

#10

## Song

Here we encounter a unique form (A1A2A3 B1 A4). One textual message-- "Akpabli has been sent. Open the gate."--occurs three times, each with a different yet related musical setting; after the intervention of one new poetic and melodic phrase, the familiar material returns for a fourth time. The first two sections are arranged with leader-group alternation. Starting in synch with bell stroke 2 (pulse 3, 1.3), the leader quickly arcs upwards from the mid-point to the top of the gamut (c5-a5) before turning back to descend rather more quickly to the likely tonal center (g4); the group answers with a brief phrase whose ascending leap confirms the tonal gravity of the leader's phrase (d4-g4, 5-1). The next statement of the song's central idea finds the leader ending on c5 but instead of confirming the leader's phrase final on modal degree 4 as the new tonal goal, the group again leaps up a perfect fourth, shifting the song's tonal gyroscope toward f5. The third statement of the central theme uses the same tune as the first, now sung by everyone together rather than in call-response. With the song now resting firmly on g4, the stage is ready for a dramatic musical setting of new text material (m.7-8): a descending melodic phrase from c5 to f4 (4-7<sup>b</sup>). Given that f4 is held for a full cycle of the bell phrase, the creators of this tune seem well aware of its tonal significance as modal degree 7. The tonal suspense is resolved with a final arcing phrase, followed by the familiar 5-1 cadence. It is a lovely melody.

The rhythm also adds beauty. As the longer "Akpabli" phrase moves from its start on the third partial of four-beat 1 to the second partial of the first beat of the subsequent measure, it strategically hits bell strokes 2-4-5-6-7-1. Although this might

suggest an upbeat six-feel accentuation, the phrase has such strong moments of tonal repose on the onbeats of four-beats 2-3-4-1 that the upbeat six quality remains subdued. The shorter reply moves from four-beat 3 to 4, an unusual point in the bell phrase for a full stop. It is as if the longer phrase moves the bell from stroke 2 to the next stroke 1, while the shorter reply reinterprets the bell's motion as stopping on stroke 6 (see Lehman Tufts MA thesis). These two phrases occur with identical rhythm four times, a highly distinctive instance of repetition in the Agbadza idiom. As the only other melodic rhythm in the song, B1 attracts our interest. It opens forcefully "in six," switching the song's surface rhythm from the four-feel of the preceding measure, only to shift back to being "in four" as it reaches bell stroke 6. The familiar short-short-long figure (♩♩♩) recurs symmetrically at the phrase's beginning and ending, surrounding ONE (m.8) with its 3:2 in the 2-3-1 phrasing. The durational values in mm.7-8 bring into sonic reality an important fundamental implicit in Agbadza--the composite rhythm of the underlying four-feel beats together with the bell phrase (omitting bell stroke 4). In the B section the song's composers have met the need for an effective rhythm at a critical juncture in the song.

## Drumming

To go with a song that has a recurring rhythm that flows in synchrony with the bell phrase, GFA has chosen an aggressively offbeat sogo-kidi theme. Musically, he has gone for contrast. There is a lot to review, since the kidi not only has several changes but the kidi player on the recording renders the phrases slightly differently than did GFA during our research interviews. GFA presents two settings for the drum language (A, B).

Both A and B use the same sequence of timbres (ga dzi ga, ga dzi) but in A sogo starts right on four-beat 3 while in B sogo starts on the second partial of four-beat 2 (2.2, pulse 5). As a consequence, A enters just after bell stroke 4 and its dzi stroke is of short duration; B enters in unison with bell tones 3-4 and its dzi stroke is of longer duration. A keen listener who is familiar with Ewe music will feel the impact of these subtle musical differences.

The kidi phrase adjusts to changes in the sogo part. In A (as presented in research) the kidi puts two quick bounces on the second partial of four-beat 3 (3.2) and the third partial of four-beat 4 (4.3); in the recording the kidi player puts the bounces on partials 2-3 of beat 3 and plays only one bounce in the second figure. These kidi bounce figures are strategically located within the bell phrase to match strokes 5 and 7 (pulses 8 and 12), hence marking them for prominence. The kidi bounce figures confer a 4+8 shape to the twelve pulses within the bell's musical period, subtly implying a three-beat meter (4+4+4) in a highly offset relationship to the normative four-feel.

When sogo shifts to setting B of the drum language, kidi changes the beginning of its phrase to three bounces that surround four-beat 3 (pulses 6-7-8). This has significant musical impact. The overall quality of the phrase becomes more flowing since in A the two bounce figures are isolated from each other but are joined within a unified phrase in B. Kidi's three consecutive bounces lead the listener to hear bell strokes 4-5 as a two-note figure. In both A and B, the kidi bounce on bell stroke 7 (pulse 12, 4.3) accentuates a structurally weak note in the bell phrase.

In the score, we can follow the way GFA calls the kidi to switch from drum language A to B. At first (m.41) he lays back, playing few notes and quiet ga strokes

(mm.42-43), as if alerting the kidi player to be ready. Then he blasts forth with a short rolling passage (m.44-45) that leads into his call for drum language B. At first the kidi player doesn't get it (mm.45-47) but soon enough he is playing what his lead drummer wants. With kidi on his wavelength, GFA again rolls and brings the language (mm. 50-51). Sogo and kidi stay within drum language B for the rest of the track.