, I communicate with the spirits through ụbọ (ụbọaka)

If you observe, it's the same thing the Shona people of Zimbabwe do.

It seems to me like it's through traveling.

Our people then, our ancestors do not

Travel to copy the way of life of other people and stick to it.

The case is that when they travel, they learn, come back home,

Create structures that will make

What they learnt to be good, to become theirs specifically.

This is why they have adapted the ụbọ-aka to be for the Igbo

If you observe, you will see the uniqueness.

There is a story told in my hometown

That it is used to accompany. . .

After the wedding ceremony, if you come to Umuchu to marry a woman

It is said the Ibughubu people of Umuchu played the instrument a lot then

If you come to Umuchu to marry,

The night after the marriage, for the noise to be less

So that the sound will be audible and travel far

They use the ụbọ-aka to accompany the groom and in-laws to the wedding

Around the house of the bride's relatives,

After showing them around, they leave the next day.

What this practice means is; it means two things,

When you are traveling and you come to a place like Uga⁽⁴⁾

And the night has come upon you,

Once you manage to get to Umuchu⁽⁵⁾

You already know the house of your in-laws where you can go and rest.

You just enter the house of one of them

You see it; hotel, hospitality

It has always been natural to the Igbo

Igbo

Ọ ka ndị mbụ si debe ndụ.
Ụbọaka a bụ ihe a na-akpọ, na-agụ egwu,

Wee na agaghari ụdị agaghari a.
Ndị b'anyi na-abụ ha puo mgbe ahu,
Ha mụta ihe, ha nọta, e jiri ya na-ahazi ndụ.

Kita dizi m ka ọ . . . anyi puo,
Anyi atunata ihe ahu atunata otu ahu ọ dị.

A nadighi eche ya n'echiche.
Atu nata ya, a fanye ya na ndụ anyi,
Ọ mairi fanye onwe ya.
Ọ dikwa m ka o so n'ihe na-etisa obodo.

Carter-Ényì: Afuru m ka I na hazi ihe a,
Gwam e tu ndị Igbo si a hazi nke ha.
Eze: Mmm, Onye mee ka ụbọ a gazuo,
Igbo niile, n'ụwa niile,
Bukari Obiligbo.
Obiligbo agbaka mbọ.
Ezigbo Obiligbo, onye Nteje.
Ọ na-abụ, ị gee egwu ya,
I ya-anụ ihe, I nụ ka ọ si hazi ya
M kpọ egwu ya, kpọtaya,
M wee kpọzie nhazia
Site na, nke mbụ, igwe nke mbụ, ruo n'igwe nke ikpeazu.
(Proceeds to pluck the ụbọaka; lowest pitch first, then the highest pitch)
Mana m ga-akpọgodu k'egwu Obiligbo na-adi.
M nwete ya, m ma na m hazite ya.

Ọ ka e si ahazi ihe gbo
Ị hazie ya, ọ bụlu n'ichọ iji ya kwuo okwu,

Ị hazicha ya, ị kwuonu okwu ahu
Ihe ị kwuru dabaa, ị ma na ị hazitego ya.

(O na-akpọ egwu eji mara Ezeigbo Obiligbo na ụbọaka)

O tua ka egwu Obiligbo na-adịba.
Ị nezie anya, ị fụ na ụbọ a, ihe ọ ga enye gi bụ. . . .
(Scale ascending and descending)
(Continues playing the Ezeigbo Obiligbo ụbọaka standard)

O tu a ka ndị Igbo si hazi ya.
Mana emeketezi,
Mụ na enyi m nwoke, Emmanuel Nwankwo,
Wee fụkwa na, e nwekwa ike

English

This is how the ancestors planned life
ubọ-aka is the musical instrument that is played, while
people sing
While the in-laws are shown the bride's relatives
When our ancestors travel in the olden days
When they learn something, they return, and employ that
thing to make life better
Now it seems to me that. . . when we travel,
We import things the way they are from the place we have
traveled to
No one hardly applies thought to it
When we import it back, we impose it on our lives
And it ends up imposing itself
I feel it is one of the things that disintegrates the (Igbo)
society.
Carter-Ényì: I saw you tuning the instrument.
Tell me how the Igbos tune their ụbọaka.
Eze: Mmm, the person who made the ụbọ popular
Across the Igbo land and the world,
Is mostly Obiligbo
Obiligbo did a lot
Ezigbo Obiligbo. From Nteje.
If you listen to his music,
You would hear something, how he tunes it (ubọ-aka).
When I play his music, and play it well,
I will now play the scale
From the first, the first prong, to the last prong.
(Proceeds to pluck the ụbọaka; lowest pitch first, then the highest pitch)
But first of all, I will play Obiligbo's music the way it is.
When I get the music, I will know that the tuning is
correct.
That is how tuning is done in the olden days.
When you tune it, if you want to do speech surrogacy with
it,
After tuning it, you use it to say what you want to say
If what you say sounds correct, then you know that the
tuning is correct.
(He plays Ezeigbo Obiligbo's musical standard on the
ụbọaka)
That is how Obiligbo's music normally is.
When you listen, you will notice that the ubo gives you. . .
(Scale ascending and descending)
(Continues playing the Ezeigbo Obiligbo ubọ-aka
standard)
That is how the Igbos do it.
But after some time,
My friend, Emmanuel Nwankwo and I,
Noticed that, it is possible

Igbo

Agbakwunye ihe n'enu ya.
Nke ndi Igbo gboo, anaghi adi ota a.
Mana a si ndi Igbo, ndi Igbo aburọ ndi tochago nu,

Ndi Igbo bu ndi ka n'eto eto
Ndi nwere akọ n'uche
Ndi na-etinye onwe ha, tinyin uche ha n'olu

Na-eme ka ihe onye jekwudo,
Ihe Agburu obuna jekwudo
Eme ya, ọ ka mma,
O wee na-aga.
E jehi m asi, na nke a awuhọ nke ndi Igbo.
Maka ọtutụ ụmụ Igbo akpọwago ya.
Mụnwa, na-eme ya.
Ọ bụ mụ na enyi m nwoke, Emmanuel Nwankwo
Bido, tinyin nke a;
Tinyin ya, anyi wee na-akpọ ya.
(Plays the two octave ubọaka)
Ngwa nee ka anyi si hazi nke a.
(Plays the scale of the two octave ubọ-aka, ascending and descending)
(Continues playing tunes on the two octave ubọ-aka)
Mgbe ụfọdụ, ọ na-enye m ohere ikpọ ya, di ka mụnwa na-akpọ piano.
Di ka m a na, e, e, a na, a na. . .
Egwu mụ ete aka, nwee nkeji di iche iche
Doo anya, tọ ụtọ.
(Plays the two octave ubọ-aka)
Ihea bu egwu (mmonwu) anyi na agu n'umuazi,

"M ma emekwa ebere"
"Ebere, ebere"
"M ma emekwa ebere"
Carter-Ényì: ọ otogbuo onwe ya, Daalụ (laughter)
Ajụjụ ọzọ m ga-ajụ gi bụ,
Ọ kwa i ma ndi Gambia,
E tu ahu ha si we nwee 'Kora',
Ọbuhọ mmadụ nile na-akpọ ya.
Ọ bụ ezinaulọ and ndi mụtalụ ha,
Ndi so ha, bụ ndi nwe ike ikpọ ya.
Carter-Ényì: ọ ofu ife, n'ihe gbasalu ụbọaka,
Ka ọ di iche?
Eze: Mmm, ọ bụcharo ofu ihe.
Mana ọ nwekwa ihe yitelu ya.
I nee anya,
Kora ndi Gambia,
Ihe ha na-akpọ onwe ha bụ 'Jali'

English

To add some prongs on top.
This was not the Igbo Ubo-aka was in the olden days
But when you talk about Igbo, the Igbo people are not done with progress,

The Igbo people are still progressing
They are a people with deep thoughts
They are a people who apply themselves and their thoughts to work

Ensuring that the practices anybody encounters
The practices each generation encounters
Is enhanced to be better,
Therefore, the growth continues.
I would not say that this one is not the Igbo ubọ-aka.
Because some Igbo people are playing it already.
I perform with it
It is I and my friend, Emmanuel Nwankwo
That started putting the additional prongs;
We fix it, we then play it
(Plays the two octave ubọaka)
Okay, now observe how we tuned it.
(Plays the scale of the two octave ubọ-aka, ascending and descending)
(Continues playing tunes on the two octave ubọ-aka)
Often, it allows me to play it like the piano.

Just like I am, eh, eh, I am, I am. . .
My songs become longer, and have different sections
Become clearer and sweet.
(Plays the two octave ubọ-aka)
This is a (masquerade) folk song we sang when I was a child,
"I will not have mercy"
"Mercy, mercy,"
"I will not have mercy"
Carter-Ényì: It is really sweet
Another question I would ask you is,
You are aware of the people of Gambia,
How they have the kora,
It is not everyone (in Gambia) that plays it.
It is only specific families and the parents in such families
And their apprentices that can play it
Carter-Ényì: Is it the same thing for the ubọ-aka,
Or is it different?
Eze: Mmm, It's not exactly the same thing.
But there are similarities.
When you look into it,
The kora of Gambia,
What they call those who play it is 'Jali'

Igbo

Ndị na-akpọ ya, Jali; Minstrels.
So, and ha na-akọwa na, o nwelu ihe dị iche
Minstrels na musician.
Na Gambia ị bụ a Minstrel,
Dị ka ihe omimi
Ọ dị ka onye. . . onye ma akwụkwọ rinne.
Maka ọ ha ka a na-akuziri k'obodo si bido;

“Kee onye, onye chiri mbu?”
“Onye chiri, onye chiri ka a chichalu?”
Ihe njiile gbasara obodo aha,
A na-akwuzilie. . . a na-akuzilu ya ụmụ ụmụ n'egwu.
Ya wụ ihe yara ahụ.
Ọ dị ọnọdụ ka, na Jali na Gambia dika dictionary.
Ọ dị ka library.
Ị kpaghaa ya na music, ọ gụsisiba.

So, ihe dị na ya bụ,
N'ala Igbo, nke dị be anyị yitelu ya bụ,
Onye na akpọ ụbọ,
Ụmụ ihe njiile a na dīkwanụ n'ọbara.
Onye na akpọ ụbọ mụta nwa,
Ndụ o biri,
Ka o si che echiche,
Ka o si meso mmadụ omume,
Udị ọru ọ nọ na-arụ,
Udị egwu ọ nọ na-ege,
Ọ ya aba nwa ya n'ọbara.
Ọ ihe a na-akpọ DNA.
So, ọ dị nwa ya n'ahu, karia ka ọ dị nwa onye ọzọ.

Nwa ya aha na-etokwa, jekwude ya ka ọ na-eme ihe a,
Ọ na-ene, maka asi nne ewu na-ata agba ya,

Nwa ya a na-ene ya anya n'ọnu, na-amụta.
Ọ nwerọ ụlọ akwụkwọ a na-akụ
Kpọm kpọm kpọm kpọm,
Bịa mụta ụbọ,
Bịa mụta ọja,
Bịa mụta ufie.
Ọ ị nọlụ n'obodo,
Ị na-amụta ya.
Nwatakiri, nna ya na-akpọ ụbọ,
Ka nwere ohere ị muta ya karia
Nwatakiri nna ya anaghi akpọ ụbọ.
Mana ọ dichaghọ otu aha nke ndị Gambia di.
Nke wụ na ị ga-amacha akụkọ njiile aha

English

Those who play it, the Jali; Minstrels (Griots)
So, and they are show that there is a difference
Between minstrels (griots) and a musician.
To be a minstrel (griot) in Gambia,
Is a deep thing
It is like a person with great intellect
Because it is the minstrel (griot) who knows the history of
the community.
“Who ruled the community first?”
“Who ruled next?”
The entire history of that community,
They teach this history to generations in songs.
It's not a common practice.
The 'Jali' of Gambia are like a dictionary.
He/she is like a library.
Once they are asked to perform music, they render
historical accounts.
So, the thing about it is,
What resembles it in the Igbo land is,
A person who plays the ubo,
Things like this are mostly in the bloodline.
Once a person who plays the ubo has a child,
The life he lived,
How he thinks,
How he treats his fellow human beings,
The kind of work he does,
The kind of music he listens to,
Will be in that child's blood.
That is what is called DNA.
So, it becomes a part of his child more than the child of
another person
When the child grows and encounter him in performances,
He will be observing, because our people say: When the
mother goat is chewing,
The kid goat watches her mouth, and learns.
There is no school where one knocks
“Kpọm kpọm kpọm kpọm kpọm” (knocking sound)
Come and learn the ụbọ,
Come and learn the ọja,
Come and learn the ufie.
The point is, when you are in the community,
You learn.
A child whose father plays the ụbọ,
Has the chance to learn more than
The child whose father does not play the ụbọ.
But the family system is not exactly like that of Gambia.
Where you would be formally “trained” in all their history
and stories.

Igbo

Nke ndị Gambia dị rii ka,
Otua ka omenala ha dị.
Nke anyị adịchaghị out a.
Maka mgbe Obiligbo na ahanye Ajani nwa ya egwu,

Mgbe Obiligbo na-ahanye Ajani nwa ya egwu
O nwekwa ebe ọ bịa si,
'Onye emekwana ka Obiligbo n'egwu'.
Ndị Igbo, ị ma,
A bịa na ihe gbasara ndọrọ ndọrọ ọchịchị,
Anyị dị, Republican.
Onye owuna, anyị nwere ofu obi,
Mana onye ọbuna wụ onye Igbo nwe obi nke ya.
Obiligbo wee dọ aka na-nti mgbe ahu si,
'Onye emekwana ka obiligbo n'egwu.'
Nya pụta, onye mụta ụbọ a,
Ya mụta ya n'udi nke ya, kpọba.
So, ọ bụchaghọ ofu ihe na kora ndị Gambia.
Carter-Ényị: Ihe ọzọ m chọrọ ị mata bụ,
Kedụ ụdị n'ụdị egwu e nwelu ike ịji,
Ụbọaka a nūnwa kpọ?
E nwelu ike ịji ya kpọ egwu ndị oyibo?
Eze: Ihe nīlẹ dī n'echiche.
Ebe uche gī rudebe,
Ka I ga-erudebe.
A ga-ejinwụ ya kpọ egwu oyibo.
E mego m ya rinne.
Ị je na Instagram mụ,
I ga-afu ebe m ji ya kpọ,
Egwu Bob Dylan;
'Blowing in the wind.'
A ga-ejikwa ya kpọ,
Ma egwu ndị Igbo eji ekpe ekpere.
Ma ihe anyị na-akpọ gospel music.
M'egwu ana agụ n'ụnọ ụka.
Egwu dī iche iche.
E mechago m ya.
M'egwu choir, a ga-ejinwụ ya.
Onye chọ kita, o tinye ụbọ na choir ya.
Ọ na echiche.
O nwerọ ebe ede na anaghị etinye ya na ya.

Ị che ya, si ka e tinye ya, e tinye ya,
ọ daba, ọ mebe.
Ọ tọba ndị mmadụ ụtọ, ọ gbasa siba ebe nīlẹ.

English

For the people of Gambia,
That is how their tradition is.
Ours is not exactly the same.
Because when Obiligbo was passing on his music to his son
Ajani,
When Obiligbo was passing on his music to his son Ajani,
There is a place he said,
Let no one do like Obiligbo in his music,
For the Igbo, you are aware that,
When it comes to politics for instance,
Our system of government is Republican.
Everyone, we all have one heart,
But everyone who is Igbo also has their own unique nature.
Obiligbo now made it clear in his music, saying,
'Let no one do like Obiligbo in music.'
What it means is that, when a person learns the ụbọ,
He learns it in his own style and performs it.
So, it is not exactly the same with the kora in Gambia.
Something else I would like to know is,
What kind of songs can you
Play with the ụbọaka?
Can it be used to play non-African songs?
Eze: Everything is in the mind.
Where one's mind can extend to
That is the limit of what one can do.
You can use it to play non-African songs.
I have done it so many times.
If you go to my Instagram page,
You will see where I used it to play,
A Bob Dylan song;
'Blowing in the wind.'
It can also be used to play,
Even songs the Igbo use to worship in Christian churches
Including what we call gospel music.
Indeed, songs that are performed in the churches.
Different songs.
I have done all these
It can also be used in choral music.
If a person desires, he can use the ụbọ in his choir.
It is in the mind.
It is not written anywhere that you cannot apply it there
(the ụbọ)
If you think creatively about how to use it, you apply it,
if it makes sense, then that is it.
When people like it, then it becomes popular.

Additional videos provided by Gerald Eze (the interview participant):

1. Ubo-aka and Music Education

https://youtu.be/JeV6FOmAo5I?si=Q_u4kTQs-QaRb2kG

This is a short documentary on Ichoku Academy, showing the study of ubo-aka and various Igbo musical instruments. This documentary also features commentaries by Dr. May-Blossom Brown, who, as cited in the interview, provided her house for the training of children on ubo-aka music in an Igbo town, Umuoji, Idemili North Local Government Area, Anambra State. The rehearsals and performances shown in the documentary were being held at the Ichoku Academy Center and Obalende Restaurant, both in Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria.

2. Ubo-aka in Choral Music

https://youtu.be/oBGKjndXK0w?si=2FLUtGGwctqi0_w1

Gerald Eze performing “Abuoma 6: Ukwe Ndi Nsogbu Biara” (popularly known as Yahweh Gi Ejine Iwe), a choral music composed by Rev. Fr. Raymond Arazu (PhD).

Notes drawn from the YouTube link to Gerald Eze’s channel:

Fr. Arazu played a huge role in developing indigenous Igbo liturgical music for the Catholic Church. He translated the psalms to Igbo and used the Ubo-aka to compose original tunes for the psalms. He died on 26 December, 2021. This performance was done by his graveside on the 26th of January 2022. Here is the Ubo-aka playing his Abu. Before his death, I gifted him one ubo-aka after performing in his parish severally with the ubo-aka. He was trying to play this particular chant with the ubo-aka and it took him some time but he eventually got it. I played it for him with different variations and he said to me: “you are the master.” Fr. Arazu is late but his legacies live on.

3. Cultural Fusions of the ubo-aka

<https://youtu.be/8649lGvRd54?si=Zo-Bu95EQ9-LdSWA>

Gerald Eze and Daniel Flori on ubo-aka and Guitar Fusion performance of an Igbo folk song originally composed by Mike Ejeagha.

<https://youtu.be/-7n-r9VSTpo?si=Aj-pKyDv1W4ij4BM>

Gerald Eze and Claire Merlet on the ubo-aka and Violin playing an Igbo Choral music of the Catholic Church, composed by Rev. Fr. Udoka Chinedu Obieri at the Art Omi music residency, New York, United States of America.

4. Ubo-aka music played to Western popular music

<https://youtu.be/WsqbbOUJCJY?si=rzNmVAIx-I3acgI4>

Gerald Eze playing “Despacito” originally by Luis Fonsi, and popularized by Justin Bieber.

<https://youtu.be/WHYE11Lv2g0?si=DBWgyqDfaygDIjuQ>

Ubo-aka accompaniment of Shape of You by Ed Sheeran, performed by Gerald Eze (ubo-aka) and Benita Amaluwa (voice).

5. Ubo-aka played to an Igbo Christian Music

<https://youtu.be/3h6OKskievM?si=mrg7eUuBMEFTnzxT>

Gerald Eze plays the one octave ubo-aka to Sir. Sam Ojukwu’s Jesus Aha na-aso m Uso.

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Footnotes

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[Return to text](#)

1. All of the video clips from the session are available in a single playlist at [this YouTube link](#), and also listed in the works cited as Carter-Ényi 2021.

[Return to text](#)

2. Solfa is the term used in Nigeria, as in "Tonic Sol-Fa" which is what the missionaries called it.

[Return to text](#)

3. In Idemmili North Local Government, Anambra State.

[Return to text](#)

4. a town in Aguata Local Government Area of Anambra State.

[Return to text](#)

5. a neighboring town to Uga.

[Return to text](#)

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