

#24

## Song

The form of this song is unlike other songs with this tonality (g4-ab4, c5-d5-eb5, 1-2b-3-4-5-6b). The song text has one theme, "Great people like Dzokoto were once on earth," stated in two ways, each sung twice (A1A1 A2A2). Other songs with this minor flavor have the fully rounded form (AABBA). The melody is typical, however, in contour, progression of phrase finals and tessitura, placement of phrases within the bell cycle, and timing of notes in relation to bell strokes and the metric matrix. As we have heard in other songs, four-feel beat 1 becomes the site for rhythmic play. The song is unified by a rhythmic figure we have encountered in other songs--starting on four-beat 3  --that implies 3:2 and highlights unisons with bell strokes. This song is distinctive in its use of sustained notes to accentuate phrase finals on modal degrees other than the tonal center (d5 as 5, a4 as 2). My sense is that the composer is well aware that listeners will feel the tonal gravity of g4 and therefore deliberately gives prominence to other pitches.

## Drumming

This composition employs a kidi phrase with has a strong personality, so to speak, that limits sogo's job to cueing the kidi, playing modest figures that add energy to the kidi phrase, and periodically inserting rolling passages that are timed appropriately to the form of the song. The theme carefully works with offbeat and onbeat partials within four-feel beats: it opens by marking for consciousness three successive third-partial positions (2.3, 3.3, 4.4), then come two successive two-note figures--the first moves from

pickup to onbeat (1.3-2.1) and the second moves from onbeat to second partial (3.1-3.2)-- and finally solitary bounces sound on both sides of ONE (4.3, 1.2). In my view, this composition supports the hypothesis that Ewe musicians are aware of the aesthetic consequences of the rhythmic designs in their instrumental music. The phrase's three bounces on the third partials establish that offbeat moment as important; the pickup-onbeat figure indicates that the composer knew that a third partial location derives its musical power from its relationship to the subsequent onbeat; the onbeat-second partial figure indicates that the musicians are mindful of the way a figure's musical personality derives from its linear position (that is, what it precedes and follows), its polyrhythmic relationships with the bell and other instruments, and its location within the metric matrix; finally, the closing strokes that come before and after ONE reveal the composer's keen awareness of the orienting function of that moment. I interpret this closing gesture as a droll comment that says in effect, "We all know the power of ONE, so let's emphasize it by negation."

We gain further insight into the Ewe sense of musical design by observing that in performance the musical period of the drum composition is offset from the form of the song; in other words, the drum composition starts when the group responds to the leader's opening call, which aligns with the finishing portion of the drums' phrase. Because of the offset design the song/drum pair always is unfinished and moving forward. The accentuation patterns in the drumming of item #23 enliven the unison moments they share with notes in song's tune. Unlike the other items in this collection in which the drumming and singing independently co-exist, drum and song seems carefully matched here.