

Focus Day 2008



"Out of Africa" African Influence in Contemporary Percussion Music

Hosted by Benjamin Toth
Presented by the
PAS New Music/Research Committee

SESSION I

9:00 A.M. BALLROOM D

KALABASH (2004) BY NIGEL WESTLAKE

Performed by The University of Kentucky Chamber Percussion Group, James Campbell, Director

Rimshot Music

"Kalabash" for four percussionists, was composed as part of the HC Coombs Creative Arts Fellowship for the ANU School of Music's student percussion ensemble "Drumatix" and was premiered by them at the National Art Gallery in July 2004.

Two marimbas and a selection of splash cymbals and log drums are shared amongst the four players who engage in a virtuosic interplay reminiscent of the balofon music of West Africa. The balofon is the forerunner of the modern marimba and shares many physical characteristics with its modern counterpart, the main difference being that the wooden bars (or notes) are suspended above a collection of different sized kalabash gourds instead of aluminium resonators. In some instances these gourds have spiderwebs stretched over their openings which create a fantastic buzzing resonance when the bars are hit with mallets.

The traditional music of West Africa frequently features the balofon and there are many accomplished exponents of dazzling virtuosity amongst the tribes of Northern Ghana. It is the musical gestures and celebratory nature of this folk music which in some ways informs the language of Kalabash and though there is no direct borrowing of musical themes or techniques, this exotic sound world has become a departure point for the compositional process.

ABERINKULA I (2004) BY KYLE FORSTHOFF

The bata drums were originally developed by the Yoruba people of modern-day Nigeria and the tradition was imported to Cuba during the years of slave trade. Since that time the bata drums have been used as the primary instrumental accompaniment to the rituals and practices of the Santeria religion, which continues to thrive not only in Cuba, but in the US as well.

"Aberinkula I" was composed in September 2004 and combines traditional Cuban bata rhythms and compositional ideas of my own design. During the summer of 2004, I was fortunate to receive a Research and Creativity Grant from the University of Kentucky, which I utilized to attend the 9th Annual Explorations in Afro-Cuban Dance and Drum Workshop held at Humboldt State University in Arcata, California. During the workshop, I was able to continue my studies of the folkloric tradition of bata drumming, which I had begun some years earlier. I envision this work to be the first in a series of pieces composed to both reinforce my studies of bata drumming as well as provide a forum for my own compositional ideas. The word 'aberinkula' in the title refers to any set of bata drums that would be used in a non-sacred situation, such as in the performance of this piece.

The piece is composed in two large sections, the first predominantly in triple meter, the second in duple, gradually building in speed and intensity to a climatic finish. Among some nine traditional toques (rhythms) are also to be found compositional techniques such as the cyclical phasing found in many African musics, rhythmic construction a la Steve Reich, a three-part fugato section, and a number of North Indian tihais used as cadential devices. This piece is affectionately dedicated to my teacher, mentor, and friend Michael Spiro for introducing me to this amazing musical tradition.

CONTINUUM WORLD PREMIERE BY JOHN PENNINGTON

Performed by John Pennington and the Tellus Percussion Ensemble

The composition "Continuum" is in two sections (attacca) for six players which utilizes (in the second section) a bar percussion instrument (made by Richard Cooke of Freenotes) which is similar to a vibraphone bar with a trough resonator and is hand held accompanying a Middle Eastern Tar, tuned to a note in the scale of the bar instruments. The first section exploits the Brazilian instrument Caxixi in varied sizes which develop the unique possibilities of the instrument and is based on traditional African rhythms including the Ewe: Agbekor, Gahu and Kpanlogo. The title represents the ever-present process and ubiquitous nature of African rhythm and its varied manifestations.

HANDS UP (2002) BY JOSH GOTTRY

Performed by The Winthrop University Percussion Ensemble, B. Michael Williams, Director

C. Alan Publications

"Hands Up" is a conga trio based loosely on elements of West African djembe rhythms. The piece opens in 12/8 time

with a unison statement from the ensemble, then alternates between layered patterns, solo sections for each player, and the opening statement. The mid-section of the piece shifts temporarily into 4/4 time and each player utilizes a different implement (brush, blastick, or mallet) on the conga or conga shell. The original feel then returns for a short reprise of the opening material.

PATTERN TRANSFORMATIONS (1988)

BY LUKAS LIGETI

Performed by Third Coast Percussion

Composer's Note: "Pattern Transformations" is one of the first pieces I ever composed, and is certainly the first in which I began to find a voice of my own. Inspired by the metric structure of Baganda court music, from a region today situated Uganda, I set out developing new forms of interplay between musicians in an ensemble. Based on a fast fundamental pulse, different musicians feel the "beat" at different moments, and this relative notion of meter opens the door to endless polyrhythmic possibilities, giving the music a 3-dimensional quality, akin to looking at a sculpture from different sides. For me, this piece was the beginning of a path of exploration of polymetrics which continues to this day and has become one of my main areas of interest as a composer.

SESSION II

10:00 A.M. BALLROOM G

DAKU DAKU DEH

BY NED F. SMITH

Performed by Benjamin Toth

The composer describes the piece as follows: "Ultimately, the title, 'Daku Daku Deh,' is a phonetic representation of the central motif of four sixteenth notes and an eighth note. The piece is reminiscent of the polymetric music commonly heard in West Africa, particularly in Ghana, and inspired by the 'Ritmica' system of rhythmic independence as developed in Sao Paulo, Brazil by Jose Eduardo Gramani (and taught to me by Rogerio Boccato). Since this piece began as an exercise in independence, part of the composition and practice regimen was singing the main theme and doing movement and rhythm workouts with my hands and feet utilizing shifting ostinati of variable and uneven lengths. The pedaled instruments are left to the discretion of the performer, as is the length and material used in the improvisation midway through the piece. The only request given is that the improvisation focus around a repeating straight sixteenth note and utilize the 'Daku Daku Deh' motif as a centralizing idea. The overall complexity of the shifting polymeters can be explored in a more subtle fashion before the piece comes to its final climax. The piece is dedicated to Rogerio Boccato." —N.F. Smith

The performer adds the following: The polymetric nature of the composition is the most obvious connection to West African percussion music (e.g. Agbekor, Fume Fume, Adzrowo, Adzogbo). The main theme is an ever-shrinking or expanding ostinato that is repeated throughout the piece (played with two sticks on bongos). Meanwhile, the feet manipulate four foot-pedals in order to "show" the theme in different "meters" or subdivisions – much like the way the supporting drums, bells and rattles "highlight" seemingly different meters in West African music. In "Daku Daku Deh" the composer layers two or more implied meters simultaneously, including subdivisions of two, three, four, five, and/or six. I have selected a djembe, darabouka, hi-hat and bass drum for the instruments that are to be played with the feet. —Benjamin Toth

SIMPLE SONGS OF BIRTH AND RETURN

BY NATHAN DAVIS

Performed by Douglas Perkins

Mytoses Music

Commissioned by Douglas Perkins, "Simple Songs of Birth and Return" is inspired by the essential function of mbira music in life rituals of the Shona people of Zimbabwe. In writing these pieces, I sought this quality in my own musical language—a language that is not African at all but rather roots its cultural relevance in my time and place. "A Tale Begun," the first of the two movements, is written in celebration of the birth of Douglas' first child, Jacob, and takes its name from a poem by Wislawa Szymborska. "Two Shadows" is inspired by the Shona concept of the separation of one's light and dark shadows after death.

EITHER/OR

BY DOMINIC DONATO

Performed by Michael Lipsey

"either/or" is composed of two alternating sections, either "Strictly in time" which should be precise with a strong implied pulse, or "Flexible" which should be more free. As the piece progresses, the task of the performer becomes more challenging as each section eventually takes on characteristics of the other.

—Dominic Donato

PEBBLE PLAYING IN A POT (1976)

U.S. PREMIERE PERFORMANCE

BY LASZLO SARY

Performed by Adam Blackstock

Editio Musica Budapest

During the 1970's Laszlo Sary became entangled in the compositional process of minimalism; "Pebble Playing in a Pot" is the product of his research and interest in the compositional method. With its use of only six pitches and constant repetition, the listener may be reminded of similar works such as Steve Reich's "Music for Pieces of Wood and Drumming." One may hear elements of West African Drumming within this piece, as the repetitive of bell patterns. The work may be divided into three large sections, all of which begin with a very thin texture of only two pitches; each section then develops into a much broader texture as more and more notes are added to the respective patterns. The A and B sections are an inversion of one another, and the C section serves as a coda.

6&8 (2007)

BY TOBIAS BROSTRÖM

Performed by Austin Vaughn

"6&8" borrows most of its material from West African drum traditions, in particular from Gambia. In 2001 I spent three weeks in the small village Tumani Tenda, and at the organized village-camp I had the opportunity to meet representatives from four distinct West African/Gambian musical cultures: Mandinka (cora, ballafon), Wolof (drums/singing), Susu (djembah, dundun-bah, singing and dance), and Fula (flute, callabash, riti, and acrobatics).

Susu and Wolof, which both share a strong tradition in drumming, were my primary inspirations. Susu is originally from Guinea Conacry and is closely related to Mandinka. All of these once disparate cultures are now found all over West Africa due to the circulatory effects of war, tourism, trade and nomadism. Susu was refined under the administration of president Sechko Touray in Guinea Conacry when music schools for all children were established.

The rhythms in "6&8" are traditional beats and breaks (particularly in the style of Susu), here developed and modernized. Call and reply, for instance, is characteristic of Wolof -originally a way of communication, they are the messengers and storytellers. In "6&8" the bass drum imitates the DunDun-Bah (the Susu bass drum) and the hi-hat acts as a simplified clave usually played on a bell that is connected to the DunDun-Bah.

VOCALISE FOR DJEMBÉ AND REAL-TIME COMPUTER SOUND PROCESSING (2008)

WORLD PREMIERE

BY CHRISTOPHER TONKIN

Performed by Morris Palter

The instrumental part of "Vocalise" combines traditional djembé playing with various non-traditional, "invented" techniques. Though none of the material for the piece was derived from anything specifically African—such as those rhythmic patterns that might accompany various traditional African ceremonies—general features such as repetition, periodicity and polyrhythm still remain very much in the foreground.

Beyond the notion that many African rhythms are derived from speech patterns, the djembé and other African instruments possess an inherent vocal quality, largely to do with their natural range of color. Taking this as a point of departure, at various points throughout the piece the sound of the live djembé is convolved—subtly hybridized—with pre-recorded vocal timbres (actually sung vowel sounds). It is this feature that explains the title "Vocalise," a term defined as a textless vocal exercise. The amplification serves further to accentuate some of the acoustic properties of the drum, most notably its distinctive natural resonance.

SHE WHO SLEEPS WITH A SMALL BLANKET

BY KEVIN VOLANS

Performed by Rick Kurasz

"She Who Sleeps With A Small Blanket" was written for Robyn Schulkowsky and first performed by her at the Musuem Carolina Augusteum in Salzburg on October 22, 1985.

Composer's Note: The only overly African thing about this piece is the title, which implies 'she who sleeps alone.' I.e. without a lover. I wrote it as a virtuoso etude for Robyn Schulkowsky. At the same time I decided to make it a composition study for myself, by limiting the instrumentation to drums only, with a brief coda on marimba. I explored several different kinds of patterning, the principal one being cross-rhythms in triplets played with two sticks.

SESSION III

11:30 A.M. BALLROOM D

WEST

BY JOSEPH HARCHANKO

Performed by Due East (Erin Lesser, flutes; Greg Beyer, percussion)

Arcomusical

Composer's Note: This work is an exploration of the role of timbre and rhythm in the indigenous music of several cultures around the world, linking it to the rhythmic and timbral idioms of early 21st century art music. I see the West as the great confluence of world cultures—a meeting point of European and African cultures from the indigenous peoples that continue to flourish here today. Further, the landscapes of the West contain a power all their own that permeates and vibrates among those who live here today.

The piece utilizes a poem by the Sao Paulo based poet, Sérgio Alcides. Entitled *Suite Camarae*, it is written in the form of traditional lyrics from Capoeira Angola, the Afro-Brazilian martial art in which the berimbau finds its home. The inspiration for the poem came from a collaboration with Due East percussionist, Greg Beyer, whose voice is heard in the pre-recorded sound files that make up part of the work.

MORE AFRICAN LAUGHTER

WORLD PREMIERE

BY C. CURTIS SMITH

Performed by the Coalescence Percussion Duo (Judy Moonert and Greg Secor)

TIME'S RACING (BUT MEASURED BY WHAT WE DO)

BY ERIC RICHARDS

Performed by Kay Stonefelt and Tiffany Nicely

Frog Peak

Composer Eric Richards and Kay Stonefelt began collaborating for "Time's Racing" by exploring the new sounds of a metal gyl from Ghana, West Africa. The tuning (pentatonic) and structure of this instruments are inspired by the traditional gyl, a wooden pentatonic xylophone of the Dagara people from the Upper West Region of Ghana. The metal gyl keys are cut from zinc or tin roofing, tuned to a dialectical pentatonic scale, and placed over small gourds that act as resonators.

In "Time's Racing," Richards seeks to combine the sounds of a new but traditionally inspired instrument, the metal gyl, with the sounds of a modern instrument of the West, the vibraphone, and the traditional Tibetan tingsha (small cymbal) pitched to d, the combination of which requires the utmost sensitivity, precision, and interaction between the performers. There are no solo lines, but rather a mixture of timbres that emerge from the two performers.

Richards has written the piece to be performed in two ways. His first idea, and the performance at PASIC 2008, is for two musicians, each with a vibraphone, a gyl, and a tingsha, to perform each of the parts live. The results are subtle and the parts combine as a whole, not standing out one from the other. The alternate version is for one part to be pre-recorded and mixed with the other part in a live performance.

Richards' ideas are a perfect coming together of instruments from various cultures and the cultural expectations of the instruments, the weaving of sounds and timbres, indigenous yes, but also a bit of the experimental from both continents. Richards' ideas for this piece, like much of his other works, play to that which is reflective, pensive, and intimate in the areas of timbre and tuning.

"Time's Racing" contains many subtleties and nuances that cannot be notated—an ever present issue in new music to be sure. For instance, the early or late entrances before or after the beat, and how to treat them; the repeated notes or bebung; the unstemmed notes without meter, just how occasionally are they phrased and how perceptible are the interior fermatae, these are issues, even though carefully and distinctly put forth in the performance notes, that have been more closely considered between Richards and the performers.

"Time's Racing" truly belongs in the category of chamber music for percussion. It is completely acoustic, with two performers, and it is intimate in concept and performance.

THE INNOCENTS

BY JOHN LANE AND ALLEN OTTE

Performed by John Lane and Allen Otte

"The Innocents" was originally conceived as an evening length performance art piece that complemented Taryn Simon's photographic exhibition of the same title at the Cincinnati Contemporary Arts Center. Simon's photographs are of individuals—either at the scene of the crime or at the scene of their alibi—who were exonerated through The Innocence Project (www.innocenceproject.org) using DNA evidence. Individuals in some cases served up to 18 years in prison before being exonerated. Her work questions the use of photographs or eyewitness account, acknowledging that unjust convictions often result from a victim's response to photographs or lineups.

From the larger work, we have distilled music and text into a shorter format for this performance. Through the use of found sounds, mbira, and karimba, the work illustrates some of the strong emotional responses brought about by Simon's original work. The music is broken into short, but relatively continuous movement: Intro/Rap, Exposition, Litany, Prison Song, and Postlude.

WE SHALL OVERCOME (2005)

ARR. DAVID MACBRIDE

Performed by Murray Mast and Jeff Neitzke

Pan Press

"We Shall Overcome" is based on the famous spiritual made popular during the civil rights movement. Like many people, I have vivid memories of singing this song at peace rallies during the '60s. The piece is written in the spirit of the folk song tradition of adapting and elaborating on pre-existing material. The work combines freely composed music with improvisation based on the tune. In addition, listen for subtle, or not-so-subtle, musical references. This piece, along with "This Land is Your Land," was commissioned in 2005 by Murray Mast and Josh Quillen. —David Macbride

ONCE REMOVED

BY JOHN FITZ ROGERS

Performed by The Meehan/Perkins Duo (Todd Meehan and Douglas Perkins)

Base Two Music Publishing

"Once Removed" is based on a simple premise: two marimbists play the same or related music at a fairly fast tempo, but they almost never play together. Individually, each performer must execute fairly simple patterns with great rhythmic precision, and to help, each listens to a click track (electronic pulses not heard by the audience) over headphones supplied by an audio CD. However, what is recorded on the CD are two different click tracks on the separate left and right stereo channels (one performer listens to the left channel, the other to the right channel). Though both click tracks proceed at the same tempo, one track stays at a fixed distance behind the other, which means that the one performer is always slightly "behind" the other performer. When these individually simple patterns are combined in performance, the resulting mosaic is both very fast and quite complex—something that sounds like one "super marimba" rather than two individual lines.

Of course, the conceptual challenge for the performers is difficult, even though the patterns themselves are not overly virtuosic. Musicians are trained to communicate and to play together, yet in some ways this work demands that the performers not listen to each other. Though the technology of multiple click tracks creates new possibilities of texture and ensemble precision, the trade-off in "Once Removed" is that each player remains somewhat isolated from the instruments he or she plays, and more importantly, musically separated from the other performer, like people trying to reach one another from opposite sides of a thin glass pane.

SESSION IV

2:00 P.M. BALLROOM D

TRIO FOR OGUN (1996)

BY N. SCOTT ROBINSON

Performed by Winthrop University Percussion Ensemble, B. Michael Williams, Director

New World View Music

"Trio for Ogun" is neither religious nor traditional but is inspired by African cosmology. I was introduced to aspects of traditional religion from Africa and the African Diaspora during a seminar on African religions while a graduate student at Kent State University.

"Trio for Ogun" is also inspired by the concept of phasing, which I learned from playing the music of Glen Velez, Robert "Tigger" Benford, and Steve Reich. The entire piece is based on only two rhythmical patterns, one in six beats and the other in eight beats. Each hand drum, features an open melodic tone, a sharp unpitched slap, and a closed unpitched bass tone. The musicians play in unison and on cue, one will start the pattern a half of a beat early while another starts the pattern an entire beat late with one musician keeping the original pattern. The result is that the open tones of the hand drums interlock to form a melody. The slaps also interlock and by assigning a horn note a fifth higher than the open tone of each drum for the slaps, a counter melody is produced, for which I originally used African ivory trumpets (known as aben among the Asante in Ghana and mbongo among the Mangebetu in Democratic Republic of Congo) but tuned conch shells can be substituted as well.

A particular goal of this piece is to give the Western performer a kind of African experience while playing music. Despite the score being written in a traditional Western fashion, the piece is correctly performed without the score and, hopefully, without the performers counting the individual parts in a Western fashion. While out of phase, each performer must listen carefully as to how their individual parts fit in the melodies produced. Much of traditional polyrhythmic African drumming music works in a similar fashion in that it is not counted but the individual players "feel" the correct alignment of each part in the polyrhythmic-melodic tapestry being produced in a given piece without the concept of counting beats.

"Trio for Ogun" was first performed in 1996 at Kent State University in Ohio followed by 2 subsequent performances in Ohio, and later performances at Berklee College of Music, University of Kentucky, Winthrop University, Northern Illinois University, and Southern Oregon University, among others.

DOMINICAN CYCLES

WORLD PREMIERE

BY JEREMY BRUNK

Performed by The Millikin Percussion Ensemble, Brian Justison, Director

In January of 2007 the Millikin University Percussion Ensemble had the opportunity to visit the Dominican Republic, presenting concerts in vicinity of Santo Domingo. Part of our tour included studying Dominican drumming styles with folklorist and percussionist Edis Sanchez. Impressed by the depth and variety of these musical traditions, as well as the clear connections to African music, I began writing “Dominican Cycles” before we had even left the island. In an effort to reveal the common rhythmic elements at the heart of all Dominican music, “Dominican Cycles” involves the deconstruction and juxtaposition of drumming patterns from several musical styles that would otherwise not be combined. The first movement draws from Salves, Los Palos and Los Congos del Espirito Santo, with each rhythm subjected to contrasting subdivisions of the beat, often resulting in the simultaneous perception of multiple tempos. Several variants of Merengue, the popular national music of the Dominican Republic, appear in the second movement alongside Gaga, the rural dance music of the sugar cane fields. The designation “Cycles” to this composition refers to its musical form, in the same abstract manner as a Sonata or Fugue may describe a piece of non-programmatic, absolute music. “Dominican Cycles” represents the fourth such completed work bearing this title. In this case, cyclical permutations of the numbers 1-9 govern the overall palindromic design and are evident in the changing trio groupings of the nine players. Composed for Brian Justison and the Millikin University Percussion Ensemble, the first movement of “Dominican Cycles” was premiered on April 20, 2008 at Millikin and the second movement completed in June.

KLUNG

BY DAVID MACBRIDE

Performed by Quey Percussion Duo with Bill Solomon

OKHO

BY IANNIS XENAKIS

Performed by the Talujon Percussion Group

“Okho” is an exploration of the melodic and textural possibilities that the West African djembes plus one bass drum can afford. Within each of the eight sections, the composer uses homogeneous thematic material distributed in solos, duos and trios in order to achieve the remarkable macro/micro symbiosis that characterizes all of Xenakis’ works.

ZAVANNA

BY SØREN MONRAD (2007)

Performed by The Oberlin Percussion Group, Allen Otte, Director

CONCERT

3:15 P.M. BALLROOM G

NEW MUSIC FROM BRAZIL

DUO ELLO (CARLOS STASI AND GUELLO)

Two basic characteristics of the duet have impressed different audiences; the intensity of their performance and the innovative repertoire. In this sense, various instruments, even the most conventional ones, are explored in many ways, including the creation of innovative playing techniques to produce unique musical structures and sonorities.

A MOMENT (2001/2001) BY CARLOS STASI

Two gongs and frying pans

Despite apparent limited sources, a great complexity of colors, rhythms and techniques are produced by using only two gongs and frying pans.

SANTOS (1999/2000) BY CARLOS STASI

Güira and cajon

An intense piece featuring the cajon and the wild Dominican scraper called guiro.

VIAGEM (2000) BY CARLOS STASI

Berimbau and metal reco-reco with springs

This piece was originally composed as a solo for metal reco-reco with springs (Xavier Guello, 1994/1995) and it was dedicated to Guello. A version for two instruments, including the Brazilian musical bow called berimbau, was then created in 2000.

ELA (1993/2001/2002) BY CARLOS STASI

Panderios, caxixis kalimba, temple bell and frame drum

This duet for pandeiros is softer than the first and also features a new technique of playing kalimba inside a pandeiro. The piece impresses for its simplicity and timbre quality.

EVENING CONCERT

8:00 P.M. BALLROOM D

JOE GALEOTA AND THE BERKLEE WEST ARICAN DRUM AND DANCE ENSEMBLE

WITH SPECIAL GUESTS BERNARD WOMA, NANI AGBELI AND SAEED ABBAS

THE MUSICAL LANDSCAPE OF GHANA: TRADITIONAL GHANAIAAN MUSIC FROM THE TEN REGIONS

KETE

Kete is music commonly found in the royal courts of traditional Akan communities. The music communicates praise for chiefs and tells of his varied accomplishments. Additionally, Kete portrays the exploits of war. The drummers are hand-picked by the royal court and their drums are wrapped in ornate red and black cloth. The music is performed in the courts of every chief whose status entitles him to be carried in a palanquin. Therefore, it is frequently heard at many state occasions and festivals. The most elaborate arrangements are performed at the enstoolment of the Asantehene, or King of the Ashanti nation. The Asantehene speaks through a linguist and often is seen with a certain type of grass in his mouth while being transported on the palanquin. Draped in gold, the Asantehene is dressed in a full kente cloth, the royal dress of kings and queens of the Ashanti Nation.

BAMAAYA

Bamaaya is an ancient dance performed by Dagomba farmers of the Northern Region in Ghana. Originally a men’s dance, Bamaaya became popular first in Tamale by Jago Morrow and soon spread throughout the country as a main item in the repertoire of many cultural groups. The dance has five sections, each with its own set of movements and rhythms. It began at the end of a long period of drought as an expression of happiness and gratitude. The two double headed goat skin drums that are commonly used in Dagbon are the lunga hour glass shaped drum and the gungon, a small bass drum with a snare stretched across each head. Each drum is played with a curved stick.

GYIL SOLO BY BERNARD WOMA

Yilla/Guola is a traditional music of the Sissala people from the Upper West region of Ghana. Yilla, is a recreational music performed during moonlight celebrations and other social events as is meant to educate people about social control and other vices in the community. Guola is the traditional funeral music and dance for the elderly. Bernard’s unique arrangement of the two combines both styles, played on the upper and lower bars of the xylophonecalled gyil.

Bewaa is a recreational music and circular dance among the youth of the Dagara people of Northwestern Ghana. It is joyous and playful in nature and includes songs from everyday life. The modern form, called Piru, performed this evening, is a platform for new dance steps and creative gestures. The song Yaa Yaa Kole depicts social interaction; it translates to “Please keep begging --if she is happy, she will accept your proposal.”

ADZOGBO

Adzogbo—A Fon drum and dance suite, found it’s origin in Benin several hundred years ago and became popular among the Ge of Southern Togo and the Anlo Ewes of Southern Ghana, in the late 19th century. The theme of Adzogbo strength against enemies and pride of being the best, is performed in two sections Todzo for women and Le for men. Todzo also called Kadodo (literally: fencing with rope) is comprised of a basic dance step patterned in 6 and songs that are referential in nature. The Le is a series of poems that are highly choreographed. Traditionally, the lead dancer, atsado recites the poem or chant, and then it is translated in movement and rhythm. Adzogbo is difficult to master and takes much preparation and rehearsal. The dancers are dressed in colorful costumes and exciting dialogues of complex rhythms that are expressed between the support and master drums.

KPANLOGO

Kpanlogo is a recreational music of the Ga people, dating back to the early 1960’s in the capitol city of Accra. Kpanlogo is a fusion of four Ga traditional dances: Gome, Kolomashie, Oge and Highlife. This new music form— often equated with rock and roll—spawned from the younger generation in search of a redefined identity during the early phase of Ghana’s newly gained independence in 1957. It was not until two famous Kpanlogo dancers, Frankie Laine and Otoo Lincoln, performed a gentler version of what had been seen as a “vulgar” new dance for Ghana President Nkrumah that the dance was deemed nationally acceptable. Since then, Kpanlogo has continued to be performed at most festive occasions throughout Ghana by an array of cultural and traditional groups.