



This information is intended to prepare teachers and students for a Young Audiences performance.

## THE OBO ADDY LEGACY PROJECT

*A Journey to Ghana, the Heart of Africa*

### ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

**The Obo Addy Legacy Project** presents a program that showcases the variety of music and dances from Ghana, a country that has over 40 different languages. Each culture or region uses different instruments and different styles of music. The drum is central to the music and Ghanaian drummers are known throughout the world for their skill at hand drumming and for the complex rhythms they master. The master drummer improvises and embellishes over the layers of polyrhythms the supporting drummers lay down. The bells and rattles complement with additional rhythms, hence the term *polyrhythm*.

The student audience travels on a musical journey to Ghana, hearing songs from the major regions, each with different costumes, instruments and traditions. Alex Addy narrates from the stage and describes the music, the musical instruments, and other aspects of the culture. In this introduction to Ghana, students will hear different types of music and see energetic dances while they learn something about the people. *A Journey to Ghana* involves students in hand clapping, dancing and call and response.

### ABOUT THE ARTIST

**Obo Addy** was the first African drummer to settle in Oregon. He passed away in September of 2012 and left a legacy of educating a new generation of African drummers and dancers, many of whom are now part of the performing group. His upbringing in Ghana was filled with the traditional song, dance, ceremonies and rituals of his native Ga culture. Obo left Ghana in the 1970s to tour internationally with a traditional group formed with his brothers. Before that, he attained the title “Master Drummer” by learning the master drumming parts of the Ewe, Ashanti, Fanti, Dagomba and Konkomba cultures. The National Endowment for the Arts honored Obo in 1996 as the first African artist to receive the National Heritage Fellowship Award, the highest honor a traditional artist can receive in the United States.

Obo is responsible for bringing the next generation of Ghanaian musicians living and performing in the Portland area. Obo assembled a group of young Ghanaian performers to form Okropong, most of who came directly from the National Dance Company of Ghana. Okropong performers are: **Alex Addy, Mashud Neindow, Mathias Galley, Bernard Tettey and Michael Akoto.**

### ORIGIN OF THE ART FORM

Ghana is located in West Africa, in the area formerly called the Gold Coast. The country of Ghana is twice the size of Pennsylvania and slightly smaller than the United Kingdom. As in the United States, people in Ghana live in urban and rural settings: Lifestyles, dwellings and cultural traditions are as diverse as life in New York City compared to life in a farming community in the Midwest.

Music and dance in Ghana and in other parts of Africa are integrated into people's day-to-day lives, at work and at play, during worship and the healing of the sick. Songs and dances can mark historical events such as *Bambaya* representing the Damba Festival in Northern Ghana. Because of its ritual and cultural significance, musical performance is approached very seriously. Musicians, especially drummers, begin training at an early age.

Musical performance is not considered the exclusive province of highly trained professionals, however, nor is musical expression reserved exclusively for scheduled concerts and recitals. African music and dance are an outgrowth of the everyday needs and concerns of the people.

Among the most visually impressive musical instruments of Ghana are the hand drums. These drums are carved out of whole logs and covered at one end by antelope skin pulled taut by leather strings fastened to wooden pegs. There are many kinds of drums and they vary based on the region they are from and their function. The *donno*, another percussion instrument, consists of skins fitted at both ends of a wooden shell shaped like an hourglass. Running the length of the drum and fastened between both heads are many leather strings. When the drum is placed under the arm, these strings can be squeezed to raise and lower the tension, thus tuning the drum. Using a specially carved stick, a master drummer striking the skins can extract innumerable sounds from these "talking" drums.

### VOCABULARY

<b>Aesthetic:</b>	a set of principles sensitive to or related to art or beauty and defined by its respective culture.
<b>Community:</b>	a group of people sharing a common interest, and often defined geographically by a neighborhood or city.
<b>Culture:</b>	the collective customs and accomplishments of a particular people or group.
<b>Ethnic:</b>	of or relating to a group of people who share racial, linguistic, religious, or cultural ties.
<b>Heritage:</b>	a country or area's history; cultural traditions that pass from one generation to another.
<b>Pan-African:</b>	relating to all nations or people of African descent collectively; advocating freedom and independence to all people of Africa.
<b>Revitalize:</b>	to bring new life to.
<b>Self-determination:</b>	autonomy, freedom, and control over one's destiny.
<b>Values:</b>	the principles of a particular individual or culture and on which lives are led, decisions made, and actions taken.

### EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

#### *Pre-Performance*

- Locate Ghana on a map. Find the city of Accra. Look at the neighboring countries.
- Discuss how living in a country like Ghana could be different than living in The United States.
- Read some Anansi stories. Anansi the spider can be found in many books and is a universal hero. Ask the students to write one of their own stories using Anansi as the hero, or to draw pictures of him. Compare to Coyote in Native American legends.

#### *Post-Performance*

- Create a list of the instruments used by the performers. What did they look like-draw a picture.
- How did they sound?
- Write a group story about the performance. How was it different from the music we are used to hearing? How was it similar? What rhythms were used in the music? Draw pictures of their story.

### OTHER RESOURCES

<http://www.oboaddylegacyproject.org/HOMOWOTeacherResourceGuide.pdf>