



# Smithsonian Folkways

West African Song and Chants - Children's Music from Ghana  
A Smithsonian Folkways Lesson  
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## Summary:

With these segments, teachers are offered opportunities to use children's music from Ghana, West Africa, to gain experience with basic polyrhythmic ensembles. Singing, chanting, dancing and playing instruments are included throughout the unit.

Suggested Grade Levels: (3-5, 6-8)

Country: Ghana

Region: Volta Region, Ashanti Region, Central Region

Culture Group: Ewe, Akan, Ga

Genre: children's social music

Instruments: voice, clapping, firikiwa, tokee, gankogui, drum

Language: Ewe, Twi, Ga

Co-Curricular Areas: Social Studies

National Standards: 1,2,5,6,7,8,9

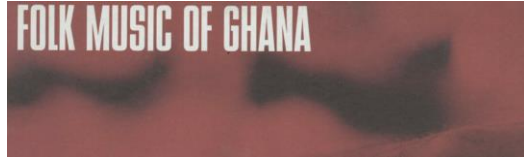
## Prerequisites:

Experience with combining multiple rhythms together using voice and body percussion, reading quarter note/ two eighth notes/ quarter rest/ dotted quarter-eighth note

## Objectives

- Students will perform steady beat and rhythmic ostinato to recording of Ghanaian folk tune (National Standard 2)
- Students will sing and chant folk tunes from Ghana (National Standard 1)
- Students will read and clap/play rhythms extracted from Ghanaian folk tunes/chant (National Standards 1,2,5)
- Students will read and sing melody fragments extracted from Ghanaian folk melodies (National Standards 1,5)
- Students will learn about and play authentic instruments from Southern Ghana - firikiwa, tokee, gankogui (National Standards 2, 6, 7, 8, 9)

Materials: Audio technology to play sound recordings, firikiwa (small iron castanet), tokee (banana shape bell), small drums, video technology to show Por Por Music video.



“Gome”, Folk Music of Ghana, Folkways Records Album No. FW8859, c. 1964 by Folkways Records & Service Corp., NYC, USA 10023

<http://www.folkways.si.edu/folk-music-of-ghana/world/album/smithsonian>



“Tuu! Tuu! Gbovi”, “Kaa Fo”, “Mede brebre masi ta”, African Songs and Rhythms For Children - Recorded and Annotated by Dr. W.K. Amoaku, SFW45011, c.1990 Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

<http://www.folkways.si.edu/african-songs-and-rhythms-for-children-recorded-and-annotated-by-dr-wk-amoku/childrens/music/album/smithsonian>

Companion book for “African Songs and Rhythms For Children”:

Amoaku, W.U., “In the African Tradition - African Songs and Rhythms for Children, A Selection from Ghana, c. 1971 Schott, Germany

La Drivers Union Por Por Group - Video

<http://s.si.edu/africa-videos>



map from [www.ghanaweb.com](http://www.ghanaweb.com)

\*NB: It is advisable that each lesson segment would incorporate a short review of the material from the previous lesson. By lesson segment four, there would be three familiar selections and one new selection. This unit would continue past lesson segment four until all material is mastered.

Lesson Segments:

1. "Gome" rhythmic ostinato using claps and moving (National Standards 5,6,7,9)
2. "Kaa Fo" singing with instrument accompaniment (National Standards 1,2,6,7,8,9)
3. "Mede Brebre Masi Ta" speech choir with drum (National Standards 1,2,5,6,7,8,9)
4. "Tuu! Tuu! Gbovi (National Standards 1,2,5,6,7,8,9))

1. Lesson Segment Title

- a. "Gome" <http://www.folkways.si.edu/folk-music-of-ghana/world/album/smithsonian>
  - i. walk beat in place
  - ii. count beat in groups of 4
  - iii. clap on beat 1
  - iv. clap on beat 1 and 4
  - v. add scooping hand motion on beat 2 & 3
- b. Questions: Where might music be from? (Ghana - explore on map) What kind of voicing? (male voices, call and response, two parts) What instruments are heard? (sticks on side of drum, iron bell, drums)

GOME (Mr. Jacobson)

Many years ago, various types of artisans were employed by Europeans to other parts of Africa to work, these include washermen, carpenters, masons and plantation workers. As it is with all Africans, their work is swiftly done as they accompany themselves with their own folksongs combined with worksongs. In the Spanish possession of Fernando in West Africa, they did not receive favourable treatment from their European bosses, and these unfair treatments were established in the Gome songs.

Apparently one Mr. Jacobson, noted for his cruelty lost a finger while manipulating a machine, this incident was automatically transposed into a creol. At play time or work time, it became a very popular song among the people of the island. Those who returned home later made the Gome very popular again that it also became a farewell song at funerals of their mates. A single drum played with the hand, and tonal changes derived from the pressure on the skin by the heel of the foot, and other work tools like the crow-bar and saw, are the simple instruments used by the Gome players.

- c. Discuss role of music in daily life in Ghana. Use Por Por music video showing how taxi drivers have united and used music to represent themselves as an example of the way music is incorporated into all forms of expression.

<http://s.si.edu/africa-videos>

Assessment: Demonstration by students of beat maintenance and clapping on correct beats without watching teacher and performance of Question and Answer components of song.

2. "Kaa Fo"

## Kaa Fo

Ga Cradle Song, Ghana, West Africa

Voice

The musical notation is written on a single staff in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a 3/4 time signature. The melody consists of three phrases. The first phrase (measures 1-3) is 'Ka a fo, Ka a fo, Kaa'. The second phrase (measures 4-6) is 'fo ni mo ko kwε - daŋ fika ka kɛ kpo'. The third phrase (measures 7-9) is 'yε - dan kaa fo ni mo ko kwε - daŋ'. The lyrics are written below the notes.

Ka a fo, Ka a fo, Kaa

fo ni mo ko kwε - daŋ fika ka kɛ kpo

yε - dan kaa fo ni mo ko kwε - daŋ.

Translation:

Kafo, Kafo,	Don't cry, don't cry,
Kafo ni moko kwε odaŋ	Don't cry and let anyone see your mouth
fika ka kɛ kpo ya odaŋ.	There is gold in your mouth
Kafo ni moko kwε odaŋ.	Don't cry and let anyone see your mouth.

Note - refer to the companion book for rhythm patterns for accompaniment.

- "Kaa Fo".
- Show phonetic pronunciation for text while playing recording of "Kaa Fo". Have students match claps while listening.
  - Introduce firikiwa - teacher plays along with recording.
  - Students snap firikiwa rhythm while teacher plays along to recording.
  - Students take turns trying firikiwa, other students follow clapping pattern.
  - Teach pronunciation and translation. Learn melody.
  - Put together in three groups - 1. singing 2. clapping 3. firikiwa.
- Rotate.

Assessment: Demonstration by students of steady beat, firikiwa rhythm pattern, small group singing and playing.

### 3. “Mede Brebre Masi Ta”

**Mede Brebre Masi Ta**  
**Akan Speech Choir**



Meh-deh breh-breh breh-breh ma-si ta. Meh-deh breh-breh breh-breh ma-si ta.

(phonetic transliteration)

Note - refer to companion book for full translation, transcription and additional parts.

- a. Extract segment of chorus part (koseh koseh koseh) and have students chant while they hear teacher speak solo part.
- b. Discuss translation
- c. Extract another part of chorus (nyi ni nyi ni). Write the two extracted parts down on board with rhythm above. As teacher chants solo part, point at one of the chorus parts. Alternate at will.
- d. Alternate between extracted parts while hearing recording. Ask what they hear. (male voices)
- e. Teach simplified drum ostinato.
- f. Rotate through students in small groups or solos - one group on drum ostinato and on chorus parts while teacher chants solo.

Assessment: Student demonstration of having learned the song in a small group performance

#### 4. "Tuu! Tuu! Gbovi"

### Tuu! Tuu! Gbovi

Ewe Children's Song

Voice



Tuu! Tuu! gbo - vi, Tuu! Tuu! gbo - vi. Da-da mel' a - fea meo.

Na - na mel' a - fea meo. A - o, de - de - vi nye, bo - nu, bo - nu kpo. 'Meka fo wo?

Po - lu - vi yea? Tu ta ne ma - fui nawo. A - o vi - nye me - ga - fa 'vi - o.

A - o de - de - vi nye bo - nu, bo - nu kpo.

Translation:

Tuu! Tuu! Gbovi.	Away, away, little goat.
Tuu! Tuu! Gbovi.	Away, away, little goat.
Dada me l'a fea me o.	Mama is not at home.
Nana me l'a fea me o.	Grandma is not at home.
Ao, dedevi nye, banu, banu kpo.	Oh, my little child, keep quiet.
'Meka fo wo?	Who spanked you?
Pɔluvi yea?	Is it little Paul?
Tu ta, ne mafui nawo.	Spit and let me spank him for you.
Ao, vinye, megafa 'vi o.	Oh, my child, don't cry.
Ao, dedevi nye banu, banu kpo.	Oh, my poor child, keep quiet.

Refer to companion book for pronunciation guide and rhythms.

- Prepare 3 rhythm patterns on flash cards or on board. Practice reading and then clapping.
- Split class into three groups. Assign one of the rhythm patterns to each group. Practice and rotate.
- Clap patterns along with recording.
- Ask what they hear? (female voice and claps)
- Transfer clapping patterns to firikiwa, tokee and gankogui

Extension - Song could be taught in the next/future lesson/s.

Assessment: Student demonstration of performance of song with singing and clapping patterns, and of understanding of rhythm patterns as per their sound and their notation.