**FUNCTIONS OF DANCE**

In Africa dance is taken as a must, everybody is supposed to know how to dance. Dance brings about socialization with age groups. In dance, we are bringing our selves together. In many African games, dance is impregnated in it and when a child does not know how to dance, he finds it very difficult to cope up with others.

When you are dancing you are building your body at the same time as a result, you will be strong energetic and your body will escape diseases.

There is enjoyment in dance parties and when one does not know how to dance, he or she would stay back and watch others dancing and as a result, you would loose because many people are admired and presents with or awarded gifts.

During enstoolment and outdooring of chiefs, the chiefs are expected to dance especially during the oath swearing ceremony. It is therefore very compulsory for chiefs to learn how to dance because dance forms part of their activities. In many political durbars dance is used to usher the invited guests. For example, during the 10th anniversary of the June 4th Uprising, the Ghana Dance Ensemble had to perform to usher in the Head of State to the wreath laying ceremony of the Revolution square. Anyone who knows how to dance effectively is easily fitted into the society and is respected because dance is regarded as a major socializing agent in the society.

In a palace dance, men and women attract the attention of audience. These palace dancers are highly respected and where ever the chief goes the dancers follows him and this make them to know many people. They attract many people and through this, they gain their life partners.

In Africa, dance plays a key role in healing process. In many religious houses, people have to dance during the healing process.

In the puberty rites, the one to be initiated is supposed to dance because dance forms a major part in the rites. Good dancers are employed as dancers to which they are paid for, they earn their living from this. For example, the Ghanaian excellent dancer, Adjetey Sowah. A good dancer is always the eye of the community. He is well known by everybody and he is given gifts during performances.

**HOW DO GHANAIANS ACQUIRE DANCE**

**(FORMAL AND INFORMAL)**

***INFORMAL***

We shape the destine of children right from the womb. When pregnant women fall or jump it affects the baby. Whatever exercise they do affects the baby in the womb. When the baby is born, and is carried at the back and the mother dancing, the child begins to acquire that sort of rhythm. Also, some mothers are fond of playing to their babies when they carry them on their lap, the child as a result acquire rhythm consciousness hence become active.

* the movement, the way mothers do things during festivals by pounding, grinding and dancing all affect the baby when they are born.
* Children’s games during the moonlight also enable them to acquire the habit of dancing since most of these games are impregnated with dance. They acquire the dance through participation.
* During folktales, they learn movements through miming of characters. For example a child can impersonate the dance of an old lady.
* Fishermen paddling on the sea, rivers and lagoons registers dance movements. So when children are taking part in such activities they pick dance movements unconsciously. Even when pulling the set off shore, in order to induce them to work harder, they employ musical rhythms to which they pull their nets.
* Pounding of fufu also registers dance movements.

When children are playing in the sand, the boys assume the role of fathers while the girls assume the role of mothers. By assuming such roles, there are a lot of dance movements in corporates in such activities.

\* Rocking babies on thighs, ***(when babies trying to walk, mothers give them rhythms)***

***FORMAL***

* Elected chiefs go through a lot of court dances before they come out. When you are chief, during certain occasions like funerals and festivals you cannot escape dancing, for that matter you are out doored
* Priests and Priestess also learn to dance when they are initiated into the priesthood.
* Formal dance is learnt at the University of Ghana under the Institute of African studies as an introductory course for level 200 students whilst the School of Performing Arts trains students to become professional. It is a professional school to train people to know how to dance.
* C.Y.B. C.Y.O., Christian groups learn to dance to praise God. Dance is highly corporate in the activities of C.Y.B., C.Y.O and at most places, there are professional dancers who teach these groups how to dance.
* Private tuition. People who want to be dancers but does not want to go to dance school do have private tuition in dancing. Even chiefs contact dance teachers to teach them how to dance before they are out doored.
* There are Cultural groups which people join to learn how to dance.

**GAHU DANCE**

**History/Origin**

Gahu originated from the Yoruba of Nigeria. It is a recreational music and dance performed in some Southern Ewe communities. As a result of acculturation, Gahu emanated from the music and dance traditions associated with marriage rites of the Yoruba people of South Western Nigeria, precisely, Badagri.

As it will be deducted from the meaning of the title GaHu, Ga – meaning money or very important personality and Hu – from the Fon language literally symbolizing drum or musical type, the performance represents the musica and dance expression of very important or rich people in the society where it is perpetuated. Gahu having its origin from Nigeria can be seen in the rich Yoruba costume worn during performance.

Gahu can be seen in most southern Ewe communities. In Ghana where it is very popular, areas like Dzodze, Dakpa, Tadzewu, Aflao, Denu, Anlo Afiadenyigba and other southern Ewe settler communities in Accra and other urban towns perform it.

**Context**

As music and dance for entertainment, Gahu features for recreation at social functions. These occasions include life-cycle events – marriage and wedding ceremonies, festivals and durbars. Down in Badagri as stated earlier, the music features mainly at marriage and wedding ceremonies. Gahu may be seen at funerals of a deceased member or upon invitation of the group. Apart from the above situations, Gahu songs may be sung by individuals for entertainment. Organized communal labour or farm or at sea may incorporate Gahu songs to soften labour.

Being a circular dance, Gahu is performed in a circular arena. The instrumentalist sit on a bench and in front of them stand the cantors, forming a big circle in front of all, are the dancers who form the core of the chorus. The dance as choreographed, no ordinary person can just join in without being a member of the group.

**Instrumental Set Up**

The instruments used in Gahu ensemble include the following:

i. Gakogui - double bell

ii. Axatse - rattle

iii. Kagan - supporting drum

vi. Kidi - supporting drum

vii. Sogo - supporting drum

viii. Boba - master drum

**Mode of Performance**

According to Opoku, a renowned Ghanaian choreographer and founder of the Ghana Dance Ensemble, Gahu dance is a blend of pelvic shift style of the Yoruba and a softer and lighter version of the southern Ewe torso contraction. He states further that inflection, gaiety and abandonment form the expressive keynote in the dance.

(Opoku1971: 14)

The dance itself gives room for individual expression and improvisation. It is flexible and light-hearted. The movement in the dance itself can be measured by two count forward movement by the left and alternated immediately by the right. At an exact point in time, the hip moves with the legs action. The shoulder also hoists to the right and left accordingly, with the dancer holding the arms curved and stretched forward. A good dancer is seen not only by responding accurately to the rhythms of the instruments but also by his or her facial expressions.

Gahu, like other southern Ewe dances, starts with greetings and prayers to the ancestors, known as ***ayodede*** or simply a ***yoo*** in this context. It starts with a song in free rhythm but later joined by the idiophones. With the arena set, the main cantor, walking round the dancers, starts the song which is later joined by the chorus.

This section is then followed by a very brief dance period aimed at warming the performers up. Songs sung in this section are very strophic in form. This section may be repeated three or four times.

The song cycle section, known as ***hatsiatsia***, then resumes. Very topical songs are performed. Accompaniment in this section is provided by the bell and axatse. Another dance section follows which may last for several hours.

Gahu songs are generally in simple binary form, call and response, solo and chorus refrain therefore underlines the bulk of Gahu songs. Almost all scales are used in the songs. This may be attributed to the vast spread of Gahu music and its influence by several cultures. Scales therefore used are; Tritonic, Tetratonic, Pentatonic, Hexatonic and Heptatonic in both hemitonic and enhemitonic forms.

Theme of Gahu songs relate to historical, philosophical, topical and human issues. As observed in Atrikpui songs, Gahu songs also use a liturgical language comprising fragments of French. Yoruba, Fon, Hausa and Ewe. Some of the themes illustrate proverbs, greetings, love and courtship, death, praise ridicule and gratitude.

**Adzogbo**

Adzogbo is a traditional music and dance that originated from the Benin Kingdom, also known as Dahomey. Originally, it was called Dzovu and was primarily used as spiritual or religious music and dance. During performances, men would display their dzoka or juju charms, especially the so-called “love charms,” to seduce women.

The music and dance eventually made its way to Togo and then Ghana in the late 19th century. However, its function and purpose changed as it became more widely performed and adopted by different groups of people. The southeastern Ewe people of Ghana, in particular, have embraced Adzogbo as a form of entertainment during festivals and other social occasions.

The Adzogbo dance typically involves a group of performers dressed in colorful costumes, with the dancers moving in unison to the rhythm of the music. The dance is characterized by its energetic and vibrant movements, with the performers often incorporating acrobatics and other physically demanding feats.

One unique aspect of Adzogbo is the presence of the women’s section or phase of the dance, which is called Kadodo. During this phase of the dance, women lead the performance, showcasing their own unique movements and styles.

Overall, Adzogbo is a testament to the rich cultural heritage of the Ewe people of Ghana and the wider West African region. It continues to be an important part of their social and cultural life, as well as a symbol of their identity and traditions.

**THE SLAVE TRADE**

**BLACK DANCE**

Black dance are dances performed in the European countries whose root can be traced in Africa. The slave importation to the new world in the 17th century was not the first incidence of enslavement in Africa. The Portuguese, in fact began the slave trade in 1441 as an element of national commercial expansion. As early as 1518, slaves were imported to the West indices, particularly to the island of Hispaniola (Haiti).

How were the slaves acquired? They were acquired through the whites worked through the chiefs, the release of prisoners, they were made to perform in ships which later on took them away. The Africans of the slave areas did, indeed have a cultural background and a highly developed on at that. A rich African mythology developed through the centuries and was spread by the word of mouth from generation to generation. Folk tales, riddles, proverbs and poetry were examples of the African heritage.

A fundamental element of Africa aesthetic expression was the dance. Music and mask making were incorporated into the wide variety of religious dance forms. The slaves dance so as to release tension, be strong and healthy and also to entertain their masters. Dance was, in some cases, to entice the native Africans to board the white man’s ships. Most slaves, were however, not enticed on board ships but were bought from slave dealers, captured as prisoners of war or abducted.

**SLAVES AT HAITI PORT CARIBEAN (3-4 YEARS)**

When the slaves reached this port, they were distributed to masters where they were made to work vigorously whether rainy or shinny. After work, in order to release tension and boredom they start to dance or perform. It was observed that the African was forced to dance in bondage and under the lash. He danced because the white ruler wanted his stock in good condition. He danced not for love, nor joy, nor religious celebration, nor even the pass the time, he danced in answer to the whip. He danced for survival.

**BLACK DANCE OF THE CARIBBEAN 1518 -1900**

The African heritage is obvious today in the West indices. The slaves took along their culture. The French and Spanish slave owners were more liberal than English and Americans in allowing the native Africans to retain their own culture. According to Harold Courlander, the survival of African heritage in Haiti, for example was due to the relatively liberal attitude of the 1st French and Spanish rulers and the catholic churches. The main objective of the church was salvation of the soul. The slaves under the French and the Spanish were allowed to practice their culture alongside that of the whites in the Caribbean (West indices). The African was generally considered a human being, whereas in the United States the slaves were frequently considered non-human. The Protestants were more repressive than the Catholics. In Louisiana, Mexico and South America where Catholic churches were powerful, Africanism were retained in greater number. According to John Hope Franklin many Africans debarked first on one of the West Indian islands for a process termed ***“SEASONING***”. The slaves were regarded as seasoned with 3-4 years and was viewed by main land planters as much more desirable than the raw negroes fresh from the wilds of Africa.

During the 1803 overthrow of the white ruling class in Haiti, white planters and their slaves flocked to Louisiana and particularly to the New Orleans area, here, the slaves took their religion along and since they were under the Catholics they have the liberty to practice their own culture.