

Before coming to the states a year ago, **Okaidja Aryeetey** had been a member of the Ghana Dance Ensemble for five years in the role of dancer, demonstrator and choreographer. He has performed and conducted workshops locally and internationally both with the Ghana Dance Ensemble and through Homowo.

Patience Sewor has 15 years professional experience in performing and teaching Ghanaian dance worldwide. She has performed as a senior dancer with the Ghana Dance Ensemble in countries all over the world, including the United States. She has also served as an assistant to the artistic director of the dance company.

Esther Gohoho is a dancer with the Ghana Dance Ensemble. She has been performing with the Ensemble since 1994. She has toured throughout Africa and the United States.

Born in Accra, Ghana, **Mathias Galley** has 21 years experience performing Ghanaian dance. Galley performed and taught with Kotobabi (1981-1983), Nana-Nom Dance Ensemble (1983-1994) and the Ghana Dance Ensemble (1995-2001). Galley has toured Africa, Europe and the United States. He recently joined Obo Addy's Okropong.

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Homowo African Arts and Cultures
<http://www.homowo.org>

Directed by Obo Addy
Produced by Susan Addy

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102nd Season, 77th program



UNIVERSITY OF OREGON • SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Beall Concert Hall
8:00 p.m.

Friday evening
April 26, 2002

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

SCHOOL OF MUSIC

WORLD MUSIC SERIES

presents

OBO ADDY and OKROPONG
"Music & Dance of Ghana"

PROGRAM NOTES

by Susan Addy

Welcome to the music and dance of Ghana! We want to introduce you to Ghana's rich musical history and show you how African musical traditions are being kept alive in our country.

In Ghana, as in other African countries, tradition is the root, the beginning, and the source. It provides a sense of identity and community for people. Musicians acknowledge the importance of tradition when they pour libation to ask the blessings of their ancestors before beginning a musical performance. Ritual music for the ancestors or spirits is performed without creative alterations. The aim of the musicians is to recreate the old music that the ancestors or spirits like so that they will enjoy themselves and be disposed to help human beings with their problems.

Tradition in Ghana is not only a reflection of the past and older musical styles, however. It also reflects the present and future of the people. There is a flexible attitude toward tradition in music and in other areas of life. It is believed that musical and cultural traditions must change as the people who uphold them change. Traditions cannot prevail otherwise.

Still, Africans realize they cannot simply abandon tradition in the face of the new. Instead, they maintain those traditions that are functional (such as ritual music), while blending the traditional and the new to create new musical or other traditions if life demands it. This is particularly true of social music which is much more susceptible to change than African religious music.

Sankofa, a symbol used in Ghanaian cloth, best symbolizes this attitude. *Sankofa* is a mystical bird, which looks behind himself before flying forward. The *Sankofa* symbol on cloth means "reach back and take it." In other words, look to the past for what is useful and incorporate it into your present endeavors.

In this concert, there are many examples of this approach. The music is from several major ethnic groups in Ghana—the Ga, Fanti, Dagomba, and Ashanti—reflecting Obo Addy's own journey through the musical traditions of his country, where he has absorbed and recombined influences from many sources. Even traditional music incorporates change, especially when it is social and not ritual in nature.

ABOUT TONIGHT'S ARTISTS

Obo Addy is a recognized master drummer from Ghana, West Africa. The Arts Council of Ghana gave him this title after he became proficient in the drumming of all regions of Ghana. There are only a few drummers who receive this coveted title. In Ghana, you have to be born into a traditional house of music in order to really know the music.

Obo has played professionally since he was 18 years old and toured the world with the group Oboade. They played in Europe, Australia, America, Japan, Israel and many other countries. One highlight was the 1972 Olympics in Munich. Another was a three-month tour in which they were flown into the Aboriginal settlements of Australia. Obo settled in the Pacific Northwest in 1976 and has become a world-renowned drummer, composer, and teacher.

Obo Addy is a repository of Ghanaian music history, a brilliant musician, and an innovative original composer - a man of rhythm, deeply rooted in the musical traditions of Ghana. His life-long experience of playing every kind of music- from the ceremonial music of his father, a *Wonche* or medicine man, to the big band sounds of the Joe Kelly Band, to the traditional sounds of the world renowned Oboade- makes him unique. He has been touring the United States since the mid 1970's performing and teaching in colleges and universities and at community centers and festivals. He received a Governors Award for the Arts in Oregon in 1993 as well as a Masters Fellowship from the Oregon Arts Commission. In September of 1996, Obo received the National Heritage Fellowship Award from the National Endowment for the Arts, the highest honor given to traditional artists in this country. Obo is the founder and leader of Kukrudu and Okropong. In addition to touring, he maintains a busy schedule composing and teaching.

OKROPONG

Alex Addy comes from a line of drummers within the Addy family. Much of his youth was spent in Ghana where he was involved in drumming performances at his church. Alex's infectious energy used in his teaching is an asset to the educational programs of Homowo's African Arts and Cultures, a Portland-based non-profit organization. Alex has worked with Homowo for the past five years.