Ensemble Performers:
Michelle Aniwaa
Victoria Awogbemi
Windila Balbone
Joseph Benedict
Andrew Clifford
Megan Combs
Daniel Conroy
Aoua Dukure
Fauzia Ghatta
Kerr Gooden
Shalini Gunaratna
Alexa Mani
Evan Mason
Elira Mavraj
Diana Minerva
Margaret O'Connor
Brianna Ridler
Linck Rossano
Jamie Salerno
Tia Samuel
Geoffrey Schmerherhorn
Madeline Schmauch
Alex Tunison
Jayden Williams

Additional Guests:
Nana Abena Baffour Akoto
Anthony Frimpong
Erica Mensah
Kwabena Poku

West African Drum & Dance Ensemble
Julie Hunter, director
Martin Kwaku Kwaakye Obeng, guest instructor and artist

Zamina
Kpatsa Dance-Drumming
Shayo Lee
Kpatsa Le Samba
Tu Tu Gbovi
Agbadza Dance-Drumming
Kwadzo Ku
Agba Ee
Sansa Kroma
Kpanlogo Dance-Drumming
Tsoo Boi
Haa Mi Ayekoo
Engo N'na Ee
Osei Aye
Zamina
Calabash

Special Thanks:
Repertoire:

“Zamina” is a song about a woman named Zamina with the Akan term “akwaaba” meaning welcome. It is typically performed as part of the Kpanlogo repertoire (see last piece).

Kpatsa is the first dance-drumming genre of the concert. It is music and dance of the Ga-Adangme ethnic group of southern coastal Ghana, and is popular as a form of entertainment at funerals and festivals. It has historically been performed as a coming-of-age dance for girls prior to marriage. It is said that this style of music originated among dwarfs, and that the off-kilter and low-to-the-ground dancing reflects the movements of dwarfs. Instrumentation includes nonota (iron double bell), toke (boat-shaped bell), shekeshe (gourd rattle), mi (lead hand drum), sogo (low stick drum), kidi (medium stick drum), and kagan (high stick drum).

“Tu Tu Gbovi” is a song set in the Ewe language spoken in southeastern Ghana. It is a popular traditional lullaby which translates to “away, away, little goat”. It is often performed solo without accompaniment in people’s homes; however, there are many examples of its adaptation to genres such as boboobo, palmwine, and highlife.

Agbadza is Ewe war dance-drumming, which is typically performed in contemporary contexts at funerals. It first developed in the 1700s, and is the most common type of traditional music played today among the Ewe people of southeastern Ghana and southwestern Togo. The themes of songs touch on heroism, leadership, bravery, war, and death. One song featured here, “Agba Ee”, discusses death by using the metaphor of a plate that has gone missing. Another song, “Kwadzo Ku”, is about a Monday-born male who has died at home. In West Africa, people are given day names based on the day of the week they are born. The instrumentation includes the gankogui (iron double bell), axatse (gourd shaker), toke (boat-shaped bell), kagan (small stick drum), kidi (medium stick drum), and sogo (lead hand drum).

“Sansa Kroma” is an Akan song about an orphaned eagle who must hunt for baby chicks to survive. It is typically sung as a children’s musical game involving the passing of stones, but will be performed by the Crane West African Ensemble as a stand-alone song. Several members of the group sang this song when they were growing up in Ghana and taught it to the class.

Kpanlogo is the third dance-drumming piece of the night and last piece of the performance. It is a type of Ga recreational genre from the capital city region of Accra in southern Ghana. It is typically played at funerals, festivals, and parties. It developed in the 1950s during Ghana’s independence period. The song lyrics and dance movements embody the lifestyle of urban West African youth. The lead hand drum calls the dancers. Instrumentation includes mi (hand drums), nonota (double iron bell), shekeshe (gourd shaker), dodompo (small iron bell), tamalin (frame drums), and wooden clappers. In West African performance contexts in places such as Ghana, Togo, and Nigeria, audiences often acknowledge the exceptional dancing and music abilities of skilled artists by handing them money or placing it on their foreheads as they perform. This practice is known as dashing or spraying. The audience is encouraged to clap and sing along, if so inspired!

Guest Artist Bio:

Martin Kwaku Kwaakye Obeng has worked with the Crane West African Drum and Dance Ensemble since its start in Spring 2013. He is a well-renowned drummer, composer, dancer, and educator originally from Ghana who has worked internationally for the past 30 years. He began drumming at the age of five, and by seventeen he was appointed Royal Court Drummer to the high chief of the Aburi-Akuapim region of the Eastern Region of Ghana. He was a member of Ghana's National Arts Council Folkloric Company. He has continued to perform traditional music of West Africa, in addition to highlife, jazz, Latin music, reggae, and different fusions of these styles. Obeng teaches at Brown University, and has shared the stage with such luminaries as Max Roach, Roy Hargrove, Randy Weston, Anthony Braxton, Gideon Alorwoyie, and Obo Addy. His most recent recording, Africa’s Moving Forward, is available at www.kwakukwaakyeobeng.bandcamp.com. To hear more of Obeng’s music, and read about his work, please visit his website at www.kwakukwaakyeobeng.org, and follow him on Facebook at www.facebook.com/KwakuKwaakyeObeng/.