

#23

Song

In comparison to other Agbadza songs, this one is short and simple. Its tonal progression is very characteristic: the leader's cadence of e4-a4 moves to the group's cadence d4-g4. I have notated the lead sheet version of the tune with dotted eighth notes in four-beat 1 but other rhythms do occur since this song's two-note onbeat-offbeat figures become opportunities for the singers to play with time. The idea of playfulness is important; sometimes the timing of the second note is not precise but performed with an elastic time feel (rubato).

Drumming

Composition #23 closely resembles #22 but in this case a figure with three bounces comes before a figure with a single bounce. The placement of the figures within the bell phrase also is different: the three-bounce figure is very normal in the context of Ewe music but the second figure stands out by placing a lone bounce right on the second pulse in the measure, normally the weakest point in the cycle. The play of sogo conforms to regular Agbadza style with dzi strokes matching kidi bounces and the linear flow of its improvisation working around the kidi phrase, often with contrasts between ternary and binary flow within four-feel beats. The figure in drum language B, gaDEdziDEdzi, which is a favorite of GFA throughout the recorded performance, gives the ternary beats a binary flavor. In composition #23 the binary feel becomes very strong, as heard in the rolling phrases that sound as if four even strokes fit within single four-feel beats (notated as a set of four dotted sixteenth notes). To my ear, GFA gives many different timing

patterns to the basic notion of striking the drum four times during the duration of a single four-feel beat. This is true through the entire recorded performance, but particularly so in this item.