



Epistemics of African Music Performance: Navigating Knowledge, Tradition, and the Digital Frontier

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Article History

Received: 2025-02-29

Revised: 2025-06-15

Accepted: 2025-06-22

Published: 2025-06-24

Keywords

Artificial Intelligence

Cultural Integrity

Epistemology

Ethics

How to cite:

Kirui, A. K., Wanyama, M. N., & Mapaya, M. G. (2025). Epistemics of African Music Performance: Navigating Knowledge, Tradition, and the Digital Frontier. *African Musicology Online*, 14(2), 14-24.

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Abstract

African music traditions are profound epistemic systems, embodying knowledge, history, and spirituality. This paper explores the rich epistemologies inherent in these traditions and examines the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in their study and preservation. It critiques the pervasive epistemic bias in current AI technologies, advocating for culturally attuned systems developed through ethical community engagement, co-design, and culturally informed data collection. The paper presents case studies that illustrate how AI, when developed with bias mitigation strategies, can provide insightful analysis and support for diverse musical forms. Furthermore, it addresses the ethical considerations surrounding data sovereignty, informed consent, and equitable benefit sharing. Finally, the paper envisions the future of African music epistemology in the digital age, highlighting both the potential for AI to enrich musical landscapes and the critical challenges posed by digital divides, algorithmic bias, and cultural exploitation. The call is for an African-led approach to AI development that champions innovation, upholds cultural integrity, and ensures epistemic justice.

Introduction

In many African societies, music is not merely an aesthetic artefact but a part and parcel of African life, deeply rooted in social structures, spiritual beliefs, historical consciousness, and philosophical underpinnings. The study of African music performance as an epistemic system—a system of knowledge—necessitates a departure from purely Eurocentric analytical frameworks. This requires in-depth research on African epistemologies, which are known to be diverse, though they possess shared foundational principles that shape how knowledge is construed, validated, and transmitted. Several African scholars support this understanding through their literary works. Their collective work defines, analyses, and champions African musical epistemologies while challenging the Eurocentric perspectives that historically marginalised, misrepresented and discriminated against these indigenous knowledge systems. Their works will be synthesised in detail in this study.

Colonial legacies and Western frameworks have historically shaped African music, often misrepresenting its inherent knowledge and making it vulnerable. This study advocates for a decolonial imperative: reclaiming African epistemic systems and promoting more equitable and authentic understandings. Central to this is the proposed deployment of decentralised AI, which, unlike previous centralised innovations, could offer a more transformative approach to studying complex African music. The fact that AI can be trained to respond to the local African knowledge systems means that AI can re-evaluate past research conducted within Western paradigms while



potentially developing new, culturally sensitive analytical methods capable of addressing the complexities of African music.

Defining African Epistemology

African epistemologies, in their varied continental expressions, inherently emphasise the “cultural embeddedness of knowledge” (Jimoh & Thomas, 2015). It is understood as how “the African conceptualises, interprets and apprehends reality within the context of African cultural or collective experience” (Udefi 2014, p. 108). This perspective often stands in contrast to and challenges the historically asserted Western supremacy reasoning, particularly as it was imposed on Africans during the colonial era. According to Udefi (as cited in Akanmidu, 2005), the proponents of African epistemology aim to direct scholarly attention towards these cultural underpinnings. This perspective holds considerable significance. As noted by scholars such as Senghor, Anyanwu, and Onyewuenyi (1984), a unique African mode of perception and response to the world exists, forming the foundational structure of African epistemology (Akanmidu, 2005).

African epistemologies often adopt a holistic view of reality, where the spiritual and material worlds are interconnected (Akanmidu, 2005). This perspective challenges Western methodologies, acknowledging more than what is readily accessible. Asante outlines key elements, such as “poly-consciousness,” “inclusiveness,” and “personalism,” which shape the African understanding of reality and influence cognitive claims, including those expressed in music (Jimoh, 2017). Reality is therefore seen as a unified system where personalism links spirit and matter tangibly (Akanmidu, 2005). This holistic view means African musical arts are grounded in “humanity” and societal well-being (Nzewi, 2024). Consequently, as musical knowledge is tied to the cultural, spiritual, and social fabric, performance becomes a site of knowing, reflecting a specific African worldview (Asante, cited in Akanmidu, 2005; Jimoh, 2017). Traditional African musical instruments are not mere tools for performance but conduits of spiritual presence, challenging Western ideologies (Asante, 2000). African epistemologies require independent interrogation, free from Eurocentric perspectives, and necessitate the inclusion of elements such as spirituality, culture, and social materialities.

Orality as a primary epistemic mode and validation

Oral tradition is the pillar of indigenous knowledge systems in African societies, serving as the “backbone of African communities” and, more importantly, the “primary vessel of historical knowledge” (Izu, 2024). Music, with its instrumental techniques and playing styles, encompasses complex rhythms, melodic contours, and entire vocal repertoires, predominantly transmitted through oral and aural means. This transmission occurred through dynamic spoken words, songs, rhythms, and performances. In an African setting, music is more of a lifestyle, and with the seamless transfer of knowledge integrated into the flow of daily life, social gatherings, festivals, and ceremonies, effectively making “the community the school”. This responsibility was entrusted to the elders, who, through experience, passed down knowledge through primarily oral traditions. Kwabena Nketia, the Ghanaian musicologist, consistently emphasised that African music is a living art form that must be actively practised and studied (Nketia, 1986). Madimabe Geoff Mapaya’s research discussed the “Aura-Oral learning methods” as a traditional African approach (Mapaya, 2014). He emphasises immersive, communal music learning. This understanding of embodied and oral transmission is supported by Amoaku’s work, which informed the adaptation of the Orff Schulwerk method for teaching music to African children, re-emphasising the core traditional African principles of rhythm, movement, and improvisation that are inherent to oral and embodied learning (Amoaku, 1990).

Musical instruments can also be viewed as repositories of historical and emotional content. This notion firmly grounded African musical traditions in the affective and spiritual domains, not solely the cognitive (Nzewi & Nzewi, 2007). This perspective challenges conventional Western distinctions



between the mind and body, as well as between subjective and objective knowledge. In numerous African musical epistemologies, knowledge is not abstract data but is embodied, enacted, and experienced (Mapaya, 2014). The body of the musician, the instrument, and the performative act are sites of knowledge, residence and realisation. The instrument, as the case of the Bara drum illustrates, is an instance of extended cognition in which memory is shared across the musician, the materiality of the instrument, and performance practice. This has implications for how we perceive musical knowledge is encoded, recalled, and transmitted. Music can be divested of its performative context, or the instrument of the musician, but possibly at the expense of dis-aggregating integral epistemic components.

In African musical culture, the validation of knowledge is based on social networks, and elders and master musicians are among the significant custodians (Nketia, 1974). Elders, matured by age and experience, transmit communal wisdom, enabling "epistemic deference," where the knowledge of an individual gives way to the perception of such known individuals (Mapaya, 2014; Nketia, 1974). This stands in contrast to Western individualistic ideologies. Master musicians, like master drummers, attain their position through long, rigorous apprenticeships spanning decades, becoming living repositories of musical and cultural traditions (Boyer-Dry, 2008). Examples such as the Kenyan Nyatiti musicians, who learn by laborious imitation of what they observe and hear from their masters (Igbowa, 2005), or the Ghanaian Ewe, whose Agbekor drumming and dance is transmitted orally by apprenticeship and direct observation of master drummers by younger musicians (Agawu, 1995), demonstrate the principle. Their authority is validated by peers and by their ability to lead and to teach. Learning is a process that emphasises practical demonstration, direct observation, and imitation, in which apprentices learn large repertoires through close interaction with masters. This system of "epistemic deference" is not blind obedience but reflects a sophisticated trust in demonstrated expertise. Knowledge verification is performative: "knowing" is shown in "doing," through effective, meaningful performance, answerable to community aesthetics and socio-cultural functions, attesting mastery (Grushka, 2009). This maintains the functional foundation of musical knowledge, apart from theoretical, text-based systems of verification.

Nketia's pioneering work, for instance, *The Music of Africa*, provided a general overview of comprehending traditions in the continent, with African music presented as a vibrant, dynamic art form that is essential to national identity. His book focused on broad overviews, and his approach to conservation varied with that of Akin Euba, who combined Yoruba traditions and classical music to usher in "intercultural musicology." This synthesis and discourse gave impetus to Euba's promotion of cross-cultural exchange and creative development beyond preservation. Together, their work stands in contrast to colonial discourse, upholding the intrinsic value and systematic nature of African music systems from an insider's perspective. This two-sidedness – struggling to retain tradition while enabling open-world interaction – is a ubiquitous dialectic within African musicology, as these scholars mediate the dynamic tension between profound, long-standing tradition and working within the exigencies of globalisation and evolving practice. Their research demands the precedence of African music as a vital cultural and political force that must be reverently archived and dynamically reinterpreted for current life. Nketia's interest in national identity also relates music to domains of society and politics, highlighting its function as something beyond mere entertainment. Euba's (1996) syncretism of styles also serves to support the necessity of constantly reacting to and incorporating external influences while remaining faithful to African cultural identity. Their combined work will justify a balanced view, acknowledging that the power of African music is in its ability to develop and evolve, yet maintain its inner strength.



Kofi Agawu's landmark work centres on analytical issues in West African music, postcolonial theory, and the challenge of representing African music inclusively. His book, *The African Imagination in Music*, explores traditions, structural elements, and performance mediums (rhythm, melody, form, and harmony), providing a necessary introduction to the main aspects of African music. Agawu's (1992) earlier work, *Representing African Music*, rigorously examines how, over time, discourses over African music have been built on "difference" and "othering," often resulting from colonial power ideologies rather than music fact. He contended the significance of the "oral archive," pointing out pedagogical patterns, repertoires, and critical discourses retained in memory and actualised in performance, pleading for greater self-consciousness about the limitations of interpreting African music. Agawu also attempts a "rational complexity" approach to African rhythm, rebutting simplistic assumptions that it is intuitive. Anku (2000) developed a new theory that utilises mathematical set theory to analytically deconstruct African rhythm, dissecting music into "sets" of percussive notes rather than Western discrete notes. Anku's theory incorporates the "regulative time point" and "performance maps," thereby creating an analytically systematic system that is rooted in African musical thought. These approaches represent a sophisticated indigenous theorisation that exists independently of Western music theory, upholding the epistemological independence of African music and resisting conventional assessment criteria.

Achieng'Akuno (2019) critiques the inadequacy of Western music theories in interpreting music in African traditional societies, arguing that they fail to understand music education in Kenya. One of the key concepts in her work is the "digilogue zone," denoting the exchange between indigenous Kenyan technology and its electronic equivalents in music education at the tertiary level. Akuno is a believer in culturally attuned music education that engages with these technological realities, optimising performance and utilisation of resources while grounding learners in their heritage. Amoaku (1982) was trained in music pedagogy and practice, with a specialisation in using the Orff Schulwerk method for teaching African children, incorporating African songs and rhythms, and emphasising the African traditional connection between rhythm, movement, and improvisation. Mapaya (2014) employs Afrocentric paradigms to research the indigenous knowledge systems of music, specifically the *mmino wa setšo*, among the *Bahananwa* people. His exploration of the "Aural-Oral learning methods" has overseen curriculum reforms at the University of Venda. Nzewi (2014) offers a fierce critique of the coloniality of music education in Africa and proposes the epistemological independence of African traditional music, encompassing all theoretical content, philosophy, and practical principles necessary for modern-day education. Nzewi condemns the "mental dependency syndrome" where Northern hemispheric paradigms dominate, rendering indigenous epistemology "virtually invisible."

Avorgbedor (1994) works on Anlo-Ewe music, examining performances as a form of literary production and their social significance. He investigates the conventions of aesthetic interaction between music and the visual arts, as well as the influence of globalisation on the culture of performance. His ethnographic fieldwork in detail reveals how music is deeply integrated into social life and language to fulfil specific epistemic roles. These scholars demonstrate that music cannot be examined independently of its socio-linguistic milieu. The close connection between music, language, performance context, and cultural meaning is at the centre. Authors like Avorgbedor demonstrate how certain music practices are deeply embedded in social life, language, and artistic expression. Their work demonstrates functional and dynamic positions of music in society. Their elaboration of these intersections reflects an understanding that musical meaning is derived from interactions between them, which challenges analytical procedures that dissociate musical sound from broader socio-linguistic contexts. The collective work of all these thinkers thus asserts that epistemologies of



music in Africa are firmly rooted in the general cultural context and need to be understood in an integrated fashion, rather than a reductionist fashion that excludes music from its lived reality and linguistic contexts. Such interdependence unsettles analytical approaches trying to dissociate music from its broader socio-linguistic contexts.

Coloniality, representation, and decolonising African Musicology

The encounter between African societies and European colonial powers had a profound impact on all areas of life, particularly on how knowledge, including cultural and artistic expertise such as music, was conceived, valued, and represented. African musical epistemologies, rooted in communal life, oral tradition, and whole-person worldviews, were often misunderstood, undervalued, or actively suppressed by colonial regimes and the Western scholarly paradigms that followed (Nketia, 1986). This section will critically examine the enduring influence of colonialism on African music epistemologies and representation and follows the continued efforts of African academia and others to decolonise the field, recapture epistemic agency, and construct more equitable and authentic knowledge.

The colonial gaze's enduring legacy in African Music studies

The colonial period was characterised by an ideological positioning of Western reason and cultural norms as superior to their non-Western forms (Akanmidu, 2005). This "colonial gaze" had a profound effect on the research and representation of African knowledge systems, including musical epistemologies. Kofi Agawu believes that discourse on African music tends to emerge from an intellectual framework that emphasises "difference" and "othering," utilising these differences as tools of colonial power and control. Thus, characterisations of African music were more informed by power relations and colonial structures than they were by musical situations or local understandings (Agawu, 2003). The colonial invasion extended beyond interpretation; it introduced new elements in the form of Western musical instruments and harmony systems, actively reshaping the epistemological and sonic landscape (Agawu, 2003). This served to devalue indigenous forms of music and internalise colonial standards within colonised societies, as happened with the "dependency syndrome" of the Kenya Army Band. Nzewi reproaches foreign researchers for their superficial research and dismissals of African musical praxis, highlighting how the colonial venture actively intervened and reshaped the epistemological landscape by imposing Western schemas (2024).

Critiques of Eurocentric frameworks and representational deficiencies

Nzewi critiques the "mental dependency syndrome" of African musical arts education, arguing that Northern hemispheric paradigms established during colonialism dominate and assert themselves on African students to view their tradition through "European-American lenses" and thus disenfranchise the local epistemologies (2014). Agawu (2003) stresses that African music discourses have historically been created by non-Africans for non-Africans, addressing matters of access where resources are greater in the Global North and remarking on how the utilisation of text to portray oral tradition creates a disconnect between practice and discourse, suggesting the necessity of an "oral archive." Achieng' Akuno remarks on the inadequacy of Western theory in understanding music in traditional African societies, particularly in the Kenyan context, theorising a fundamental mismatch between imported paradigms and local conditions (2019), as seen in the "dependency syndrome" encountered in the Kenya Army Band. Mapaya (2016) argues against the confines of canonised ethnomusicological methods of researching indigenous African music, referring to the discrepancy between university-based musical education and current South African musical practice, evidence of a general problem of colonialism in academia.



Towards re-centring African intellectual traditions

The research of African scholars not only illuminates the dilemmas of coloniality but also opens up the way toward decolonisation and the reclamation of epistemic sovereignty. These paths demand that we dismantle reigning structures and actively re-centre and re-affirm indigenous African knowledge formations. A groundbreaking step, according to Nzewi (1997), is to recognise that African traditional music possesses the required philosophy, theoretical substance, and practical principles for culturally appropriate and autonomous modern music education. Here, the idea that African music must be legitimised or theoretically grounded in external paradigms is being questioned, and the local musical arts are being defined as an entire epistemological wealth. Nzewi (2024) proposes a deliberate effort to liberate African academicians and students from mental dependency by engaging in critical conversations and rectifying deceptive literature. This shift aims to re-establish African musicology as central and self-sufficient.

Agawu (2003) calls for African musicologists to push more forcefully into the general discussions of African music and to reclaim intellectual territory, thereby inserting their voices into the shaping of the discourse. It is a demand for greater agency of the most elevated sort. Mapaya (2014) does the same in arguing the case for defining and determining African musicology as a discipline separate from an ethnomusicology that can be an outside-in approach, and for the full indigenisation of the syllabi in the universities. Akena's call for a critical analysis of Western scholarly practice that fails to adequately promote the conservation, adaptation, and integration of indigenous African instruments in schools again underscores the need for practical, locally oriented solutions to musical heritage preservation (2012). The need for localised scholarship ensures African music studies remain connected to actual practice and knowledge.

These functions overlap in the contention that decolonising African music epistemology is a two-pronged task. It demands, on the one hand, a critical deconstruction of colonial thought's hegemonies, practices, and institutional order. It requires, on the other hand, active re-centring, re-validating, and bringing to the fore indigenous African systems of knowledge, theory, pedagogical models, and intellectual voice. Genuine decolonisation thus means more than the superimposition of African "content" on hegemonic Western paradigms; it implies a reconsideration of the epistemological ground itself, in a way that African theories and philosophies can reconstitute the discipline of musicology. Nzewi's (2024) case that traditional African music is holistic, and Mapaya's (2014) promotion of African musicology as a distinct discipline, are key arguments in support of this essential rethink. The goal here is not just to attain epistemic justice for African music but to decolonise musical knowledge worldwide by incorporating the deep expertise that is forthcoming from African epistemologies.

Current challenges and opportunities

AI exposes African cultural heritage, and its rich musical heritage in particular, to new challenges and possibilities. On the one hand, AI offers tools for the restoration, preservation, and revival of African music, while on the other hand, it hinders the sustainability of the musicians' careers. AI programs can transfer old recordings made on analogue devices to digital and restore degraded parts. The creation of searchable databases for traditional instruments involves machine learning to analyse and preserve these cultural artefacts. It is also applicable in transcribing orally transmitted musical content that has been difficult to transcribe into formal notation (Morales et al. 2025; Zhou & Lu, 2025). AI can also be applied in the general management of cultural heritage, such as documentation and providing virtual experiences from museums (Babatunde & Tajudeen, 2025). AI can make music production more accessible to emerging artists by lowering costs and production expenses (Fashanu, 2025;



Bowmans, 2023). AI can facilitate artistic freedom by providing more tools to create music (Fashanu, 2025).

Yet, these opportunities are overshadowed by significant dangers. Moreover, these opportunities are clouded by considerable perils. The advancement of generative AI, in particular, has heightened concerns regarding the appropriation of Indigenous African cultural expressions, including songs, dances, and other art forms (Dugeri, 2025; Morales et al., 2025). AI systems, especially those trained on vast, often indiscriminately scraped datasets, can decontextualise musical works, stripping them of their original meanings, spiritual significance, and communal connections (Dugeri, 2025). There is a considerable risk that AI might misrepresent or oversimplify the intricate cultural nuances embedded in Indigenous African music due to a lack of deep contextual understanding programmed into these systems (Babatunde & Tajudeen, 2025). The historical exploitation of Solomon Linda's "Mbube" serves as a stark pre-AI cautionary tale of how creative works can be decontextualised and commercially exploited without due benefit to the originators, a risk now magnified by AI's capabilities (Dugeri, 2025).

The perceived opportunity of AI for preserving African musical heritage is, therefore, profoundly double-edged. While digitisation can create accessible archives, the process of converting rich, embodied, and context-laden musical practices into digital data can involve significant decontextualisation. This digital data, once made, can become more susceptible to appropriation if its collection and application are not governed by robust ethical and decolonial frameworks that prioritise community control (Dugeri, 2025). Therefore, if AI "preservation" is not handled carefully, it may paradoxically make cultural heritage more susceptible. The claim that AI is "democratising" music production also merits careful consideration to avoid digital colonialism. This is true because having access to AI tools does not always mean it will resolve underlying power disparities in digital literacy, data ownership, control of distribution platforms, or access to technology (Dugeri, 2025). Instead of promoting true empowerment for local creators, AI may unintentionally reinforce existing dependencies, thereby exacerbating pre-existing systemic injustices. This could result in worsening the digital colonialism introduced by previous innovations.

Algorithmic bias, data scarcity, and the risk of epistemic injustice

The intersection of African music and AI is plagued by the dangers of algorithmic bias and epistemic injustice, primarily due to non-representative training sets and the limitations of current AI models. There is a fundamental problem stemming from the over-reliance of AI music models on Western music forms, primarily due to the biased nature of their training data. Research indicates that styles of non-Western music are woefully underrepresented; African music constitutes almost an infinitesimal 0.3% of information in prominent generative systems (Fashanu, 2005). This scarcity necessarily bars the creation of culturally attuned and authentic algorithms. While initiatives like the Ndwom dataset for Akan music are vital efforts to close the gap (Moore, 2025), they remain exceptions. This "data gap" is not merely a technical glitch but a contemporary form of epistemic injustice, actively rendering African musical epistemologies invisible or on the periphery of powerful global technologies (Fashanu, 2005). Through studying Western music for the most part, such systems effectively preclude African modes of knowing, creating, and enjoying music with equal gravitas and respect, frighteningly mirroring earlier colonial proclivities of downgrading non-Western knowledge (Moore, 2025).

The impact of biased training materials is that AI models, when asked to engage with non-Western sensibilities, tend to automatically default to familiar Western tonal and rhythmic norms (Li, 2016). There are musical attributes typical of African culture, such as complex polyrhythms, complex polyphony, microtonal subtleties, and dynamic call-and-response interplay (Akuno, 2019). According



to Gresty (2025), current AI production and transcription are evidenced to have high limitations in handling such complexities. Judgment of human nature tends to be superior to detecting musical nuance that can be ignored or misread by AI. Computer polyphonic music transcription is challenging, and reducing diverse genres to standard Western notation can be insufficient, especially for microtonal systems (Mapaya, 2014). This will lead to reductionist or culturally unfaithful products, using Western musical sense on non-Western modes. In this epistemic failing, the AI fails to "understand" the music in its terms.

Apart from structural misrepresentation, there is also the fundamental problem of AI's capacity to engage with the epistemic functions of such music elements. Music elements within African contexts do have some cultural, social, or religious semantics. Current AI, being pattern-copying in scope, tends to be incapable of grasping these deeper semantic layers without being specially programmed and attentively annotated with culturally relevant data (Zhao et al., 2025). A machine can create a technically "correct" polyrhythm but entirely miss the ritual significance, capturing the "what" of the music but not the "why" and "how it means." This is a severe case of misrepresentation, creating an empty echo instead of a valid representation of African music knowledge.

Recommendation

- a. The implementation of culturally-sensitive AI for the re-analysis of previous research and the localised response to intricate African music.
- b. The potential for training AI to utilise local content in the examination of complex African musical composition.
- c. The necessity of establishing a methodological strategy for AI-assisted re-evaluation of ethnomusicological studies conducted through Western paradigms.
- d. Ethical frameworks for AI in African musicology, aimed at promoting epistemic justice.

If AI is to be a tool of epistemic emancipation rather than a new colonial imposition, its development and deployment must be led by robust ethical frameworks, prioritising an "African-led approach to AI development" that drives innovation while upholding cultural integrity and epistemic justice.

Key ethical aspects include:

- a. Data sovereignty must be granted to African music.
- b. Ethical co-design and community outreach are crucial in the development of artificial intelligence technologies for African music.
- c. Intentional approaches are necessary to address algorithmic bias.
- d. African philosophical concepts can inform the design of Ethical AI, for example, Ubuntu (the interconnectedness and well-being of a community) or Ga philosophy concepts (benevolence, non-maleficence, justice, explicability, and collective well-being).
- e. The protection of indigenous knowledge and intellectual property
- f. If AI is to be revolutionary and not just another high-tech tool perpetuating colonial relations, its development must be grounded in African epistemologies and ethics from the outset.

Conclusion

This study has explored African music performance not only as an art form but also as a complex and vibrant epistemic system. It is among the primary media whereby diverse African societies generate, embody, pass on, and legitimise knowledge inherent in their social, spiritual, historical, and philosophical existence. These musical epistemologies, characterised by holistic worldviews, oral



precedence, and communal legitimation, bear witness to multifaceted ways of knowing and existing in the world we live in. The works of African scholars have made significant contributions to charting the journey of discovering these epistemes, challenging Eurocentric biases, and proposing the intellectual sovereignty and validity of African knowledge systems.

The advent of AI presents both existential threats and revolutionary opportunities for the field of African musical epistemologies' research and survival. While risks of bias, appropriation, and new forms of epistemic injustice are significant if AI is designed uncritically, this study has argued for an activist, decolonial approach. The most important recommendation—to develop and deploy AI systems trained on African local content, guided by African ethical frameworks, and codesigned with African communities—can revolutionise the discipline. This will offer an opportunity to examine past research that has been limited by Western parameters, providing new insights into African musical complexities and, more importantly, aiding in the analysis, preservation, and creative exploration of musical traditions.

The future of African musical knowledge in this rapidly transforming technological era relies on a shared, global investment in epistemic justice and pluralism. This necessitates transcending a Western-centric technological and academic model to access the knowledge and insights embedded in African philosophies and intellectual traditions. The recommendations offered herein—placing African leadership at the centre of research and AI development, investing in ethically sourced and locally controlled data, developing culturally responsive AI models and metrics of evaluation, strengthening legal protections for indigenous knowledge, fostering AI literacy within African music communities, and promoting decolonial research practices—represent significant steps in this regard. This will lead to more radical epistemic freedom, where African musical thought can exist on its terms, where African creators and communities are sovereign over their cultural productions, and where their unique wisdom can enrich the global tapestry of human knowledge and creativity. This requires long-term investment in African-led research.

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