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Artificial Intelligence, Indigenous Knowledge, and Traditional Music in Ghana: Opportunities and Challenges for Composition and Cultural Heritage Preservation

Artificial Intelligence, Indigenous Knowledge, and Traditional Music in Ghana: Opportunities and Challenges for Composition and Cultural Heritage Preservation

Joseph Aketema
University of Venda, South Africa

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Abstract
Despite growing AI applications in music, it remains unclear how AI can support Ghanaian traditional music without compromising Indigenous knowledge, cultural continuity, and human creativity. This matters because traditional music preserves cultural identity, memory, and intergenerational knowledge. Using a qualitative descriptive design, this study explores the perceptions of five experienced Ghanaian practitioners regarding AI in music composition and heritage preservation. Data were collected through an open-ended questionnaire administered via Google Forms, with participants' responses examined to identify recurring perceptions and concerns. Guided by the Technology Acceptance Model and Progressive Traditionalism, the findings indicate that practitioners viewed AI as potentially useful for documentation, archiving, and preservation. The responses also emphasised that AI should complement rather than replace human creativity, oral traditions, and community-based systems of knowledge transmission. Key challenges identified include the limited representation of African traditional music in AI training datasets (Mehta et al., 2025), concerns about authenticity and copyright, and the need for culturally responsive AI governance. The study argues that the sustainable adoption of AI in African traditional music requires an approach that integrates technological innovation with Indigenous epistemologies and ethical stewardship. It concludes that AI should function as a collaborative infrastructure for cultural continuity rather than a substitute for the musicians and communities that sustain traditional musical heritage.

Introduction

Music is a vital medium for preserving history, expressing cultural identity, transmitting Indigenous knowledge, and fostering social cohesion (Gwerevende & Mthombeni, 2023). Traditional music serves as a repository of collective memory, reflecting the beliefs, values, rituals, and experiences of communities (Omoera & Aketema, 2026). The evolution of music production and preservation has paralleled technological advancement, reshaping how music is created, documented, preserved, disseminated, and experienced. From analogue recording to digital platforms, each innovation has expanded opportunities to preserve musical heritage while raising new artistic and ethical concerns.

In film and media, technological innovations have reshaped the relationship between sound and visual storytelling. During the silent film era, live musicians provided essential accompaniment to moving images (Altman, 1996). Advances in sound recording and synchronisation transformed filmmaking and music production by improving the accuracy of sound recording and distribution (Crafton, 1999). While early recording technologies were expensive and inaccessible, particularly in Africa, ongoing progress has gradually lowered barriers, making digital recording and preservation more accessible.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming creative practices and the preservation of cultural heritage. Broadly defined, AI encompasses computer systems that perform tasks typically requiring human intelligence, including learning and language processing (Russell & Norvig, 2020). Advances in machine learning and generative AI have enhanced these systems' capabilities to analyse musical datasets, generate original compositions, restore recordings, automate transcription, and support digital archiving (Briot et al., 2020). In music composition, AI has evolved from a computational support tool into an increasingly collaborative component of the composition process, generating melodies, harmonies, and orchestration. AI systems help composers by facilitating experimentation and streamlining workflows, without replacing human creativity. Gioti (2020) further argues that computational creativity can extend rather than replace human creativity by expanding the space of creative possibilities.

For traditional music, AI can analyse Indigenous musical structures and generate culturally relevant ideas, thereby supporting endangered musical traditions. Oral transmission has long sustained many African musical traditions, but factors such as urbanisation and globalisation threaten these practices. "AI can help preserve traditional music by making recordings more accessible." (Participant 4, Google Forms response, 2026). Many institutions are documenting and safeguarding African musical heritage through sound archives and digital repositories. In Ghana and South Africa, institutions such as the J. H. Kwabena Nketia Archives and the International Library of African Music (ILAM) contribute to the preservation of African musical heritage. The Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA) in Belgium also houses one of the largest collections of Central African ethnomusicological recordings, holding approximately 50,000 items, many of which were made during the colonial period (Cornelis et al., 2005).

Despite these efforts, African archives face serious challenges, including limited funding, outdated recording equipment, inadequate storage and digitisation facilities, and a lack of technical expertise (Adu & Ngulube, 2017; Rakemane & Mosweu, 2021). Furthermore, a significant portion of Africa's recorded musical heritage is held outside the continent, highlighting historical inequalities in access to recording technologies and archival resources. AI can restore degraded audio, generate descriptive metadata, support automated transcription, and improve the organisation, retrieval, and long-term management of digital music collections (Briot et al., 2020; Schellnack-Kelly & Modiba, 2025). However, integrating AI into traditional music raises important ethical, legal, and cultural concerns, including authorship, copyright, informed consent, algorithmic bias, and the protection of Indigenous knowledge and cultural expressions (Al-Busaidi et al., 2024; Lewis et al., 2025; UNESCO, 2022). Recent Afrocentric scholarship further argues that AI systems intended for creative practice should be grounded in Indigenous epistemologies and culturally situated knowledge frameworks so that technological innovation strengthens, rather than erodes, local musical traditions (Dawson, 2026).

Despite growing research on AI in music generation and digital creativity, its application to African traditional music remains underexplored. Although existing studies increasingly acknowledge the need for culturally responsive AI systems grounded in Indigenous knowledge, empirical research on AI-assisted composition and heritage preservation in African contexts remains limited (Kirui et al., 2025; Odeke & Kirui, 2025). Few investigations examine how AI can

support engagement with Indigenous musical traditions while ensuring archival preservation and maintaining authenticity and community ownership. This study explores the role of AI in the composition and preservation of African traditional music in the digital era. It examines how AI technologies can enhance creative musical practices and documentation while addressing related ethical, legal, and cultural issues. The findings aim to inform ongoing discussions in music technology, digital humanities, and cultural heritage studies, with a focus on the responsible use of AI within African traditional music contexts.

Artificial Intelligence, Musical Creativity, Preservation, African Traditional Music and Cultural Ethics

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative force across creative industries, reshaping how music is composed, produced, analysed, and experienced. AI generally refers to computational systems capable of performing tasks that typically require human intelligence, including learning from data, recognising patterns, solving problems, and generating creative outputs (Russell & Norvig, 2020). Recent advances in machine learning and generative AI have enabled systems to compose music, emulate stylistic characteristics, generate harmonies, orchestrate musical ideas, and assist composers throughout the creative process (Briot et al., 2020). Contemporary systems learn musical structures from large datasets and produce original outputs that resemble human compositions (Briot et al., 2020). AI is therefore increasingly understood as a collaborative creative partner that supports idea generation, arrangement, orchestration, and refinement.

Some scholars argue that AI is unlikely to replace human creativity entirely (Butson & Spronken-Smith, 2024; Paesano, 2023). Instead, it functions as an assistive technology that complements human imagination by accelerating routine compositional tasks, offering creative alternatives, and expanding opportunities for experimentation (Kerdvibulvech, 2026). As is argued by Kerdvibulvech (2026), "Far from serving merely as a tool, AI increasingly functions as a collaborator and co-creator, enabling novel forms of expression, automating labour-intensive tasks, and augmenting human creative capacities across domains such as visual arts, music, film, design, and gaming" (p. 147). Human composers continue to provide artistic judgement, cultural understanding, emotional interpretation, and contextual decision-making (Addaquay, 2025; Lefford & Thompson, 2018). These qualities remain particularly important in traditional music, where musical meaning is closely connected to community, language, ritual and performance.

The preservation of traditional music has become increasingly important as communities seek to safeguard intangible cultural heritage amid globalisation, urbanisation, migration, and changing patterns of cultural transmission. Much traditional music is transmitted orally through performance, apprenticeship, ritual practice, and communal participation. This makes traditions particularly vulnerable when knowledge holders pass away, communities are displaced, or younger generations become less engaged with Indigenous cultural practices (Smith, 2006; UNESCO, 2003). Digital technologies continue to transform approaches to preserving musical heritage by enabling the recording, storage, digitisation, and dissemination of audiovisual materials (Schüller, 2008).

AI expands these possibilities through automated processes that improve the efficiency, accuracy, and accessibility of digital archives. For instance, "Traditional assessment methods focused on human judgement may be insufficient to capture the nuances of human-AI co-created works" (Kerdvibulvech, 2026, p. 154). Machine learning can be used to restore deteriorated audio by reducing background noise, correcting distortions and enhancing sound quality without substantially altering the original performance (Schellnack-Kelly & Modiba, 2025). Speech recognition can facilitate transcription of oral performances and song texts, while natural language processing can assist with translating Indigenous languages and generating descriptive metadata.

AI can also classify recordings by musical style, language, instrumentation or geographical origin, making large collections easier to search and manage (Briot et al., 2020). Pattern-recognition tools can identify recurring melodic, rhythmic and structural characteristics and support comparative studies across regional traditions (Tzanetakis & Cook, 2002).

African traditional music is one of the continent's richest expressions of cultural identity, social history and indigenous knowledge. It transmits oral histories, moral values, religious beliefs, social norms and collective memory across generations (Nketia, 1974). Musical performances accompany festivals, rites of passage, royal ceremonies, funerals and religious observances, making music an integral part of everyday social life rather than isolated artistic practice (Agawu, 2003). Preserving traditional music therefore protects wider systems of indigenous knowledge.

Historically, the documentation of African traditional music has been shaped by unequal access to recording technologies and archival infrastructure. During colonial and early postcolonial periods, ethnographers, missionaries, anthropologists and musicologists often used recording equipment largely unavailable to local communities (Ajotikar & Van Straaten, 2021). Substantial collections were consequently deposited in museums, universities, libraries and research institutions outside Africa (Ajotikar & Van Straaten, 2021; Johnson-Williams, 2023). While such collections contribute to ethnomusicological research, they raise questions about ownership, accessibility, cultural representation and the historical displacement of African cultural heritage. Institutions such as the J. H. Kwabena Nketia Archives at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, and ILAM in South Africa have played significant roles in recording, cataloguing and preserving diverse musical traditions (Ngulube, 2024).

Many African archives nevertheless face financial constraints, inadequate digitisation infrastructure, obsolete recording equipment, limited technical expertise, unstable digital storage systems and inconsistent preservation policies (Adu & Ngulube, 2017; Rakemane & Mosweu, 2021). AI can strengthen existing initiatives through automated metadata creation, audio restoration, multilingual transcription, intelligent cataloguing and improved digital retrieval. Successful adoption, however, depends on digital infrastructure, institutional capacity, professional training and collaboration among archivists, researchers, technologists and local communities (Schellnack-Kelly & Modiba, 2025).

The application of AI also raises ethical, legal, and cultural concerns about ownership, authorship, representation and protection of Indigenous knowledge. Traditional music often emerges from collective cultural practices that have evolved over generations without identifiable authors. Determining ownership of AI-generated adaptations based on traditional materials therefore presents significant challenges (Lewis et al., 2025). Questions also remain about prior informed consent, benefit sharing and the use of culturally significant recordings as training data. Generative AI may reproduce stylistic features without acknowledging their cultural significance or the communities from which they originate (UNESCO, 2022), potentially reinforcing historical patterns of cultural extraction.

Authenticity and cultural integrity are equally important. AI can imitate musical styles, reproduce instrumental timbres, and generate compositions inspired by traditional music, but it cannot independently reproduce the lived experiences, spiritual meanings, social relationships and cultural knowledge that give traditional performances their significance. Technological accuracy should therefore not be equated with cultural authenticity (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004). Algorithmic bias is another concern because systems learn from their datasets. Where African musical traditions are underrepresented, AI-generated outputs may reproduce existing inequalities and misrepresent cultural diversity (Mehta et al., 2025). Inclusive data practices, African participation, and locally generated digital heritage resources are therefore necessary.

Even though AI can support composition, documentation, restoration, classification and archival management, preservation is not merely a technical exercise (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004; Smith, 2006; UNESCO, 2003). Cultural heritage includes the historical, social and cultural meanings attached to musical practices (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004). AI systems cannot independently interpret ceremonial functions, symbolic meanings or community relationships. Effective preservation therefore requires technological specialists, archivists, ethnomusicologists and community knowledge holders to work together. The synthesis also indicates that the value of AI in traditional music lies in how practitioners negotiate technology rather than simply whether they accept it. Preservation must remain an active process involving recording, interpretation, access, transmission, and community participation. Digital tools can extend the life of traditional music while depending on people who understand its language, history, performance conventions and social functions. Where communities participate in decisions about data, ownership, and use, AI can support cultural continuity, creative experimentation and intergenerational learning meaningfully.

This literature gap is significant because relatively few studies integrate AI-assisted composition, heritage preservation and practitioner perspectives in the African traditional music context (Kirui et al., 2025; Odeke & Kirui, 2025).

Table 1: Major Artificial Intelligence Applications in Traditional Music Composition and Preservation

AI Application	Primary Function	Relevance to Traditional Music
Music generation	Produces melodies, harmonies, rhythms, or complete musical works from learned musical patterns	Supports composition, arrangement, experimentation, and educational engagement with traditional musical styles
Audio restoration	Removes noise, distortion, clicks, and other defects from historical recordings	Improves the quality and longevity of archival recordings
Automatic transcription	Converts speech, lyrics, or musical performances into text or symbolic representations	Facilitates documentation of oral traditions and song texts
Metadata generation	Automatically assigns descriptive information to digital recordings	Improves cataloguing, indexing, and retrieval within music archives
Music information retrieval	Identifies musical features such as rhythm, melody, instrumentation, and genre	Supports comparative music analysis and ethnomusicological research
Pattern-recognition	Detects recurring musical structures and stylistic characteristics	Assists in documenting and analysing Indigenous musical traditions
Language processing	Translates, summarises, and analyses Indigenous language content	Enhances multilingual documentation and accessibility
Intelligent archiving	Organises, classifies, and retrieves digital collections using AI algorithms	Strengthens archive management and long-term digital preservation

Source: Adapted from Briot et al. (2020) and Schellnack-Kelly & Modiba (2025).

Theoretical Framework

This study is underpinned by two complementary theoretical perspectives: the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) developed by Davis (1989) and Emielu's concept of Progressive Traditionalism. TAM explains factors influencing practitioners' willingness to adopt AI technologies, while Progressive Traditionalism provides a cultural lens for understanding how technological innovation can coexist with the preservation and ongoing development of traditional music. Anchoring these observations is the understanding that AI must remain sensitive to the communities from which musical traditions originate (Dawson, 2026). This argument is based on the observation that "the theoretical and aesthetic foundations of many computational-creative systems remain shaped by Eurocentric ideas about authorship, time, and cultural knowledge" (Dawson, 2026, p. 49). Within African contexts, the introduction of AI

technologies developed externally, without meaningful consideration of local epistemologies, has been characterised as a form of "algorithmic colonisation" (Dawson, 2026, p. 52). This process can privilege external technological frameworks at the expense of Indigenous creative practices, knowledge systems, and ways of producing meaning. Such concerns highlight the importance of developing Afrocentric AI systems that are culturally grounded, ethically responsive, and attentive to the specific communities and knowledge traditions within which they are deployed (Dawson, 2026).

Practically, automated systems may process audio recordings effectively but cannot independently interpret the unique cultural contexts and elements that give traditional music its significance. Effective cultural preservation therefore requires culturally sensitive technological models, collaboration among technological specialists, archivists, ethnomusicologists, and community knowledge holders. This will ensure that digital preservation reflects both technical accuracy and cultural authenticity.

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), developed by Davis (1989), is one of the most influential frameworks for explaining why individuals adopt or reject new technologies. The model proposes that technology acceptance is primarily shaped by two interrelated constructs: perceived usefulness, defined as the extent to which an individual believes a technology will enhance performance, and perceived ease of use, defined as the degree to which a technology is considered easy to learn and operate (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). These perceptions shape users' attitudes towards technology and ultimately influence their intention to adopt and use it. In this study, TAM offers a useful framework for understanding how music practitioners—including composers, producers, sound engineers, and archivists—perceive AI technologies in their professional practice. AI applications such as automated music generation, audio restoration, speech transcription, metadata generation, and intelligent archiving can improve efficiency, reduce production time, and expand creative possibilities. The two frameworks guide the interpretation of the study's findings and provide the conceptual lens through which participants' experiences and perspectives are analysed. In this regard, technology adoption depends largely on whether practitioners perceive these technologies as beneficial, reliable, accessible, and sufficiently easy to integrate into their creative practices. However, a limitation of the study is that the research instrument did not operationalise the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) constructs of perceived ease of use, attitude towards use, and behavioural intention. Given these observations, these constructs cannot be directly measured or systematically recovered from the data, and the study does not claim to provide a full TAM-based assessment of technology acceptance. Rather, TAM is used as a conceptual framework for interpreting participants' accounts of their experiences and perceptions of AI technologies.

Progressive Traditionalism

While TAM explains technology adoption, it does not adequately account for the cultural significance of traditional music or for how innovation interacts with Indigenous knowledge systems. To address this gap, the study draws on Emielu's concept of Progressive Traditionalism, which holds that African musical traditions are dynamic and continually evolve in response to changing social, cultural, and technological conditions. Rather than viewing tradition as static or incompatible with modernity, Progressive Traditionalism recognises that innovation can strengthen cultural continuity when it remains grounded in the values, aesthetics, and knowledge systems of the communities from which traditions emerge (Emielu, 2018). Progressive Traditionalism challenges the assumption that technological advancement necessarily threatens traditional cultural practices. Instead, it proposes that new technologies can serve as instruments for documenting, revitalising, reinterpreting, and transmitting traditional music to new audiences without compromising its cultural identity. This perspective is particularly relevant to AI, whose

applications extend beyond creative production to include documentation, restoration, archiving, education, and heritage preservation. Within this study, Progressive Traditionalism provides a framework for examining whether AI supports the continued relevance and sustainability of traditional music or risks diminishing cultural authenticity and community ownership. The framework therefore emphasises that technological innovation should complement, rather than replace, indigenous knowledge, human creativity, and cultural custodianship.

Integrating the Frameworks

The integration of TAM and Progressive Traditionalism provides a holistic theoretical foundation for this study. TAM explains how practitioners evaluate and adopt AI technologies based on perceived usefulness and ease of use. In contrast, Progressive Traditionalism explains how those technologies can be incorporated into traditional music in ways that respect cultural continuity, authenticity, and indigenous knowledge. Together, the two frameworks acknowledge that the successful integration of AI into traditional music depends not only on technological capability but also on cultural legitimacy. Practitioners may recognise AI's practical benefits while also raising concerns about ownership, authenticity, ethical responsibility, and the preservation of cultural values. Examining these technological and cultural dimensions together enables a more comprehensive understanding of AI's role in the composition and preservation of traditional music in the digital era. Accordingly, these complementary frameworks guide the interpretation of the study's findings and provide the conceptual lens through which participants' experiences and perspectives are analysed. A limitation of the study is that, because TAM was not used to structure the research instrument or coding process, the data does not provide systematic evidence for all its constructs or their relationships. In particular, the study does not directly measure participants' behavioural intentions to use AI or their actual system use. The findings should therefore not be interpreted as a comprehensive test or validation of TAM. Rather, TAM serves as a complementary interpretive framework through which relevant aspects of participants' experiences and perceptions can be understood.

Methodology

A summary of the study's methodological design is presented in Table 2, outlining the research approach, participant selection, data collection procedures, and analytical framework.

Research Design, Population and Sampling

This study adopted a qualitative descriptive design to explore practitioners' perspectives on the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the composition and preservation of traditional music. A qualitative approach was appropriate because the study sought to understand participants' experiences, perceptions, and professional opinions regarding the opportunities and challenges associated with AI. Rather than measuring variables or testing hypotheses, qualitative research facilitates an in-depth exploration of how individuals interpret emerging phenomena within professional and cultural contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The study targeted experienced Ghanaian music practitioners working in professional and academic settings, including sound engineers, music producers, recording specialists and educators. Participants were drawn from selected tertiary institutions and professional settings in Ghana, including the University of Media, Arts and Communication (UniMAC), the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA), the University of Cape Coast, the University of Ghana, and University of Education, Winneba.

Purposive sampling was used to identify information-rich participants with specialised knowledge relevant to the study (Patton, 2015). Participants had at least five years of professional practice, ensuring that they had experienced significant technological developments in music production and preservation. Five practitioners participated. Although the sample was relatively

small, it was considered appropriate for an exploratory qualitative study seeking depth rather than statistical generalisation.

Table 2: Summary of Research Methodology

Methodological Component	Description
Research approach	Qualitative research
Research design	Qualitative descriptive research design
Study location	Ghana
Target population	Experienced Ghanaian music practitioners, including sound engineers, music producers, recording specialists, and music educators
Sampling technique	Purposive sampling
Sample size	Five (5) participants
Participant criterion	Minimum of five years' professional experience in music education, music production, sound engineering, or music technology.
Data collection instrument	Open-ended questionnaire
Data collection platform	Google Forms
Questionnaire distribution	WhatsApp and email
Data collected	Qualitative textual responses
Data analysis technique	Thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2006; 2021)
Trustworthiness criteria	Credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)
Ethical considerations	Voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and secure handling of participants' responses

Source: Author's construct (2026)

Data Collection and Analysis, Trustworthiness and Ethics

The relatively narrow participant selection was deliberate. Participants were experienced music academics with substantial engagement in professional music production, including film and media sound production, recording, and composition. This criterion was adopted because the study sought respondents with both academic grounding and practical experience of contemporary music production and its technological implications. Participants were recruited through selected tertiary institutions and professional networks, while access to the online questionnaire was restricted to the intended academic and professional population.

The study paid particular attention to the trustworthiness of the research process by considering credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was supported through the deliberate selection of participants whose academic and professional experience was directly relevant to the research objectives. Dependability was strengthened through a consistent approach to data collection and management. Confirmability was addressed by distinguishing participants' views from the researcher's interpretations, thereby reducing the influence of personal assumptions on the findings. Transferability was supported by providing sufficient information about the participants and their professional contexts, allowing readers to assess the relevance of the findings to similar settings.

Participation was voluntary and based on informed consent. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study, and no personally identifying information was requested beyond what was necessary for participation and data management. The collected responses were securely stored, with access limited to the researcher, and will be retained for the period required by applicable institutional research-ethics guidelines before being securely destroyed. The use of digital communication channels and institutional professional networks may have limited participation from community-based traditional music custodians who are less digitally or institutionally connected. This limitation, however, was consistent with the study's deliberate focus on practitioners working at the intersection of academic knowledge and professional music production.

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Findings

Participant Profile

Five experienced Ghanaian music practitioners participated in the study. They were drawn from selected tertiary institutions and had extensive experience in professional sound engineering and music education. Their academic qualifications ranged from graduate to postgraduate qualifications, while professional experience in sound engineering spanned six to twenty-six years and teaching experience ranged from five to twenty-four years. This combination provided diverse perspectives on the emerging role of AI in the composition and preservation of traditional music.

The participants' diverse professional experiences provided a basis for examining AI in music composition and heritage preservation in Ghana. The findings are organised around the three research questions and themes emerging from the thematic analysis.

Table 3: Summary of Participants' Background

Characteristic	Anonymised Description
Number of participants	5
Professional background	Sound engineers, music producers, educators, and recording practitioners
Participant 1	Ghanaian University
Participant 2	Ghanaian University
Participant 3	Ghanaian University
Participant 4	Ghanaian University
Participant 5	Ghanaian University
Academic qualification	Graduate and postgraduate qualifications
Teaching experience	5–24 years
Professional experience	6–26 years

AI as a Creative Collaborator

Four participants viewed Artificial Intelligence as a tool that enhances rather than replaces human creativity. All participants described AI as supporting musical experimentation, generating creative ideas, assisting with arrangement and improving production efficiency. However, Participants 2–5 stated that meaningful musical expression, particularly in traditional music, continues to depend on human creativity, cultural understanding and artistic judgement. Participant 1 explained: "AI can assist in generating musical ideas and suggesting harmonies, but the creative vision must still come from the musician" (Participant 1, Google Forms response, 2026). Participant 2 stated: "It is helping sound engineers to mix and master tracks and music in the easiest way" (Participant 2, Google Forms response, 2026). Participant 3 noted that AI contributes to creative exploration through "ideas and timbral expansion" (Participant 3, Google Forms response, 2026). These responses position AI as a collaborative creative partner rather than an autonomous composer.

AI Applications in Music Composition and Production

All five participants identified several practical applications of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in music composition and production. These included melody generation, harmonic suggestions, accompaniment creation, sound design, audio mixing and mastering, and the automation of repetitive production tasks. Their responses suggest that AI is increasingly perceived not simply as a technological novelty but as a practical tool that can support different stages of the creative and technical processes involved in music production. Participant 1, for example, acknowledged that "AI can accelerate aspects of music production and provide composers with additional resources for experimentation" (Participant 1, Google Forms response, 2026). Similarly, Participant 2 observed that "Rather than viewing AI as a complete replacement for conventional compositional practices, it can be seen as a tool that generates ideas, suggests musical possibilities, and facilitates experimentation" (Participant 2, Google Forms response, 2026). Participant 3

explained that an important issue emerging from current AI integration is the need to "humanise computer-generated technological data and outputs" (Participant 3, Google Forms response, 2026). This perspective indicates that AI may broaden the range of creative possibilities available to musicians by allowing them to explore melodic, harmonic, rhythmic, and sonic alternatives more quickly than through entirely manual processes. The responses also highlighted the technical applications of AI in music production. Four participants identified mixing and mastering as areas in which AI-assisted software can streamline production by automating or supporting tasks that traditionally require considerable technical expertise and time. These observations suggest that AI may be particularly useful for reducing the technical workload associated with music production, allowing practitioners to devote greater attention to creative and interpretive decisions. Although the participants recognised the efficiency and technical capabilities of AI, they did not regard AI-generated material as a finished creative product. Instead, they understood such outputs as preliminary resources that require human interpretation, modification, and refinement. This position places human agency at the centre of the creative process and suggests that the value of AI lies partly in its capacity to provide starting points that musicians can subsequently transform according to their artistic intentions. Generrally, the participants indicated that a collaborative rather than substitutional relationship between AI and human creativity is needed to advance musical and artistic creativity. This is because AI can facilitate composition by generating musical ideas, suggesting harmonies and accompaniments, supporting sound design, and assisting with technical production processes. However, the participants maintained that artistic expertise remains necessary to determine whether and how such outputs should be used. As Participant 4 explained, "Human practitioners retain responsibility for evaluating, modifying, contextualising, and giving cultural meaning to AI-generated material" (Participant 4, Google Forms response, 2026).

This finding is particularly significant in Ghanaian traditional music, where musical decisions are not determined by technical or aesthetic considerations alone. They may also involve cultural knowledge, performance conventions, communal values, oral transmission, and the authority of cultural practitioners. Based on these observations, while AI may facilitate aspects of composition and production, participants' responses suggest that technological efficiency should not be equated with creative or cultural authority. AI can generate or manipulate musical material, but human practitioners remain essential in determining its appropriateness, authenticity, cultural relevance, and artistic value.

Limitations of AI in Representing Indigenous musical Systems

Four participants expressed reservations about AI's ability to represent the cultural, historical and spiritual dimensions of traditional music. Several argued that existing systems depend heavily on datasets dominated by Western musical traditions. Participant 4 remarked: "AI lacks the cultural experiences and emotions needed to create authentic traditional music" (Participant 4, Google Forms response, 2026). Participant 5 observed: "Without adequate African traditional music datasets, AI cannot faithfully reproduce the nuances of our Indigenous musical traditions" (Participant 5, Google Forms response, 2026). All participants also noted that oral transmission, performance practice, communal participation, and contextual meaning are difficult to capture computationally. Given these observations, AI should remain a complementary tool guided by musicians and cultural knowledge holders. From the foregoing, practitioners recognise AI's capacity to enhance creativity and streamline workflows, but successful application depends on sustained human oversight and deeper integration of Indigenous musical knowledge.

AI for Music Documentation, Preservation and Responsible Adoption

On the need for documentation, participants recognised AI as valuable for documenting, recording, digitising, archiving, and preserving traditional music. They noted that AI can improve recording quality, facilitate restoration and transcription, and support digital storage, thereby

reducing the risk of losing Ghana's musical heritage. Participant 1 stated, "AI can help preserve old recordings by cleaning noise and improving audio quality" (Participant 1, Google Forms response, 2026). Participant 2 similarly noted that AI facilitates documentation through automated transcription and digital processing, making traditional music more accessible to future generations. Four participants further emphasised AI's potential to strengthen digital archives by organising, classifying, retrieving, and managing large volumes of musical data. Participant 3 remarked, "Digital archives supported by AI will make our traditional music available for future researchers and musicians" (Participant 3, Google Forms response, 2026). Participant 4 stressed that well-organised digital repositories can help prevent the loss of traditions historically dependent on oral transmission. All participants identified wider benefits including educational access, research, cultural dissemination and public engagement. AI could provide digital learning resources for younger generations, while museums, archives and cultural organisations could organise collections efficiently and expand public access through searchable repositories. Nevertheless, participants emphasised that technological preservation should complement community-based transmission. Oral traditions, live performance and intergenerational learning remain essential to preserving cultural meanings. Overall, the responses indicate that AI can complement existing preservation practices by improving the documentation, accessibility, and long-term preservation of Ghanaian traditional music while supporting, rather than replacing, cultural custodians and community-based systems of knowledge transmission. AI is viewed as an important tool for documentation, preservation and accessibility, but sustainable preservation requires continued participation by communities, performers and cultural custodians.

All five participants identified opportunities for AI to increase creative efficiency, improve production, strengthen heritage preservation, expand educational access, and facilitate the dissemination of traditional music through digital platforms. They noted that AI could automate repetitive tasks, allowing musicians to devote greater attention to artistic and creative decisions. However, three respondents specifically identified the limited representation of Indigenous African musical traditions in existing AI training datasets as a major challenge. Participant 5 explained, "The biggest challenge is that AI has not been trained adequately with our traditional music" (Participant 5, Google Forms response, 2026). This limitation may affect the ability of AI systems to produce outputs that adequately reflect the musical characteristics and cultural contexts of African traditions. Beyond dataset representation, the participants expressed broader concerns about cultural authenticity, copyright, ownership of Indigenous knowledge, and the potential implications of excessive reliance on AI. Participant 1 cautioned, "Technology should not replace the cultural knowledge passed from one generation to another" (Participant 1, Google Forms response, 2026). The participants therefore emphasised the importance of maintaining human creativity, cultural knowledge, and community-based systems of musical transmission alongside technological innovation. They also expressed concern that excessive dependence on AI could weaken human ingenuity and creativity in traditional modes of music composition and transmission. These observations suggest that the benefits of AI adoption should be balanced with ethical and culturally responsive approaches that protect Indigenous knowledge and sustain the creative agency of musicians and cultural practitioners.

All participants recommended developing AI systems trained on comprehensive datasets of traditional African music and strengthening collaboration among musicians, cultural custodians, researchers, software developers and policymakers. They emphasised documenting endangered musical practices before incorporating them into AI systems. Educational institutions and cultural organisations were also encouraged to invest in digital infrastructure, capacity building and public awareness. The practitioners regard AI as valuable but insist that it should complement rather than replace human creativity, Indigenous knowledge and community-based cultural practices.

Discussion and Implications

The findings suggest that participants regard AI as a valuable tool for enhancing creativity, production, documentation, digitisation, archiving, and preservation of Indigenous musical heritage. Rather than replacing established practices, AI is perceived as a complementary resource for generating ideas, refining production, and preserving musical materials. This perspective highlights the importance of maintaining human creative agency and Indigenous knowledge when adopting emerging technologies. The findings indicate that integrating the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Progressive Traditionalism provides a basis for understanding practitioners' perceptions of AI in traditional music. While TAM explains perceptions of usefulness and practical application, Progressive Traditionalism provides a culturally grounded perspective on technological innovation and Indigenous practices. Participants' responses suggest that AI's usefulness should therefore be considered alongside cultural authenticity, community ownership, ethical responsibility, and continuity of Indigenous knowledge.

The study also suggests that AI adoption extends beyond technological efficiency to encompass cultural continuity and responsible innovation. Participants reported opportunities for AI to support composition, production, documentation, archiving, and heritage preservation, while raising concerns about the limited representation of African musical traditions in training datasets, cultural authenticity, copyright, and Indigenous knowledge governance. AI datasets involving Indigenous musical materials should therefore address provenance, informed and collective consent, community ownership, culturally restricted or sacred materials, access controls, benefit sharing, attribution, and the right to withdraw. These principles can help prevent inappropriate extraction, circulation, or decontextualisation of Indigenous knowledge and ensure meaningful community participation in collecting, representing, using, and preserving cultural materials.

Although limited by its qualitative design and small purposive sample, the study provides insights into experienced Ghanaian music practitioners' perceptions of AI. Broader comparative and mixed-methods research is needed to examine how culturally grounded AI systems can support the sustainable preservation, transmission, and creative evolution of African traditional music while respecting community rights, knowledge, and cultural authority.

AI as a Collaborative Creative Technology

Participants viewed AI primarily as a collaborative creative partner rather than an autonomous composer. They acknowledged its capacity to generate musical ideas, assist arrangement, enhance sound design and streamline mixing and mastering. Nevertheless, artistic judgement, cultural interpretation and creative vision remain human responsibilities. This aligns with TAM (Davis, 1989), which suggests that users are more likely to adopt technology when they perceive it as useful for improving task performance. Participants viewed AI as enhancing compositional efficiency and expanding creative possibilities without diminishing the central role of musicians. The finding is consistent with scholarship characterising AI as a collaborative system that supports human creativity (Briot et al., 2020).

The study extends this discussion by showing that, in African traditional music, practitioners place equal importance on cultural knowledge and artistic intentionality. Creativity was understood not simply as musical production but as culturally informed interpretation of Indigenous musical traditions. Progressive Traditionalism reinforces this position by arguing that technological innovation should strengthen rather than displace established cultural practices (Emielu, 2018). Participants' insistence that AI remains subordinate to human creativity reflects an understanding that technological advancement and cultural continuity can be mutually reinforcing.

AI, Digital Preservation and Responsible Adoption

Participants regarded AI as an important resource for documenting, restoring, archiving and disseminating traditional music. AI-assisted transcription, audio restoration, metadata generation

and digital archiving can enhance the long-term preservation and accessibility of Indigenous musical heritage. These findings support UNESCO's (2003) position that safeguarding intangible cultural heritage increasingly depends on systematic documentation, preservation and knowledge transmission, and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's (2004) emphasis on digital infrastructures for sustaining cultural memory. They also align with recent scholarship on music information retrieval, archive management and digital heritage preservation (Briot et al., 2020; Schellnack-Kelly & Modiba, 2025). Yet participants stressed that technological preservation should complement, rather than replace, oral traditions and lived cultural practice. Viewed through Progressive Traditionalism, AI can reinforce Indigenous cultural continuity when used as a supportive preservation tool. Technology should therefore sustain traditional knowledge rather than detach it from the communities and contexts that give it meaning. Participants identified limited African representation in AI training datasets, authenticity, copyright and the possible erosion of Indigenous knowledge as major challenges. These concerns suggest that technology adoption depends not only on perceived usefulness but also on cultural legitimacy and faithful representation. Consistent with scholarship on algorithmic bias, Indigenous data sovereignty and ethical AI governance, participants advocated African-centred datasets and collaboration among musicians, researchers, cultural custodians and technology developers. Responsible adoption should therefore be grounded in Indigenous epistemologies so that AI strengthens cultural resilience and supports sustainable transmission.

Theoretically, the study indicates that AI adoption in African traditional music cannot be understood solely through technology acceptance models. TAM explains practitioners' willingness to adopt AI according to usefulness and ease of use, while Progressive Traditionalism explains why they simultaneously insist on preserving Indigenous knowledge, human creativity and cultural authenticity. Practically, the findings highlight the need for African traditional music datasets, collaboration between software developers and cultural practitioners, and investment in digital heritage infrastructure. Successful integration of AI ultimately depends on striking a balance between technological innovation and cultural continuity.

Conclusion

This study examined the role of AI in the composition and preservation of traditional music, drawing on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Progressive Traditionalism to explore the perceptions of five experienced Ghanaian music practitioners. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the findings indicate that AI is regarded as a valuable tool for enhancing musical creativity, improving production processes, and supporting the documentation, digitisation, archiving, and preservation of Indigenous musical heritage. At the same time, participants emphasised that AI should complement rather than replace human creativity, Indigenous knowledge, cultural authority, and community-based systems of musical transmission.

The findings further highlight the importance of developing AI datasets for traditional music through culturally responsive and ethically grounded processes. Such development should consider provenance, informed and collective consent, community ownership, culturally restricted or sacred materials, access controls, benefit sharing, attribution, and the right to withdraw. These principles are particularly important where AI systems draw on Indigenous musical knowledge and cultural materials that may have specific custodial, communal, or sacred significance. Addressing these concerns can help ensure that technological innovation does not result in the extraction, inappropriate circulation, or decontextualisation of Indigenous musical knowledge.

Concerns about the limited representation of African musical traditions in AI training datasets, cultural authenticity, copyright, and the ethical governance of Indigenous knowledge suggest that AI adoption in traditional music extends beyond technological efficiency. It is also a question of

cultural continuity, creative agency, ownership, and responsible innovation. Although the study is limited by its qualitative design and small purposive sample, it provides empirical insights into how Ghanaian music practitioners perceive the opportunities and challenges associated with AI. Future research should employ broader, comparative, and mixed-methods approaches to examine how culturally grounded AI systems can support the sustainable preservation, transmission, and creative evolution of African traditional music while respecting the rights and authority of the communities that sustain it.

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Appendix A: Open-Ended Questionnaire

Study Title: Artificial Intelligence, Indigenous Knowledge, and Traditional Music in Ghana: Opportunities and Challenges for Composition and Cultural Heritage Preservation

Note: The questionnaire was administered electronically through Google Forms. It comprised open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed responses based on participants' professional experiences and perspectives regarding the application of Artificial Intelligence in the composition and preservation of traditional music.

Participant Information

Dear Participant,
You are invited to participate in this research, which explores the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the composition and preservation of traditional music. The study seeks the perspectives of experienced music practitioners regarding the opportunities, challenges, and implications of AI for creative practice and cultural heritage preservation. Your participation is entirely voluntary. All responses will be treated confidentially and used solely for academic purposes. No personally identifiable information will be disclosed in any publication arising from this study. The questionnaire should take approximately 10–15 minutes to complete. Thank you for your valuable contribution.

Section A: Participant Information
1.What is your current professional role?
☐ Music producer
☐ Sound engineer
☐ Music educator
☐ Performer
☐ Researcher
☐ Other (please specify): _____
2. Highest academic qualification

3. Institution

4. How many years have you worked in music production, sound engineering, music education, or related fields?

Section B: Artificial Intelligence and Music Composition

5. In your experience, how is Artificial Intelligence currently being used in music composition?
6. Which AI tools or applications, if any, have you used in your professional work?
7. In what ways do you think AI supports or enhances the composition of traditional music?
8. What limitations have you observed when AI is applied to traditional or Indigenous musical practices?

Section C: Artificial Intelligence and the Preservation of Traditional Music

9. How can AI contribute to the documentation and preservation of traditional music?
10. What role can AI play in digital archives, music repositories, and heritage preservation?
11. What benefits do you think AI offers researchers, musicians, educators, and cultural institutions?

Section D: Opportunities and Challenges

12. What opportunities does AI present for the future of traditional music?
13. What ethical, legal, cultural, or technical concerns should be considered when applying AI to traditional music?
14. How can AI technologies be developed in ways that respect Indigenous knowledge systems and cultural ownership?
15. What recommendations would you make for the responsible use of AI in the composition and preservation of traditional music?

Closing Statement

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. Your responses are greatly appreciated and will contribute to understanding how Artificial Intelligence can be responsibly integrated into the composition and preservation of African traditional music.