



Evening Concert Series

2019–2020 Season

Sara M. Snell Music Theater

Saturday, November 23, 7:30 PM

West African Drum and Dance Ensemble

Julie Hunter, director

Martin Kwaku Kwaakye Obeng,

guest instructor and artist

Akan Poem & Drumming	Traditional
Gahu Dance-Drumming Se Adzo Gahu Woe Loo Kinini Tana	Traditional
Pete Pete	Traditional
Kpegisu Dance-Drumming To Nku Deke Kiti Dza	Traditional
Kpanlogo Dance-Drumming Womibae Ayelevi Kawie Saka Saka Soweto Osei Aye Tsoo Boi	Traditional

Repertoire:

Akan Poem & Drumming is unique in a number of ways. It features the *atumpan* which is a pair of low- and high-pitched drums played by Akan people in southern Ghana. It is played in two main ways: the speech and dance modes. Today the *atumpan* is used by many other ethnic groups throughout this region, such as the Ga, Ewe, and Dagbamba. The *atumpan* is capable of communicating phrases of meaning through its imitation of the rhythms and tonal variations of the Akan language. In this way, the *atumpan* literally “speaks” and is therefore known as a talking drum. In this piece, the ensemble will recite an ancient Akan poem honoring the River Tano, which will also be played on the *atumpan* in the speech mode. The text, shared below, features many significant traditional phrases and proverbs. The transcription and translation come from the recording *Rhythms of Life, Songs of Wisdom* produced by Smithsonian Folkways.

Poetry Honoring the River Tano

Asuo twa okwan	The river crosses the path
Okwan twa asuo	The path crosses the river
Opani ne hwan?	Which is the elder?
Asuo twa okwan	The river crosses the path
Okwan twa asuo	The path crosses the river
Opani ne hwan?	Which is the elder?
Yeboo kwan no katoo asuo no	The path was cut to meet the river
Asuo no firi tete	The river is of old
Asuo no firi Odomankoma a oboo adee	The river comes from “Odomankoma” the creator
Konkon Tano	Konkon Tano
Brefa Tano	Brefa Tano
Asuo brekete	Asuo brekete
Agya Kwaa Ata ei!	Father Kwaa Ata ei!
Asu berempon	The great river
Asuo twa asuo	River that passes a river
Takasi berempon	Takasi the Great
Woama Bosompra adi afasee	You have caused Bosompra to eat the water yam
Me nam, me nam, me nam, ma si ta ko mu	I have wandered, and wandered, and wandered, I have stepped into the deep floods of Ta
Takasi berempon	Takasi the great
Frampon damirifa	Frampon, condolence
Damirifa	Condolence
Damirifa	Condolence
Damirifa due	Deepest condolence
Damirifa due	Deepest condolence
Takasi berempon	Takasi the great
Frampon, damirifa	Frampon, condolence
Asu berempon	Great river
Frampon damirifa	Frampon, condolence
Damirifa	Condolence
Damirifa	Condolence
Damirifa due	Deepest condolence
Damirifa due	Deepest condolence
Damirifa due, due, due.	Deepest, deepest, deepest condolences.

Gahu is an Egun dance from Benin that was adopted by Ewe communities in Togo and Ghana in the mid-Twentieth Century. The music is typically played at special events such as religious and harvest festivals, or for the installation of a chief. It is a social dance that reflects modern living and sensibilities in contemporary Africa. The lead drum, *gboba*, cues the dancers to change their movements. Instrumentation includes *gankogui* (iron double bell), *toke* (boat-shaped bell), *axatse* (gourd rattle), *sogo* (large stick drum), *kidi* (medium stick drum), *kagan* (small stick drum) and *gboba* (large lead drum).

Pete Pete is one of the most popular Akan children's songs. "Pete" means "vulture" in Akan, which is used as a metaphor to describe a child's large appetite. The lyrics include a list of foods in order to get a child's attention and let him/her know it's time for dinner, such as *fufu* (cooked and pounded yam, cassava, and/or plantain), and *abenkwan* (palm nut soup). Guest artist Martin Kwaku Kwaakye Obeng released a version of this song on his album titled *Sun Sum* which can be accessed here: <https://store.cdbaby.com/cd/kwakukwaakyeobeng>.

Kpegisu represents a type of Ewe war dance-drumming. It first developed in the 1800s, and is typically reserved for special events such as annual harvest festivals, regional and national arts festivals, or the installation of a chief. The songs touch on themes of war, heroism, bravery and death. The song "To Nku Deke" translates as "One-Eyed Buffalo" and incorporates a proverb to describe the difficulties that are faced in life (war). The second song, "Kitia Dza", has a meaningless text which imitates the sound of the drum language played by the lead stick drum, *kloboto*. This musical genre was importantly taught to ethnomusicologist Julie Hunter during fieldwork in Ghana, and her work with female musicians in the Klikor Kpegisu Habobo, a unique all-women's dance-drumming association in which women perform instruments and repertoire typically reserved for men. The instrumentation for *Kpegisu* including *gankogui* (iron double bell), *axatse* (gourd shaker), *sogo* (large hand drum), *kidi* (medium stick drum), *kagan* (small stick drum), and *kloboto* (master stick drum).

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!*

Ensemble Performers:

Justice Akwei
Rainar Anderson
Victoria Awogbemi
Isabelle Bailey
Zachary Castro
Melissa Dolese
Kenny Doubouyou
Paul Dougall
Darius Fuller

Molly Guarton
Anise Hetman
Jacob Hetman
Joseph Janover
Katya Lyubomirsky
Alanna Pinard-Brace
Rishi Ramsingh
Andrew Richardson
Clayton Williams

Additional Guests:

Nana Abena Baffour Akoto
Tokunbo Allen Bakare
Fauzia Ghatta
Brandon Griffin
Peter McCoy

Guest Artist Bio:

Martin Kwaku Kwaakye Obeng has worked with the 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 titled *Africa's Moving Forward* is available online at www.kwakukwaakyeobeng.bandcamp.com. To hear more of his music, and read about his work, please visit his website at www.kwakukwaakyeobeng.org, and follow him on Facebook at www.facebook.com/KwakuKwaakyeObeng/.

Special Thanks:

Dean Michael Sitton, Martin Obeng, Peter McCoy, Kwasi Dunyo, Joseph Janover, Alanna Pinard-Brace, Melissa Dolese, Libbie Freed, Robert Vadas, Fauzia Ghatta, Brandon Griffin, Caron Collins, Karen Miller, Jenna Tabakaru, Robert Zolner, Douglas McKinnie, Matt Gatti, Lonel Woods, Timothy Sullivan, Christine Doran, Manavi Deku, Komi Deku, Yaw Atiso, Music Theory/History/Composition Department, Interdisciplinary Studies Department, Brown University Department of Music, Jason Hunter, Linda and David Hunter.