

A close-up photograph of marimba wooden bars, showing their natural wood grain and texture. Metal fasteners are visible at the bottom, securing the bars together. The lighting is warm, highlighting the rich brown tones of the wood.

# PERCUSSIVE NOTES

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## Marimba Masters Reunion



# PERCUSSIVE NOTES

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# Adapting Three Asante Spiritual Music Styles for Drumset

By royal hartigan



royal hartigan (left) and Kwasi Boa with the Abodwese Shrine ensemble at Penteng

Asante traditional dance drumming includes a wide spectrum of pieces that are essential to, and express the meaning of, Asante ways of life: elements of the life cycle, seasonal cycles, honoring ancestors, social/recreational occasions, and connections to a spirit world. Abodwese, Oteduaso, and Kopo are spiritual music and dance styles that involve ritual, texts, instrumental and vocal music, and dance, and whose themes can include divination, healing, and connections to a spirit world, among other topics.



This article will first focus on an analysis of the public sections of selected spiritual dance drumming styles as played in three communities in the Asante Region of Ghana, West Africa. It will then document one original approach by which their rhythmic voices may be adapted to the drumset in the African American jazz tradition.

Abodwese, Oteduaso, and Kopo ensemble drumming involve multiple voices of time, tone, timbre, accent, and rhythm as a means to individual reflection, community ritual, and spiritual transcendence. It has a serious and personal meaning in the lives of its practitioners, serving as a strategy for meeting life's circumstances. The heritage of these spiritual dance drumming styles, their antecedents, and other similar pieces passed down through oral tradition indicate the existence among African peoples since ancient times of complex and highly sophisticated spiritual systems, cosmology, and human transcendence, long before the incursions of external influences, such as those of European and other colonial invasion, contemporary international neo-colonial penetration, and the degradations of techno-centrism.

In a similar way, the drumset and jazz ensemble in the African American tradition can function as a means toward cultural remembrance and transmission. Their historic and contemporary style of free expression serves as a repository for centuries of upheaval, struggle, and transcendence. Just as the pulse of dance drumming traditions continue in West African communities, their parallel expression in African American jazz ensembles and drumset comprise music, as stated by bassist and composer Charles Mingus, "as serious as your life."

## ABODWESE, OTEDUASO, AND KOPO SPIRITUAL DANCE DRUMMING MUSIC

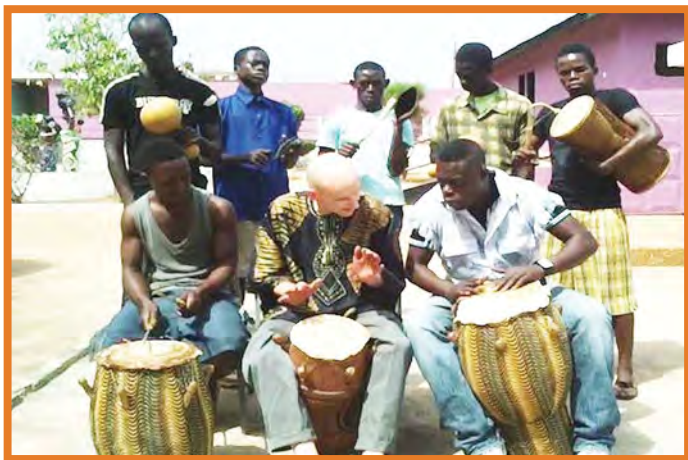
### Instruments and Rhythmic Structure

The common elements in the Abodwese, Oteduaso, and Kopo drumming ensembles comprise instruments that provide a time referent, the *dawuro* bells and *ntrowa* rattle; a supporting response drum, *apentemma*; and lead drum, *pintin*. On occasion at these villages and at Mampong, two other support drums, *donno* and *abomaa*, were played in the ensemble. In the Penteng recording, the ensemble played without the *donno* and *abomaa* drums, although I have seen the *donno* played as part of the Penteng ensemble at other times.

*Dawuro* is a hollow, flat, medium-length bell played with a wooden stick, and it is also played in the Asante Fontomfrom court music. In some cases, the smaller, boat-shaped, iron *dawuro* played



Playing *ntrowa* rattle with Abodwese Shrine singers at Penteng



Playing the Kopo style at Mampong Asante: in front, *petia* (substituting for *abomaa*), *apentemma* and *pintin*; at back, *ntrowa* rattles, *dawuro* bells, and *donno* hourglass drum



Dancers Kwasi Boa (L) and Adwoa Bona (R) interacting with the Penteng Abodwese Shrine drum ensemble

in Asante Kete court music may also be used, especially when the hollow flat *dawuro* is not available, as was the case in Jatiase and for one of the two bells in Mampong. Its basic timeline has a pattern of five open and mute strokes spanning 12 eighth notes in western visual notation. While oral traditions appropriately do not use visual notation as an aspect of performance, for purposes of analysis, this article will employ western notation that serves as a guide for understanding.

As with many West African pieces, there are many ways to hear the individual and collective voices of these spiritual music ensembles. This multiple rhythmic perspective allows simultaneous beat orientations in layers of 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, and so on, across the 12 pulses of the *dawuro* time span, each potentially "beginning" on any of the 12 eighth-note pulses. As is necessary with a single visual notation, we will locate one main beat series as four dotted-quarter values over a 12/8 time cycle, based on the timing of dancers' foot movements. However, the 12/8 time cycle allows the reader to adapt the time feel as two per cycle (two dotted-half notes), three (three half notes), six (six quarter notes), or eight (eight dotted-eighth notes) still within a 12-pulse time span.

The *ntrowa* gourd rattle reflects the pulse of *dawuro*. In each community, singers played the *ntrowa* with a rhythmic propulsion and attack that ignited the time on the front edge of the beat. I learned through observation that its pattern may be played with short downward wrist/hand strokes through the air for the first and third

strokes, while short upward and outward wrist/hand strokes in the air for the second and fourth strokes produce a stronger accented sound (Example 1). Ntrowa players will sometimes add another stroke mirroring the second dawuro bell stroke so the two patterns are identical; when added, this stroke is also played in a downward motion.

Example 1. The timeline expressed by dawuro bell and ntrowa rattle (M = Mute; O = Open)



The wooden hourglass-shaped, double-headed, string-tension *donno* drum has a basic two-stroke low-high ascending voice that implies a sense of six beats across the 12 pulses, written as six quarter notes or rests. Hearing the *donno* voice as a time referent will allow the listener to perceive a six-beat feel over the basic four feel.

*Abomaa* is a slender, thin, wooden, single-headed, open-bottom drum played with two thin sticks. Its basic phrase is a sequence of alternating single and double open strokes that emphasize each of the four dotted-quarter main beats. When an *abomaa* is not available, a larger drum called *petia* is sometimes used, as in the performances at Jatiase and Mampong, while in Penteng, neither drum was available for the recording. In some communities *abomaa* is called *agyegyewa*.

Two single-headed, open-bottom hand drums complete the basic drum ensemble. *Apentemma*, whose base is smaller than its carved wooden body, uses a hand technique to sound mute, open, and bass strokes. Mute strokes are accomplished by keeping the hand (from around the knuckle area out to the fingers) or stick on the drumhead on stroke contact. Open resonant tones are produced by bouncing the hand (from the knuckle area out to the fingers) or stick off the drumhead on stroke contact. Deep bass tones are sounded by bouncing the entire palm of the hand off the drumhead, usually

across the whole drumhead area. Muted bass sounds are produced by keeping the full palm on the drumhead on stroke contact for a muffled effect. Slap tones are made by striking and grabbing the drumhead in a slapping motion with the knuckles and fingers, creating a sharp, high, sound.

*Apentemma* functions as a support drum, and its basic pattern is a series of open and mute pairs that answer the strong open, mute, and bass sounds of the larger and lower-pitched *pintin* lead drum. Some players at times vary the sound and articulate the mute strokes of these two drums as higher-pitched, sharp, slap tones. *Pintin* has a narrowing contour and a smaller base than its main upper body. In my research at Jatiase, Mampong, Penteng, and Krobo, the *pintin* was a larger *apentemma*-style drum.

During rituals, *apentemma* and *pintin* often have a white powder applied to one side of the drum shell, and this area is kept on the side opposite to the drummer, as the power it represents is directed toward the ritual dancing and the activities of the okomfoo (priest/ess). At one session in Krobo village, I mistakenly placed the *apentemma* drum I was playing with the powder toward my body, and immediately all the participants urgently told me to turn the drum so the powder faced away from me toward the dancers. They explained that if I were to play the drum with the powder toward my body, something adverse could happen, such as misfortune or impotence.

In some communities, the *atumpam* master drums are played as a lead drum for some sections of spiritual dance drumming. In most of my research, I did not see *atumpam* played; in fact at only one ritual was *atumpam* a part of the ensemble. I was told that when available, *atumpam* are used, but that the *pintin* is commonly used as lead drum for these spiritual music styles.

While musical tempo can vary based on the specific actions of the ritual at any moment, in each community the pace of Abodwese, Oteduaso, and Kopo ensemble drumming was generally fast, usually between 200–240 dotted-quarter beats per minute. This speed, combined with the constant interlocking of instrumental parts, creates a motion and force that propels dancers and supports the intensity of ritual activities. At Penteng, much of the drumming was at such a fast pace and soft dynamic that finger techniques, as opposed to full hand strokes, were employed for the *apentemma* drum, creating a lighter sense of motion (Example 2).

Example 2. The spiritual dance drumming ensemble

1. Abodwese dance drumming at Penteng 1 without donno and abomaa

▶ Tap to play Video



2. Abodwese dance drumming at Penteng 2 without donno and abomaa

▶ Tap to play Video





The musical notations for all examples in this work follow the indications of stroke type found to the left of the staff in the ensemble score below, for *dawuro*, mute and open (M and O), *donno*, low and high (L and H), *abomaa* and *apentemma*, mute and open (M and O), and *pintin*, mute, open, and bass (M, O, and B).

### 3. Spiritual dance drumming at Mampong 1

▶ Tap to play Video



### 4. Spiritual dance drumming at Mampong 2

▶ Tap to play Video



♩. = 240

Dawuro M O  $\frac{12}{8}$

Ntrowa  $\frac{12}{8}$

Donno H L  $\frac{12}{8}$

Abomaa M O  $\frac{12}{8}$

Apentemma M O  $\frac{12}{8}$

Pintin M O B  $\frac{12}{8}$

H-High  
L-Low  
M-Mute  
O-Open  
B-Bass

## Abodwese, Oteduaso and Kopo Ensemble Instrumental Variations

*Dawuro* variations played by Asante musicians include the addition or omission of strokes, creating a different sense of time. Playing the five strokes as an almost equidistant series creates a feeling of five over the time cycle, a forerunner and parallel to the *cinquillo* ("five") of Afro-Cuban music. Adding a stroke for a six-stroke pattern intensifies the feel. Stating only the first, third, and fifth strokes of the *dawuro* cycle creates a three-stroke referent across the bell timespan. This is sometimes pulled by musicians into a near equally spaced three-stroke phrase, related as an ancestor to the *tresillo* ("three") in Afro-Cuban music. Some bell players mute the first of the three strokes, resulting in an open, two-stroke sound that refocuses the time feel through subtle shading and nuance (Example 3).

Example 3. *Dawuro* bell pattern variations

M O  $\frac{12}{8}$

M O  $\frac{12}{8}$

One *ntrowa* variation is a three-stroke pattern that leaves space in the time cycle, falling as the second of three partials "off" dotted-quarter main beats, 2, 3, and 4 (Example 4).

Example 4. *Ntrowa* rattle variation

$\frac{12}{8}$

Abodwese, Oteduaso, and Kopo ensemble *donno* styles include many variations and improvisations that can reshape the sense of time in the ensemble over the bell timeline: two-, three-, four-, or here, six-beat feels. The basic two-stroke motive, written as quarter notes low-high, following a quarter-note rest, results in a repeating three or six feel, and can be pulled across the six-beat feel to fall at different points in the time cycle. These include strokes on the second and third quarter-note values following the rest (the most common basic pattern given here in the ensemble example), the first and second quarter-note values, or the



Okomfoo Nana Osei turning in trance at Krobo Village

third and first quarter-note values in a six-beat feel, this last a part of the Mampong ensemble's performance. In each case, the low-high tonal shape is maintained. When a *donno* is not available, the music is played without its voice, as in the performance at Penteng (Example 5).

Example 5. *Donno* hourglass drum variation patterns



*Abomaa* variations can include an extension of its basic two-stroke motive over notated dotted-quarter main beats 2, 3, and 4, or a series of flams/grace-note strokes that suggest a six-beat feel in quarter notes (Example 6).

Example 6. *Abomaa* variations



Example 7. *Apentemma* variations



Example 8. *Pintin* variations



The *pintin* and *apentemma* variations are played to reflect dancers' movements, actions of the priest/ess, or other important points in the ritual. As observed in Jatiase, Penteng, and Krobo, when the *okomfoo* (*ɔkomfɔ*, "priest/ess," pronounced aw-kohm-faw) moves near the drum ensemble and singers, the *apentemma* and *pintin* play in a lighter, softer style. Once close, on the *okomfoo*'s signal, the drums stop playing, and only the *dawuro* bell and *ntrowa* rattle continue with singing until another signal by the *okomfoo* to resume the full ensemble playing (Examples 7 and 8).

There are many dialogues between *pintin* and *apentemma* reflecting dance movements in these spiritual dance drumming styles. One has an open tone pair and three mute strokes on *apentemma* answering and interlocking with alternating patterns of four open and four bass tones on *pintin* (Example 9).



An *okomfoo* approaches the Kopo drum ensemble and singers at Jatiase

Example 9. *Pintin*-*apentemma* dialogue 1 basic patterns





Variations in this conversation include a repetition of the open-tone pair and single mute stroke in the *apentemma* voice, while *pintin* fills the space between open-tone pairs with combinations of open, bass, mute, or slap strokes. *Pintin* can play different patterns of one, two, three, or four strokes in the space spanning its four eighth-note values (Example 10).

Example 10. *Pintin-apentemma* dialogue 1 variations

Another dialogue has *pintin* bass and open sounds implying a duple feel, written as dotted eighths, connecting with *apentemma* open and mute strokes (Example 11).

Example 11. *Pintin-apentemma* dialogue 2 basic patterns

## DRUMSET STYLES

The drumset can express the pulse of Abodwese, Oteduaso, and Kopo ensemble drumming in many ways. For this article, our focus will be expressing the Asante rhythmic voices in an African American style, with an emphasis on jazz performance. In each of these examples, listen as you play and hear the sounds you are combining as voices in a conversation, just as you would in learning traditional African drumming. Internalize the patterns you are speaking; once you feel comfortable with the rhythmic conversation, vary the sound sources played with your sticks to all parts of the drumset in order to achieve a tonal and timbral motion. The notation guide for the drumset voices is given in Example 12.

Example 12. Drumset notation key

Begin with the *dawuro* bell timeline on cymbal and the *donno* rhythm as alternating tom and snare cross-stick sounds over a *pintin* variation divided between bass drum and hi-hat. Cross-stick technique is executed by inverting the drumstick, holding the tip against the drumhead, and striking the thicker body of the stick against the drum rim, creating a hollow wooden sound similar to the clave in Afro-Cuban music. The six-beat feel of the *donno* rhythms layers over the four-beat feel of bass drum and hi-hat. Low-high *donno* sounds can also be played literally as low-high tom tones, retaining the tonal shape of the original.

For all drumset styles in this article, cymbal rhythms can be played on the body or bell of the cymbal or hi-hat, or on snare drum, mounted tom, or floor tom rims or shells. This is a variation technique used by Edward Blackwell, Clifford Jarvis, and Max Roach, among many others. To produce a stronger sound, play on the bell of the hi-hat or cymbal; for a lighter sound strike perpendicular to the edge of the cymbal with the side of your stick (Drumset Example 1).

Drumset Example 1, viewable at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fnx\\_Jyrsujg&list=PLAEDE1EB86D5AC27C&index=3&feature=plpp\\_video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fnx_Jyrsujg&list=PLAEDE1EB86D5AC27C&index=3&feature=plpp_video)

Try a series of alternating snare cross-stick and tom sounds with the *dawuro* phrase on cymbal and a six-beat feel between a grounded bass drum sound leading to beats 1 and 3, and hi-hat strokes implying *donno* (Drumset Example 2).

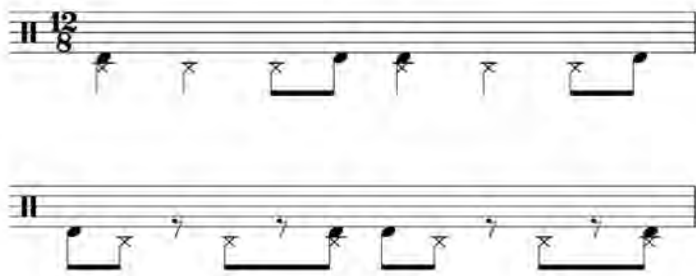
Drumset Example 2, viewable at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sp-pWPRTdUw&list=PLAEDE1EB86D5AC27C&index=4&feature=plpp\\_video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sp-pWPRTdUw&list=PLAEDE1EB86D5AC27C&index=4&feature=plpp_video)



You can play this alternate hi-hat pattern, as well as six-beat feels on hi-hat written as six quarter notes, in two positions across the 12 eighth-note pulses of the bell cycle, to imply another layer of time. *Apentemma* drummers use this six-beat feel as a basis for many variations. Try these layers with the other examples in this study (Drumset Examples 3 and 4).

Drumset Example 3, viewable at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RW-crhS-nqeY&list=PLAEDE1EB86D5AC27C&index=5&feature=plpp\\_video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RW-crhS-nqeY&list=PLAEDE1EB86D5AC27C&index=5&feature=plpp_video)

and Drumset Example 4, viewable at [https://youtu.be/iX3p0f9\\_ItY?list=PLAEDE1EB86D5AC27C](https://youtu.be/iX3p0f9_ItY?list=PLAEDE1EB86D5AC27C)



Another hi-hat style is a three-stroke statement based on an *ntrowa* variation, joined here with a bell variation on cymbal and alternating snare and tom sounds emphasizing the third eighth-note value of each dotted-quarter beat. This creates layers emphasizing the second (hi-hat) and third (snare and toms) partials of each main beat over the bass drum outlining main beats 1 and 3. The resulting interlocking of the three partials within dotted-quarter main beats produces an active sound whose timbres are constantly changing, similar to the interlocking voices of the Abodwese, Oteduaso, and Kopo, and other Asante and Ghanaian ensembles. The cymbal pattern omits the second stroke of the basic *dawuro* phrase, and you can also omit the fourth *dawuro* timeline stroke (in parentheses), just as Asante bell players do, to shape the time in a different way (Drumset Example 5).

Drumset Example 5, viewable at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJtE-hPxUXE&list=PLAEDE1EB86D5AC27C&index=7&feature=plpp\\_video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJtE-hPxUXE&list=PLAEDE1EB86D5AC27C&index=7&feature=plpp_video)



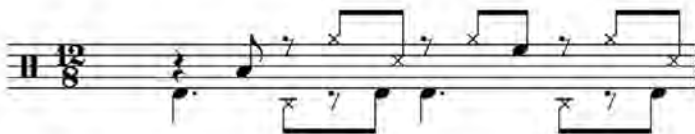
An active groove voices the lower-pitched open and higher-pitched mute *apentemma* couplets as low and high tom sounds, the *dawuro* rhythm on cymbal, the three-stroke *ntrowa* variation as hi-hat foot strokes, and a bass drum heartbeat. Both the basic and varied *apentemma* patterns fill the space and intensify ensemble interactions while retaining their tonal shape on drumset (Drumset Example 6).

Drumset Example 6, viewable at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pJsc-CegpD-4&list=PLAEDE1EB86D5AC27C&index=8&feature=plpp\\_video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pJsc-CegpD-4&list=PLAEDE1EB86D5AC27C&index=8&feature=plpp_video)



Moving the *ntrowa* three-stroke variation to cymbal with alternating snare cross-sticks and tom tones over a *pintin* variation pattern as a bass drum/hi-hat pulse creates a tonal and timbral conversation, and gives a relaxed feel under a soloist. Max Roach emphasized to me on many occasions the importance of leaving space for others in an ensemble, especially a soloist, saying, "What you don't play is often as important as what you do play" (Drumset Example 7).

Drumset Example 7, viewable at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c-b8LMuK3FPc&list=PLAEDE1EB86D5AC27C&index=9&feature=plpp\\_video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c-b8LMuK3FPc&list=PLAEDE1EB86D5AC27C&index=9&feature=plpp_video)



These spiritual dance drumming rhythms may be adapted into an African-American gospel style. Play the *dawuro* timeline as snare drum cross-sticks or tom sounds, and *apentemma* couplet motives as open hi-hat stick strokes answering foot strokes on each main beat. Asante *dawuro* players create variations by omitting some basic pattern strokes, and this works as well with cross-sticks on snare drum (optional strokes in parentheses). As with the basic *pintin* voice, bass drum reinforces the pulse on beats 1 and 3. The hi-hat stick stroke rhythm may also be played on cymbal. To intensify this sound, try the stick strokes on the bell of the hi-hat or cymbal (Drumset Example 8).

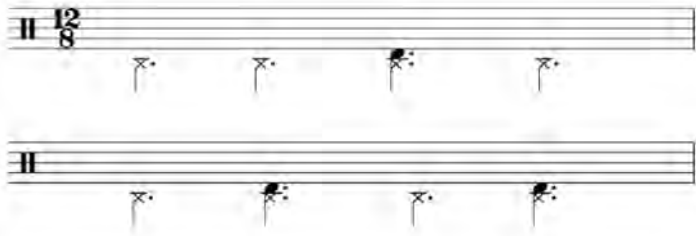
Drumset Example 8, viewable at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pVT-UTvGH38&list=PLAEDE1EB86D5AC27C&index=10&feature=plpp\\_video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pVT-UTvGH38&list=PLAEDE1EB86D5AC27C&index=10&feature=plpp_video)



You can also vary this style at a slower tempo by dropping ("bombing") bass drum on beat 3 for an African reggae sound. Bringing bass drum to beats 2 and 4 creates a more active reggae motion. Grooves in this style complete a circle from Africa to the Caribbean and back (Drumset Examples 9 and 10).

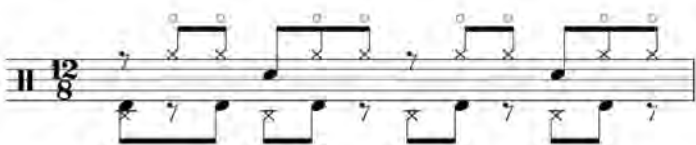
Drumset Example 9, viewable at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZ\\_nqulZ1ow&list=PLAEDE1EB86D5AC27C&index=11&feature=plpp\\_video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZ_nqulZ1ow&list=PLAEDE1EB86D5AC27C&index=11&feature=plpp_video)

and Drumset Example 10, viewable at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k-kZQTehRVY&list=PLAEDE1EB86D5AC27C&index=12&feature=plpp\\_video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k-kZQTehRVY&list=PLAEDE1EB86D5AC27C&index=12&feature=plpp_video)



Playing an altered *dawuro* pattern on bass drum with *apentemma* motives as hi-hat or cymbal bell strokes over left-hand backbeats and a hi-hat foot pulse produces a funk sound. You can omit any one or two of the five bass drum strokes to vary the funk heartbeat, in a way similar to variations among Asante bell players (Drumset Example 11).

Drumset Example 11, viewable at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q0i7Z6Ti7Sg&list=PLAEDE1EB86D5AC27C&index=13&feature=plpp\\_video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q0i7Z6Ti7Sg&list=PLAEDE1EB86D5AC27C&index=13&feature=plpp_video)



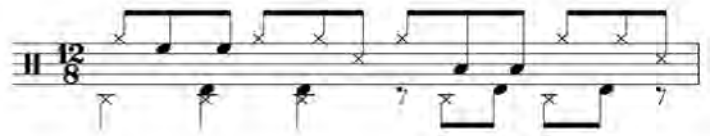
One of the common Abodwese, Oteduaso, and Kopo ensemble interlocking instrumental conversations falls between *abomaa* and *apentemma*. Try the *abomaa* phrase as cymbal sounds and *apentemma* variation open tones on toms over a *pintin* variation divided between bass drum and hi-hat (Drumset Example 12).

Drumset Example 12, viewable at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YUCByhGJD80&list=PLAEDE1EB86D5AC27C&index=14&feature=plpp\\_video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YUCByhGJD80&list=PLAEDE1EB86D5AC27C&index=14&feature=plpp_video)



Adding the *dawuro* timeline as hi-hat foot strokes and the *donno* rhythm as bass drum sounds to the *abomaa-apentemma* conversation creates an active four-way motion that intensifies a solo or ensemble passage. The Columbia Clave of Afro-Cuban rumba traditions, which delays the third *dawuro* stroke one eighth-note duration, is similar to the *dawuro*/hi-hat pattern (Drumset Example 13).

Drumset Example 13, viewable at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FP-ShdHX1vGY&list=PLAEDE1EB86D5AC27C&index=15&feature=plpp\\_video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FP-ShdHX1vGY&list=PLAEDE1EB86D5AC27C&index=15&feature=plpp_video)



One common Abodwese, Oteduaso, and Kopo *pintin* variation parallels a common jazz swing and bebop cymbal rhythm. First, play this pattern on cymbal with hi-hat on 2 and 4 and the *dawuro* bell phrase with your left hand on snare and toms, to hear the relationship between the triple feel of this music and jazz swing. Next, fill in all the eighth-note spaces around the *dawuro* voice with alternating hi-hat and bass drum strokes to produce an intense groove similar to the style of Clifford Jarvis's and Elvin Jones's layered voices. You can also focus this approach solely between left hand and hi-hat or left hand and bass drum under the cymbal pattern, this last with hi-hat foot strokes sounding on beats 2 and 4. Moving your left hand among snare, toms, and cymbals or slightly opened hi-hat creates a tonal and timbral motion (Drumset Example 14).

Drumset Example 14, viewable at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a1NJ1aztkQY&list=PLAEDE1EB86D5AC27C&index=16&feature=plpp\\_video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a1NJ1aztkQY&list=PLAEDE1EB86D5AC27C&index=16&feature=plpp_video)



Now reverse the functions, with left hand filling in the eighth-note spaces around the *dawuro* time cycle played as alternating bass drum and hi-hat strokes. As with the previous example, you can try this approach solely between hi-hat and left hand or bass drum and left hand under the cymbal pattern, this last with hi-hat foot strokes on beats 2 and 4. Again, moving your left hand among snare, toms, and cymbals or slightly opened hi-hat creates a changing tonal and timbral space. For these last two examples, once the bass drum/hi-hat patterns are internalized, freely reorder the sequence of the two different sounds from single alternations to any combination that fits musically, e.g., two or more consecutive bass drum or hi-hat sounds in any sequence (Drumset Example 15).

Drumset Example 15, viewable at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-BU\\_aA6-lZw&list=PLAEDE1EB86D5AC27C&index=17&feature=plpp\\_video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-BU_aA6-lZw&list=PLAEDE1EB86D5AC27C&index=17&feature=plpp_video)



The Abodwese, Oteduaso, and Kopo *pintin-apentemma* dialogues can also be adapted to drumset. Play the *dawuro* bell pattern on cymbal with the *apentemma* phrase divided between bass drum and hi-hat sounds. Add the *pintin* four-stroke phrase alternating in its basic form between open and lower pitched bass tones as mount-



ed and floor tom sounds whose respective medium and low pitch ranges parallel the *pintin* open and bass sounds. Since the *pintin* voice can be freely varied among four, three, two, or a single bass, open, mute, or slap stroke in the space between *apentemma* open tones, try this approach as free variations of four, three, two, or single snare, tom, or cymbal sounds in the same way as the spiritual ensemble drummers. The interlocking of parts produces a dynamic motion (Drumset Example 16).

Drumset Example 16, viewable at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4EXqioF\\_UcA&list=PLAEDE1EB86D5AC27C&index=18&feature=plpp\\_video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4EXqioF_UcA&list=PLAEDE1EB86D5AC27C&index=18&feature=plpp_video)



Playing these rhythms with your hands on the drumset brings a direct and personal sound to your playing. Begin with your left hand on snare with snares released, and your right hand on floor tom. Play open and mute strokes on each drum near the edge of the drumhead, just as Asante drummers do on *apentemma*, *pintin*, and other hand drums. Try the *pintin*-*apentemma* dialogue with the *apentemma* open and mute strokes as open and mute left-hand strokes on snare drum. Join this with a *pintin* dialogue mute-open tone variation as mute and open tones on floor tom. Now play the *dawuro* timeline as hi-hat foot strokes and a bass drum pulse on beats 1 and 3. You can also ground bass drum as the repeating two-stroke *donno* pattern. This active conversation intensifies any music you are playing. Try this hand technique with each of the drumset rhythms in this article (Drumset Examples 17 and 18).

Drumset Example 17, viewable at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cMFAdsx-GVQ&list=PLAEDE1EB86D5AC27C&index=19&feature=plpp\\_video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cMFAdsx-GVQ&list=PLAEDE1EB86D5AC27C&index=19&feature=plpp_video)

and Drumset Example 18, viewable at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZtujMtAWJO8&list=PLAEDE1EB86D5AC27C&index=20&feature=plpp\\_video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZtujMtAWJO8&list=PLAEDE1EB86D5AC27C&index=20&feature=plpp_video)



Use these patterns as a starting point—a door to finding your own sound through the spiritual dance drumming family of voic-

es. When its rhythms feel comfortable in your playing, extend the patterns in these examples around your four limbs and the sound sources of the drumset. While keeping the timeline or other instrumental patterns inside your hearing, create your own voices in a way parallel to the transcendent drive of the Asante drummers.

Listen to the improvisations based on Abodwese, Oteduaso, and Kopo ensemble drumming rhythms at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iGOPAzBaH8Q&list=PLAEDE1EB86D5AC27C&index=21&feature=plpp\\_video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iGOPAzBaH8Q&list=PLAEDE1EB86D5AC27C&index=21&feature=plpp_video)

## RESEARCH CONTEXT

In honor of musician, composer, scholar, author, teacher, mentor, and friend, Professor J. H. Kwabena Nketia, this essay is part of my lifelong performance and scholarly focus in African and African American music cultures. Professor Nketia's work and writings inspired my first formal studies in African music with Kwadzo Donkor and Kobena Adzenyah at Wesleyan University (Connecticut) in the 1980s.



royal hartigan speaking with Professor J. H. Kwabena Nketia

These led to cross-cultural studies with Wesleyan faculty professors Donkor, Adzenyah, and jazz artist Edward Blackwell, resulting in my PhD dissertation *blood drum spirit: Drum Languages of West Africa, African America, Native America, Central Java, and South India* (1986), as well as subsequent works *West African Rhythms for Drum set* (1995), *Dancin' on the Time* (2006), and *West African Eve Rhythms for Drum set* (2009), and an upcoming film on African and African American music and culture. This essay is an appreciation for all Professor Nketia has done for sharing the meaning of African music with the world, advocating for its visibility and respect, and giving us a vision of what ethnomusicology is at its best.

My research took place in four Asante communities, Jatiase, Mampong, Penteng, and Krobo. Due to the nature of this cultural expression, only the public aspects of the performances are included in this article out of respect for the people's beliefs. Since the music and dance carry ritual meaning that is sacred to the people, only short segments are given in the video clips and music notations as per the requests of the priests, priestesses, and musicians. Although copyright restrictions are not a part of Asante culture, historical misuse of indigenous materials by outsiders requires the citation of this work in all its aspects as the general property of the Asante people, and specifically here, that of the people of Jatiase, Mampong, Penteng, and Krobo. Nana Onyina, chief priest at Jatiase, Kwabena Boateng and Yaw Daniel Okyere at Mampong Asante, chief priest Nana Obeng Gyasi at Penteng, and chief priestess Nana

Kwartemaa at Krobo have given permission for study, transcription, performance, video recording, sharing, and drumset adaptations. The people who shared their music and culture in this study are as follows:

Jatiase – okomfoo (priestess) Te Nyarko, okomfoo (priest) Kwame Antwi, and okomfoo Kwarteng; musicians Kwabena Dapaa, Akwasi Amponsah, Kwaku Frimpong, and Yaw Duku, with Yaw Daniel Okyere.

Mampong Asante – musicians Kwabena Boateng, Yaw Daniel Okyere, Prince Afrifa, Papa Yaw, Akuamoah Boateng, Yaw Akowuah, Kwaku Charles, Nana Agyima, and Charles Owusu. Assistants included Kofi Oppong, Francis Opoku, and Musah Salaam.

Penteng Abodwese – shrine chief okomfoo Nana Obeng Gyasi.

Penteng – Abodwese Shrine chief priest Nana Obeng Gyasi; musicians Kwasi Boa, Kofi Bay, Jwasi Gyamfi, Adwoa Kwartemaa, Yaa Akyaa, Adwoa Bona, Akua Darkobea, Afia Mansa, Pokuwaa, Akua Kru, Akua Birago, and Akosua Agyekumwaa, with Yaw Daniel Okyere.

Krobo – chief priestess Nana Kwartemaa, musicians Nana Osei (priest), Kwaku Motia, Yaw Opoku, Kwabena Wesie, Kofi Sarpong, Kwaku Dua, Kofi Frimpong, Kwadwo Adama; other group members include Kwadwo Agyeman, Kofi Appia, and Kwame Atigya.

### Production Credits

Yaw Daniel Okyere, Kwabena Boateng, and Weihua Zhang, video recording, photographs, and formatting; Joseph Gyimah, logistics; Heather Tripp, video-photo transfer; Taylor Kirkwood, electronic music notation, and Richard Legault, notation transfer.

For Jatiase, photo credits, Yao Daniel Okyere, used with permission of Te Nyarko and Kwame Antwei; for Mampong Asante, photo and video credits, Kwabena Boateng, used with permission of Messrs. Boateng and Okyere; for Penteng, photo and video credits, Yao Daniel Okyere and Kwabena Boateng, used with permission from Nana Obeng Gyasi; and Krobo, photo credits, Yao Daniel Okyere and Marie Nelson, used with permission from Nana Kwartemaa and Nana Osei.

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