



## NANA AMA ADADZIEWAA!: THE VOICE BEHIND POPULAR HIT SONGS IN GHANA?

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**ABSTRACT:** *In this paper, we unravel the personality, musical exploits, challenges and contribution of Nana Ama Adadziewaa, Ghana's iconic female background vocalist to the music industry. Using interviews, documents and audio reviews for data collection, we reveal that Nana Ama Adadziewaa's voice is behind a corpus of popular hit songs in Ghana. Furthermore, her voice is heard on the Ghanaian airwaves nearly every day; however, this does not bring her any economic gains due to Ghana's poor royalty collection system. We conclude by eulogising Nana Ama Adadziewaa as a model of excellence in the background vocals of Ghanaian popular music and a significant contributor to the Ghanaian music industry. Subsequently, we recommend that the Ghana Music Right Organisation (GHAMRO) and relevant stakeholders enhance the royalty collection system in Ghana so that Nana Ama Adadziewaa and her contemporaries benefit as a matter of urgency from their hard work.*

**KEYWORDS:** BVs, music industry, Nana Ama Adadziewaa, hit songs, popular music



## INTRODUCTION

In popular music parlance, a background vocalist, also referred to as backing vocalist or backup singer, is a singer who performs as a background singer in *live performances* or audio recordings. Bartlett (2011) described background vocalists as professional contemporary gig singers (PCGS) who earn their income by regularly performing contemporary commercial music styles in local, national and sometimes international contexts. They either emulate the *star* artists as singers in cover bands or play their original music in various band combinations in many commercial live music locations (such as pubs, clubs, hotels, and recording studios). The importance of background vocalists or backup singers (hereafter referred to as BVs) in popular music spheres cannot be overemphasised because the ‘hook’ of many popular songs, which *catches* the listener’s attention, is usually found in the chorus, which the BVs also sing. It is worth noting that technological advancement has made it possible for individual artists to record both lead vocal (LV) and the BVs in a studio setting. Interesting as it may be, professional BVs are always in demand by music producers to provide such services. Despite the relevance and contribution of BVs to the production of vocal music in the recording industry, studies on popular musicians over the years have mainly focused on prominent mainstream individual *front artists*. It is common knowledge that music, as a cultural product, plays a vital role in the world’s cultures. For instance, music-making is a communal activity in traditional African societies. Everyone involved in creating the music is seen as a significant contributor, be it LV or BV (Agawu, 2003; Nketia, 1974; Vordzorgbe, 2009). We argue that the experiences of BVs contribute significantly to the overall sound output of popular songs by working behind the scenes to help bring these individual front artists to prominence. Notwithstanding, their contributions are usually glossed over or swept under the carpet, and in the end, no one seems to know those personalities behind the voices.

A preliminary investigation into Ghana’s popular music scene reveals prominent personalities who began as BVs. Pauline Oduro, Pascaline Edwards, Nana Adjoa Awindor, Hannah Marfo, Diana Hamilton, Mary Agyapong, Claudia Agboka, Celestine Donkor, Nana Yaa and Lamisi are a few of many examples. It is truisitic that most mainstream front artists began as BVs; nonetheless, due to the lack of recognition for BVs in the popular music scene, some of them have backed down completely, while others transited into becoming mainstream front artists. It is worth noting that a few of them, such as Margaret Adom, Suzanne Ashiagbor and Yvonne Ohene Djan (Shee), have been consistent over the years. However, Nana Ama Adadziewaa appears to be the most consistent and versatile Ghanaian female backing vocalist over the past two decades. It is quite usual for a Ghanaian BV to be artist-genre-specific; however, Nana Ama Adadziewaa is an exception to the above phenomenon. The voice of Nana Ama Adadziewaa is behind many hit songs of Ghanaian popular music artists across genres, such as the late Tommy Wiredu (highlife), Nana Quame (burger highlife), Lord Kenya (hiplife), Noble Nketsiah (gospel), Blakk Rasta (reggae) among others. Similarly, she has also worked with top-notch recording engineers/music producers in Ghana, such as George Abban and Kaywa (Tema), Zapp Mallet (Accra), Sammy Helwani (Nungua), Morris Baby Face (Kumasi), among others.

Ghanaian popular music artists usually employ female BVs, which is reflected in most popular hit songs in recent times. Also, literature on women in Ghanaian popular music is burgeoning; however, bands and individual front artists have been the focus (Ampofo & Asiedu, 2012; Arko-Mensah et al., 2020; Boateng, 2016; Donkor, 2013; Fiagbedzi, 2010; Kyere, 2012). Despite female BVs’ contributions to the Ghanaian music industry, scholarly study on them is



still lacking. For this reason, we find the case of Nana Ama Adadziewaa, Ghana's iconic female backing vocalist, interesting and attempt to unravel her personality, musical exploits, challenges, and contribution to the music industry. We refer to *front artists* as prominent mainstream artists or lead singers of a group or band.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature on Ghanaian popular music is burgeoning both historically and theoretically (Acquah et al., 2021; Aidoo, 2014; Amenyo, 2010; Ampomah, 2013; Braddock, 2020; Coffie, 2012, 2019, 2020b, 2020a; Coffie et al., 2020; Collins, 1977, 2005, 2018; Fiagbedzi, 2010; Gyebi-Tweneboah et al., 2022; Kudonu, 2012; Kudonu et al., 2021; Marfo, 2016; Otchere & Dordzro, 2020; Sowah, 2017; Webb, 2011; Yamson, 2016). John Collins, a highlife music historian, leads in this regard with a plethora of literature on the social history of highlife music (Collins, 1977, 1985, 1994, 2001, 2005, 2016, 2018). Collins traced the social history of Ghana's popular music from the 1880s to the 2000s. He also highlighted some prominent composer-performers such as E.T. Mensah, King Bruce, Guy Warren, Jacob Sam, Kwaa Mensah, E.K. Nyame, and Kakaiku, who shaped Ghanaian music soundscape. In like manner, Sunu Doe (2011, 2013), tracing the origin and development of burger highlife music, emphasised the contributions of exponents such as George Darko, Lee Duodu, Lumba Brothers, Rex Gyamfi, among others, who were all composer-performers. As much as the composer-performers mentioned above performed with bands and groups, it is worth stating that they were also the *front artists* or *faces* of their respective groups. In contrast to Collins and Sunu Doe, Coffie (2012) analysed selected works of Ebo Taylor, Stan Plange and Kwadwo Donkoh, prominent dance band highlife composers and arrangers, to uncover the stylistic trends of the dance band highlife music of the 1960s. We want to emphasise that Ebo Taylor and Stan Plange, unlike Kwadwo Donkoh, also played with bands and were not front artists; however, their composition and arranging prowess attracted a scholarly study of their personality and works.

In recent times, studies on women's role and contributions to the development of Ghanaian popular music have also been discussed extensively. According to Collins (1994), up until the late 1960s, there were very few women such as Julie Okine and Agnes Ayitey who sang for E.T. Mensah's Tempos Band and Vans Concert Group, respectively, in the 1950s. They were operating in the Ghanaian popular and concert party scene, as music was not considered a *respectable* profession for women. Kyere (2012) echoed Collins' view and argued that Ghanaian female secular musicians are underrepresented in the literature on Ghanaian music, which resulted in her comparative study of the lives and works of selected female front artists from 1980 to 2010. Kyere observed that consumers' perception of female musicians bordered on the negative, which is a recreation of the historical stigma that has always been present in the lives of female musicians who have appeared on stage as secular performers. Boateng (2016), however, stated that female popular musicians in Ghana are challenging these societally accepted perspectives of gender roles and sexuality and presenting a different narrative about women and womanhood that go contrary to those presented by their male counterparts. Arko-Mensah et al. (2020) concurred with Boateng that women are slowly changing society's perception and reinforcing the belief that they can face the opportunity when it presents itself. They also highlighted the profiles of the women performers and their achievements as a group. Also, examining the artistry of Naa Amanua, a neo-traditional female



composer-singer, Fiagbedzi (2010) encouraged Ghanaian women to take up careers as musicians despite the challenges women face in society. Donkor (2013) discussed the contribution of the Tagoe Sisters, a Ghanaian music duo, toward the development of gospel music in Ghana, as Donkor claims there were few scholarly studies on Ghanaian popular musicians at the time. Considering the discussion so far, we may infer that Ghanaian popular musicians are gradually gaining scholarly attention. This inference is also supported by the works of (Adum-Attah, 1997; Aidoo, 2019; Boahen, 2015; Brew, 2019; Coffie et al., 2020; Collins, 2016; Kaye, 1999; Obeng, 2015). However, these studies focus on prominent individual artists, thereby glossing over the significance of BVs in Ghanaian popular music.

More recent additions to scholarly oeuvres of Ghanaian popular music are Owusu-Poku (2021) and Gyebi-Tweneboah et al. (2022), where highlife songs' sonic properties become the focus. In Owusu-Poku's seminal work on *Ghanaian Highlife Sounds of the 1970s*, he noted the uniqueness of the 1970s highlife sounds compared to the 1960s, which he attributed to technological advancement and the socio-cultural context of recording approaches employed by studio engineers. Owusu-Poku explored the cultural perceptions of sound in Ghanaian music-making by delving into the recording approaches of Francis Kwakye, one of Ghana's most accomplished sound engineers of the 1970s, to unravel the uniqueness of the highlife sounds of the 1970s (Owusu-Poku, 2021). Similarly, Gyebi-Tweneboah et al. (2022) discussed the live sound reinforcement practices in the Ghanaian popular music scene from the 1940s–1950s. They postulated that the type of live sound reinforcement strategies and techniques employed at any given time depends on the technology available to practitioners. Despite the burgeoning literature on the various aspects of Ghanaian popular music, research devoted to BVs is a *sine qua non*. We also argue that Ghanaian BVs explore a wide variety of popular music styles and make a valuable contribution to the musical culture of the front artist; however, they are consistently under-studied in the majority of musical and academic literature. Therefore, it is in the quest of unravelling the personality, musical exploits, challenges, and contribution of Ghana's iconic BV, Nana Ama Adadziewaa, to the Ghanaian music industry and understanding the *world* of BVs that this study finds its justification.

## METHOD

This study is an extract from more extensive work on *Ghanaian Popular Musicians* as a resource for studying *Ghanaian Popular Musicians* in academic institutions. Drawing upon a single intrinsic case study design, we delved into an in-depth study of an individual to explore her inner workings and interactions. A case study is an intensive investigation of a phenomenon in its real-life context (Schoch, 2020; Seidu, 2007; Simons, 2009; Wynn & Williams, 2012). The study was conducted on Nana Ama Adadziewaa, Ghana's iconic backing vocalist in Accra. The study employed multiple qualitative data collection strategies, including observations, review of documents, audios, traditional and social media, and a face-to-face interview with Nana Ama Adadziewaa about her early life, musical journey, and performance exploits. We also used a semi-structured interview to collect essential information from some popular artists and recording engineers/music producers she worked with within the Ghanaian music industry through purposive sampling. Nana Ama Adadziewaa was selected for this study because of her iconic status as a BV and her consistency in the Ghanaian music industry over the past two decades in the studio and live performance contexts.



## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### *Early Life and Education*

Nana Ama Adaziewaa, christened Anna Nana Ama Dadzie is one of Ghana's most consistent and influential professional background vocalists. She was born to John Appiah Dazdie and Lydia Turkson, a non-musical wealthy family of four siblings, on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1979 at Dansoman, a suburb in the Greater Accra region of Ghana. She spent her formative years schooling, starting at Fimepp Saviour International School at Dansoman, where she had her basic education and graduated in 1994. She continued to Winneba Secondary School in the Central region for her secondary education and graduated in 1997. As a child at Achimota in Accra, her father exposed her to records of highlife and gospel music greats such as C.K. Mann, A.B. Crentsil, and Stella Seal. Hence, she effortlessly learned to sing most of the songs she heard at that tender age. In addition, she narrates, *I was often called upon to sing at morning assembly during my elementary school days*. These experiences, however, influenced her music preference in subsequent development.

Nana Ama joined her first music group, *Faithful Servants*, an interdenominational youth group, in 1995 at Akoto Lante in Accra during her junior high school days. It is worth stating that this group has also produced prominent Ghanaian gospel musicians such as Jude Lomotey, Jane and Bernice, Joe Mettle, among others. Nana Ama later joined the *National Symphony Orchestra* (NSO) in 1999 to learn how to play the violin and enhance her musical acuity. Around this same time, she met Nesbit Hanson Addey, a vocal expert, who later became her vocal coach and subsequently left the NSO and began singing in churches.

### *Early Music Life*

In 1999, a newly established radio station in Ghana, *Top Radio*, contracted the late Nana Kwame Ampadu and the late Kojo Acquai, highlife music greats, to record a jingle for a signature tune. In search of a singer to record the jingle, a family friend recommended Nana Ama to the search team, and as fate may have it, she was later invited to the studio to record the jingle. Upon reaching there, she surprisingly met Nana Kwame Ampadu and Kojo Acquai for the first time. Nana Ama narrates:

Nana Kwame Ampadu asked if I could sing... the family friend assured him and the entire crew that I was capable of singing. I also told Nana Kwame Ampadu that I had already done two live performances with Kojo Antwi, which convinced him to give me the chance to try. Kojo Acquai instructed me on what to do, and I was handed the lyrics to rehearse for the recording. The music had already been programmed.

We want to explain that Kojo Antwi is one of Ghana's most revered reggae-Afropop singers. Since Nana Ama had done a live performance with him as a background vocalist before meeting Nana Kwame Ampadu and Kojo Acquai, her credibility was no longer questionable. After the successful recording of the jingle, Kojo Acquai, being impressed with Nana Ama's silky voice, recommended her to Charles Amoah, a burger highlife music great who was also looking for a background vocalist for one of Ghana's most decorated sound engineers/music producers, Zapp Mallet. Nana Ama further explains that:



Kojo Acquai invited Charles Amoah and me to his house for a meeting. Charles Amoah then gave me five audio cassettes with eight songs each to learn all the songs within five days for an audition. Interestingly, I finished learning the songs in three days and reverted to Charles Amoah. Uncle Charles, as I affectionately call him, auditioned me on some of the songs on the cassettes. While in the audition process, a thick tall gentleman entered and sat in the studio where I was being auditioned. Immediately after the audition, Charles Amoah exclaimed, Zabbey! (referring to Zapp Mallet) meet Nana Ama, your new background vocalist, and Nana Ama, meet Zabbey, your Boss!

Zapp Mallet corroborated the above narrative in an interview about meeting Nana Ama. He narrates:

I first met Nana Ama in 2000 at Charles Amoah's house. At the time, I had a background vocalist who used to work with me on songs of musicians such as the late Tommy Wiredu and Lord Kenya, but she decided to take her career path by becoming a frontline musician. So, in a quest to find a new background vocalist, I went to Charles Amoah to help me find one, which I later discussed with him. One day, Charles Amoah called and said he had one lady for me, so I should pass by his house and check the lady out. When I arrived there, Charles Amoah was in the process of auditioning Nana Ama. I did not ask if she was the one Charles Amoah was talking about, but I assumed that she was the one, and I thought she was not bad because I could work with her. Later, Charles mentioned that she was the lady he was referring to.

Surprisingly unknown to Nana Ama, Zapp Mallet was searching for a professional BV at his TLC studios at *Mile 11* in Accra. Hence, upon impressing Zapp Mallet, he requested that she begins work as a BV the day after the audition. As a result, Nana Ama recorded her first two songs, *Me do* (My love) and *Yeesom sika* (We are treasuring money), in 2000 as a BV to Lord Kenya, one of the most influential hiplife music greats Ghana has ever seen. These songs became instant hits in Ghana and won Lord Kenya multiple awards in the 2002 Ghana Music Awards. It is worth noting that in as much as Lord Kenya's rap in the two songs is commendable, it is, however, Nana Ama's background vocals that liven the songs. Nana Ama's success with Lord Kenya won her much admiration from radio presenters, DJs and music lovers. According to one radio presenter, who does not want his name to be mentioned, *Nana Ama was nick-named Nana Ama Kenya, which afforded her more opportunities to work with other prominent Ghanaian musicians across genres. Soon, she became the most sought-after BV in the Ghanaian popular music scene.* He further explained that some DJs sometimes refuse to play songs by some artists just because Nana Ama was not the BV for those songs.

### ***Musical Exploits***

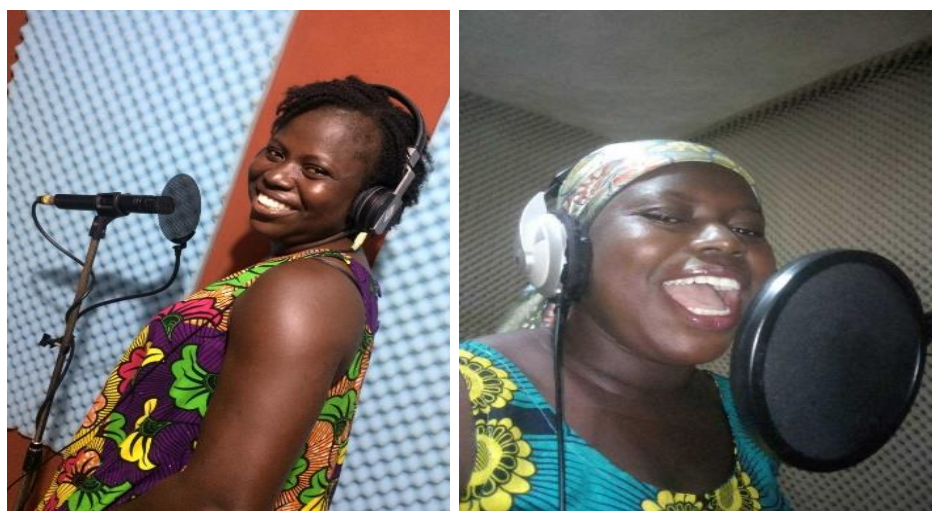
Nana Ama regards her role as a BV in recordings and live performances as a profession she loved growing up; thus, she invested a lot of time and effort into researching the art of backing vocals across genres. This bit, however, explains why she did not go as an individual front artist despite the lack of recognition for BVs in the Ghanaian music industry. Bartlett (2011) observed that professional contemporary gig singers' career success and longevity often depend on their vocal individuality and style innovation. In Nana Ama's quest to succeed and remain relevant in the Ghanaian popular music scene and industry, she developed a performance

philosophy to guide and drive her singing art and distinguished her from her contemporaries. According to Nana Ama:

as a background vocalist, I analyse and interpret the song according to the lyrics and themes... I perform every song as I would have performed my own song... since I do not know where the song would be heard, I put in all my best to make the song a success.

However, this performance philosophy was reflected in all her productions, whether audio recordings or live performances. Her aural acuity and vocal precision became the definition of background vocals in the Ghanaian recording industry. Kweku Antwi, an audio recording engineer, claims that it is quite normal for recording engineers to teach BVs voice parts during recording sessions at the studios. Some background vocalists had no idea how to sing the other voice parts. He was, however, quick to say that Nana Ama has a great sense of harmony without being taught how to harmonise songs by the engineer. *The passion, commitment, and dedication she works with have been incredible over the years. She treated every song with passion as though it was her composition*, as Kweku Antwi informs. Zapp Mallet also puts it differently: *working with Nana Ama has been phenomenal because she is very punctual, serious-minded, and excellent at whatever she does.*

Similarly, Charles Amoah, a veteran Ghanaian popular musician, greatly admired Nana Ama's musicality, describing her as *a magnificent BV of Ghanaian popular music – one of the best vocalists in Ghana*. Before most of her recording sessions, she usually takes enough rest to be sound to deliver. Furthermore, she sang all the voice parts (soprano, alto, tenor) alone for most of the songs she recorded and also contributed to the songs of some of the artists by composing choruses and *hooks*. Nana Ama further reiterated that although she may not be a good songwriter, she usually employs some of the lyrics of the verse of the song to compose her melodies, which are later used as choruses and hooks. Lord Kenya's *Me dɔ*, Blakk Rasta's *Barack Obama* and Akatakyie's *Esi* and *ɔdɔ esikyire* are a few examples of the many choruses and hooks she composed for artists. Figure 1 below shows Nana Ama in her usual elements.

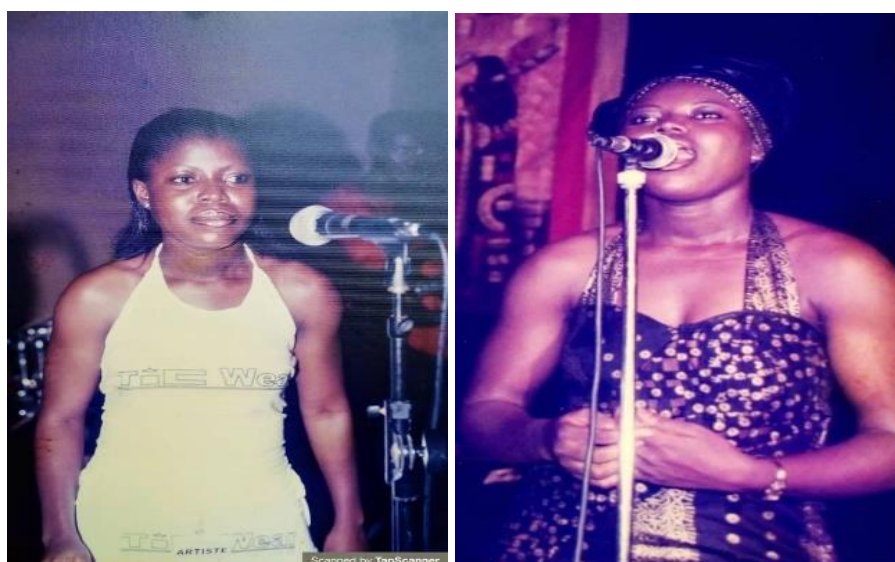


**Figure 1: Nana Ama, doing a recording session at a studio. (Image courtesy Nana Ama).**

Besides Nana Ama's musical prowess, her personality commands respect; as one of her contemporaries informed, *self-respect is her trademark. She also treats every artist with respect, no matter the level of their musical maturity.* It also explains why she became the most sought-after BV in the Ghanaian music industry. Nana Ama sharing her experiences as to what might have given her the advantage over other Ghanaian BVs in the recording industry, narrates:

I used to record songs at Ghana films studio (presently TV3 Studio B) using reel-to-reel (analogue technology), which required that the artist and the entire band rehearse for about a month or two before the recording. Hence, any mistake made by any band member during the recording process required that we begin the whole recording process once again.

She believes this enhanced her musicianship and made her very active in producing the kind of vocal sound we hear. See figure 2 below.



**Fig. 2: Young Nana Ama doing live background vocals. (Image courtesy Nana Ama).**

### ***Challenges as a Background Vocalist***

According to Nana Ama, it was quite challenging to pursue her musical career as her mother initially disapproved of her decision of becoming a musician. This challenge encountered by Nana Ama was not different from what happened to other women in Ghanaian popular music, such as Tagoe Sisters, Akosua Agyapong, Vida Opabea, Adelaide Buabeng, among others (Donkor, 2013). Collins (1994) points out that music was not considered a *respectable* profession for women in Ghanaian society. Nana Ama mitigated the above challenge by imploring Nana Kwame Ampadu, fond of her exceptional vocal ability, to convince the mother to grant her wish to pursue music as a career. We want to state that Nana Kwame Ampadu was one of the most respected Ghanaian highlife musicians. Besides, all admired his sense of lyricism; hence, Nana Ama was hopeful that the mother would accept her decision to pursue





music as a career if Nana Kwame Ampadu could speak to the mother on her behalf. Nana Ama puts it this way:

One day, Nana Kwame Ampadu accompanied me to my house, where he assured my mum that her daughter would not be a deviant and live a *loose life* as people perceive female musicians... I also promised my mum that I would not engage in immoral activity, and I confidently believe I have kept my promise.

According to Nana Ama, one of the challenges that Ghanaian BVs face today is the frequent attempt by the current crop of Ghanaian popular front artists to do both the lead and backing vocals. Despite being economical to the front artists, this development is also making the work of professional BVs less critical in the recording industry, which was not the case in the past. Furthermore, backing vocals' quality and liveliness are gradually being compromised. For instance, the sonic contrast or variation between the solo and chorus is not quite felt since the same voice sings both the lead and backing vocals. It was quite usual for Ghanaian recording studios to employ the services of BVs in the past, and artists came to the studios with their BVs. However, this practice is rarely seen in these present times.

Over the years, the poor royalty collection system in Ghana has made the work of BVs unlucrative and unattractive; thus, most Ghanaian BVs, as stated earlier, have either transited to the mainstream front artist or abandoned their music career. Acquah and Acquah-Nunoo (2021) observed that royalty payment law enforcement in Ghana is minimal. Besides, the *Ghana Music Right Organisation* (GHAMRO), the body licensed by the government for collecting and distributing royalties, is constrained by software and log-in systems to work effectively. According to Nana Ama, most background vocalists were given a meagre amount of money for transportation and food by the artists. The lack of knowledge and understanding of the music industry practices by most Ghanaian BVs has also added to their problems. In the Ghanaian music industry, a BV is usually paid an amount of money by the front artist for doing the background vocals without any contractual agreement concerning royalties. Subsequently, the BV does not benefit from the work's royalties; only the front artist benefits from the royalties generated. Nana Ama is currently leading a campaign to form a professional association for BVs in Ghana. She believes that the best input or contribution she can make in mitigating the challenges of BVs in Ghana is to educate, advocate for their recognition, appreciation and respect, and introduce contractual agreements with artists regarding royalties made from their songs.

### ***Contribution to the Ghanaian music industry***

Nana Ama has worked with many prominent artists in Ghana and abroad as a BV over the past two decades. Also, she has worked with several prominent recording engineers/music producers. See figures 3 and 4 below. Blakk Rasta, one of Ghana's reggae greats, posited that Nana Ama had done the background vocals for most popular musicians in Ghana, but none of them had worked on more songs with Nana Ama than him. He further narrates:

I have 11 albums to my credit, and only *Timbuktu By Road* has 32 tracks on it, which are not a compilation of my songs but rather new songs on an album. Nana Ama did the background vocals for about

90% of the songs on this particular album. I call her *Bandfuwo mame* (The mother of bands).



**Fig. 3: On the left, Nana Ama in a live performance with highlife & hiplife music greats, A.B. Crentsil and Obour respectively, and on the right, in a pose with the late Nana Kwame Ampadu, highlife music great. (Image courtesy Nana Ama).**



**Figure 4: Nana Ama poses with highlife and gospel music legends Pat Thomas and Yaw Sarpong. (Image courtesy Nana Ama).**

Prince Bright of *Buk-Bak* fame, a hiplife legend, similarly shares fond memories of Nana Ama, whom he worked with:

I first met Nana Ama Adedziwaa in 2000 at the Virtual Lab Studio around Ring Road. Through the recommendation of JQ, who was the in-house engineer for the studio. He spoke profoundly to us that we could work with her because she was an excellent singer. Buk Bak as a group was primarily a male-dominated group, so she was the only privileged lady to be featured on our *Klu Brofo* single. Over the years, Nana Ama Adedziwaa has remained an amazing friend with whom I



share ideas. She is an exceptional person in her *work ethic* as a singer. She hardly does multiple takes during recording processes since she often only sings what is expected of her once.

**Table 1 below shows a list of some prominent Ghanaian artists she has worked with over the past two decades as a BV. Also, see figure 5 below.**

S/N	Prominent Ghanaian Artists	Genre of Music
1.	Nana Ampadu	Highlife
2.	Papa Yankson	Highlife
3.	A.B. Crentsil	Highlife
4.	Pat Thomas	Highlife
5.	Jesse Jones	Highlife
6.	Amakye Dede	Highlife
7.	Tommy Wiredu	Highlife
8.	Micheal Dwamena	Highlife
9.	Lucky Mensah	Highlife
10.	Kaakyire Kwame Appiah	Highlife
11.	Naa Agyeman	Highlife
12.	Daasebre Gyamenah	Highlife
13.	George Darko	Burger Highlife
14.	Charles Amoah	Burger Highlife
15.	McGod	Burger Highlife
16.	Daddy Lumba	Burger Highlife
17.	Nana Acheampong	Burger Highlife
18.	Nana Quame	Burger Highlife
19.	Rex Omar	Afro-pop
20.	Ssue	Afro-pop
21.	Kojo Antwi	Afro-pop
22.	KK. Kabobo	Reggae
23.	Randy Nunoo	Reggae
24.	Rocky Dawuni	Reggae
25.	Shasha Marley	Reggae
26.	Black Rasta	Reggae
27.	Samini	Reggae
28.	Bishop Michael Osei Bonsu	Gospel
29.	Yaw Sarpong	Gospel
30.	Nana Yaw Asare	Gospel
31.	Nicholas Omane Acheampong	Gospel
32.	Prophet Seth Frimpong	Gospel
33.	Noble Nketsiah	Gospel
34.	Grace Ashy	Gospel
35.	Phillipa Baafi	Gospel
36.	Lord Kenya	Hiplife
37.	Akatakyie	Hiplife
38.	Okomfuo Kwadee	Hiplife
39.	Buk Bak	Hiplife
40.	VIP	Hiplife

41.	Obrafour	Hiplife
41.	Obour	Hiplife
43.	Kontinehene	Hiplife
44.	Abrewa Nana	Hiplife
45.	Edem	Hiplife
46.	Ekow Shailo	Hiplife
47.	Berima Sidney	Hiplife
48.	Tinny	Hiplife
49.	Antwi ne Antwi	Hiplife
50.	Terry Bonchaka	Hiplife
51.	Sonnie Achiba	Hiplife
52.	Kwaw Kesse	Hiplife
53.	Kofi Debrah	Hiplife
54.	Lady Talata	Hiplife



**Fig. 5: Nana Ama poses with Ghanaian reggae music greats Shasha Marley and Blakk Rasta. (Image courtesy Nana Ama).**

**Table 2 below shows a list of some prominent international artists she has worked with over the past two decades as a BV.**

S/N	Prominent International Artists	Country
1.	Steve Wonder	USA
2.	Luciano	Jamaica
3.	Yvonne Chaka Chaka	South Africa
4.	Omawumi	Nigeria
5.	Onyeka Onwenu	Nigeria
6.	Flava	Nigeria
7.	Samsung	Nigeria
8.	Yaya Lele	Togo
9.	Miata Fahnbulleh	Liberia
10.	Alidu Mohammed	Ghana/USA

**Table 3 below shows some prominent recording engineers/music producers she has worked with locally and internationally in the recording industry as a BV over the past two decades. Also, see figure 6 below.**

S/N	Sound Engineers/Music Producers	Country
1.	Charles Amoah	Ghana
2.	Zapp Mallet	Ghana
3.	Jay Q	Ghana
4.	Hammer of The Last Two	Ghana
5.	Sammy Helwani	Ghana
6.	Morris Babyface	Ghana
7.	Kaywa	Ghana
8.	Sugartone	Ghana
9.	Bodo Steiger	Germany
10.	Colter Harper	USA
11.	Master Kraft	Nigeria



**Fig. 6: Nana Ama in an embrace with her mentor, legendary Ghanaian sound engineer/music producer Zapp Mallet. (Image courtesy Nana Ama).**

**Table 4 below shows a list of some Ghanaian popular hit songs that the background vocals are credited to her.**

S/N	Song Title	Artist
1.	Me dɔ & Yɛsɔm sika	Lord Kenya
2.	Ahwedɛ Abena & Abrɔ ne bayie	Okomfour Kwaadɛ
3.	Kwansema	Daasebre Gyamenah
4.	Klu blofo	Buk Bak
5.	ɔdɔ esikyire & Esi	Akatakylie
6.	Sony m'aba	Sony Achiba
7.	Ma nonkɔ & Me ne me joly	VIP



8.	Yesu Wo Dɔ	Noble Nketsiah
9.	Kasa ma m'koma & Kodwootɔ	Bishop Michael Osei Bonsu
10.	Mehuri sɔ	Prophet Seth Frimpong
11.	Visa	Nana Yaw Asare
12.	Wɔ Nuntsɔ Yesu & Agye sɛ Wobe mu	Grace Ashy
13.	Mogya no akasa (Album)	Philipa Baafi
14.	Kwahu Bepɔ	Naa Agyeman
15.	Me dɔ mu ye du	Tommy Wiredu
16.	Apuskeleke	Kofi Debrah
17.	Puulele	Terry Bonchaka
18.	Barack Obama & Cocaine in the palace	Black Rasta
19.	Woyonko da ne wo da & Yekum wo	Berima Sidney
20.	Awɔ de me	Nana Quame

**Table 5 below shows prominent Ghanaian bands she has performed with as an unofficial member.**

S/N	Bands
1.	Rex Omar's Nu Ashanty Band
2.	Blakk Rasta's Herbalist Band
3.	Goodies International Band
4.	Kojo Antwi's Band
5.	Rocky Dawuni's Band

**Table 6 below shows some notable events, landmarks, awards and recognition of Nana Ama as a BV. Also, see figure 7 below.**

S/N	Event & Landmarks	Year
1.	Rocky Dawuni's Annual Independence Show	2000 – 2010
2.	Steve Wonder Live in Ghana	2004
3.	Ghana Black Stars' Fifa World Cup Cheer Song	2006
4.	Goethe-Institut Burger Highlife Show	2007 – 2009
5.	FIFA 08 Soundtrack (Wake up the town) by Rocky Dawuni	2007
6.	Playing for Change & Volunteering music teacher	2008
7.	International Women Colloquium in Liberia	2009
8.	Luciano Live in Ghana	2016
9.	7DS GH TV (Honourary Award)	2020
10.	3 Music Awards (Contribution to the Music Industry)	2021
11.	Global Music Awards Africa (Contribution to the Music Industry)	2021



**Fig. 7: Nana Ama received an award from Global Music Awards Africa and 7DS GH TV. (Image courtesy Nana Ama).**

It is worth stating that Nana Ama has done background vocals to over a thousand songs and has also worked with over a hundred front artists; however, only some of the notable hit ones are listed in tables 1–4. We also want to add that she has even lost count of some of her works. Aside from Nana Ama’s career as a BV, she is an entrepreneur and does pro bono music teaching at Bizung Music School, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) in Tamale in the Northern region of Ghana.

## CONCLUSION

In this study, we have constructed a concise narrative of the personality, musical exploits, challenges and contribution of Nana Ama Adadziewaa to the Ghanaian music industry. Also, we have barely scratched the surface in finding Nana Ama’s place within the Ghanaian background vocal scene. Hence, extensive studies are needed to thoroughly compare Nana Ama’s approach to background vocals to her contemporaries and determine her historical significance and impact on the style. She has worked closely with popular recording engineers/music producers and artists across genres, both locally and internationally. Furthermore, it appears that any song she recorded as a BV became an instant hit. Thus, she is a significant contributor to the music industry, considering how consistent she has been in the Ghanaian music industry and the many hit songs to her credit as a BV. Her voice is heard on the Ghanaian airwaves nearly every day; however, this does not bring her any economic gains due to Ghana's poor royalty collection system. We, therefore, recommend that the Ghana Music Right Organisation (GHAMRO) and relevant stakeholders should, as a matter of urgency, enhance the royalty collection system so that Nana Ama Adadziewaa and her contemporaries benefit from their hard work.



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