

World Drum and Dance Ensemble

Course Information

Music 3612
Either 0 credits, S-U, or 1 credit, letter grade

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Materials

Course materials are available on the Percussion Department website:

<http://percussion.music.cornell.edu/materials.html>

Look under the “WDDE” column

C.K. Ladzekpo, *Foundation Course in African Dance Drumming*
Online tutorial: <http://bmrc.berkeley.edu/people/ladzekpo/Foundation.html>

Kevin O’Sullivan, description of Ewe funeral
Online article: <http://dancedrummer.com/funerals.html>

James Burns, “My Mother Has a Television, Does Yours? Transformation and Secularization in an Ewe Funeral Drum Tradition.” *Oral Tradition* 23:1
Online article, with transcriptions and audio: <http://journal.oraltradition.org/issues/20ii/burns>
This article contains explicit language.

Song texts, audio and video files

What we do

The World Drum and Dance Ensemble focuses in 2009-2010 on performing percussive music of the Ewe people, an ethnic group of approximately 4 million people living in southeastern Ghana, Togo, and Benin. Our members learn all aspects of this music, including singing, drumming, and dancing. Special attention is paid to the historical and cultural implications of the music, through readings and discussions. In fall 2009, we will study dance-drumming belonging to a few different genres, in versions similar to both “village-style” music as practiced in the Volta Region of Ghana, and similar to that staged by the Ghana National Dance Company.

Projects

Our fall concert is **Thursday, November 19, at 8 p.m. in Willard Straight Hall**. We share this performance with the Cornell Steel Bands and CU Percussion Ensemble.

Master drummer **Kodzo Tagborlo** of the Dzodze Apeyeme Agbadza Society and the Dzigbordi Haborbor of Dzodze, Ghana, will be here to work with us in October. Joining him, as last fall, will be **Pierrette Aboadji**, formerly of the Ghana National Dance Ensemble, and **James Burns**, from Binghamton University. Kodzo’s travel plans are being made presently – dates will be firmed up by mid-September.

Rehearsals

The ensemble rehearses weekly, **Thursdays from 7 to 9, at Lincoln Hall B20**. Members are asked to be set up and ready to begin playing at the beginning of rehearsal – this means setting aside time BEFORE rehearsal to find, build, and set benches and percussion instruments. Members will also help each other to pack up at the end of rehearsal. **If you are not set up for the beginning of rehearsal, you are late for that rehearsal.**

While song texts and translations, as well as class readings, might be distributed via paper, we learn the entirety of the musical structure by memory, reflecting the methodology of Ewe musicians. Audio files will be available on the percussion department website, but a personal audio recorder might be a smart tool to bring to rehearsals, in addition to a notebook and folder for class handouts.

Depending on our members' desires and availability, we may add a Saturday rehearsal before our concerts – we'll know close to the date.

Assignments and Grading

Our work consists mainly of rehearsing together; therefore, attendance is of the highest importance. There are no free or unexcused absences. If you are sick, I need a medical excuse form at the following class session. If you have a meeting, out-of town excursion, or other unavoidable, **once-in-a-lifetime activity** coming up that might cause you to miss a class, I need to know about it via email by FRIDAY BEFORE the coming meeting. Classes missed without either contact will result in the reduction of one letter grade. **Students will fail the course with a third unexcused absence.** Two late appearances to rehearsal will also result in the reduction of one letter grade.

Our performances are our chance to share our work and experiences with others, and are the events to which we work during the semester. **Students who miss either of the scheduled fall performances will fail the course without documented proof of extraordinary circumstance.**

There may also be occasional assignments in addition to personal practice time, which will be related to some aspect of Ewe culture. For example, one might need to discuss, or write a reaction to, an article discussing modern *Agbadza* songs of Dzodze Ewe musicians. Each student in this course is expected to abide by the Cornell University Code of Academic Integrity. Any written work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work.

Grading also reflects commitment to the work of the World Drum and Dance Ensemble. A committed musician is on time and prepared for rehearsals, hungry for and enthusiastic about music, and intent on contributing to the group and to realize their own potential. Intermittent or inadequate preparation and attitude will result in low grades, as well as an unhappy ensemble.

In addition to our concerts, I may hold short proficiency exams, where groups of students will have an opportunity to demonstrate their grasp of course material. If these become necessary to check our progress, more information will be available as the time approaches.

Participation in and preparation for rehearsals and performances will account for **60%** of a student's semester grade, performance on the proficiencies will count **20%**, and written assignments will make up **20%**.

Equipment

Cornell will supply all percussion instruments, and batik cloths for performance. Students may bring or purchase their own, and the instructor may be of assistance in locating bells, shakers, or batik.

Concert Dress

Solid-color T-shirt in earth tones or otherwise harmonizing batik print; shorts under cloth