

NAME OF THE ELEMENT: TRADITIONAL DANCE OF THE EWES: “AGBAZA”

DOMAIN: PERFORMING ARTS

COMMUNITY: COMMUNITIES WITHIN THE VOLTA REGION

REGION: VOLTA REGION

DESCRIPTION: Agbadza, a traditional dance of the Ewe people in the Volta region of Ghana, is a captivating and culturally rich expression of communal celebration. This rhythmic dance is often performed during social gatherings, ceremonies, and festive occasions, serving as a significant element of Ewe identity. The dance is deeply intertwined with Ewe music, which involves the harmonious collaboration of various traditional instruments like **Gakague (A Bell** - It has a recurring phrase that establishes the tempo of the song and serves as a timeline for the rest of the ensemble.), **Sogo (Master / Lead Drum** - This is the ensemble leader drum. It indicates to the other drums what they are supposed to be playing. This drum also signals the dancers when they are supposed to be starting to dance, through the use of drumming language.), **Kidi (Second Supporting Drum** -This is the second drum in the ensemble. It communicates with the Sogo to create a conversation using drumming language.), **Kagan (First Supporting Drum** - This is a support drum, which has a recurring rhythm throughout the performance that interacts with the bell to create a specific melody.), **Rattle/ Axatse (Beaded-Rattle** - This is a beaded-rattle that follows the rhythm of the timeline closely to complement the Agbadza song.) and **Handclaps** (The handclaps in Agbadza are used to add human interaction to the song and create a dense musical texture of high energy.)

During an Agbadza performance, the dancers move with remarkable precision, showcasing intricate footwork that is both visually striking and culturally meaningful. The dance is characterized by energetic and synchronized steps, with dancers forming circles or lines, creating a sense of unity and collective spirit. The footwork is accompanied by vibrant arm and body movements, enhancing the overall expressiveness of the performance.

One distinctive aspect of Agbadza is the incorporation of symbolic gestures and signs during the dance. Dancers use hand movements, facial expressions, and body postures to convey specific meanings. For example, certain gestures may represent aspects of Ewe folklore, tell stories of historical events, or convey messages related to the community's values and traditions. These signs add layers of storytelling to the dance, transforming it into a visual narrative that connects the participants with their cultural heritage.

The drumming patterns in Agbadza play a crucial role in guiding the dancers and influencing their movements. The lead drummer, often referred to as the "Atsimevu," sets the pace and rhythm for the entire performance. The responsive interaction between the dancers and the

drummers creates a dynamic and immersive experience, as the rhythmic beats resonate with the intricate footwork and gestures, fostering a profound sense of cultural continuity.

In essence, Agbadza transcends its role as a dance; it becomes a vibrant cultural tapestry, weaving together music, movement, and symbolism. Through the rhythmic beats and graceful motions, the Ewe people celebrate their history, express their communal identity, and pass down their rich cultural heritage from one generation to the next.

Consent: COMMUNITIES WITHIN THE VOLTA REGION

Submitted by: National Folklore Board