

TEACHER'S NOTES WALA



REQUIREMENTS

Set-up time - 30 minutes **Pack-up time** - 20 minutes

Duration - 45 - 50 minutes plus questions

Performance Area - 5 metres across for all the instruments and about 4 metres out to the front for performance space

Audience Requirements: Primary - if more than one session then junior & uppers separately
Secondary - mixed ages are fine

INFORMATION ON GHANA, WEST AFRICA

Full country name: Republic of Ghana

Area: 238 540 sq km (93 030 sq mi)

Population: 22 million

Capital city: Accra (pop 2.9 million)

People: Akan (44%), Mole-Dagbani (16%), Ewe (13%), Ga (8%), Guan, Gurma, Gonja, Dagomba

Language: English (official language), Ewe, Ga, Twi

Religion: Christian (60%), Muslim (15%), traditional African religions (25%)

Government: Parliamentary democracy

President: John Evans Atta Mills

GDP: US\$22.6 billion

GDP per head: US\$1 310

Inflation: 9%

Major industries: Mining, lumber, cocoa, light manufacturing

Major trading partners: US, Germany, France, Japan, South Korea

Currency: Ghana Cedi (GH ₵)

THE MEMBERS OF WALA:

When a child in Ghana discovers their passion for music or dance, they are encouraged to study as an apprentice to a master. They specialise in a chosen instrument with a view to becoming a master themselves, also encompassing study of a broad range of instruments. For example, a dancer focuses mainly on the dancing, however to be a master at dance she/he will need to fully understand and play all the percussive instruments. This is imperative for him/her to understand the music which supports the creative expression of the dance. It follows that the drummer must also have an awareness of the relationship between the music and the dance. Each member of Wala has a specialty; however each of them has the skills to play all instruments, sing and dance.

THE MUSIC OF WALA:

Wala perform a blend of original and traditional music mostly in 6/8 and 4/4 time. Traditionally in Ghana cultural groups are representative of a particular tribe or region only performing the music of their people. With the advent of modern influence, communication exchange, and the ability to travel far outside of ones region, cultural groups have learnt the music not only of different regions and tribes, but other countries. Performances may now include influences from other regions, however the music of their tribe is the heart and soul of the performance. Wala's members are from the Ga tribe mainly from in and around Accra, and the Ewe tribe from the Volta region in Southern Ghana.

THE INSTRUMENTS OF WALA:

Wala use many different instruments in their performances originating from not only Ghana, but many West African countries. The kpanlogo, atumpani, fumtumfrum, gome, aslato and ashiwa are from the Ga and Akan people, while the kaagai, atsimevu, kidi and sogo originate from the Ewe tribe. Many of the instruments are common to the West African countries of Senegal, Guinea, Mali and Cote D'ivoire. These include the balafon (xylophone), flute, doun douns, talking drum, gong gong (bell), shekere and the djembe drum.

Wala's drums are mainly from the GA tribe and the EWE tribe.

DESCRIPTIONS OF SOME OF WALA'S DRUMS:

Obonu drums **Atumpani** drums both these are sets of two and come from the royal drum family

Ashiwa this is a thumb piano quite large the player sits on it and plays it between his legs

Gome this is a box drum played with hands and feet, player also sits on plays between legs

Kpanlogo drums usually set of 4-6 melodic hand drums (traditional congas)

Djembe hand drum very well known from west africa

Balafon traditional xylophone

Ewe set of drums consists of 4 drums going from small to large played with sticks

Gong Gong this is the bell

Chekere shakers



THE COSTUMES OF WALA:

Wala's vibrant costumes are made in Ghana by a local tailor. The type of costume identifies the tribe of a person or group and what region in Ghana they are from. The dance costumes are designed by the group to suit the dance. The raffia skirt is a traditional fetish (juju) costume for traditional dances. Scarves add colour and design to the costumes, and are usually worn by women for special occasions. Some costumes are made from Kente cloth which is woven in bright, narrow strips with complex patterns. It is usually made from cotton and is always woven outdoors, exclusively by men. The Ewé also weave kente cloth, and their more geometrical patterns contain symbolic designs handed down through the ages. Kente cloth is only worn in the southern half of the country and - as distinct from other forms of traditional weaving - is reserved mainly for joyous occasions.