



West African Drumming and Dance

An invigorating virtual performance filled with the rhythms of West Africa, featuring Assistant Professor of Music **John Dankwa** and Assistant Professor of Dance **Iddi Saaka**, joined by students in West African music and dance classes.

Friday, December 14, 2021

FREE online event | www.wesleyan.edu/cfa



Wesleyan University

Center for the Arts Middletown, Connecticut | www.wesleyan.edu/cfa

WEST AFRICAN DRUMMING AND DANCE CONCERT

7:00 PM, May 14, 2021 - Virtual Performance

IDDI SAAKA

Choreographer, Dancer, and Drummer
Assistant Professor - Dance

JOHN WESLEY DANKWA

Lead Drummer
Assistant Professor – Music

TOGETHER WITH SHIRLEY SULLIVAN (WEST AFRICAN DANCE COURSE ASSISTANT),
KEIZO FISH AND JOCELYN PLEASANT (COURSE ACCOMPANISTS),
AND THEIR STUDENTS IN WEST AFRICAN DRUMMING AND DANCE CLASSES

~ THE PROGRAM ~

KPATSA *Performed by West African Dance I class DANC 260 – 01*

A traditional Ghanaian dance of the Ga-Adangme people of southern Ghana, Kpatsa is said to be associated with abodo (dwarfs). The music and dance imitate the limping, uneven walking and dancing of dwarfs. The Ga-Adangme people live in central southern Ghana around the capital, Accra and this dance is said to have originated in Ada, a coastal town about 100km east of Accra. Kpatsa was part of an annual festival and is now frequently performed at durbars (gatherings of chiefs and people), funerals, and at Christmas or Easter celebrations.

NAGLA *Performed by the West African Dance III class DANC 365-01*

Nagla is a social dance of the Kasena people of the upper east region of Ghana. It is a dance originally performed by the youth to show youthful exuberance and there is humorous play between the guys and the ladies. This dance can be seen on all social occasions that call for celebration.

KPANLOGO *Performed by West African dance I class DANC 260-01*

A dance created by Otoo Lincoln at Sakumo Tsonshi area of Accra in the early 1960's. The Kpanlogo dance is a youthful recreational dance form of the Ga people of southern Ghana. It is a fisher-folk dance, with most of the gestures and intricate footwork reflecting messages and depicting the fishing trade. The messages also touch on many social issues such as courtship and marriage. It is a dance that is used to express emotions at celebrations and funerals as well as at other gatherings or durbars.

BAWA *Performed by the West African Dance III class DANC 365 – 01*

Bawa is a harvest dance of the Dagarti ethnic group of North Western Ghana. It is a seasonal dance preceded by pouring of libation to the gods and ancestors for providing a rich harvest and asking them to provide a more abundant harvest the following year. The dances provide the final phases of festivities of enjoyment in community wellbeing. Old and young of both sexes participate in this dance.

GAHU *Performed by West African dance I class DANC 260-01*

A recreational dance performed by the southern Ewe communities in the South Eastern part of Ghana. It is believed to have originated from the musical traditions associated with marriage and wedding rites of the Yoruba of Southern Nigeria. In the southern Ewe communities, it is performed as entertainment at social gatherings such as weddings, naming ceremonies and funerals.

ADZOGBO *Performed by West African Dance III class DANC 365-01*

Originally a cult dance associated with one of the war gods of Benin (Dahomey). Traditionally, Adzohu is done in two parts, the first part, “Kadodo” is for women only – here the women gather as a chorus group singing and performing rituals while the young men “warriors” are preparing spiritually for the war. The second part, “Atsia” is done by the young “warrior” men prior to their departure to the battlefield. Today in the absence of ethnic wars, both men and women perform adzogbo for recreation by the Ewe of South Eastern Ghana.

~Profiles~

Iddi Saaka is an award-winning West African dance and music performance artist and teacher who specializes in Ghanaian dance and music as well as contemporary dance. Saaka holds a Diploma (with distinction) from the University of Ghana and an MFA in Dance from the University of California, Los Angeles. He has performed and taught nationally and internationally in several venues including Los Angeles, New York, Connecticut, North Carolina, Florida, Israel, Ghana, Burkina Faso, and Guinea. In 2003, he performed for the president of Israel. He has created original multifaceted works that address the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Ghana and Malawi and has worked with youths in detention centers across Connecticut as well as with physically challenged youth in Israel, using dance and music to equip them with lifelong skills such as anger management, respect for cultural diversity, and self-dignity. Saaka has taught dance at Wesleyan University since 2008 and is currently an Assistant Professor of Dance at Wesleyan and a recipient of Wesleyan’s prestigious Binswanger Prize for Excellence in Teaching award in 2018. Saaka has also served as Visiting Instructor of Dance at the University of California, Los Angeles and San Diego, and the University of Ghana.

John Wesley Dankwa is a PhD. candidate of Ethnomusicology in the Department of Music, Wesleyan University. Having been born into an Akan royal family in Ghana, John developed his drumming skills at an earlier stage. He has an in-depth musical qualities and profound socio-cultural knowledge in Ghanaian traditional drumming. He is a drum poet, teacher and state ceremonial drummer. He has composed and performed drum poems for several African and world leaders, including Thabo Mbeki (Former president of South Africa), Benjamin Mkapa (Former president of Tanzania and, J. A. Kuffour (former president of the Republic of Ghana) and Mirza Masroor Ahmad (Khalifatul Masih V), World Leader of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. John has also taught classes in West African drumming in Ghana and the US. Currently, he teaches West African music and culture at Wesleyan.

West African Dance I Students: Shakira Abdul-Rauf, Stephanie Aka, Gabrielle Baba-Conn, Ashley Brea, Nicholas Catalan, Michael Freiburger, Abigail Glassman, Joseph Godslaw, Jenna Handler, Natasha Marder, Sonia Menken, Amin Mojarad, Ashley Ogwang, Christina Onuzuruike, Lowie Price, Ellie Rosen, Robyn Wong

West African Dance III Students: Serena Aimen, Georgia Garrison, Karli Gigstad, Lilah Hixson, Annie Kidwell, Keren Lebron Ramos, Alma Pres, Pablo Puente

West African Music and Culture (Intermediate) Students: Nate Antoine, Sarah Gbadebo, Ama Hagan, Ian Jacobson, Alvin Kibaara, Julia Nacario, Sydney Ochieng, Thao Phan, Pablo Puente, Benjamin Russman, Abdalla Salia, Siramori Yattassaye

~ *Special Acknowledgements* ~

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DANCE DEPARTMENT FACULTY/STAFF

Pedro Alejandro, Associate Professor of Dance (on leave)
Patricia Beaman, Artist-in-Residence
Milka Djordjevich, Visiting Assistant Professor of Dance
Doug Elkins, Visiting Associate Professor of Dance
Maho Ishiguro, Visiting Assistant Professor of Dance
Katja Kolcio, Associate Professor of Dance/Director of the Allbritton Center
Hari Krishnan, Professor of Dance/*Chair*
Chelsie McPhillimy, Technical Director, Dance
Michele Olerud, Administrative Assistant
Marcela Oteiza, Associate Professor of Dance
Joya Powell, Visiting Assistant Professor of Dance
Iddi Saaka, Assistant Professor of Dance
Nicole Stanton, Provost & Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs/Professor of Dance

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