

*John Collins and Flemming Harrev*

-----  
**KING OF THE BLACK BEAT**  
-----





## **KING OF THE BLACK BEAT**

---

**The Story of King Bruce  
and the Black Beats, Highlife Dance-Band of Ghana**

---

**JOHN COLLINS**

Edited and with a discography compiled by

**FLEMMING HARREV**

THIS IS A LIMITED EDITION  
OF THE BOOK

IT IS NOT FOR SALE

IT IS FOR EDUCATIONAL  
PURPOSES ONLY

Thanks to David Stehl of the UNESCO Intangible  
Cultural Heritages Section, Paris, for final  
formatting and editing of the manuscript

Thanks to the US Embassy Public Affairs Section,  
Accra, for financial assistance for this  
educational highlife book

## **Contents**

### **PREFACE**

### **CHAPTER 1**

#### **An Introduction to the Early History of West African Highlife Music**

*By John Collins*

Palm-Wine and Guitar-Band Highlife  
Brass-Band, Adaha and Konkomba Highlife  
Dance-Band Highlife

### **CHAPTER 2 Early Days**

Early Musical Influences  
Local Music in the Area  
Achimota College

### **CHAPTER 3 Learning the Trumpet**

Taking Up the Trumpet  
Finding a Place to Rehearse  
The London Jazz Scene

### **CHAPTER 4 Back in Accra with the Accra Orchestra**

Stock Arrangements and Highlifes  
Part-Timers  
Falling between Two Stools  
Leaving the Accra Orchestra

### **CHAPTER 5 First Generation Black Beats**

The Influence of Louis Jordan  
Those Days of Sharing  
Saka Acquaye Leaving  
Early Repertoire  
First Recordings

### **CHAPTER 6 The Golden Age of the Black Beats**

Louis Armstrong and the Goatee Beard Look  
The Lead Singers

### **CHAPTER 7 The Second Generation Black**

Beats and the 'B.B.' Bands  
Into the Limelight Again  
Foul Play  
Playing or Promotion?  
The Seven 'B.B.' Bands

### **CHAPTER 8 Music Problems and Music Unions**

The Musicians Unions  
Royalties  
MUSIGA  
Spinners and Copyright Laws



Music Pirates

**CHAPTER 9 Present and Future Plans**

Future of Live Bands  
The Pull of Music

**CHAPTER 10 Black Beats' Songs - Comments and Translations**

**CHAPTER 11**

A Discography of the Black Beats  
By Flemming Harrev

**INDEX**

**PREFACE**

This book owes its existence to the 4th international conference of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM) held in Accra, 12th-19th August 1987. Not only was it the first conference of its kind to take place outside Europe and North America. It also happened at a time when African popular music gained new momentum, following its commercial break-through on the international record market in the early 1980's.

The choice of Ghana, the mother country of highlife, was directly influenced by John Collins' many articles, books and ongoing research. Ghana also seemed a natural choice since it was here popular music first evolved in West Africa. In consequence, several African musicians and academics were invited especially for the conference. Among them King Bruce, trumpeter, saxophonist and renowned band-leader of the The Black Beats, one of the classic highlife dance-bands of the 1950's.

King Bruce not only played a very active role in the proceeding, he also proved a very generous person in informal conversations in between sessions who willingly shared his life-long experience as a musician. It was after a one hour interview, when I excitedly returned to John Collins' house in Achimota, the idea arose to expand my interview into a proper autobiography. Listening to the tape, we both realized the importance of King Bruce's life-story to the wider history of highlife in Ghana.

The story had to be told. So before I left for home the original interview was copied for John Collins to use as reference. During the end of 1987 and early 1988 he went back to interview King Bruce on a

variety of subjects, held together in chapters reflecting King Bruce's development as a musician and band-leader. These interviews were first transcribed in question-answer form and then sent to Copenhagen for editing and annotations. At the same time a discography of the Black Beats was worked out from old Decca catalogues and other references. The discography and the edited manuscript were in turn returned to Ghana for King Bruce's comments and approval. The discography itself formed the basis for the closing chapter 10, with comments on and translations of nearly fifty of the Black Beats' songs.

Finally we would also like to thank King Bruce for graciously placing his personal photo archive at our disposal for the publication of this book.

Copenhagen, 26th March

1991

Flemming Harrev

## CHAPTER 1

### An Introduction to

### THE EARLY HISTORY OF WEST AFRICAN HIGHLIFE MUSIC

*By John Collins*

Highlife is one of the myriad varieties of acculturated popular dance-music styles that have been emerging from Africa this century and which fuse African with Western (i.e. European and American) and Islamic influences. Besides highlife, other examples include kwela, township jive and mbaqanga from South Africa, chimurenga from Zimbabwe, the benga beat from Kenya, taarab music from the East African coast, Congo-Zaire rumba, soukous and kwassa kwassa from Central Africa, Raï music from North Africa, jùjú, Àpàlà and fùjì from Western Nigeria, makossa and bikutsi from Cameroon, Mandingo music from Mali and Guinea and mbalax from Senegal.

Highlife and these other African 'black and white' fusion styles can be compared with parallel fusion styles that have emerged out of the African heritage in the New World - such as ragtime, jazz, samba, blues, calypso, rumba, swing, rhythm and blues, soul, reggae and disco - but as they developed at home in Africa itself and thus having a direct and continuous link with the traditional music of that continent. However, these two branches of black music, from the African Diaspora in the New World and from Africa itself, are more than just parallels when one recognises that there are both African roots in the popular music of the Americas (a topic already well researched in books on jazz history, the search for 'The Roots of the Blues', etc.) and, conversely, a strong impact of the 'Diasporic' music (such as rumba, jazz and calypso) on the evolution of popular music in Africa.

This black New World influence is apparent in Africa's very first fusion-music called gumbe, gomme, or gome, which developed in the West African country of Sierra Leone in the early nineteenth century. For African gumbe grew out of the goombay frame-drums brought by a group of Maroons (free blacks) from Jamaica who were deported by the British and re-settled in Freetown, today the capital of Sierra Leone. By the mid-nineteenth century gumbe became a craze amongst the coastal population of Sierra Leone and later spread inland and along the coast to other parts of West and Central Africa. (1)

This is not so surprising as Jamaican goombay drumming itself was created by slaves who originally came from Africa and brought their musical ideas with them. In a sense, the Maroons from Jamaica were simply bringing back to Africa, African music that had been adapted to the New World; thus completing what can be considered as a centuries old 'trans-Atlantic musical feedback cycle', i.e. African music taken to the Americas by slaves, transmuted there, and then brought back to Africa.

From African gumbe music there grew other early African popular music styles such as ashiko and maringa, which combined gumbe drums with guitar and accordion - and the musical saw in the case of ashiko. Both gumbe, in Ghana called gome, and its two spin-offs, ashiko and maringa, were later partially absorbed into highlife music.

Although the word 'highlife' was not coined until the 1920's, its origin dates to the late nineteenth century English-speaking West African countries of Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ghana and Nigeria. Highlife emerged as three distinct streams, each dependent on which particular western musical influence was assimilated and utilised by the African musicians who fused it with their own tradition. Firstly there were the imported influences of foreign sailors that became palm-wine guitar-band highlife; secondly, that of the colonial military brass-bands that became adaha highlife; and thirdly, that of the Christianised black elite which became dance-band highlife.

#### **PALM-WINE AND GUITAR-BAND HIGHLIFE**

Palm-wine music was created by coastal West African musicians who combined local stringed and percussion instruments (including the gumbe frame-drums) with those of foreign sailors; i.e. portable instruments used aboard ships such as the guitar, mandolin, banjo, harmonica, accordion and concertina. The name 'palm-wine' itself was derived from the low-class dockside palm-wine bars where foreign and local sailors, stevedores and Dockers congregated to drink the fermented juice of the palm-tree. And the foreign seamen not only included whites but also Afro-Americans who added a touch of ragtime to early palm-wine music - another example of black musical feed-back referred to previously. Then there were the visiting Kru sailors from Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, a traditionally maritime peoples who had settlements (Kru Towns) down the West African coast before the colonial period and who, during the nineteenth century, worked aboard foreign sailing boats and steam ships. Indeed it was the Kru seamen who first pioneered the West African 'two-finger' palm-wine style of plucking the guitar, by applying the traditional African cross-rhythmic way of playing the local lute or harp to the guitar. And it was the same Krus who created and spread around West African coastal towns some of the basic palm-wine guitar chord patterns such as 'mainline', 'dagomba' (from 'Dago Mba Wo Ye Tangebu'- first line of the song in the Kru language) and 'fireman'; the latter taking its name from the job of stoker aboard the coal fuelled steamers.

By the turn of the century there were many other local West African variations of palm-wine music, besides that of the Krus. There was maringa (sometimes called ragtime) in Sierra Leone; ashiko in Accra and Lagos; timo in Accra and osibisaaba in Ghana's coastal Fantiland. The latter is a fusion of palm-wine music with the Fanti fishermen's traditional osibi music (where, incidentally, the London based Ghanaian Afro-rock band Osibisa gets its name).

Although all these early palm-wine styles were initially coastal and urban phenomena, over time and especially when they spread into the hinterland villages, a more rootsy variation of palm-wine music was created. This was sung in the vernacular languages rather than Creole and Pidgin English, the lingua Francas of the coast, and it utilised the more complex traditional 12/8 polyrhythms rather than the syncopated 4/4 rhythms of earlier palm-wine highlife styles like maringa, dagomba and fireman.

In Nigeria this more Africanised or de-acculturated version of palm-wine music was called native blues, in Fantiland it was known as ohugua or opim, and in Ashanti as odonso or Ashanti blues. It should be pointed out that 'Blues' was not a reference to American blues, but rather that this rootsy version of palm-wine music was often played in a minor or hexatonic key - closer to the traditional pentatonic scale than is the major diatonic scale, which is the scale of mainline, dagomba and fireman.

According to the veteran Ghanaian palm-wine guitarist Kwaa Mensah, his uncle Kwame Asare or Sam, Ghana's first popular palm-wine guitarist, was taught guitar by a Kru seaman and went on to compose many early Ghanaian palm-wine songs, including the lovely highlife 'Yaa Amponsah'. The following are some comments by Kwaa Mensah on his uncle.

"Sam's father was a storekeeper who sold carpenter's in Cape Coast [Fantiland]. His father played the concertina and used to take Sam, when he was very small, on his shoulders to play clips. His father played ... opim or ohugua [i.e. 'Blues']. Opim was a special music for concertina. Another rhythm they played was ashiko, a highlife played with a musical saw. Ashiko bands consisted of an accordion or concertina, clips, carpenter's saw, where the saw is bent and some iron or knife is used to rattle the mouth or face of the saw. Sam later learnt to play guitar against his father's wishes, who thought only ruffians played guitar; so Sam ran away to Kumasi to join the T.C.C. Company. There in Kumasi he met with Kwah Kanta from El Mina and H.E. Biney from Cape Coast. Kwah Kanta played wooden box and Biney and Sam played guitar. In 1928 they [Sam's trio] went to London to make recordings." (2)

During the 1930's palm-wine music and West African 'Blues' became so popular that each year about 200,000 78 r.p.m. records of this music were sold in West Africa by companies such as Zonophone, HMV (His Master's Voice), Parlophone, Columbia and Regal. It was Ghanaians who first recorded this music. Besides Sam's trio, also called the Kumasi Trio, other early Ghanaian artists included George Aingo, Kwamin, Kwesi Paperah, Appianing, Kwesi Menu, Komla Biney, Osei Bonsu, Mireku, Kwabina Mensah, Kamkam, Kojo Seidu, Kofi Mabireh - who mainly sang in Fanti and Twi.

During the Second World War record production ceased (the shellac being needed for the war effort). But by the 1950's HMV (by then part of EMI) and Decca were in full swing producing palm-wine music - by now generally referred to as guitar-band music as the guitar had become the dominant sailor's instrument in such groups. And some of the most famous Ghanaian guitar-bands of that first time were led by Appiah

Adjekum, Otoo Larte, Kwaa Mensah, E.K. Nyame, Onyina, Kakaiku, Yamoah, I.E., J. Squire Addo and Akumanyi.

### **BRASS-BAND, ADAHA AND KONKOMBA HIGHLIFE**

The second major stream of highlife developed out of the brass and fife bands associated with the European forts dotted along the West African coast (for instance Ghana had 200 forts). From early on the regimental brass and fife bands utilised local musicians to play military marches and music. The transformation of European march time into a syncopated African beat occurred when West Indian troops were stationed in West Africa - which in Ghana was from the 1880's on, when the West Indian Rifles Regiment was stationed at El Mina, Winneba and Cape Coast to help the British fight the Ashanti Wars. When the Ghanaian military brass-band musicians saw that the West Indian regimental bandsmen played their own local Caribbean mentos and calypsos in their spare time, the Ghanaians were inspired to do the equivalent and create their own African version of danceable brass-band music which they called adaha.

This conversion of on-beat European military music into black off-beat adaha music parallels what happened in New Orleans in the southern United States, the birthplace of jazz. For jazz emerged out of the Afro-American marching funeral brass-bands, many of whose players were trained in the military bands of the American Civil War. Indeed the parallels between these two black brass-band styles - African adaha and Afro-American jazz - are even closer, as they even developed at the same time, i.e. the 1880's.

Two of the earliest adaha highlife brass-bands in Ghana were the Lions Heart and Edu Magicians bands of El Mina - and within a few years many towns in southern Ghana had one. In fact adaha music became so popular, that in the villages of southern Ghana where people could not afford the expensive imported brass-band instruments, a 'poor man's version' of the adaha called konkoma or konkomba became a craze between the 1920's and 1940's. And except for the big brass-band drum and an occasional flute or bugle, local instruments and voices were used. However the konkomba bands did keep the rather drill-like formation dances of the more prestigious adaha bands.

Konkomba highlife became so popular that it diffused eastwards out of the Akan speaking areas of southern Ghana and in the 1930's reached western Nigeria, where it became one of the many styles that were incorporated into the local Yoruba palm-wine music known as jùjú. And although konkomba largely died out in the 1950's, in the Ewe speaking areas of eastern Ghana and Togo, konkomba fused with local recreational music where (starting off in the town of Kpando) it became known as bor-bor-bor dancing and drumming. And bor-bor-bor's distant connection with the brass-band tradition is hinted by the occasional use of a bugle amidst a battery of traditional Ewe drums, bells and rattles.



An interesting parallel to this 'indigenisation' of West African brass-band music took place in East Africa after the First World War. For after this war, the local East African troops, or Askaris, who had been employed by the Germans in mainland Tanzania (then German East Africa, later re-named Tanganyika) and trained by them to play military music, took this music back to their villages with them (3). As in the case of West African adaha and konkomba, the East African Askaris could not afford the expensive brass-band instruments and so used local ones (including gourd kazoos), but retained the drill-like dances. The brass-band style created by the East African, known as beni, was popular right up to the 1950's. And just as West African konkomba fused with traditional Ewe music to produce bor-bor-bor, so too did beni 'lead on' to more Africanised versions, such as mganda and chikosa in Tanzania and the kalela dance of the Copperbelt region of Zambia and Zaire.

#### **DANCE-BAND HIGHLIFE**

The third major stream of highlife, that of the dance-bands, was derived from the pre-Second World War dance orchestras of the black coastal elite of Sierra Leone, Ghana and Nigeria. These orchestras were largely symphonic type ensembles which did not play European classical music, but rather European and American dances like waltzes, polkas, Afro-American ragtime and Latin American ballroom music (tangos, sambas, rumbas, etc.).

In Sierra Leone during the 1920's there was the Triumph Orchestra and the Papa Dan Jazz Band, in Nigeria the Lagos City Orchestra and in Ghana the Jazz Kings, the Cape Coast Sugar Babies (or Light Orchestra), the Winneba Orchestra and Ashanti Nkramo Band. These were followed in the 1930's by Teacher Lamptey's Accra Orchestra, the Accra Rhythmic Orchestra, the Accra City Orchestra, the Casino Orchestra and the Koforidua Royal Orchestra. The very earliest dance orchestra in Ghana however, was the Excelsior Orchestra, formed in Accra by the Ga musician Frank Torto.

In fact it was in Ghana during the 1920's that these high-class orchestras first began playing an occasional palm-wine, gumbé, or ashiko song - which is when the term 'highlife' was first coined. For the poor people who congregated outside prestigious black elite clubs in Accra like the Merry Villas and Palladium Cinema suddenly began to hear their own local street music being orchestrated by sophisticated bands - and gave the music the name 'highlife'. The following is a comment on this topic by Yebuah Mensah who was running the Accra Rhythmic Orchestra in the 1930's.

"The term highlife was created by people who gathered round the dancing clubs, such as the Rodger Club, to watch and listen to the couples enjoying themselves. Highlife started as a catch-name for the indigenous songs played at these clubs by such early dance-bands as the Jazz Kings, the Cape Coast Sugar Babies, the Sekondi Nanshamang and later the Accra Orchestra. These people outside called it the highlife as they did not reach the class of the couples going inside, who not only had to pay the relatively high entrance fee of about seven shillings and sixpence, but also had to wear full evening dress including top-hats if they could afford it." (4)

The Second World War made a big impact on the local African dance orchestra scene, as British and American troops were stationed in West Africa. Ghana, for instance, would have become the exile base for the British government and Royal Family, if Britain had been defeated by Germany - just as General de Gaulle and the Free French set up headquarters in Brazzaville (Congo).

The music of the British and American troops was swing and bands were set up in West Africa by them to play this dance music. One of the earliest in Accra was formed in 1940 by the Scottish sax player, whose stage-name was Sergeant Jack Leopard. Unable to form a swing-band from just white musicians he recruited from the army, he also brought in African musicians from the local dance orchestras who could read music - and set up Leopard's Black and White Spots. In the following quotation the famous post-war dance-band musician E.T. Mensah, who was a member of the Black and White Spots, comments on the influences of the foreign army and its musicians on the local Accra music scene.

"It was Sergeant Leopard who thought us the correct methods of intonation, vibrato, tonguing and breath control, which contributed to place us above the average standard in town. ... We played from one army camp to another in the Accra district. Each of us got a pound for each engagement. Boy, oh, boy, that pound seemed a fortune to us in those days. For some years we had been playing in one or the other of the three orchestras in town: the Accra, Rhythmic and City. In these we used to get about two shillings every engagement. ... When the Americans came we learnt a lot of lessons. It was the first time I personally saw a white man holding a pick-axe and digging. Up to then it hadn't been natural to see a white man doing this. ... They (the Americans) usually came to town with a fat load of money, count so much and buy say two or three bottles of beer. When you wanted to give them the balance they would say, 'Keep the rubbish'. The whites, especially the Americans, often left their camps and were trying to patronise the local bars. Bars began to spring up during the war so that in any small corner there was a kiosk [selling beer]. They didn't mind sitting down at these bars from six at night to twelve midnight, drinking, talking and listening to jazz and swing on the gramophone." (5)

Another swing-band formed the same year in Accra as the Black and White Spots was the Tempos, set up by the Ghanaian pianist Adolf Doku and an English engineer and sax player called Arthur Leonard Harriman. The following is what Adolf Doku has to say about the formation of the Tempos dance-band.

"Harriman was a good saxophone player, having played with several European bands in Britain before coming out to West Africa. He once met me at a private party, where I was playing the piano, and asked if I would allow him to play his saxophone with me at that party. Of course I agreed to his request and soon we were playing dance music to which the guests danced.

After this we met several times later and decided to include a drummer and a trumpeter to the team. We drafted in two members of the armed Forces who were in the Gold Coast at the time, it was in 1940 during the Second World War years and soon engagements started coming in for us to



play at private parties only. But later on, the secretary of the then European Club in Accra [now the Arts Centre] approached us and engaged us to play at all mid-week dances and also every Saturday." (6)

The Tempos Band, like the other swing-bands in war-time Ghana, was much smaller than the local pre-war dance orchestras - and their clientel was mainly foreign soldiers. However, at the end of the war, the troops began to leave and whereas the other swing-bands folded up, the Tempos survived, but with a fully African membership. The band was first under leadership of the tenor saxophonist Joe Kelly and then, from 1947, E.T. Mensah (doubling up on sax and trumpet) took over. And it was under E.T. Mensah's leadership that the Tempos Band became the most important West African highlife dance group of the 1950's.

For E.T. kept the outfit to a small swing combo size (seven members in fact) and created a highlife style that had a swing touch to it. The other crucial ingredient that made the band so successful throughout West Africa was introduced primarily through the band's drummer Kofi Ghanaba (then known as Guy Warren). Ghanaba had previously been in London where he had played congas for Kenny Graham's Afro Cubists Band and had been a BBC disc jockey playing calypso. So on returning to Ghana he introduced Afro-Cuban percussion as well as calypso horn inflexions to the Tempos.

The Tempos' dance-band combination of highlife, swing, calypso and Afro-Cuban music was so successful that E.T. became known as 'The King of Highlife' (i.e. dance-band highlife) and his music became the distinctive city sound of the 1950's - the optimistic period leading up to independence for Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. As a result many bands and bandsmen from these countries emulated him, were inspired by him, or in some cases, were even taught by him. These included the dance-band leaders Bobby Benson, Rex Lawson and Victor Olaiya from Nigeria; then there was the Ticklers Dance Band from Sierra Leone, and from Ghana a whole host of bands such as the Red Spots, the Rhythm Aces, the Rakers, the Hotshots, Star Gazers, the Shambros and King Bruce's Black Beats.

1. Flemming Harrev: Goumbe and the Development of Krio Popular Music in Freetown, Sierra Leone. Paper Presented at IASPM's 4th International Conference, Accra, Ghana, 12th-19th August 1987.
2. John Collins: Musicmakers of West Africa. Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1985, p. 15.
3. Terence O. Ranger: Dance and Society in East Africa. London: Heineman, 1975.
4. John Collins: E.T. Mensah. The King of Highlife. London: Off the Record Press, 1986, p. 10.
5. op.cit., pp. 13-14.
6. op.cit., p. 15.

## *Chapter 2*

### **EARLY DAYS**

I was born on Saturday the 3rd of June 1922, right here in this house D 219/3 Okomfo Sarpei Avenue, Amamomo, James Town, Accra. It was built by my mother before she was married to my father. My mother is a full Ga. My father was descended from the Ga's who migrated to Togo some 250 years ago when they suffered reverses in wars with the Akwamus. One group of Ga's took refuge in southern Togo. This is why in the town of Aneho, today, you still find Ga names for districts and compounds, named after places in Accra, and Ga names like Allotey, Akwei, Gnlesh Sempe and so on.

My father had many jobs. At one time he was an agent for one of the expatriate companies which later became incorporated into the U.A.C. [United Africa Company]. For a while, he was a civil servant. But he ended up as a private merchant dealing in fishing nets and lines. In this job he worked jointly with my mother who was also a trader. Both my parents were Methodists. My father died at the age of 64 when I was twelve years old, that was in 1934. My mother outlived him by twenty years. She had three surviving sons, called Thompson, by a previous marriage. And when she and my father got together, we were also three; two boys, of which I was the junior, and a girl.

### *EARLY MUSICAL INFLUENCES*

My earliest musical influence was firstly that of my family. My three Thompson brothers, from my mother's first marriage, were all accomplished organists and pianists associated with church music. One of these brothers, Mr. Emmanuel Kpakpo Thompson, is still alive and is an organist at the Freeman Methodist Church in Accra. He is a graduate supervisor of the London Academy of Music and a fully qualified music teacher and ran various choirs. At one time he was a member of the still existing Orpheus Choir in Accra. When I was young, there was plenty of musical activities going on in his house which was nearby to ours. He had choristers and singing groups coming to him to practice, and he was giving individual tuition to various people all the time. At one time I started learning the piano from him, but this was interrupted in 1932 when I had to go to boarding school at Achimota.

Also my full senior brother, Eddie, was a keen and wizard guitarist. He played a lot of the music called 'fireman' and 'dagomba wire' that resulted in songs like the Liberian one 'Rekpete', which was much later recorded by Hedzoleh (1). When I was on holiday from Achimota I used to listen to him. Each area in Accra then had its own small guitar-based highlife band, amateur groups that were backed by African drums and steel claves. My brother's group, known as 'Canteen', was made up of youths, nearly all of whom became seamen eventually. A lot of the players in these groups were aspiring to go to sea, and

most of the things they played reflected the seamen's life or were songs picked up along the coast from seamen.

Apart from my senior brothers, my mother belonged to a group known as 'Etsi Penfo', which is Fanti for 'we are all equals', or 'co-equals'. They sang religious dirges and featured at prayer meetings, wake-keepings, and even went on the radio. Most of the lyrics were taken from Biblical stories, Christian songs in the vernacular with an African feeling. The group had no instruments and was composed of elderly and seriously religious women.

#### *LOCAL MUSIC IN THE AREA*

Then there were the marching bands. For instance, the management of the Palladium Cinema near my home, one of the oldest cinemas in town, operated a marching band. And in the old days, to get people to attend the nightly film shows, this band would start at the Sea-View Hotel. The band consisted of a bass drum (held horizontally by two people whilst a third person did the actual drumming), a side drummer, a pati drummer, one or two flute players, and steel claves players. They would start drumming at the Sea-View Hotel, Jamestown, from about 6.30 p.m., and march steadily from there right up to the Palladium by eight o'clock, making 'campaign' and picking up followers all the way. This band grew in size over the years, and occasionally we even had a full brass section, called a Kru Band, because many of the instrumentalists were Kru sailors and stevedores from Liberia.

At the same time, in the 1930's, there were a lot of different Ga dance styles and groups around, some of which grew out of the marching bands. It happened this way. People sang and drummed, then a particular song would become popular and give the whole thing a name. For instance, the marching music, when it wasn't for marching, we called 'alaha'. This was not a brass band, but a drumming group which included a pati drum (the equivalent of a snare-drum of the current dance bands), sometimes a big bass drum, plus congas, jingles [triangles], cowbells and voices. But no horns or wind instruments.

Then, in the 1930's and 1940's, there was a dance called 'borwer', which had strong Kru connections, and another called 'tsiboder'. Another dance was called 'soshi owo nli', which means 'to crouch', or 'to bend down'. Yet another was 'koyin' (which means 'to pick up the mind' or 'think about it'), 'ayika', 'G-ram' and 'kenka'. Much later there was a dance called 'something'. And in the 1950's there was a dance called 'kolomashie', the 'mashie' part meaning, 'it's on top' or 'outstanding'. All these drumming and singing groups weren't like tribal or fetish music, they were more modern.

My parents didn't like them. But I often used to slip away and watch these groups. Usually by the time I came back, someone or other had always reported to my father that they had seen his son on the street dancing, and I would never hear the end of it. I suppose this was partly the reason I was shipped to boarding school in Achimota.

Occasionally, and this was in the late forties, there were competitions with judges and prizes between the different singing-drumming groups. Sometimes they became so serious that they ended in fights between supporters. These singing-drumming plus dancing groups were more firmly organised than the guitar groups, as the guitar playing boys were aspiring to become seamen. And when they went to Takoradi, or other ports, they would buy a few drinks or palm-wine in the bars there and just sit down to play and enjoy themselves. But these singing-drumming groups were standing groups that were invited to parties and functions, and were therefore more permanent.

#### *ACHIMOTA COLLEGE*

I went to Achimota from 1932 to 1941, in fact up to 1944, as I did my inter-degree exam [predecessor of 'A' levels] there. But even though my brother Kpakpo Thompson had coached me on piano, the only thing I played at school was the accordion. It was in a close-harmony group we called BLOGS, from the surnames of the five members who played. We had one boy from Sierra Leone who played the uke or ukelele, and I played the accordion. We mostly played American country and western. This was in my last few years in college, when I was taking my 'A' Levels. And the group only lasted for a short while.

Doctor [Ephraim] Amu was my house master for a time as well as my music teacher and he taught us his Twi and Ewe songs. He had come to Achimota after he had lost his appointment as a teacher at Akropong Training College because of his strong African ways. He didn't believe in the idea of going to classes or church in western style suits, but always wore traditional kente cloth or batahari. He had these strong feelings about African culture as far back as the 1930's. He was welcomed at Achimota as the founders of the school, Guggisburg, Fraser and Aggrey, were strongly interested in promoting African ways. Even the British teachers, who were mainly from Cambridge and Oxford, even though they were Europeans, understood very readily the need for African culture in an institution like Achimota, and there was complete harmony between the black and white staff. So when I went to Achimota, all the things that years later were strongly stressed by Kwame Nkrumah, regarding 'the African Personality', had already been pumped into us (2).

Besides Doctor Amu, there was also a Miss Alice Parnell, who was an accomplished pianist from Scotland. Another was Mr. Chapman-Nyaho who was a violinist and at one time my house-master and geography teacher. Then there was the late Mr. Phillip Gbehoe, who later wrote the Ghanaian National Anthem. And Mr. Attoh-Okine, who taught us several subjects like music and history, and later on became a politician. Mr. Kwame was another of my music teachers, but I'm afraid he wasn't one of my popular ones. Because, he was trying to teach me European classical music and my personal contact with it was not very cordial, as I couldn't see the use of it at all. And I must say to my regret, that if I had [had the] patience, a lot of things that I am now learning very hard, for which I'm either having to find money for or work overtime on, I could have learnt at school free.

But most of us didn't like the music that Miss Parnell and Mr. Kwame were trying to get us to appreciate. The music we really used to like was what we called 'tribal drumming'. On some Saturday nights we had school entertainment with films, lectures, and sometimes a drama group from outside. And once a month, each of the tribal groups at the school would conduct a drumming, dancing and singing session in Ga, Akan, Ewe, or a northern language. And it was in this that I took a direct and keen interest.

I recall this story which happened in the late thirties, when a few of the boys who were learning to play violins, trumpets, trombones, clarinets and so on, and were trying to build up a school orchestra to play classical music. Then the idea came up, of why not having one of these Saturday nights as a highlife concert using our classical instruments. I got involved in this and went to Accra, to get hold of a jazz-drum outfit, as they didn't have one in the classical orchestra they were trying to build. The show went like wildfire. We played popular tunes and highlifes. All went well until Monday morning when all the boys were dragged into the vice-principal's office, and was he cross with us. There was a real stink of. It was unheard of for pupils to use the school's classical instruments to play this type of street pop. And for a while some of the boys were suspended from the school.

For tribal music we didn't use school equipment. But now that I look back on it, it seems incredible. By then Doctor Amu hadn't arrived at the school, or he would have said something. For I'm sure, he wouldn't have found anything wrong in using brass instruments, violins and pianos to play African music.

It was only in my very last years at Achimota I became interested in jazz, swing and ballroom dance music. Those were the war years when we had British and American army units stationed here. They had bands for their entertainment and so ballroom music progressed considerably. The Accra airport was virtually taken over by the Americans, and one wing of Achimota College itself was taken over by the British Resident Minister who was taking care of the British war effort here. This was the time of musicians like Glen Miller, Benny Goodman and Artie Shaw. I was also a very keen supporter of a series of jazz music shows organised by the late Joe Kelly and Guy Warren [Kofi Ghanaba] at the Accra Town Hall [now called Parliament House] in the early 1940's. These were dubbed 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc. 'Tosses'.

By the time I left Achimota I had a definite liking for jazz and swing. I used to buy these imported records from departmental stores like U.T.C. and Kingsway. In fact we could buy any type of imported records whether classical or jazz, right up to the 1960's when our foreign exchange palaver set in. During the war there were even some swing and jazz bands set up by expatriates, like the Tempos Band (3). But as the war came to an end, and the soldiers were shipped back to Britain and America, they managed to replace them with Ghanaians. I heard a lot of swing and jazz music by going to dances where these bands played. However it was after I left Achimota that I became seriously interested in ballroom dancing. I was very keen at becoming an adept and went to many dancing schools in Accra, like the Trinity School of Dancing, for this purpose.

1. Hedzoleh Sounz, a band based at Faisal Helwani's Napoleon Night Club in Accra, recorded 'Rekpete' in the early 1970's (Bibini BBN 101, side A, 45 r.p.m.).
2. For a portrait of the renowned Ghanaian composer and teacher Ephraim Amu see V. Kofi Agawu: 'The Making of a Composer', *The Black Perspective in Music* (Cambria Heights, N.Y.), Vol. 15, No. 1, Spring 1987, pp. 50-63.
3. For the story of the early Tempos Band see John Collins: 'E.T. Mensah. The King of Highlife', London: Off the Record Press, 1986, pp. 13-17.



### **LEARNING THE TRUMPET**

In 1947 I went to London for two years with a group of one hundred Ghanaian students. This was one of many groups. We had all been given scholarships for various practical and professional courses. This was in preparation for Ghanaians taking over senior posts in the civil service from expatriate officials. I was doing a practical course in accounting in the post office, and was attached to the savings bank department. Some of my Achimota colleagues were with me, or had already gone to Britain on similar sponsored courses, or on private training. Like 'Bertie' Mawere Opoku who had been one of my art teachers at Achimota, and much later became head of the School of Performing Arts at the University of Ghana at Legon. Another was Kwaa Swansey who had been a member of our BLOGS band and later became Attorney General under Nkrumah. Then Professor Baidoe who became a doctor at Korle Bu Hospital.

We represented more or less the cream of the youth of those times, and our reaction when we went abroad and found that there was something like a colour bar was just devastating to our self-esteem. We hadn't imagined that under any circumstances would we be socially unacceptable. I mean, all our lives we had had the best of what was going, and the first week in London we went to some dances and found that the British girls wouldn't dance with us. We began to wonder, because Ghanaians had been coming to England for ages, and we weren't told about this sort of thing. After all weren't we British in every sense too? It was a thing we had had no briefing on at all. There and then I swore I wouldn't have anything more to do with ballroom dancing, but rather concentrate on the music side instead.

### **TAKING UP THE TRUMPET**

I registered with the famous brass playing institute, Parkers Brass Studio on Wardour Street near Shaftbury Avenue, London, which catered for both professionals and part-timers. I purchased a trumpet that cost me fifteen pounds, had one lesson a week at Parkers, and spent about an hour or so a day rehearsing. But it was a very difficult business finding a place to rehearse. Our main practical attachment courses at the post office would close around three or four o'clock. Then I had to attend evening classes in accounting at Morgate from around six. So I had to sandwich rehearsals in between these hours. It wasn't easy, as the post office was in the heart of London and the rehearsals meant taking a tube or bus out of the centre of the city.

Depending on how much money I could afford for the studio, I spent an hour or two each day there, and then nipping back around six to get something to eat at the training school and being at the evening school by seven. This was six days a week, as in those days everyone worked on Saturdays. So, it meant quite a

lot of my resources and time were dispersed shuttling between my three interests of the post office, learning the trumpet, and evening school in theoretical accounting.

Somehow the trumpet appealed to my nature. I like its brilliance and the way it cuts through things. But I wasn't trying to play jazz at that stage. I was just interested in getting mastery of the instrument from music schools. What you do with the instrument thereafter is another matter altogether. In all I spent two years training on the instrument in England, but it wasn't enough to actually get me on the bandstand.

I had a funny experience on the London underground, once when I met my old music teacher at Achimota, Mr. Phillip Gbehoe. He noticed I was holding a case and asked me, 'What is it?'. I said, 'It's a trumpet', and he asked me what did I want with it. I told him I was paying good money to learn how to play it. And he did have a good laugh, as he could remember clearly the struggle and effort he went through, to get me and a certain group interested in classical music when we seriously opposed to having any of our time spent on the study of it. He did his best but we wouldn't cooperate at all. And there I was in London, using the little money I had on studio space, trains and buses, and paying for music training which I could have got free at school.

#### *FINDING A PLACE TO REHEARSE*

Now, the post office is such a large institution, that sometimes it is better to go to a small town to learn things and see something, comparable to what we have in Ghana. As against that, in London you might have a whole building dealing just with postal orders, and so you won't see the whole picture at all. So I went to places like Harrogate in Northumberland, Edinburgh and Shrewsbury, where, at the time, I was the only black man in town and everyone used to stare at me when I passed by or stood in queues.

Whenever I got to a town, my first concern after settling down was where I could find a suitable rehearsal place. In Shrewsbury, after I had made inquiries and found that there were no rehearsal studios, I started roaming and looking around myself. I saw a river with a secluded building by it. There was a part between the building and the river bank that gave me the privacy I needed. I started practising there each night up until almost twelve midnight, for it was summer and I had plenty of time, as I finished at the office at three in the afternoon and it remained broad daylight until ten or eleven.

Then one evening, after I had been going there for a week, I thought I could sense the presence of someone behind me. But I kept on playing. Finally I noticed a tall policeman and I said, 'Good evening', and we got talking. He wanted to know who I was, and I told him everything about myself. Then he said, 'Do you know what this building is?', and I replied, 'No, but it appears to be secluded and is an ideal place for me to practice'. He asked me whether anyone had ever come to bother me, and I said no. Then he again said that did I know what the building was and I said no. Then he told me it was a mortuary. To imagine that I had been sitting in this place until nearly midnight for over a week!



The policeman had no objections, but after what he told me I didn't want to go there anymore. And when I told them next day at the office what had happened they had a good laugh at me. But after I told my boss at Shrewsbury, that I didn't think I could concentrate practising very well, knowing that there were dead bodies in the building, he said, 'Look, the office is in the business part of town and once business is over then the whole area for hundred of yards around will be deserted. So you can practice after close of business and you won't disturb anybody'. After that I used to rehearse in a little room above the lift shaft on top of our office building.

In Harrogate too the offices were quite secluded from the town, and I used to practice there after closing business as well. That's the thing I found most encouraging about England. Most people were very keen when they found out that you have some interest in a cultural activity. And when people got to know I was a trumpeter they were full of encouragement.

Edinburgh was the only place where I couldn't get a secluded place to rehearse, and there were no rehearsal studios there. Also one time a policeman did stop me in London, when I found going to a studio a bit tiresome and expensive, and thought I could find an open park where I wouldn't disturb anybody. So, I found a park and there were people there, but not close as I went as far away from them as possible. All the same, as soon as I had started practising a policeman came up to me and said, 'No, no. I'm afraid you can't do that sort of thing here'.

#### *THE LONDON JAZZ SCENE*

While in England I was mostly concerned with going through my basic trumpet training. Frankly, I was too fresh to the music scene to take full advantage of the benefits of meeting people who were really versed in the business. But I did meet a few like the jazz-man Humphrey Lyttleton, whom I met personally, and also Bruce Turner who played clarinet and saxophone. Then I saw, but didn't have the opportunity of talking to, Benny Goodman at the London Palladium. And the saxophonist Coleman Hawkins who was in transit through London and played at a club on Oxford Street. The performance was illegal and led to a lot of trouble afterwards with the musician's union, but by then he had gone. Then there was the pianist Marian MacPartland and her husband who was a most outstanding trumpeter. I think his name was Jimmy MacPartland, but I've forgotten his name as this was quite a while ago. Oh yes, and I saw Edmundo Ross play a few times at his club the Coconut Grove. But as I said, I was too fresh to really benefit from the influence of these people.

#### **BACK IN GHANA WITH THE ACCRA ORCHESTRA**

In 1950 I returned from England, by which time I had gained sufficient control in my trumpet playing. I came back with just a trumpet and a lot of textbooks as I wanted to continue studying my instrument and master it, before I went out and played. I could read a bit of staff notation from a musical score, but I couldn't play without a book and certainly couldn't fit immediately into any band as I couldn't play by ear. So I went to understudy a number of people. Some of them I went to directly and asked for help, others I just stood by at dances and rehearsals and listened to without them being aware of that I was doing.

People on the scene who helped me was the pianist, the late Adolf Doku and of course E.T. Mensah and his Tempos Band. The drummer Guy Warren [now Kofi Ghanaba] was also very important, as were the tenor sax and clarinet player the late Joe Kelly and the alto saxist Papa Hughes, all with E.T.'s Tempos. However, within a short time after I came back, it became quite clear that I couldn't hope to make any progress without being in a band. Especially as, unlike London, I couldn't take guided studies under anybody. There wasn't anyone here then who was organised to give tuition. If you wanted to learn to play it was just a case of jumping into the water and learning how to swim.

My first real band was the Accra Orchestra, but as a matter of fact I did play claves for E.T. one time when the Tempos played at Burma camp. What happened was that soon after being with E.T. Mensah I met Tommy Gripman. He had been a playmate of mine before as we lived in more or less the same area of town. Then he wasn't into music, but when I came back from the U.K. I discovered that he was one of the leading trombone players with the Accra Orchestra run by Teacher Lamptey.

People had also got to know that I was learning to play the trumpet, and having just come home from England, were expecting great things of me, though I'm sorry to say they were a bit disappointed. Anyway, I got invited to join both the Accra Rhythmic Orchestra, run by E.T.'s elder brother Mr. Yebuah Mensah, and the Accra Orchestra, but I had made the decision to join the Accra Orchestra just a few days before.

I joined then somewhere in the middle of 1950, and one thing I liked about them at the time was they were playing from written music. It was standard strict-tempo ballroom numbers and jazz numbers using stock arrangements imported from England. But I must say, I owe my real progress to personal coaching from Mr. Tommy Gripman, whom I remain dearly devoted to to this day.

## *STOCK ARRANGEMENTS AND HIGHLIFES*

Here King went and collected a bundle of old scores used by the Accra Orchestra which included the following songs:

- Stardust (Foxtrot) by Hoagy Carmichael
- The Peanut Vendor (Rumba) [by Moises Simons]
- One O'clock Jump (Jazz) by Count Basie
- Blowing Bubbles (Waltz) [by John W. Kellette]
- American Patrol (Swing) by Glen Miller
- Lady Be Good (Foxtrot) [by George Gershwin]
- Mister Five by Five (Jazz) [by Gene Depaul & Don Raye]
- Lullaby of Birdland (Jazz) by George Shearing
- Three O'clock in the Morning (Cha-cha-cha) [by Julian Robledo]
- In the Mood (Swing) by Joe Garland
- Memories of You (Foxtrot) [by Eubie Blake]
- Things Ain't What they used to Be [Jazz]  
by Lionel Bart [Mercer Ellington]
- Sweet Georgia Brown (Foxtrot)  
[by Ben Bernie, Kenneth Casey & Maceo Pinkard]
- Johnny Comes Marching Home (Swing) a traditional song
- White Christmas [Waltz] by Irving Berlin
- Take the A Train (Foxtrot) [by Billy Straihorn]
- Because of You (Foxtrot) [by Arthur Hammerstein]
- String of Pearls (Swing) by Glen Miller
- Carolina Moon (Waltz) [by Joe Burke]
- Begin the Beguine (Foxtrot) by Cole Porter
- Mambo Number Five [Mambo] by Perez Prado
- Bye Bye Blues (Swing)  
[by Dave Bennett, Chauncey Gray, Fred Hamm & Bert Lown]
- Woodchoppers Ball (Swing) by Woody Herman

Then the Accra Orchestra also played highlifes as they had been in the streets, the palm-wine bars and villages all along. When a highlife song came along and it was popular we used it in the dance halls. But we didn't need any written arrangements and it was off-the-cuff three-part harmony. Of course we couldn't get the same intricate arrangements as you could find with the imported music. However we played more highlifes in an evening than imported numbers, because with the highlifes practically everybody would go to the floor. But when it came to standard western and ballroom numbers it meant only the people who had gone to dancing school could dance. So highlifes were more popular with the dance fans, like 'Everybody Likes Saturday Night' (1), 'Aye' (Whitch), 'She Mi Ni Oya' ('Say Good-bye Before You Go'), 'Wo Owoo Lo' ('Are You Sleeping?'), 'Meele Ni Yaa E' ('A Passing Sailing Ship'), 'Naabu Le Ke Tso', and 'Sekondi Market'. All the songs were written anonymously.

The sort of venues the Accra Orchestra played were those places open to all dance bands, like the Accra Town Hall, the Rodger Club, Madison Square Gardens in Tudu, which was a place used for boxing, also the European Club (now the Arts Centre), and on festive occasions departmental works yards and offices. Then there were chiefs and private houses that had adequate space in their compounds to be converted for the purpose. Even church yards and football parks if you could get the muscle to put up the necessary security fences and temporary smooth floors. And we didn't only perform in Accra but in all the places where we part-time musicians could go and come back in time to be in our offices by the proper time on Monday morning. Occasionally we would go as far as Kumasi, roads permitting. In those days, transport wasn't so expensive, and the band fee was a larger element in the promoter's costing structure than the cost of transporting the band to the place and back. These days it's the other way around.

#### *PART-TIMERS*

The people playing in the Accra Orchestra were teachers, fitters, traders, unemployed people, company clerks, governmental department clerks, and people from the military. The only people who were not prominently featured were women, as the conditions of work were too rough and ready for the serious participation of girls or women.

The orchestra was pretty large as it was formed before the smaller dance band of the E.T. Mensah era. It had as many as three trumpets, two trombones, and up to five saxophones. Then of course there was a drummer and also a sousaphone (later replaced by a standing bass), a guitar, and percussion instruments like congas, bongos, maraccas, wooden and/or metal claves, scrapers, etc. Usually only one singer, as singers were not very important in those days.

During all this time with the Accra Orchestra I was still working with the P&T, and at the time it was unheard of for a senior civil servant to be playing in a dance band. Particularly one who had just come back from training in England. My Scottish boss at the P&T, Mr. Ramsay, didn't like me being a musician at all, and he wasn't the only one let me add. They thought I was letting myself in for a lot of trouble on the social level, as they told me that being a musician didn't match with the conception of being a serious

and respected civil servant, exposing myself to all sorts of, excuse me to say, riff-raff. And the musicians too didn't think that a senior civil servant should have anything to do with them. This idea plagued my career up until the end when I retired.

#### *FALLING BETWEEN TWO STOOLS*

One instance of the confusion occurring from falling between two stools was because being a musician, everyone used to call me by my first name, King. It happened when a young man called Emmanuel, whom I had engaged as a messenger in the office, was also residing in my house. And one day when he didn't turn up for work there was a telephone call from my office to my wife in the house asking to speak to Emmanuel. And to make it easier for my wife to recognise the chap being sought after, the chap who rang, said he wanted, "To speak to Mr. Emmanuel, King Bruce's boy". And my wife was furious, for my messenger was worthy of being called mister, but I wasn't.

Another confusion was the difference between me and the other musicians. Back then I didn't drink alcohol and when I played at dances I used to take a flask of coffee or tea. So when the other musicians were given refreshments of beer or something stronger, I drank my coffee and they laughed at me. In fact, I didn't start taking alcohol until I was thirty-four, and that was only because I was transferred outside of Accra in 1956 to Cape Coast as an Assistant Government Agent who had to play a lot of visits to chiefs. For the first thing chiefs would do when Government Agents, District Commissioners or their assistants came to visit them was serve them drinks. Mostly hot beer, as the chiefs would pull the bottles from under their beds, dust them in our presence and serve us there and then. And it wouldn't have been very polite on my part to refuse the drinks.

#### *LEAVING THE ACCRA ORCHESTRA*

I stayed with the Accra Orchestra about one-and-a-half years and finally left because of general annoyance with the band's mismanagement. You see, Teacher Lamptey was a good musician and was kindly disposed to everybody. He had the knack of getting people to work together even if some were violently disagreeing with each other. But he was no manager and was careless with dates, funds and so on. Sometimes we would go miles out of Accra to play on the understanding that fees, or part of it, was to be collected at the end of the show, only to find that everything had been paid already. So we had quite a few scrapes with drivers, because we were not holding the funds to pay them once they had fulfilled their part of the obligation, to take us to and back from venues.

On one occasion, a driver even attempted to impound our instruments here in Accra after we came home and there was no money to pay him. Teacher did have an uncle who was younger than him and who became his manager. He wasn't a musician. But blood being thicker than water, we musicians couldn't do

anything to put Teacher Lamptey aside and correct him, as he would only listen to his uncle. It was particularly frustrating for me, as it was my everyday business to ensure things were properly run in the office. But when I came home to the band I meet mismanagement all the time. These two different sides of my life were therefore disturbing my peace of mind.

This went on and in early 1951 we had one particularly nasty incident of this kind. We were already to move out and play a date when a promoter came along claiming that the date was his. And this aggrieved promoter, from whom our management had collected money, wouldn't distinguish between us musicians and our management. So when he began slinging abuse and diatribes around, he included all of us. It was just a bit too much. And when we tried to get into the lorry the driver tried to impound our instruments. It very nearly landed us in the police station.

When we musicians saw the driver, trying to go away with our instruments, we couldn't stand idle by. The instruments didn't actually belong to us, but if they were taken away it would mean we couldn't go on with our rehearsals and we couldn't fulfil our date. Then the news would get around town and a whole lot of nasty things would be said about all of us. So with all this trouble, with the mishandling of promoter's money, I finally had enough, and in the middle of 1951 I left the band.

Also the money we had from a show was just laughable. When I joined the Accra Orchestra we were paying for instruments that had recently been imported on a loan secured from a certain gentleman. I understand that the original loan was two thousand pounds, which was enough for the whole range of band equipment: trumpets, trombones, saxophones, drums, guitar and sousaphone. But there was a proviso that the loan plus interest had to be paid back within a certain period. And if by the end of that period the sum had not been paid, the remainder becomes a fresh loan with its interest. So, those of us in the band had little money going into our pockets as most of it went to repay the loan.

When the loan had been repaid this didn't mean that each musician would own his particular instrument. The instruments would be for Mr. Lamptey and the gentleman who had raised the loan. We were all so keen on playing that it didn't really bother us. There had always been a band in Teacher Lamptey's house as long as we could remember.

So the money was divided this way. Out of the band's takings would come recurrent expenses plus the loan in instalment, and the remainder would be distributed to the musicians. That was all we could expect, and the distribution of cash to the musicians was done about once every two months.

In fact, when I worked it out, I was getting about ninepence per engagement. And with ninepence in those days you could still get a ball of kenkey [cooked fermented corn dough] for one penny, and fish to go with it for another penny. Beer was about one shilling. So let's say all my efforts of playing for four or five hours would be worth a bottle of beer.



Compared to this I was then earning c. 550 a year at the same time as a civil servant, or just under c. 50 a month, so I certainly wasn't interested in playing music for money. What I was interested in was building myself up as a dance band musician, and you can't do this without a band, as it is not only a matter of mastering an instrument but also an art. And for this you need to have the exposure of playing before a critical audience to sharpen your capabilities, irrespective of how much solo practice you have. For if you don't have audience to play for, and therefore have the opportunity to master your nervous tension that goes with this, then you don't get anywhere. So in my effort to build myself up as an accomplished instrumentalist, money didn't matter. If I had the knowledge I have now I might have gone about it differently.

The reason why I finally left the Accra Orchestra was because my efforts were proving ineffective. I wasn't getting what I wanted musically, because not all the musicians of the band had the same degree of interest and keenness to develop that I had. Some musicians considered the band merely as a vehicle for having fun. So, a piece of work, that we should have been able to rehearse in a matter of two or three hours, might take us a week because I had to practice with relays of people. This one here today and tomorrow someone else is in. We were a large band of about fifteen people, and it wasn't every one of the four nights a week we practised that we could get all members together. And even when we could, they were not punctual.

One of the serious musicians then was Tommy Gripman. And when I left the Accra Orchestra he also left and joined E.T. Mensah's Tempos Band. In fact, many of us left around the same time and Teacher Lamptey had to get another group of trainee musicians. And he carried on until the late fifties when the Accra Orchestra finally broke down altogether.

In late 1954, it became evident that I had to do something about my relationship with my boss at the P&T department. He would not accept my playing in a dance-band under any circumstances. Then the opportunity came with the offer by the government to initially qualified persons, to participate in a competitive examination to enter the administrative service. So I applied to sit for this exam, but my boss maintained that I was not qualified to do so. I therefore appealed to the government.

By the time a reply came that I was qualified, my colleagues had had the benefit of an orientation course and other aids intended to prepare them for the exam - without me. Came the exam, I came out first out of a group of over 200 contestants. Mr. Ramsay, my P&T boss, must have been severely embarrassed in having to deliver to me personally the letter about my qualification to sit the exam, and also being top of the list of successful ones. So I moved from the P&T to the administrative service.

1. 'Everybody Likes (or Loves) Saturday Night' is in fact an old Caribbean song.

## Chapter 5

### FIRST GENERATION BLACK BEATS

I left the Accra Orchestra in mid 1951 and concentrated on practising in the house. After a few months I then got a call from an old school friend. He had also played with the Accra Orchestra during an earlier period and now wanted to form a band. This was Saka Acquaye. After the Accra Orchestra he had been in another Accra dance-band before being transferred to Cape Coast, teaching at one of the secondary schools. The instruments he had used with this dance band were still around. They belonged to a friend of his, a radio mechanic, who had managed to build some of the amplifiers and acquire various instruments. When Saka was transferred back to Accra and heard that I had left the Accra Orchestra, he got in touch with me, and I took up the invitation promptly. Saka Acquaye did both his teacher's training and a special art instruction course, which involved music, at Achimota, and had a better grounding in music than I had. So it was the two of us who formed the new band and called in musicians.

As it still is now, musicians have a nose for sniffing out on the existence of instruments. As soon as there are some new instruments around they get to know. So there was no difficulty at all in getting participants, and we started rehearsing from January to April 1952. I was on trumpet, Saka was on tenor sax, and Jerry Hansen was playing alto sax and at first doing a bit of singing. [Frank] Kwamena Croffie was on bass and Billy Sam on guitar, but Croffie later took over guitar when Billy left. George Annor was on drums, and Saka's younger brother [Adoquaye Acquaye] was our conga player. Our two lead singers, [Mike] Lewis Wadawa and Frank [Atoo] Barnes came in later. So our Black Beats was smaller than the Accra Orchestra and took more after E.T. Mensah's Tempos example.

The name 'The Black Beats' just came out spontaneously one evening when we were coming home from rehearsals. Saka asked me what name we were going to use and without hesitation I said Black Beats. This happened when we were still rehearsing and before we had played any engagements. And it didn't arise as a result of any committee sitting down trying to find an acceptable name. The reason was that Doctor Amu, who had been my house master and one of my musical instructors at Achimota, had impressed on us the necessity for doing things African, and somehow this stayed right at the back of my mind all the time. At the same time, as a group we were very much enamoured with jazz, swing, and music with a beat. So we were all interested in playing good dance-band music, but keen on giving everything a recognisable African beat.



## *THE INFLUENCE OF LOUIS JORDAN*

When we started up, it was unheard of for a person, who had not distinguished himself as an instrumentalist, to think of forming and/or leading a band. Now all the boys in our group were beginners who hadn't really mastered their instruments, and as such those already in the field didn't think much of us. However, this was the time when groups, like that of the American Louis Jordan, were very popular here. He did not depend on high instrumental brilliance to achieve success, but rather a combination of singing backed by rhythm with an occasional instrumental solo and backing response. We decided to go along that line with the stress on singing. As a matter of fact at one time we were derisively dubbed 'the singing band'. But the thing caught on. Before our time a band would play sometimes for half an hour without a singer because they were playing mostly stock arrangements. The emphasis was on the ability to read scores properly and keep as close to the interpretation of the written arrangements as possible. Sometimes they would play the whole night, and the singer would only come in when they played a highlife. Even then they only used one singer at a time. We stressed close harmony singing and it went down particularly well with the young people.

Louis Jordan was a black American musician and his records were influential when I first started working with bands in Ghana in 1950. He had records like 'Caledonia', 'You Broke Your Promise', 'Saturday Fish Fry' and other popular jazz numbers. His was quite a small seven piece group with a front line of trumpet and C Melody saxophone which Jordan played. Up to then instrumental dexterity had been predominant amongst jazz and swing bands, but Jordan watered this down and stressed the singing. He was also a singer, and the instrumentals only came in to provide variety, stress emphasis and to repeat choruses. So a group that didn't have skilled instrumentalists, like our early Black Beats, could very successfully use Jordan's music because we were not accomplished instrumentalists. This was the thing that the other dance bands in Accra seriously held against us. For we were virtually nobodies as far as instrument playing was concerned, and then we had the cheek to form a band. Fortunately the fans liked our predominance of singing and this trend was proved later in the 1960's and 70's. And now it's all singers these days.

## *THOSE DAYS OF SHARING*

We had no manager as such, but I had a car and provided much of the initial working capital. I was also by far the oldest person in the band and, at the time, held the most senior position in our various places of work. Even Saka Acquaye was then a comparatively junior education officer, and I held a more prominent position. So, the business management of the band automatically fell on me. Not that I cherished it, because it always got in the way of my ability to perform, as management took up a lot of my time and I couldn't fully concentrate on my music. And that thing is still bothering me right up to today. People always want to push me into the management aspect of music, but it's partly my fault, for when I see instances of mismanagement going on I won't tolerate it and speak out immediately. In fact, I

still have some musical textbooks I brought from London in 1950 that I still haven't had time to work through.

I appreciated Saka's superior musical knowledge and ability and so he was musical director. In fact many of our first songs were his. Not his compositions but standard dance numbers he knew, as his repertoire was wider than mine having played in two dance bands before. One thing in those days was the instruments for a small band, as ours was, didn't cost much. To pay for them we had what are known as shares. From the takings of the band we would pay all our current expenses, then we would divide the rest equally. So let's say that, after all expenses, we were left with £ 100 and there were ten of us, we would take ten pounds each. But we arranged it so that the owner of the instruments, in addition to taking his share of ten pounds, would also take another ten pounds to contribute towards the cost of using his equipment. This double share system we thought was quite fair. However the owner of the instruments felt dissatisfied with what we were giving him, although for a long time he didn't tell us. I should add that I was the only person in the band who owned an instrument, my trumpet. All the rest was either owned by this mechanic gentleman, or when the band had come together, money had been found to repair and augment what was on hand.

I made it very clear to the members that we had to work to acquire our own instruments, but, unknown to me, the owner of the instruments didn't like the idea. And in this some of the band members supported him and quarrelled with me. Because as you can well understand, when people see cash around they prefer to have it in their pockets, rather than to be told that it was to be spent on acquiring a set of drums. Of course the drummer would be happy, but the others wouldn't for having been deprived of money for their own personal needs. This sort of thing led to a lot of trouble as some of the members preferred, that whenever money came, I should call a meeting and decide whether we needed a new saxophone or whatever, or cash in our pockets. And I wasn't going in for that sort of thing.

In those days it was just a matter of sharing what was available amongst the number of musicians. It was later on that this idea came that people needed to be rated, with your lead guitarist getting more than the claves or maraccas player. For those were the days when at the end of the month you would still have some of your salary left in your pockets. Not now of course.

#### *SAKA ACQUAYE LEAVING*

We started the Black Beats in April-May 1952 and by June 1953 Saka had left to the United States for further studies. (1) But the very Saturday after Saka had left, the owner of the instruments came along with his truck, ostensibly to help us that week-end to convey the instruments to the place we were going to play. And when we had finished the Saturday show he collected all the instruments, except my trumpet, which I took home with me in my car. I was expecting the equipment to follow as I used to keep them in my house, but they never arrived. Then, the next morning I got to know that he had impounded the instruments. I went straight away to see him and ask him exactly what he meant. It was then that he

told me that he was not satisfied with what we were giving him. I told him that we had an engagement that very day, and so how could we play? He said he didn't mind as he wanted clarification of the situation. So we lost that Sunday's engagement.

After that we landed up in a solicitor's office where the owner demanded a fantastic amount of money before he would release the instruments to us. So I too engaged my solicitor. He advised me to find some, but not all, of the money. I paid the owner and managed to resolve the matter. But I only managed to get back the instruments that had actually been acquired by the band. For by this time, besides my trumpet, we had gradually managed to acquire a set of drums, a standing bass or bow fiddle (double bass), an alto sax, an amplifier, and speakers. Practically everything. The only things we hadn't got hold of was a tenor sax and guitar, and so thereafter, for the next few months, we had to borrow or hire these instruments when we played out.

### *EARLY REPERTOIRE*

After Saka left, selecting, arranging and polishing numbers and seeing that they were all rehearsed, also fell on me. At that time I didn't know my right or left about arranging, and so we had to pick up things from records and play them the way we heard them. Even today I am not satisfied with my arranging ability and am still taking lessons in orchestration. I can now turn out a good arrangement after a lot of time and with a lot of effort. But what I want to be able to do is to rattle an arrangement off, in the same way I can sit down, and without thinking, write a letter that anyone can understand without difficulty. And I'm still grappling with this task today.

I had composed one or two things even with the Accra Orchestra, but I never got around to recording them, either with the Accra Orchestra or with the Black Beats, at the time Saka Acquaye was in it. The need to compose our own numbers came later, partly because at the time none of us was a really good instrumentalist. Saka was the best among us, and when he left Jerry Hansen took over tenor sax and we found someone whom we bullied into playing alto sax.

It was very difficult going. I just hadn't used my opportunities at Achimota properly, and so, for a long time after he left, we were using the repertoire that we had used while Saka was with us. Though of course we had new tunes coming in, like calypsos. And the instrumentals, on say Lord Kitchener's calypsos, were more or less what we were using. So it was a comparatively easy and straightforward matter for our trumpeters, for example to copy Lord Kitchener's trumpeter, the London based West Indian Lesley Hutchinson, or another London based West Indian trumpeter he sometimes used, Snakeship Johnson. So we learnt all this in the course of time. We used the calypso approach to arrange our own compositions.

Before our time, if you wanted to put up a dance and didn't want to use the big dance orchestras like the Accra Orchestra, Accra Rhythmic Orchestra or Accra City Orchestra, it had to be E.T. Mensah's Tempos, or a bit later the Hotshots. So the appearance of a new band on the scene, such as ours, was always welcome, as it is now. We got quite a few engagements and played all over the place, just like the other bands. But as a part-time band we were only playing three times a week on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays.

On the other hand, as a part-time band we didn't suffer from the usual high turnover of personnel. A part-time band is always more favourably placed to keep its membership than the professional bands. For one thing, you would use people who were working and whose daytime employment was in your areas, and so they don't have much cause to jump from band to band. But of course, occasionally they leave because they have been transferred out of town, or they go overseas on various studies, like Saka did. But that was not very frequent. Some of the musicians were with me from when we started in 1952 right up to 1961 when, with Jerry Hansen, they broke off from us to form the Ramblers band.

It was also when Jerry and the boys left I started to play alto sax. Up to then I was only playing trumpet. In fact, I was playing full-time trumpet for the band up to 1956, but then I was transferred outside Accra to Cape Coast and we had to bring in Quartey Hammond. Then when I came back after six months I had gone out of practice, and so afterwards I found it more profitable to concentrate on composing and arranging. I still played the trumpet, but I wasn't so sharp as I would have been if I had been in continuous performance.

#### *FIRST RECORDINGS*

We started recording in 1953, but our very first venture was a disaster. We bandsmen didn't know anything about recording and it became patent that the studio people didn't know much either. There weren't any tape recorders then. They used to record straight onto disc using one microphone. But between us and the engineers I don't know who knew less. We were recording for HMV [His Master's Voice] who had a temporary studio at Nsawam, twenty miles north of Accra. They positioned us as we sit playing at a dance-hall. Incredible! We did our four numbers, all traditional songs from Ghana in the highlife vein. Right in the middle of the first number I had a nasty crack on my trumpet and thought we would stop and start again. But the engineers didn't mind and said we should go on. And so the result of course was that that song couldn't be issued. Only one single was released. The names of the two songs on the single were 'Oshija' (Spinster) and 'Tso No Tsatsa' (Tree Ant) and we got a lump-sum of £ 10 a side. Actually, later on I was in the house of a recording engineer friend of mine. He told me he had got one of these terrible records. I got it, and broke it immediately!

Our next recording had to wait for over a year until we had a firmer grip on our instruments. By that time E.T. Mensah had made quite a few successful recordings for Decca, so we also recorded for Decca whose agent was Major Kinder. The first studio was a bungalow situated near the Ridge Hospital [it later moved to the Winneba Road, Kaneshie]. Unlike HMV, Decca recorded on tape, a ferrograph, not disc, but still with one microphone and in one good take. They also paid us c. 10 a side. It was in that first session in 1954 that we recorded 'Teemon Sane' (A Confidential Matter), which was an instant success. As a result Decca signed us on. We were with them until 1965. Some of the most popular recordings we did for Decca, that are still popular today, are 'Ao! Dei! Oh!', 'Mikuu Mise Mabea Don', and 'Srotoi Ye Mli'. Then there was 'Nnomo Noko' released on Senafone.

We were with Decca for quite a while as casual artists. They would pay us a fee and that was the end of it. We didn't become exclusive artists for them until 1955-1956. Before then we were free to record for anyone else. It was between 1953 and 1956 that we made our HMV and Senafone recordings. They were all paying about c. 10 or c. 15 a side, although for one HMV recording I remember we got c. 30.

In those days we didn't know about royalties. It was only around 1956 to 1957 that we got educated on this question, when we made a royalty agreement with Decca of tuppence [two pence] per side for every record sold. A few years later, when we had managed to form a musicians union in Ghana, we stepped this up to sixpence a side, and then tenpence, half going to the composer and half to the band.

1. In the late 1950's 'Saka Acquaye and His African Ensemble from Ghana' recorded the album 'Gold Coast Saturday Night'. It was first released in the USA ca. 1959 by Elektra (ELK 167 [mono] / ELK 267-X [stereo]). For further details see Alan P. Merriam: 'African Music on LP'. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1970, pp. 25 & 37.

### THE GOLDEN AGE OF THE BLACK BEATS

It was in 1957, when Ghana got its independence, E.T. Mensah's Tempos Band released its famous Decca recording 'Ghana Freedom (Highlife)' (1). But also during the years leading up to full independence Kwame Nkrumah had been praised and supported in many songs, in particular by the guitar and concert party groups. Again following independence many groups produced songs with similar nationalist themes. However, King Bruce always avoided letting his music be involved with politics.

As a rule I have tried to avoid any type of politics in my music, unless I'm directly requested. For instance, if I got a booking from a political organisation then I would play for a fee. But praising this man or that organisation I would not normally do, unless invited. Quite a few other bands went out of their way to compose and record something in praise of various aspects of the then new political set-up, and of certain parties. However I decided not to get involved in politics.

### LOUIS ARMSTRONG AND THE GOATEE BEARD LOOK

When Louis Armstrong and his All Stars came to Ghana the first time, in 1956, I was on transfer at Cape Coast. So I didn't meet him. But when he came the second time in 1960 I even presented him with one of my 78's [r.p.m. records] at a luncheon party. I asked him what he thought of the current trend in jazz trumpet playing in America like that of Dizzy Gillespie. Louis said that he was an old man and that these young trumpeters, like Gillespie, had nothing to learn from the old people as they had their own ideas. It was all bop and beebop in those days, which Louis wasn't bothered by as he had his own style and there were thousands who appreciated him. By the way, by this time I had started to grow my beard, but contrary to what some people think it wasn't because of Dizzy Gillespie. But I'll tell you the story.

It was Easter 1955 and we were on trek in two vehicles, a van for the band and also I had my own personal car. Now just after we had crossed the Volta River in a ferry at Senchi where the bridge is now, the band car had a flat tyre. So we stopped to replace it and to our horror found out that the spare tyre was equally flat. So I had to take the two flat tyres in my car, recross the river, and go all the way back twenty-five miles to Somanya to find a vulcaniser to repair the tyres. When I eventually got back to the band vehicle, there was nobody beside it. I became seriously worried and was at the verge of making inquiries from passers-by. I stood there wondering what to do when one of the musicians appeared, seemingly from nowhere, and said I should come along with him quickly.

He took me to a mud-hut near the road, but hidden from view, and there the other boys were with a very old Ewe man. They told me that this old man is a 'juju-man' [fetish priest] and knows everything about me and about the whole band. What we've been through, where we've come from and where we were going.



Everything. He had even described various aspects of my personality and character which were quite correct. The old 'juju-man' had even told the boys that although I had taken longer than expected, having thought I would find a vulcaniser at Sechi barely ten miles away rather than Somania, I was all right and was on my way coming.

The old man then went on, even to the extent of telling us the kind of competition we were meeting in the business, and what certain people were doing to create difficulties for us. And it was all correct. For example, he said that whenever we met one particular band on the road, we either did not get to our destination at all or got there so late that we lost. This always happened when we met this band, especially when we were playing in the same town as they. Of course we usually blamed the delays on the age of our vehicle, but there was one occasion when we took a brand new Opel truck. Again we had the same experience, because of difficulties with its carburettor, and eventually got to the venue so late that the performance was a total failure.

So, we thanked this old man very much, as he gave us some hints on certain things to avoid when we travelled, and made some proposals as to what we could do for protection. Now, it was by this time I had started to grow my beard, and I decided to keep it in memory of this incident and of the revelations this old man had made to us. And I must say that my beard has become my trade-mark.

For protection the old man gave us some thistles, or thorns, and told us that each time we were going off to play each of us should put one in our hair. Which we did. And quite soon afterwards things began to change for us, as we started coming up from then on. In fact from 1957 to 1959 was the 'Golden Age' of the Black Beats, when we could hold our own against any band from anywhere. It finally took full-time professionals to oust us out of the first position and most favoured dance-band in the country.

These first fully professional dance-bands were Broadway [later called the Uhurus] and the Star Gazers. The Star Gazers even went to the extent of learning all our numbers note-for-note, so that whenever they were playing you would think it was us. It was a very good band and was run by Eddie Quansah the trumpeter. He later formed the Globe Masters and after that he moved out of the country altogether (2).

#### *THE LEAD SINGERS*

Most of the dance-bands, like the Black Beats, that were recording in those early days were Accra based. Their musicians were Ga's and weren't good at singing in Akan. So they used to rope in Akan singers like Jos Aikins who was more-or-less a studio musician. He didn't actually record with my group but I recall that he came over here one evening looking for a band to join. But we really had a distinctive sound provided by Lewis Wadawa and Frank Ato Barnes. (3) I think Jos finally ended up with Broadway and later he went overseas.

For the Akan songs we brought in the singer, guitarist and composer Oscarmore Ofori who was also an A&R man for various groups. He had played before with the Koforidua Royal Orchestra and the Rakers Dance Band lead by Satchmo Korley. What Oscarmore and I were doing on my records was unconsciously working together. He would bring a Twi or Fanti song and I would provide a Ga one. In that way we could cover the whole country. He didn't get any of the band's royalties, but got his composer royalties from the Performing Rights Society. As a matter of fact, he probably made more money than I did, as it was I who had bore the expenses of running the band (4).

1. For the political reaction in pre-independent Ghana to 'Ghana Freedom' see: John Collins: E.T. Mensah. The King of Highlife. London: Off the Record Press, 1986, pp. 27-28.

The song was re-released in 1991 on the E.T. Mensah compilation CD 'Day by Day' (RetroAfrica RETRO 3CD - track 8).

2. Eddie Quansah went to London as a session musician and produced the 'Che Che Kule' album for Island Records (ILPS 9446) in 1976. He is now [1991] living in Australia.

3. Frank Ato Barnes is now [1991] a pastor.

4. Oscarmore Ofori (Agyare T. Ofori), composer and guitarist, was born in 1930. He has released a string of hit highlifes like 'Sanbra', 'Odo Bra', 'Ama Bonsu', and 'Anyanko-Goro'. He is currently [1991] in the ethnomusicological panel of the Royal Institute of Anthropology and director of the Eastern Region National Cultural Centre in Koforidua.



## Chapter 7

### THE SECOND GENERATION BLACK BEATS AND THE 'B.B.' BANDS

When the Black Beats finally broke up in 1961 it was because of difficulties concerning money. That goes back a long way. When we started the group some of us worked to buy equipment, and later on others joined. But we didn't make any distinction as to who helped to acquire what. The distribution of money was generally the same for all members. We didn't say, for instance, that as you had worked to buy this trumpet, sax or drum, you therefore had to have a stake, or investment, in the band so you should get something - a little extra. And this led to considerable difficulties.

Then there was the question of us being part-timers, for at no time have I ever used professional musicians. In my case it created difficulties as I was a fairly highly placed civil servant. I didn't relish too much publicity for the band and myself because it would have created problems for me in my place of employment. The same applied to one or two other musicians in the band as well. In the case of our guitarist, he was an officer on national radio and there were strictly defined times when he had to be at work. If for some reason he wasn't there, and it came out that he had travelled to go and play somewhere, it would create a lot of trouble for him. All this meant that we couldn't accept certain type of engagements. For instance, if we had to play too far away from Accra, we couldn't accept it, because of those of us who had serious obligations with employers. Then on top of all this there were all sorts of differences in perspectives, as in any human organisation. Jealousy, envy, under-cutting and back-biting, we were not free from all that. So I saw trouble coming for a long period. For as leader of a group I could sense a degree of rebelliousness and insubordination now and again. And it's so difficult to discipline a dance band. Because it's almost impossible to replace someone who won't fully cooperate. Then of course there were outside influences, with people putting ideas in the heads of our members and giving them instruments to form their own bands.

### *INTO THE LIMELIGHT AGAIN*

It was Jerry Hansen who actually led the split. I had brought Jerry into the band in 1952 until 1961, during which time he had ruled it on several occasions when I was absent in Cape Coast and Lawra. So through this he felt sufficiently mature to lead his own group. Then in 1961 there was a little dispute about the exact amount of royalties payable to the Black Beats by Decca West Africa. There was a cheque issued to me for c. 900, and it got around that the sum was more. I invited a whole lot of people to go with me to the Standard Bank to examine the cheque. But by that time the harm had been done, and Jerry Hansen had moved out of the band with nine of the boys [and formed the Ramblers Dance Band], and left me with six or seven mostly understudies. Training them took to about July ending 1961. But the cream of the band had gone and I had to rebuild it from scratch. I also had to learn alto sax.

However, by the 23rd of December that same year I was able to front the new band at a show at the Rodger Club in Accra. Everybody thought the band was finished, but we were even able to record in 1962. The new boys were admittedly not as good as the old boys, but we still were able to go to the Decca recording studio and make four sides. Two of those were instant hits and were released on 78's. So that brought us back into the limelight again.

Even the recording engineer didn't have much faith in us, but when he heard the songs he liked them. In fact, one of the songs was in Twi, which is not my language. I had only got part of the words, one verse and one chorus and was wandering what to do. I couldn't cancel the recording session. It was a Sunday and fortunately that very morning my wife had asked me to take her to market to buy breakfast things, which I did. Luckily I met a schoolmate of mine there. His mother tongue was Twi and I told him my problem. I gave him my ideas for the song and he gave me a translation and wrote it down.

Now when we went to the studio at ten or eleven in the morning we did the three other sides first. Then I called my guitarist, tenor saxist and singer whose mother tongue was Twi, and I recited the words of the first and second verse of the tune ['Se Nea Woti Ara' - GWA 4075]. Its title translated in English means 'I Love You Just As You Are'. We had just fifteen minutes rehearsal and we recorded it one time - perfect. So we were right back in the recording business again.

By that time the Decca recording studio had moved, from the hospital area near Ridge to Kaneshi, and had begun to press in Nigeria, in Onitsha [the pressing plant got destroyed in 1967 during the civil war]. Once or twice a year they were sending an engineer here, to renew all the machines at their one track studio at Kaneshie and do some recordings. But I do believe that the long periods of inactivity and lying fallow didn't do the equipment any good.

#### *FOUL PLAY*

I definitely remember one session when the tone quality of all the records made were poor. In some cases, I'm convinced that there was some foul play, that some other musicians were in cahoots with the engineer and got him to fiddle with the sound level instructions. I can't imagine a professional recording engineer letting something like this through. On one occasion I had rejected some takes and we had to redo them four or five times. But it was one of these rejected tapes that eventually came out as the accepted one and was issued on record. Then in another instance my competitors got the recording assistants to provide false figures on the levels. The recordings were complete nonsense and you would think that the engineer had gone insane, for the bass and drum level drowned everything else. And on another tape a whole sixteen-bar passage of a horn section was wiped out so all you could hear was the drums and the guitar strumming.

The only way I could get over this was to insist, that whenever Decca recorded me, they should, at my expense, provide me with a copy of the accepted tape. So that if the final work that came out differed materially from what I wanted, I would know what to do. Only by that means was I able to stop what was going on.

All the early recordings were released as singles and our first album wasn't actually record our as an album. For what Decca did when the albums first became popular was to take six to eight of our songs from singles and string them along. And by the way, another problem with Decca was that after 1963-1964 they had shifted everything from Ghana to Nigeria. Although they had been here first they didn't want to establish themselves as a local company. So after 1964 all the producers became Nigerians and it was they who would select which records Decca would release. But when the producers handle records in languages they don't understand, things don't go all right, and we Ghanaian musicians suffered. Then by 1970-1971 Decca had no more interest in me and it was then that I did an album session with Philips.

#### *PLAYING OR PROMOTION?*

Another problem I had, in fact one that helped break up the band in 1961, was the constant transfer out of Accra. Otherwise I would have been on the spot the whole time with my band. At first the opposition to me playing dance-band music came from my employers as hints. Then in 1956 I was transferred to Cape Coast for over six months, and I had to use my leave to cut this down to exactly six months. Then the second time, just about a year afterwards, I was sent to Lawra in the far north of the country for six months. And it was during these absences that Jerry Hansen ran the band.

Then in late 1967 the opposition to my playing came in black and white, and I had to give up playing in public as a result of a letter I received from the government. At that time I was a Principal Assistant Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture, as I was in the Administrative Service. You see the government set up is this. From the politicians you come to the ministries which has a number of government departments under its control and is headed by Administrative Officers. And we in the Administrative Civil Service could be shifted between any of the ministries. You might be in the Ministry of Trade today and Agriculture tomorrow. So the letter I received came from the head of the Administrative Civil Service. They told me I had now got to take the stage where I was due for promotion from Assistant to full Principal Secretary, and that the only thing that stood in my way was my dance band playing. So I had to decide whether to continue playing or accept promotion.

In fact, I got two letters. The first was that the government did not feel pleased, that I was playing. The officer who wrote this letter, in a conversation on the matter with me, later on added, 'You see, if you were playing classical music with the National Orchestra people would not be so critical'. In late 1967 came the second letter. So I replied that I had got commitments to play with my band up to Easter 1968,

but that from April and thereafter I would comply with the undertaking and wouldn't play in public any more.

But I was very much annoyed, because I had always believed that it was the actual playing in a band that sharpens your faculties and brings new ideas. When you just sit down doing nothing you don't create new music. So the ban on my playing hurt me very much. I have had to sacrifice a lot to play music and had wanted to pursue it and make something out of it. And being asked to stop I didn't think was good.

Now, as I stopped, I first had to appoint a leader of the Black Beats. That was Sammy Odoh who had been with me since 1964. Instead I then concentrated fully on the management aspect of the band. By this time new equipment had started coming out on the market here, and I had got a lot of stuff coming which I was hiring out. It was comparatively easy then to buy things from abroad if you had the cedis [the currency of Ghana], as this was before all the foreign exchange controls. However musical equipment was quite expensive. Not many people could afford to buy it and it was in short demand.

#### *THE SEVEN 'B.B.' BANDS*

I had a lot of this new equipment with me, and if I had left it lying about the house, sooner or later it - or parts of them - would have been stolen or spoiled. At the same time there were a large number of chaps coming out of secondary school who were very keen on playing in a band. For instance, I had one band that kept coming regularly to the house to hire instruments for engagements. So in 1969 I asked them where they practised. They said they didn't practice as they didn't have equipment. So I told them, why didn't they come as regular band in my house and practice during week-days, as the members of my main band, the Black Beats, have all got daytime jobs and are not here during the day. Then I told them that when they got engagements to play out I would take a share of the money.

But it was never my intention to take another band. This particular group was called the Barbecues, a name which they chose, but it had to start with 'B'. They were mostly playing pop music and imagined they were the Beatles, Rolling Stones and so on. It was led by Tommy 'Darling' Tamakloe who is now in the States. Ghanaian musicians have a sharp nose for snitching out the presence of new equipment anywhere. The thing caught on, and it was the same story. Several groups of scruffily dressed youths started coming to me. The next band to come after the Barbecues was named the Bonfides. Then there was a nearby band to here, who were travelling with decrepit equipment, which they were hiring at cut-throat rates from somebody. These became the Barristers.

Actually, at first I refused to take them, as their proprietor was a friend of mine. Then about three months after, a situation had arisen where the proprietor didn't want the band back, and he told me. Other groups who came along became the Boulders and the Barons. Yet another group who came were the Sawaaba Soundz who were having trouble with their proprietress. In fact when this lady first formed the Sawaaba

Soundz I was going to import the equipment for her, but someone persuaded her to pick up the equipment locally and that was the beginning of her problems. When her boys came to me they demonstrated that they couldn't go back to her, and she told me that she didn't want them, so they became, not including the Black Beats itself, my sixth 'B.B.' band, the 'B' Soyaaya. Finally another group at Teshie called the Blessed Apostles came here, but Teshie was too far, so they only became an associated 'B' band and I extended management facilities to them.

So at one point I was actually fully running seven bands, at the same time. But the whole thing was an experience that I wouldn't repeat. It gave people the impression that I was making a lot of money. You see with the first group, the Black Beats, I knew the people intimately. But with many of the later bands I didn't know the people. And some of them had all the bad characteristics of bandsmen, running away with money and equipment, indiscipline and so on. And all this ate into the little time I had for music. These later boys saw me, not as a musician, but as an owner of instruments. For some often were too young to know that I had actually played with bands and knew the business backwards and forwards. So they tried to pull things over my eyes, and that got me really mad. In the end I had to get rid of them all, except the Black Beats and the Barristers, who were all part-timers and have daytime jobs, and are therefore used to discipline in the work situation. The trouble with the other bands, and many bandsmen in Ghana, was that many of the boys have never worked before, and they feel music is a thing you do when you feel inclined. So they can't understand, that when you are in a band and get paid for it, you always have to do what you are paid to do.

From the start I made it my policy to let each band leader choose his style of playing, and I would not normally disturb them at rehearsals here in the house, unless I heard something that was definitely wrong. Tommy Darling, the leader of the Barbecues, had a very good voice for romantic songs and soul music. 'B' Soyaaya concentrated on avant-garde music and afro-beats, and of course the Black Beats played everything from highlife to pop. The band that had most difficulty in finding their musical way was the Boulders and that was because they had the highest rate of musician turn-over.

I was running the 'B.B.' bands from 1969 to 1980. I stopped because I found that I was working for no purpose. The whole thing was not building me up as a musician, there was no peace and quiet in the house, and I was using practically all my resources in maintaining equipment. So I wasn't making much money because keeping the equipment up-to-date was quite expensive, and all my sweat, toil and care didn't show. Also my family was suffering as a result of me not having much time for anyone. On top of all that, I had a lot of trouble with the musicians' union. Some people in it were going around making the impression that I had been exploiting musicians, when it was the other way around. As by the time my other band had broken up and gone, each was owing me money in five and six figures.

But the worst part of it all was, it was not building me up as a musician. I didn't have any time to practice on any of my instruments. I just didn't have time to learn anything. Only very occasionally did I play with the Black Beats and the Barristers, after I retired from government service in 1977. I didn't regularly play

with them. Sometimes I would go with them, and if I felt inclined to play a number I knew, I would go and join them on stage. I could have played more since 1977, but it is not an easy thing with people who are not of your age group, and who don't share the same ideas about music. In any case, the things they played, like pop music, I didn't fancy. So I could only get along with the Black Beats and the Barristers occasionally.



## MUSIC PROBLEMS AND MUSIC UNION

My main problem in running the Black Beats was replacing lost musicians. It's a very difficult business as we had to train several of them from scratch. And this was a continuous thing. Some of my musicians got transferred out of Accra, some went to pursue higher studies, some went into business and some joined other bands. For instance, when Jerry Hansen left, it took us four to five years to completely recover. Most of the bands in those days, at least those in our type of music, were part-timers. And if you want to replace a lost man, you sometimes had to change your instrumentation, as you might have the instrument but can't get the man. In fact, I would say that over the thirty-five years that my Black Beats and 'B.B.' bands have been in existence we have used well over two hundred musicians. So many that some of their names I can't even remember.

In the old days, when a band had a composition, they rehearsed it and used it at live performances before the public. So by the time the group went into the studio, all the musicians would have mastered the music and instrumental solos, and would have a full idea of the public reaction to it. It was also better then, as recording contracts went to bands. It was very rare to get a composer going into a studio with picked-up musicians. In those days there were no session men at all. To that extent the bands operated at a great advantage. Nowadays the studio fees are all paid by producers. Which is also why we have quite a crop of session men who don't belong to any particular band, and who are always nosing around recording studios. The producers engages these musicians who come from all over the place. And because the producers have little time they are in a hurry to finish everything off. As a result they may not be able to get the best out of a composition. It may be, the session musician's first contact with the composition, will be the first day they meet at the studio. They may not know the songs at all. Also because of the costs, the producers have to limit the number of instruments to the barest minimum. That doesn't do much good for the music either.

Compared to now, the period up to the sixties was fairly free of these problems. Those that existed at the time were, in my opinion, due to poor recording facilities and the total lack of educational institutions for musicians to uplift the quality of their musician-ship. But since the 1960's, with the foreign exchange strangulation, there's been difficulties about importing musical equipment. And also by the 1970's there was hardly any foreign exchange to import vinyl for records. What little there was, was used by recording companies, like Philips, to press reggae and foreign music under license, which they could sell outside Ghana to get foreign exchange. So the problems in the seventies were ten times what they used to be in the sixties and before.

As a matter of fact, somebody in the recording producing business told me in 1972-1973, that only five percent of recorded tapes of local Ghanaian music was eventually emerging on disc as finished products. I've had dozens of boys who had made recordings that never came out. And if you have a song, and for a

instead, and comperes and MC's [master-of-ceremonies] started using it. But there was no official pronouncement. The official pronouncement that did come out was rather to reverse this trend, for by then the name highlife had become established and already internationally accepted.

### *ROYALTIES*

That Decca increased its royalty rate was definitively a result of the Ghana Musicians' Union's intervention. We managed to get the royalty paid raised from tuppence [two pence] to sixpence, and finally to tenpence [actually ten Ghanaian pesewas]. There was also a general clamour of dissatisfaction then with the returns not being adequate, on the investment concerned in providing dance music. But even this didn't lead to a complete change over royalties, but royalties were brought in as an additional to the lump sum paid previously.

Provision was also made for composer royalties, as previously the band got tuppence and the composer had to defend himself, or get an agreement with the band leader who could offer anything. So it was due to the efforts of our union that the rate was raised from tuppence to ten pesewas. In those days a single [play record] was selling for one cedi [100 pesewas or roughly equivalent then to 10 shillings sterling]. But I personally struggled for the thing to be made ten percent and not ten pesewas, because I argued that today the price of a record may be one cedi, but tomorrow it may be ten cedis. And if you peg yourself to ten pesewas you may find yourself in trouble later. But I lost over that issue.

This happened at a meeting in the office of Mr. E.K. Dadson, another minister in Nkrumah's government and an old concert party man [he had been the Louisiana Girl, the lady impersonator, in Bob Johnston's Axim Trio]. So he had strong connections with the entertainment business and was then operating a band called the Uhurus. At this meeting the composer's royalties was made half the ten pesewas, the other five pesewas going to the band, and the composer was to draw his money straight from the recording company and not from the band leader. So thereby a lot of difficulties were avoided.

But the Ghana Musicians' Union collapsed. Firstly it was associated with Nkrumah's CPP [Convention Peoples Party], and when Nkrumah was overthrown in 1966 the union was dissolved. Also it collapsed because a lot of money was needed and nobody was prepared to contribute substantial amounts.

### *MUSIGA*

It was almost ten years before a new union, our present MUSIGA, was formed in 1974. The first meeting took place in Faisal Helwani's house, the Napoleon Night Club. Faisal played a very active part, as he was prepared to put up the money and time to get people together. And this time, because he had the resources to bring people all the way from Kumasi, Brong-Ahafo, Sekondi, Takoradi and so on, the movement had

a better grounding than before. He was also able to get the services of a lawyer, Willie Amarfo, who happened to be Faisal's personal company lawyer, and he became retained lawyer for the union. So things got on a more business-like footing than before.

Also, previously the musicians movement had been confined to band leaders and older musicians. This time a lot of younger musicians came along. They weren't band leaders, but were still professionals and who were feeling the pinch because of the rather poor returns they were getting for their services. So we were involved with a larger number and a larger variety of people. Still, the concert and guitar band musicians stayed away as they had their own movement, called GHACIMS [Ghana Indigenous Musicians Cooperative], which especially catered for illiterate concert musicians. As they were very busy people they didn't believe in wasting time at meetings, recording minutes and all that. And being all in the same line of business, they were able to achieve unity over issues more readily than the better educated colleagues on our side.

But the concert musicians were brought into MUSIGA and Nana Ampadu of the African Brothers [guitar-band] is now one of our vice presidents. It was only very recently that our movement was able to bring them inside our union in large numbers. In fact, we in MUSIGA had a big challenge from the concert bands who thought their interests were different from ours. That's why they set up their own GHACIMS [in 1976]. I must say that at first the concert party union was better organised than ours, all of them were true professionals, whereas we dance band musicians in town were mostly part-timers.

By 1979 the music industry in Ghana was in such a mess that MUSIGA organised a march to the seat of government at the Castle. It was really needed due to the apathy on the part of the government, for we musicians were providing a service which they thought wasn't patently essential. I mean, we couldn't withdraw our services, i.e. strike, and therefore hold the government to ransom or anything like that. So the march was the only thing we could do. I was on it right up to the point where it came to presenting a petition to the people in the Castle. Incidentally, the one who received the petition was a junior of mine who had served under me in the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, and so he was already personally very much obliged to me. So I was in the thick of things all along.

In the seventies I was second vice president, but for a long time I was inactive until quite recently. Now, although I don't hold an official position, I do from time to time get an invitation to assist. For instance, just recently, as the union didn't have a person with the necessary experience, I got invited to chair one of the weekly meetings especially held for band leaders.

I've also been trying to push the idea that there is a need to vet people applying to join the union. There are no laid-down qualification requirements for this, and suppose a man says he is a member of the Medical Practitioners Association, then at least you know that he had done secondary school and years of university study. But when a man comes and stands before you, saying he is a registered member of the musicians union, he might be nothing at all, or even deaf man or an idiot, as unfortunately no thorough examination has ever been done.

## *SPINNERS AND COPYRIGHT LAWS*

Recently we've also been discussing the adverse affect the spinners [mobile sound systems] are having on the live music scene. We've had a series of meetings on this current problem, and many of the union members thought that the government should ban them in order to protect live music and bandsmen. But I said, how can the government ban them and what law have they broken, for the spinners have legally bought all their equipment and are paying all their fees, income tax and so on. I tried to explain to the MUSIGA members that the only circumstance, in which the government could impose a ban on them, was if they were having a harmful effect on the cultural aspects of music. So I suggested that there shouldn't be an outright ban on them, rather what is needed are controls on them. For instance, that they should always have to play alongside a live group, for we cannot stand in the way of technology.

MUSIGA also helped in the recent change in the copyright law which made infringement a criminal rather than civil offence. And it is working. But the very sad death of the Copyright Administrator, Mr. Adoi-Anim, in September 1987 hasn't helped things. However since the new copyright law, the GBC [Ghana Broadcasting Corporation] has begun to pay out royalties to musicians. The first of these local payments was made at the beginning of 1987 when three million cedis was given out to Ghanaian musicians. Some people got fifty thousand cedis, some thirty, some twenty and some rather less.

As no accurate monitoring of music has been made previously, with the GBC just being a matter of totting-up whose music had been used how many times, this particular payment was just for the meantime based on the particular musician's popularity. Long ago I believe there was an accurate system of monitoring music on the radio, but with the ever increasing difficulties with our foreign exchange, this had collapsed. Also another aspect of the new copyright law was that an agreement was made with the PRS [Performing Rights Society] in London, as to what should be paid for the use of foreign music on our radio.

All these changes occurred after a series of meetings we musicians had with the GBC and the Copyright Administration at the Ministry of Information offices. We in MUSIGA pointed out that ours [i.e. music] was a marketable product which had to be monitored and paid for, and that it wasn't a question of how much the GBC could spare to give us.

Although I was there, I have always tried to hivy myself off from all these bodies. But whenever Ghanaian music is concerned, my name always crops up and everyone thinks I should be around. And because of my experience in administration no one can pull wool over my eyes. For example, once at these discussions at the Ministry of Information, one of the GBC officers asked me whether I had any idea, the enormous amount of money it cost them to operate their rediffusion service. I said, what business do you have with rediffusion in 1987, which silenced him immediately. You see, I'm more or less independent and I can face anybody on any issue, so my presence at these type meetings people find very useful, and everything that concerns music I find myself invited to.

But even though GBC is short of money we got them to agree that the payment should go up from three million to six million cedis. This was after we had tried to convince them, that it is because of their wasteful civil service ways and refusal to take advantage of their status as a commercial enterprise they are loosing so much money. Then Mr. Fifi Hesse, the Managing Director of GBC at the time, 'explained' that things are not so easy. The GBC is not a completely commercial enterprise, the government can step in at any time to tell them that to do or not do, even if this means huge losses of revenue. Anyway we saw his point that it's not a completely independent body.

### *MUSIC PIRATES*

Another aspect of the copyright problem are the music pirates, and there are hundred of kiosks up and down the country where you can get cassettes recorded from records. But if the recording studios and production facilities were more plentiful, and they were not so terribly expensive, we could beat the pirates at their own game. Because if we could put five thousand pre-recorded cassettes on the market in one go at a reasonable price, no one would buy the pirated products as the pirates would not have chance to get them out in time. But things are so stiff economically, by the time a legal cassette finally does get on to the market it goes for six hundred cedis or more. So people will buy the pirated stuff.

Only recently the pirates have gone more or less legal and even set up their own organisation called the 'Ghana Association of Recordists'. All this was a very trying time for the Copyright Administration. Because of import restrictions and the lack of foreign exchange, music in all its forms, cassettes and discs, are difficult to come by.

But all the same, people could hear music on the radio and so the recordists cashed in and produced this music quite illegally on blank tapes. Sometimes even recording straight off GBC's newly opened FM station. Now the government made it quite clear that this was illegal, but there was a ready demand for musical products and you couldn't get them in the shops, or if you could they were so expensive.

So what the Copyright Administration has been trying to handle is, on the one hand there are people who are prepared to pay for these things, and on the other hand there are the recordists who are prepared to record and sell them. So why not authorise these people to do so, on payment of a certain fee to the Copyright Office. Then, if the worse comes to the worse, the owners of musical copyright, both local and foreign, could at least be given something. So now the recordists are licensed yearly by the Copyright Office and this [1987] is the second year. They will of course also have to pay income tax, but the copyright money will go to the musicians. By the way, we are also arranging a similar thing for the spinners who will also have to pay out money to the Copyright Office every year.



## PRESENT AND FUTURE PLANS

The last recordings of the Black Beats with Philips [part of Polygram] was in 1972. I did four sides. But at that time the recording business was at a very low ebb, especially for Ga speaking artists. Akan speaking musicians were very much on the ascendancy. And if I'm to believe a man who was working with Philips at the time, the percentage of locally recorded music was only five percent, i.e. music that was eventually coming out on discs here in Ghana, the rest being foreign music pressed here under license.

Since then I've done some recordings at the Bokoor Studio for cassette production. In September 1987 I did a composition for [Felix] Houphout-Boigny's [the president of Côte d'Ivoire] eighty-fifth birthday on the recommendation of an Ivorian. He happened to be a class-mate of one of Houphout-Boigny's sons and he himself is well known to the president.

Then in December 1987 we did four more songs, all my compositions. Two of them date back to 1972. These are 'Esheo Heko' and 'Onyiemo Feo Mi Feo'. The meaning of 'Esheo Heko' translates as 'There Comes a Time'. It's about when you have to lie to get you out of a difficult position. 'Onyiemo Feo Mi Feo' means that you have a very attractive way of walking. The other songs are recent compositions. One is called 'Tsutsu Tsosemo' (Old Time Training) and is about how years ago family training and upbringing in the house was much better than it is today. The other song, 'Ekole' (Perhaps), is about you being very kindly disposed to everybody, you have a good-will and have no evil intentions. But occasionally you come up against experiences which make you swear that you will never do a favour or be kind to anybody ever.

For this recording I called some members of my first generation Black Beats [1952-1961]. These were my singer Mike Lewis Wadawa, the guitarist Jerry Bampoe and drummer George Annor. Then from the second generation Black Beats [1961-1968 when the government told King Bruce to stop playing] there was the second vocalist Dan Quarcoo and Small Nelson on congas. And from the current band there was the bassist Flash Acquaye and Desmond Ababio on keyboards. On maraccas was 'Big' Daniel Tetteh Tagoe who has been my driver, fitter and transport manager since 1970. And finally there was the guest artist, the saxophonist Roland Sackey, who has been playing on and off with the Black Beats for the last five years. He played the tenor saxophone on 'Misumo Bo Tamo She' [recorded ca. 1962], he has played with E.K. Nyame, the Farmers, and the Brigade Band.



## *FUTURE OF LIVE BANDS*

But I never considered putting our fifties highlife type Black Beats together again for live performances. The future of live bands is very doubtful as the young people like masses of electronic equipment. A live band uses maybe 400 watts of power and about ten P.A. [Public Address] and instrument speaker cabinets. An electronic spinner [mobile sound system] may use 2,000 watts and as many as forty huge speaker cabinets. So there is no comparison between the sound of live and electronic bands. And electronic bands [spinners] can play from 7 o'clock p.m. to two in the morning. No band can play like that. Also the spinners have strobe lights, disco lights, soap bubbles and other weird effects that drive the kids crazy.

At the moment live bands mainly play at hotels where grown-up people go. And there aren't enough of those places for all the dance bands. So our dance band course of action is to go extensively into recordings. That too is not easy because to record and press at least five thousand LP's would cost at least 1,000,000 cedis [approximately  $\approx$  1,600]. And people here aren't prepared to invest as no local musician or producer has ever become rich in Ghana from music. In addition, people don't use turn-tables extensively in Ghana these days. Now it's all cassettes.

So, these days my main musical activities is running the two 'B.B.' bands, the Black Beats and Barristers, and my work with the Musicians' Union and the Copyright Administration. Besides this, the Arts Council [now the Greater Accra Regional Cultural Centre] has an Advisory Committee and I was invited to serve on it in 1986. We discuss the running of the various departments as well as the ultimate aim of the Arts Council. Also the development of the regions of the country, and now since the de-centralisation policy of the government, how each of the ten regions will have its own council. We meet once a month.

Also I do go to some of the monthly meetings of the Greater Accra Musicians' Welfare Association. This was set up under the aegis of the Musician's Union. But I wasn't involved with its actual setting up, as I wasn't pleased with what they were intending to do. The Association was originally formed because on two occasions when famous musicians died [these being E.K. Nyame and Kwabena Okai]. Their families were found to be too poor to give them a decent burial. One of the objectives of the Association was to provide funds to the bereaved family when a musician dies. However, I objected to this, and said that a welfare association would not only come into play when a person died. I was more interested in an association that would take care of musicians whilst they were alive. In my thinking various forms of social security should be involved. In other words, a credit union to which people contribute and build up funds so that they can start up enterprises. In fact the Association still hasn't got around to doing this yet.

## *THE PULL OF MUSIC*

I also took part in the IASPM conference held here in Accra in 1987. [This was the Fourth International Conference of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music held in Accra, August 12<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> 1987, with the title 'Africa in the World of Popular Music']. Although I was very sorry I didn't know of the thing well in advance as I could have been better prepared and made a more useful contribution. However I did have a chance to talk about the training obligations of musicians in Ghana, the need for music schools and the practical difficulties we musicians have to put up with here in Ghana. I must say that I was most grateful for the chance I was given to learn things at the conference. For example when I asked people questions on certain aspects of jazz, no one previously had been able to answer me satisfactorily, until Scott de Vaux [a conference delegate from the USA] and others came around. So the whole conference was very useful.

You ask me what my general feelings about music are and what exactly drew me towards it? Well, frankly I don't know, but the pull is there. And going after music has involved me in a whole lot of risks, and meant lost opportunities in other directions. But still the pull is there. And it is under the strangest circumstances that tunes, remarks or situations strike me, that prompt me to put a song down as quickly as possible. Oh, I've had inspirations to write songs in graveyards, in the midst of serious work in my office, whilst shopping in the market, even in the course of an argument with friends or strangers. I couldn't tell you what use music is to other people, but all I know is that I get the pull to write or put something down now and again.

These days, if I have a chance to listen to music, I would rather choose to listen to classical music than any other type. I want to understand western music, in order to be able to perform my own music, and improve it. I think this love of classical music is a reaction from years playing music for dancing purposes only. You see, I don't think the finest thing about human beings is their engagement with dancing. I think other forms of music create more noble feelings than those of dance music. And when I say this I am not thinking of European classical music only. I mean there are all sorts of other types of music. Chinese, Japanese, Indian music, African music. Frankly, most of the dance music which we had to play for commercial reasons I now find extremely boring. Beethoven's symphony number five is C minor lasts the better part of ninety minutes, and what sort of dance music can you listen to for ninety minutes at a stretch?

I believe that music should not just be an aid to dancing, but should be of use to human beings in all aspects of their lives. Only recently I was reading in a European paper, how a certain measure of success had been achieved by surgeons, who provided music in their waiting-rooms and surgeries for patients. For music helps to relieve certain types of tension that one is subjected to in life. I think music has a greater use for human beings than just help them to dance.

I would even compare the current engrossment with dance music in Ghana as something similar to malnutrition. For example, we have our FM radio station here. About ninety-five percent of the time devoted to dance music, and I think this is quite wrong. I mean if ninety-five percent of human food consisted of boiled cassava [manioc] I think people would just revolt as there's no variety. The situation twenty years ago was much better as in the dance-hall you could hear quicksteps, slow foxtrots, rumbas, cha-cha-chas, boleros, highlifes and so on. But what do you have now? Just reggae, funk and a little highlife - finish.

On the question of the pull of music, sometimes you come across a situation which call for some kind of protest or condemnation. I find the best way to this, is put one's feeling and reaction to music. I'm afraid I haven't been able to do much in this line of thinking, because after all, whatever we do or write or create has to end up as saleable and commercial music. Because of these constraints you can't exploit the music fully. Then again, the actual facilities existing on the ground here in Ghana may not enable you to exploit your music to the fullest i.e. recording facilities].

I am actually working on such a 'protest' idea right now. You see, I was born in this house and I remember fifty years or so ago, the crocodiles, many varieties of river fish and crabs and birds. Now it's just a sewage and garbage dump, and I have strong feelings on what has happened. I mean, in other parts of the world people are taking great trouble to preserve their lakes, ponds, rivers, water ways and so on. Whereas here we just kill them as fast as we can. I am working on a composition on what has happened to the Korle lagoon and I may bring it out. We grew up here and remember how the place used to be as compared to now. It's very sad.

### **BLACK BEATS' SONGS**

Comments on and translations of almost fifty songs, released by the Black Beats between 1953 and 1963 on His Master's Voice (HMV), the Senafone and Decca labels.

### ***HIS MASTER'S VOICE***

- A: OSHIJA ('Spinster' or 'Batchelor')  
A traditional Ga song
- B: TSO NO TSATSA ('Tree Ant')  
A traditional Ga song  
[HMV series and number has not been identified]

We started recording in 1953 for HMV who had a temporary studio at Nsawam, twenty miles north of Accra on the Kumasi road. We recorded four numbers, all traditional songs from Ghana in the highlife vein. But only one single [shellac] was released ('Oshija' and 'Tso No Tsatsa') and we got a lump sum of c. 10 a side.

### ***SENAFONE - FAO SERIES (1)***

#### **TSUTSU BLEMA BENEKE (FAO 1318)**

'Tsutsu Blema Beneke' (The Old Days Were Not Like This) is an old traditional Ga highlife and we don't know who the author is. It means life in the olden times was not like this and laments the fact that things have changed and lovers behaving differently these days. The lover in the song is asking why did you run away with someone else.

The recording was done in 1953 or 1954 and happened to be the first of my lead singer [Mike] Lewis Wadawa. It also featured a guest reed player artist from Nigeria called Jibril Isa who, with some other Nigerians, operated a band here for some time under the name of the Delta Dandies. It was later called the Downbeats and was lead by an Ibo musician called Bill Friday, Jibril Isa having left Ghana about 1955. This was one of our first successful recordings.

#### SAUVY VOU (FAO 1318)

'Sauvo Vou' is not an original composition as we found ourselves short of one side at a recording session and had to think quickly to fill the gap. We had heard this tune broadcast on one of the French West African radio stations and had successfully used it at live dance engagements once or twice as an instrumental. We don't know who wrote it and we recorded the song completely oblivious of all legal risks, as in those days people were not so sharp on those things. We didn't even know the name of the song, so we picked on our title as something that sounded French. The Senafone records were distributed in Ghana by the French company C.F.A.O.

#### MENA WOM (FAO 1440)

'Mena Wom' (My Mother Brought Me Forth) is an old traditional Ga highlife tune that we converted to Fanti. The melody is similar to the Ga highlife called 'Kron Kron' (Holy) written by Mr. Sarpei. The original Ga version of 'Mena Wom' was something we played live quite successfully, so we thought we'd try it in Fanti. I don't know who the original composer is, it was an old local Accra song. The meaning of 'Mena Wom' is that I was born as a person of dignity and honour, but today I am in difficulty. The implication is that even though there are difficulties he has to maintain strict moral standards of behaviour, as because of his mother he is obliged to behave.

#### MOHAMMADU (FAO 1440)

'Mohammadu' is a traditional Hausa song brought to the Black Beats by Jerry Hansen. I was playing trumpet at that time. It was a reasonably successful song, but the Senafone company was only half hearted about the recording business. The only really popular hit we had with them was 'Nnomo Noko'. The reason for this was that the Senafone producer here was persuaded to produce English standards by Ghanaian artists. So he took things that had been recorded world-wide by Louis Armstrong and so on, and then re-recorded them. This was a very bad thing and it was a serious set-back for Senafone, as no one here was interested in these English records.

#### OBRA BO (FAO 1526)

'Obra Bo' (Life Style) is Ga song we recorded in 1955. It was written by our alto sax player Patrick Forson who worked with the Public Works Department. He died in 1987. It says that it's honesty that really matters and that's how you should conduct your life. For all these twenty or so recording we were doing for Senafone, they used a Ferrograph tape recorder in some converted cacao-shed in Nsawam.

#### NNOMO NOKO (FAO 1526)

'Nnomo Noka' (A Thing of Joy) is a romantic Ga song I wrote about someone who has lost his/her lover and is pleading with her/him not to go away, for the person is now realising how he or she is missing the lost lover. The song can be about a man talking about a woman or vice versa. We recorded this in 1955, and it was our next greatest hit after 'Teemon Sane' and helped open the way for us, as we were not then exclusive to Decca. 'Nnomo Noko' was our top Senafone song, in fact, was our greatest hit of all, but not from the point of view of number sold, as at that time we were not entitled to royalties and so we couldn't really have documented evidence as to the number sold. You see, Senafone, which was the subsidiary of the French C.F.A.O. general trading company, didn't have the sales and distribution facilities of Decca, which specialised more in record production and distribution.

#### MAYE MAYE (FAO 1527)

'Maye Maye' (I Have Tried and Tried) is a Twi song of Oscarmore Ofori's that we recorded in 1955. It says, 'I have made my effort and tried as much as I can, and I now think it is time for some else. I made my contribution with no assistance from anyone and no appreciation. Now it's high time for someone else to make a contribution.'

#### ESSIE MERCY (FAO 1527)

I wrote 'Essie Mercy', a song in Fanti, and recorded it in 1955. It says, 'You, Essie [a girl's name], treated me nicely and spent some time with me, but for some reason you are annoyed'. For Essie is refusing to accept a gift from a young man. So the man is saying, 'Don't be annoyed, just come and collect your gift'.

#### *DECCA (West Africa) WA and GWA series*

The Black Beats were with Decca from 1954 to 1965.

#### TEEMON SANE (WA - the serial number not identified)

'Teemon Sane' (A Confidential Matter) is my composition which we recorded in 1954. It was a first recording and a first hit with Decca. This is a romantic song that says it is a confidential matter between the two of us. It was an instant success and as a result Decca signed us on.



#### OBIELE (WA 840)

'Obiele' is a Ga folk-song that I knew as a child and which we used to play. We recorded it around 1955. It's about a girl called Obiele who has treated someone badly. The person who has been offended says he or she will beat Obiele with a stick. Lewis Wadawa was the singer, I was on trumpet and Frank Croffie on guitar.

#### KEDZI MILE (WA 840)

'Kedzi Mile' (If I Had Known) is a Ga highlife by one of my boys. But I can't remember which one. It says that if I had known what life would be like I would have taken certain precautions.

#### AFII NYONMAI ENYO (WA 841)

'Afii Nyonmai Enyo' (Twenty Years) is one of my Ga highlifes. It's about a funeral gathering and talks about what has happened over twenty years. Sickness takes the old ones away, the boys scatter through travelling, the girls grow up, and through envy and struggling over property family members become life long enemies.

#### REGULAR AS A RECORD CHANGER WA 841

This was an English calypso of mine we recorded in 1957. It depicts a girl who changes from one man to another like a record player and leaves each one completely ruined. Because of the words it was banned on the radio [GBC] at that time.

#### SUUMO GBOO KE MOO SHI (WA 902)

'Suumo Gboo Ke Moo Shi' (Love Never Completely Dies) is a Ga highlife of mine we released in 1958. It's about lost love. 'Love never dies completely, there's always a nagging bit left, it's an undeniable truth.' I wrote this song in 1954 or 1955, and in it the singer gives a recount of the good times he had with this girlfriend and the places they visited, like Aburi, Kumasi, Takoradi and Krobo Odumase. So he has no regrets that they have parted.

#### DEAR SI ABOTAR (WA 902)

'Dear Si Abotar' (Dear Be Patient) is a highlife song by Oscarmore Ofori in Twi. It's about a man, talking to his wife, who is offended by something the man has done. So the man is saying, 'It's a small matter, be patient!'

#### AO! DEI! OH! (WA 903)

This is a song of mine we recorded around 1959. Dei is the name of a girl. 'Ao!' is a cry of anguish as it's a love song. A man is talking to a woman, saying, 'If you had been patient things would have been so different. The person who needs to be pitied most is the person who is impatient and doesn't know God.' You see, the two have quarrelled and the girl, Dei, walked off. Now the girl's position is very sad and the man, though full of pity for her, cannot help her.

If the song was about anyone in particular? Well, that's the sixty-four thousand dollar question. But I'll tell you what. I was a band leader in need of certain types of compositions and so sometimes I had to sit down and imagine situations I can compose about. For instance, a man who has lost a love dual, what will his reaction be. I must say that some composers do get involved with an incident and recount the whole thing as a song. But I don't normally do it that way, but if I'm hit by a thing and it moves me, I write something that a whole lot of people similarly affected would like to say or express. So I generalise and when a dozen people hear one of my songs, they all think that this is precisely what has happened to them. That way you popularise your music better.

#### MENYO WO BOKOR (WA 903)

'Menyo Wo Bokor' (I'll Go With You) is a Fanti love song by Oscarmore Ofori I helped to arrange. It's about a man singing to a woman, saying, 'I can't bear to leave, I can't bear to be alone, I want to die with you'. And the chorus is saying, 'Yes, go along with him'.

#### DE EHUO (WA 904)

'De Ehuo' (That Which Has Faded) is a Fanti song by Oscarmore Ofori. A man is telling a woman, that if she wants to walk with him she should be properly dressed, wear lipstick, have her hair stretched and wear gabardine, not faded material.

#### MIKUU MISE MIBAA DON (WA 904)

'Mikuu Mise Mibaa Don' (I Shan't Come Back Again) is one of my Ga songs. The singer is saying, 'This is not what you told me and not what you promised. You appear to be a person who likes to take advice from people who are not close to us and don't know our situation. You've surprised me, you broke your promise and so I shan't come back.' This is not necessarily a love song, it's about broken promises. We made this record [WA 904] in 1959, and what Oscarmore and I were doing was, he would bring Twi and Fanti songs and I provided the Ga songs. Then we'd cover the whole country that way.

#### QUEEN'S VISIT (WA 916)

This is a highlife I wrote in early 1959 for the British Queen's planned visit to Ghana in November later that year. The Decca representative asked me to do this song but the Queen was postponed and she didn't come to Ghana until 1960 or 1961.

#### MEDAHO MAO (WA 916)

'Medaho Mao' (I'm All For You) is one of the few Fanti highlifes I've composed, which I did around 1955. In it the man is saying, 'I'm there for you always, my dear. Why do you make a lot of fuss about nothing? Let me give you the assurance that I'm always for you.' I must say that many women have teased me over this song.

#### ANOKWA EDOMI (WA 917)

'Anokwa Edomi' (This Really Hurt Me) is a Ga love song of mine. The man is saying to the girl, 'This thing you told me today has seriously hurt me. But even more so, because of the time you told me, the reason why you told me, the manner in which you told me and the person because of whom you told me.' I composed this around 1956 or 1957. It was a resounding success.

#### AGOODZI (WA 917)

'Agoodzi' [a Fanti slang term for money] is a highlife by Oscarmore Ofori that was a big hit. In it a man is giving assurance to his girl-friend that he has plenty of money, so she shouldn't worry at all. The singers were Frank Barnes and Mike Lewis, that's Lewis Wadawa, they were the band's Blackbirds.

#### MINANI MINA (I Wish I had What You've Got) WA 951

'Minani Mina' (I Wish I Had What You've Got) is a Ga highlife of mine, and I'll tell you how I got this song. I was near the old Kaneshie open-air market [in Accra] and two women were speaking and one was saying to the other, 'I wish I had what you've got'. And the way she said it clicked with me at once.

#### MO FE RON RE (WA 953)

We had two singers from Nigeria whom we backed. This is a Yoruba song by them. They were called Bassey and Chuks. They also did other songs for us like the Efik highlife 'Abasi Do' [also WA 953] and a Yoruba highlife about God called 'Owo Ko Ni Fe' and a Hausa song called 'Bu Duru Bra' [both GWA 4020]. Chuks died here in Ghana and Bassey went back to Nigeria.

#### MENYIBER SEM (WA 966)

'Menyiber Sem' (Red Eyed Matter) is in Fanti, but it is my song. Although I can speak and write Fanti, I usually prefer to get someone who has a good understanding of English and Fanti, then recite my tale or verse and get them to translate it into good Fanti. The title means my red eyed palaver, or that this is a matter that I'm deadly serious about. And I'm saying, 'If it had not been for you, I would be in a much better situation now'.

#### ME KAPERBA (WA 966)

'Me Kaperba' (Pay Me) is a Fanti highlife by Bob Cole. It means, 'you pay me back my penny or give me back my due. (2)

#### MENI AGYE (WA 967)

'Meni Agye' (I'm Happy) is a song of success and says, 'Things I've been wanting to do for some thirteen years, I've been able to do today. So if I fall down and die this minute I have no regrets.' I wrote this highlife song, 'Meni Agye', as that much Fanti I know. But in expanding the lyrics I had to seek the assistance of people who could speak idiomatic Fanti.

Sometimes I hear a phrase in Ga or another language like Fanti, and I use it. Sometimes I even get the music and lyrics together, and this comes in all sorts of situations. I might be in the midst of serious office work and right in the middle of writing a cabinet memorandum, for example, then suddenly a phrase or

music will flash through my mind. Then I will just scribble it down and then expand it later. If only we had had cassette recorders in those days it would have been very helpful. I even remember that once we were at a burial in a cemetery when one of the people there came upon the grave of a past relative. So she stopped by it and sat down and started weeping and crying out. And the things she said gave me the idea for a song.

#### ABAN NKABA (WA 967)

'Aban Nkaba' (Hand-Cuffs) is a Fanti highlife that Bob Cole did with us. In it he sings, 'When you met me my hands were in hand-cuffs. And right behind me was standing a policeman escorting me to the police station. And then, in that situation, you asked me whether everything is alright in my house. If everything was alright, how could you see me in that situation?'

In the old days all sorts of people, like Bob Cole and Oscarmore Ofori, kept on approaching successful band leaders offering them songs to record. Such people were too happy to hear their voices and songs on the air and so they didn't mind about payment. I used to get the composers to come and sing themselves and then pay them as a guest artist or as a regular member of the band, as then, none of us were entitled to royalties. It's not like these days where a composer commissions a band to back him as session musicians.

#### TELEPHONE LOBI (GWA 4008)

'Telephone Lobi' (Telephone Lover) is one of my Ga highlife, and I got into a lot of trouble over it. The song is about some people who grew up and went to school together. The boy was often punished by his parents for spending too much time in the girl's compound. He had sacrificed his school money now and again to help the girl, had helped her with her mathematics and so on. Now they've grown up, the girl is suggesting that they should just remain telephone sweethearts, but the man is saying that he doesn't fancy that at all. This song was once banned on GBC because it was too near the real thing. Some of the words were a bit risqué, especially where the man says he wants to see the woman in the flesh. People thought this was too suggestive.

#### AMMA MERE WU (GWA 4008)

'Amma Meru Wu' (You're Killing Me) is a Fanti highlife by Oscarmore Ofori about boy and girl relations. The song describes the features of the girl, 'When I see your eyes and your physical features I become determined to die with you'.

#### NKOME NKOMO (GWA 4009)

'Nkome Nkomo' (It Is My Own Concern) is one of my Ga highlifes that I composed around 1957. In it I say, 'Leave my matter or palaver to me. I will solve it on my own. The problem is my responsibility and I don't need any outsider. I know the fire-power of my gun and my shooting capabilities.' In other words I know my capabilities.

#### SROTOI YE MLI (GWA 4019)

'Srotoi Ye Mli' (There Are Varieties In Everything) is a Ga highlife I wrote in 1959. When it was released in 1960 it became our greatest hit for Decca. [Mike] Lewis Wadawa was the singer and Quartey Hammond the trumpeter. Sadly Hammond died in 1972. The song is about distinctions and differences. For instance, when you don't know wine you'll think it's all just one drink. And there may be a thousand brands, shades and varieties of it. And the same with bananas, oranges and hot peppers. However, when people heard the word differences like sweet, not so sweet, heavy, light and harsh, they started thinking about sex. And although I didn't mention anything like that, this song got me into quite a lot of trouble.

#### KASA BERE'W (GWA 4019)

'Kasa Bere'w' (Softly Speaking) is a Twi highlife which is mine and came about because we had clandestinely recorded for Philips a number in Ga saying 'Softly Speaking'. Now we wanted a Twi version. But although the idea of the lyrics remained the same, by the time we finished, it was a completely different tune because the intonation of the language was so different. In my case, the music always follows the words, otherwise it doesn't make sense. So when I changed this song from Ga to Twi it turned out completely different, even the rhythms became different.

#### GYE KO DIDI (GWA 4021)

'Gye Ko Didi' (Take And Go And Chop) is a Twi highlife by Oscarmore [Ofori] that we released in 1961, at the same time as 'Won Ma Menka'. It's about a boy giving money to a girl for something to eat or chop, 'tomorrow I'll see you again'.

#### WON MA MENKA (GWA 4021)

'Won Ma Menka' (Allow Me To Say) is a Fanti highlife song of Oscarmore Ofori that I got him to change around. The original title was 'Nne Asem Ato Me' (Disaster Has Overtaken Me). Now the Akans like



songs in which they are proclaiming about misfortunes that befell them, and I said why can't we have a song and bring something that describes joy and happiness. So I got Oscarmore [Ofori] to call the song, 'Let the whole world hear me today that I have achieved success, by business has proved a success, so permit me to say so.'

#### SE NEA WOTI ARA (GWA 4075)

'Se Nea Woti Ara' (I Love You Just As You Are) is a Twi song of mine recorded in 1962 with the second generation Black Beats, after Jerry Hansen had left. I'm playing sax on it. This was a last minute composition we did on a Sunday morning just before a recording when I met a Twi speaking friend of mine at Salaga Market. I've already referred to this before [see Chapter 7]. The words mean, 'You can love somebody because of her beauty, because of her manner of speech or the way she walks. But as for me, I love you just as you are'. We did this song in just one perfect take.

#### KWEMO NI OKAGBI (GWA 4075)

'Kwemo Ni Okagbi' (Take Care Not To Dry Up) is another of the four songs we recorded in 1962 with the second generation Black Beat - and which brought us into the limelight again. In it I'm saying that certain things are destroyed by fire, whereas certain things are strengthened and revived by fire. Certain things glow in fire, but other things are blackened by it. So make sure you do what you want to do in life, otherwise you'll dry up. Everybody needs what suits them, so take care you make a proper choice otherwise you will find yourself a total failure. People misinterpreted this song and thought it was directed at Jerry Hansen and the musicians who left me in 1961, but this wasn't my idea at all.

#### YORYI (GWA 4096)

'Yoryi' is a small black fruit which is sweet when ripe. In this Ga song of mine, all the fruits and vegetable get together to determine which of the green, unripe fruits would become most beautifully ripe. When eventually the time arrives, and they achieve ripeness, the yoryi has turned black, sour-sop and still green and prickly whether ripe or unripe. Some peppers ended up as bright yellow, and it was the tomato that achieved maximum success as a bright red. And so it is in life, when forty school class-mates get together to indicate what they hope to be in the future. And ten years after, some of them might be thieves, some dead, some might be prosperous businessmen, successful politicians and so on. That's the idea of the song. It's a parable I made up, but which is true in life.

#### DZEE ASHWE (GWA 4097)

'Dzee Ashwe' (It's No Joke) is a highlife of mine we did in 1963. 'Dzee Ashwe' is a Ga remark you make when you come against something, the quality of which is so high, that it is no joke to reach that standard. The song tells of the dilemma faced by each of us when we try this and that. A boy wants to be a successful airplane pilot, a lawyer, a doctor, Minister of State and so on. And we have great difficulty in deciding what we want to be. So make sure you know what you want from life right from the beginning, or you'll be hopping from one thing to another, wanting and attracted to this and that and not knowing exactly what is good for you. But people all read something into my songs and this one, they thought, was about women. But it could be about employment or even about bandsmen going from one band to another.

#### WOSOMPA NTI (GWA 4097)

'Wosompa Nti' (Because Of Your Helpfulness) is a Twi composition by Ami Johnson who is also singing. He's calling God's blessing on a woman and telling her that because of her helpfulness he is determined to marry her. (3)

#### ANUATRE HREBI (GWA 4098)

'Anuatre Hrebi' (A Lighter Shade Of Perfume) is a Ga highlife. I got it from an old English song which is about how you tend to like a person through a variety of little habits that person, man or woman, may have. And this endearing song describes some of these habits. In it, it is a man who is talking to women and he mentions amongst other things the light shade of perfume that he becomes aware of when he is near her.

#### GBE BE HE (GWA 4128)

'Gbe Be He' (There's No Chance) is a Ga highlife of mine that says, 'You had your chance and lost it and now you want it back'. It can have many meanings and people looked furiously around for something that has happened to me that could have inspired me to write it. But it has many meanings. For instance, long after I wrote it, during the Acheampong era [Ghana's Head of State in the early and mid 1970's], it was a great period for women to make money. Many marriages were ruined as a result of the women's 'Bottom Power' as it was called. A young woman could make ten times the money that her husband was making. Therefore she would have no time for him at all. And before you know what's happened she's packed up and left the husband. Now things have changed and all those opportunities for women have disappeared. Now she might want to come back, but the husband might have got encumbered with someone else already. So he could very well say to her, 'Gbe Be He' (There's No Chance).

BE NAKAI NONG (GWA 4129)

'Be Nakai Nong' (It's Still The Same) is a Ga highlife in which I'm making a declaration about the inability to do anything about the present situation. We've got to take things as they are, at the moment as there's nothing we can do. The song can have a personal or social meaning, depending on how you apply it.

KPANLOGO LOLO MASHI (GWA 4149)

'Kpanlogo Lolo Mashi' (The Drumming Is Still On) is an idiomatic English version I did of a traditional Ga song. We did this in 1964 or 1965. I'm convinced that there was some collusion, between someone here who really wanted me out of the market and the Decca recording staff. For they messed up all the levels, and the result was chaos with the drums drowning the lyrics. It was after this song that I insisted, I'd be given a copy on tape of everything they eventually accepted as final for commercial release. Another tragedy we had around Decca was that quite a few of our records didn't come out at all, as after 1963 or 1964. Decca had virtually packed up their production side from Ghana and were based in Nigeria. So it was Nigerian producers who determined what came out, and it was one hell of a situation as they couldn't understand our lyrics. The funny thing is that the matrix numbers of these songs that never came out do appear in the Decca catalogues. But you see, it was the producers who had to say how many should be pressed, five thousand, ten thousand and so on. But you wouldn't see any on the market as none of the Nigerian producers ordered any.

KENG KENG (GWA - serial number not identified)

'Keng Keng' (Cow-Bell) was another song we did at the same recording session as 'Kpanlogo Lolo Mashi'. And in this song whole sections of the horn music were wiped out, due no doubt, to foul play.

HWE NEA NYAME AYE (GWA - serial number not identified)

'Hwe Nea Nyame Aye' (See What God Has Done) is a Twi highlife by me and is about marital infidelity. There was a man who was lamenting, that whilst he was totally devoted to a certain woman and doing everything for her she had become the plaything of other people. Eventually the woman left him, but he is saying in the song, that if God had listened to his prayers and had allowed this woman to stay, in the light of subsequent events his life would have been terrible. We recorded this in 1965.

NKASE DIN (GWA - serial number not identified)

Nkase Din' (I'm Quietly Watching In The Background) is a Ga song of mine we recorded in the mid 1960's. In it I'm saying, 'I am quietly waiting in the background, watching people rushing around to no purpose'.

1. King Bruce remembers having recorded 12 single play shellacs (24 songs) for the Senafone company between 1953 and 1956. Cross-checking with shellacs in the authors' possession, with the card index of the BBC's record library in London and Albert McKay's record reviews in the monthly 'West African Review' (Liverpool), the shellacs identified totals 13. The reviews of the Senafone records appeared in: Vol. 27, No. 341, February 1956, p. 177; Vol. 27, No. 346, July 1956, p. 718; Vol. 27, No. 350, November 1956, p. 1072, and Vol. 28, No. 353, February 1957, p. 161. Reviews of the HMV records appeared in: Vol. 28, No. 354, March 1957, p. 349, and Vol. 28, No. 356 [should read 357], June 1957, p. 621.
2. Bob Cole, whose real name is Kwasi Awotwe, is one of Ghana's top comedians and concert party [local comic opera] singers. He was one of the founders of The Happy Trio concert party of Aboso, formed in 1937. Then he went on to form his own concert groups, The Jovial Jokers in 1946 and The Dynamic Ghana Trio in 1956. He also made a film in the late 1960's with the Ghana Film Corporation called 'I Told You So'. He is currently [1991] working with the concert party based at the Greater Accra Regional Cultural Centre.
3. Ami Johnson is the leader of the highlife guitar-band The Parrots that had a big hit in the mid-1970's with his song 'Madanfo Paa' (My Good Friend).

Since the interviews for this book were finished in early 1988 King Bruce received an award from the Entertainment Critics and Reviewers Association of Ghana (ECRAG), given to him on the 30th April 1988 at the Star Hotel in Accra for his, 'Immense contribution to the development of Ghanaian arts and culture in the field of highlife music'. In 1989 he was employed as manager of the 16 track Elephant Walk recording studio in Kaneshie, Accra. A position he held until late 1991.

King Bruce died at the age of 76 in 1998.

## CHAPTER 11

### A DISCOGRAPHY OF THE BLACK BEATS

*Compiled by Flemming Harrev*

The year of release or publication (P) does not necessarily correspond with the year of recording, as indicated by King Bruce in the text.

#### 1. 78 AND 45 R.P.M. SHELLAC AND/OR VINYL SINGLE PLAY RECORDS:

HMV [Series and number not identified] P 1953

A: OSHIJA (trad.) Ga (Highlife)

B: TSO NO TSATSA (trad.) Ga (Highlife)

Decca WA [Serial number not identified] P 1954

A: TEEMON SANE (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)

B: [not identified]

Senafone FAO 1318 P ca. 1954

A: TSUTUSU BLEMA BENEKE (trad.) Ga (Highlife)

B: SAUVY VOU (xxx) (Calypso)

Senafone FAO 1384 P ca. 1955

A: OBA (xxx) - (Highlife)

B: SAILING HOME (xxx) - (Calypso)

Senafone FAO 1385 P ca. 1955

A: RAIN DROPS (xxx) - (Highlife)

B: WHERE ARE YOU? (xxx) - (Rumba)

Senafone FAO 1386 P ca. 1955

A: SWEET ADELINA (xxx) - (Calypso)

B: BAYA MAMBO (xxx) - (Mambo)

Senafone FAO 1387 P ca. 1955

A: EMMA WAWA (xxx) - (Samba)

B: SUNSHINE SUSIE (xxx) - (Highlife)

Senafone FAO 1405 P ca. 1955

A: MONEY NEVER BITES (xxx) - (Highlife)

B: THREE RATS (xxx) - (Highlife)

Senafone FAO 1406 P ca. 1955

A: FOLLOW YOUR LOVER (xxx) - (Highlife)

B: FINE BOY (xxx) - (Samba)

Senafone FAO 1407 P ca. 1955

A: GABASERTAIN (xxx) - (Calypso)

B: KYERE ME (xxx) - (Highlife)

Senafone FAO 1439 P ca. 1956

A: CANDY RUMBA (xxx) - (Rumba)

B: TAKE HER IN YOUR ARMS (xxx) - (Samba)

Senafone FAO 1440 P ca. 1956

A: MENA WOM (trad.) Fanti (Highlife)

B: MOHAMADU (trad.) Hausa (Highlife)

Senafone FAO 1445 P ca. 1956

A: ODO YEWU (xxx) Twi (Highlife)

B: ANNE CLAIRE (xxx) - (Calypso)



Senafone FAO 1526 P ca. 1956

A: OBRA BO (Patrick Forson) Fanti (Highlife)

B: NNOMO NOKO (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)

Senafone FAO 1527 P ca. 1956

A: MAYE MAYE (Oscarmore Ofori) Twi (Highlife)

B: ESSIE MERCY (Oscarmore Ofori) Fanti (Highlife)

Philips P 283 P ca. 1956

A: SUBAN KRATTA (xxx) Fanti (Highlife)

B: SIA DZEE NU TAMOHE (xxx) Ga (Highlife)

HMV JUP 118 P ca. 1956

A: ABAHERE MI (xxx) - (Highlife)

B: NEGRITA SAMBA (xxx) - (Samba)

The Black Beats led by Jerry Hansen

HMV JUP 119 P ca. 1956

A: OTANFO ABONSAM (xxx) - (Highlife)

B: NANA ABREWA (xxx) - (Highlife)

The Black Beats led by Jerry Hansen

Decca WA 840 P ca. 1956

A: OBIELE (trad.) Ga (Highlife)

B: KEDZI MI LE (xxx) Ga (Highlife)

Decca WA 841 P ca. 1956

A: AFII NYONMAI ENYO (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)

B: REGULAR AS A RECORD CHANGER (King Bruce) English (Calypso)

Decca WA 902 P 1958

A: SUUMO GBOO KE MOO SHI (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)

B: DEAR SI ABOTAR (Oscarmore Ofori) Fanti (Highlife)

Decca WA 903 P 1959

A: AO! DEI! OH! (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)

B: MENYE WO BOKOR (Oscarmore Ofori) Twi (Highlife)

Decca WA 904 P 1959

A: DE EHUO (Oscarmore Ofori) Fanti (Highlife)

B: MIKUU MISE MIBAA DON (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)

Decca WA 916 P 1959

A: QUEEN'S VISIT (King Bruce) English (Highlife)

B: MEDAHO MAO (King Bruce) Fanti (Highlife)

Decca WA 917 P ca. 1959

A: ANOKWA EDOMI (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)

B: AGOODZI (Oscarmore Ofori) Fanti (Highlife)

Decca WA 951 P 1960

[Also Decca 45-WA 951]

A: ENYA WO DOFO (Oscarmore Ofori) Fanti (Highlife)

B: MINANI MINA (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)

Decca WA 952 P ca. 1960

[Also Decca 45-WA 952]

A: LAI MOMO (xxx) Ga (Highlife)

B: NANTSEW YIE (Oscarmore Ofori) Fanti (Highlife)

Decca WA 953 P ca. 1960

[Also Decca 45-WA 953]

A: MO FE RON RE (xxx) Yoruba (Highlife)

B: ABASI DO (Bassey & Chuks) Efik (Highlife)

Decca WA 966      P ca. 1960

[Also Decca 45-WA 966]

A: MENYIBER SEM (King Bruce) Fanti (Highlife)

B: ME KAPER BA (Bob Cole) Fanti (Highlife)

Decca WA 967      P ca. 1960

[Also Decca 45-WA 967]

A: MENI AGYE (King Bruce) Fanti (Highlife)

B: ABAN NKABA (Bob Cole) Fanti (Highlife)

Decca GWA 4008      P ca. 1960

[Also Decca 45-GWA 4008]

A: TELEPHONE LOBI (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)

B: AMMA MERE WU (Oscarmore Ofori) Fanti (Highlife)

Decca GWA 4009      P ca. 1960

[Also Decca 45-GWA 4009]

A: NKOME NKOMO (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)

B: SORE BE TIEM (xxx) Twi (Highlife)

Decca GWA 4019      P ca. 1960

[Also Decca 45-GWA 4019]

A: SROTOI YE MLI (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)

B: KASA BERE'W (King Bruce) Twi (Highlife)

Decca GWA 4020      P ca. 1960

[Also Decca 45-GWA 4020]

A: OWO KO NI FE (xxx) Yoruba (Highlife)

B: BU DURU WANA (xxx) Hausa (Highlife)

Decca GWA 4021      P 1961

[Also Decca 45-GWA 4021]

A: GYE KO DIDI (Oscarmore Ofori) Twi (Highlife)

B: WON MA MENKA (Oscarmore Ofori) Fanti (Highlife)

Decca GWA 4074 P ca. 1962

[Also Decca 45-GWA 4074]

A: MISUMO BO TAMO SHE (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)

B: ODO FOFOR (King Bruce) Twi (Highlife)

Decca GWA 4075 P 1962

[Also Decca 45-GWA 4075]

A: SE NEA WOTE YI ARA (King Bruce) Twi (Highlife)

B: KWEMO NI OKAGBI (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)

Decca GWA 4096 P ca. 1963

[Also Decca 45-GWA 4096]

A: YORYI (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)

B: OBEDI AMAME DAA (xxx) Twi (Highlife)

Decca GWA 4097 P 1963

[Also Decca 45-GWA 4097]

A: DZEE ASHWE (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)

B: WOSOMPA NTI (Ami Johnson) Twi (Highlife)

Decca GWA 4098 P 1963

[Also Decca 45-GWA 4098]

A: ANUATRE HREBII (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)

B: ODO TESE ANOMA (xxx) Twi (Highlife)

Decca 45-GWA 4128 P ca. 1963

A: ME NE NO NAM (xxx) Twi (Highlife)

B: GBE BE HE (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)

Decca 45-GWA 4129 P ca. 1963

A: AGYE OWU (xxx) Twi (Highlife)

B: BE NAKAI MO (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)

Decca 45-GWA 4134 P ca. 1963

A: MADE RESEE (xxx) Twi (Highlife)

B: BABY JULIE YABA (xxx) Ga (Highlife)

Decca GWA 4135 P ca. 1963

A: KEN KEN (xxx) Ga (Kpanlogo)

B: HWE NEA NYAME AYE (xxx) Twi (Highlife)

Decca GWA 4149 P ca. 1963

[Also Decca 45-GWA 4149]

A: KPANLOGO LOLO MASHI (King Bruce) English (Kpanlogo)

B: WODO AHYE ME MMA (xxx) Twi (Highlife)

Decca GWA 4173 P ca. 1964

A: MAHAO MISHE (xxx) Ga (Highlife)

B: YA DIBA (xxx) Ibo (Highlife)

Decca 45-GWA 4174 P ca. 1964

A: BIRIBI RE YEMI (xxx) Twi (Shake)

B: OLE MO MLI MOMO (xxx) Ga (Highlife)

## 2. 45 R.P.M. VINYL COMPILATION EP RECORDS:

HMV 7 EGC 8 P 1957

'GHANA RHYTHM'

A/1: HALA BAYA (xxx) - (Highlife)

2: FINE FINE THING (xxx) - (Highlife)

[Side B: E.K.'s Band]

Decca WAX 107 P ca. 1959

'THE BLACK BEATS BAND'

A/1: OSINANDA (xxx) - (Highlife)

2: I LOVE HONEY (xxx) - (Calypso)

B/1: SUMMO GBOO KE MOO SHI (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)

2: DEAR SI ABOTAR (Oscarmore Ofori) Fanti (Highlife)

Decca WAX 114 P ca. 1960

'GHANA HIGHLIFES - VOLUME 2

A/1: LAI MOMO (xxx) Ga (Highlife)

2: NANTSEW YIE (Oscarmore Ofori) Fanti (Highlife)

[Side B: E.T. Mensah & his Tempos Band]

Decca WAX 115 P ca. 1960

'GHANA MUSICAL BOX - VOLUME 1'

A/1: MENI AGYE (King Bruce) Fanti (Highlife)

2: ABAN NKABA (Bob Cole) Fanti (Highlife)

[Side B: Onyina's Guitar Band]

### 3. 33 R.P.M. VINYL COMPILATION LP RECORDS:

Senafone LP 102 P ca. 1957

Various Artists: 'RHYTHM ACES'

B/4: OBA (xxx) - (Highlife)

Decca WAL 1004 P ca. 1959

Various Artists: 'GHANA FESTIVAL'

A/2: SUUMO GBOO KE MOO SHI (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)

B/2: DEAR SI ABOTAR (Oscarmore Ofori) Fanti (Highlife)

Decca WAL 1006 P 1959

'BLACK BEATS RHYTHMS'

A/1: SUMMO GBOO KE MOO SHI (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)

2: DEAR SI ABOTAR (Oscarmore Ofori) Fanti (Highlife)

3: AO! DEI! OH! (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)

4: MENYE WO BOKOR (Oscarmore Ofori) Twi (Highlife)

5: DE EHUO (Oscarmore Ofori) Fanti (Highlife)

B/1: MIKUU MISE MIBAA DON (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)

2: QUEEN'S VISIT (King Bruce) English (Highlife)



- 3: MEDAHO MAO (King Bruce) Fanti (Highlife)
- 4: AGOODZI (Oscarmore Ofori) Fanti (Highlife)
- 5: ANOKWA EDOMI (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)

Decca WAL 1011 P 1960

'TROPICAL RHYTHM'

- A/1: ENYA WO DOFO (Oscarmore Ofori) Fanti (Highlife)
- 2: MINANI MINA (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)
- 3: LAI MOMO (xxx) Ga (Highlife)
- 4: NANTSEW YIE (Oscarmore Ofori) Fanti (Highlife)
- 5: ABASI DO (Bassey & Chuks) Efik (Highlife)
- B/1: MO FE RON RE (xxx) Yoruba (Highlife)
- 2: ME KAPER BA (Bob Cole) Fanti (Highlife)
- 3: MENYIBER SEM (King Bruce) Fanti (Highlife)
- 4: MENI AGYE (King Bruce) Fanti (Highlife)
- 5: ABAN NKABA (Bob Cole) Fanti (Highlife)

Decca WAL 1021 P ca. 1961

'BLACK BEATS ENCORES'

- A/1: AMMA MERE WU (Oscarmore Ofori) Fanti (Highlife)
- 2: TELEPHONE LOBI (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)
- 3: SORE BI TIE'M (xxx) Twi (Highlife)
- 4: NKOME NKOMO (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)
- 5: OWO KO NI FE (xxx) Yoruba (Highlife)
- B/1: SROTOI YE MLI (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)
- 2: KASA BERE'W (King Bruce) Twi (Highlife)
- 3: BU DURU MANA (xxx) Hausa (Highlife)
- 4: GYE KO DIDI (Oscarmore Ofori) Twi (Highlife)
- 5: WON MA MENKA (Oscarmore Ofori) Fanti (Highlife)

Decca WAP 20 P 1961

Various Artists: 'STARS OF WEST AFRICA'

- A/1: AMMA MERU WU (Oscarmore Ofori) Fanti (Highlife)
- 2: SORE BE TIE'M (xxx) Twi (Highlife)
- B/3: TELEPHONE LOBI (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)
- 4: NKOME NKOMO (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)

Decca WAP 21 P 1962

Various Artists: 'STARS OF GHANA'

A/1: SROTOI YE MLI (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)

6: OWO KO NI FE (xxx) Yoruba (Highlife)

B/1: WON MA MANKA (Oscarmore Ofori) Fanti (Highlife)

5: BU DURU WANA (xxx) Hausa (Highlife)

Decca WAL 1029 P ca. 1963

'SWEET SOUND OF THE BLACK BEATS'

A/1: YORYI (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)

2: ODO FOFOR (King Bruce) Twi (Highlife)

3: MISUMO BO TAMO SHE (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)

4: OBEDI AMAME DAA (xxx) Twi (Highlife)

5: DZEE AASHWE (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)

B/1: WOSOMPA NTI (Ami Johnson) Twi (Highlife)

2: ANUATRE HREBII (King Bruce) Ga (Baion)

3: SE NEA WOTE TI ARA (King Bruce) Twi (Highlife)

4: KWEMO NI OKAGBI (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)

5: ODO TESE ANOMA (xxx) Twi (Highlife)

Fontana MGF/SRF 27519 P ca. 1963

Various Artists: 'DOIN' THE HIGHLIFE'

A/1: WIEMO ABLEBI (xxx) - (Highlife)

B/1: MA EBAKA ARA NYIN (xxx) - (Highlife)

Decca WAPS 45 P 1972

Various Artists: 'HI-LIFES YOU HAVE LOVED'

B/1: MEDAHO MAWO (King Bruce) Fanti (Highlife)

3: ANOKWA EDOMI (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)

RetroAfric RETRO 13CD P 1987

'GOLDEN HIGHLIFE CLASSICS FORM THE 1950S AND 1960S'

01 SROTOI YE MLI (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife) 2:42

02 MEDAHO MAO (King Bruce) Fanti (Highlife) 3:09

- 03 ENYA WO DOFO (Oscarmore Ofori) Fanti (Highlife) 3:04
- 04 MISUMO BO TAMO SHE (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife) 2:55
- 05 MIKUU MISE MBAA DON (King Bruce) ) Ga (Highlife) 2:52
- 06 ANUATRE HREBII (King Bruce) Ga (Baion) 2:52
- 07 ABAN NKABA (Bob Cole) Fanti (Highlife) 2:53
- 08 NANTSEW YIE (Oscarmore Ofori) Fanti (Highlife) 3:00
- 09 ABASI DO (Bassey & Chuks) Efik (Highlife) 2:50
- 10 ODOR FOFOR (King Bruce) Twi (Highlife) 2:59
- 11 SUUMO GBOO KE MOO SHI (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife) 3:04
- 12 DEAR SI ABOTAR (Oscarmore Ofori) Twi (Highlife) 3:02
- 13 AGOODZI (Oscarmore Ofori) Fanti (Highlife) 2:58
- 14 WON MA MENKA (Oscarmore Ofori) Fanti (Highlife) 2:45
- 15 THE QUEEN'S VISIT (King Bruce) English (Highlife) 2:49

Bruss Production, Accra-North (Audio Cassette – no Serial Number) P ca. 1992

'ORIGINAL HIGHLIFE GOLDEN CLASSICS VOL. 1 AGOODZI'

Side A:

- 1. ENYA WO DOFO (Oscarmore Ofori) Fanti (Highlife)
- 2. MEDAHO MAO (King Bruce) Fanti (Highlife)
- 3. MISUMO BO TAMO SHE (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)
- 4. MIKUU MISE MIBAA DON (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)
- 5. ANUATRE HREBII (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)
- 6. ABAN NKABA (Bob Cole) Fanti (Highlife)
- 7. NANTSEW YIE (Oscarmore Ofori) Fanti (Highlife)

Side B:

- 8. ABASI DO (Bassey & Chuks) Efik (Highlife)
- 9. ODOR FOFOR (King Bruce) Twi (Highlife)
- 10. SUUMO GBOO KE MOO SHI (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)
- 11. KWEMO NI OKAGBI (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)
- 12. DEAR SI ABOTAR (Oscarmore Ofori) Twi (Highlife)
- 13. AGOODZI (Oscarmore Ofori) Fanti (Highlife)
- 14. MENYE WO BOKOR (Oscarmore Ofori) Twi (Highlife)

Bruss Production, Accra-North (Audio Cassette – no Serial Number) P ca. 1992

'ORIGINAL HIGHLIFE GOLDEN CLASSICS VOL. 2 DZEE AASHWE'

Side A:

1. SE NEA WOTE YI ARA (King Bruce) Twi (Highlife)
2. MENYIBER SEM (King Bruce) Fanti (Highlife)
3. MINANI MINA (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)
4. LAI MOMO (xxx) Ga (Highlife)
5. ANOKWA EDOMI (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)
6. ME KAPER BA (Bob Cole) Fanti (Highlife)
7. MO FE RON RE (xxx) Yoruba (Highlife)

Side B:

8. YORYI (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)
9. AO! DEI! OH! (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)
10. DZEE ASHWE (King Bruce) Ga (Highlife)
11. MENI AGYE (King Bruce) Fanti (Highlife)
12. TSOTSEE (xxx) -
13. DE EHUO DE EHUO (Oscarmore Ofori) Fanti (Highlife)
14. ONA NOKO TAMO NEKE (xxx) -

## INDEX

### A

Ababio, Desmond  
'Aban Nkaba'  
'Abasi Do'  
Accra City Orchestra  
Accra Orchestra  
Accra Rhythmic Orchestra  
Accra Town Hall  
Acheampong  
Achimota College  
Acquaye, Adoquaye  
Acquaye, Flash  
Acquaye, Saka  
adaha  
Addo, J. Squire  
Adoi-Anim  
Adjekum, Appiah  
'Afii Nyonmai Enyo'  
African Brothers  
Afro Cubists Band  
'Agoodzi'  
Ahenfo  
Aikins, Jos  
Aingo, George  
Akumanyi  
alaha  
'Ama Bonsu'  
Amarfio, Willie  
'Amma Meru Wu'  
Ampadu, Nana  
Amu, Ephraim  
Annor, George  
'Anokwa Edomi'  
'Anuatre Hrebi'

'Anyanko-Goro'  
'Ao! Dei! Oh!'  
Appianing  
Armstrong, Louis  
Arts Centre  
Arts Council  
Asare, Kwame  
Ashanti Nkramo Band  
ashiko  
Association of Gold Coast Musicians  
Awotwe, Kwasi, see Cole, Bob  
'Aye'  
ayika  
Axim Trio

## **B**

Baidoe, Professor  
Bampoe, Jerry  
Barbecues  
Barnes, Frank Atoo  
Barons  
Barristers  
BBC  
'Be Nakai Nong'  
beni  
Benson, Bobby  
Big Mouth  
Biney, H.E.  
Biney, Komla  
Black and White Spots  
Blackbirds  
Blessed Apostles  
Bokoer Studio  
Bonfides  
Bonsu, Osei  
bor-bor-bor  
borwer  
Boulders



Brigade Band  
Broadway  
B' Soyaaya  
Bu Duru Bra'  
Burma Camp

## C

calypso  
Cape Coast Sugar Babies  
'Caledonia'  
Casino Orchestra  
C.F.A.O.  
chikosa  
Coconut Grove  
Cole, Bob  
Columbia  
Côte d'Ivoire  
CPP  
Crentsil, A.B.  
Croffie, Frank Kwamena

## D

Dadson, E.K.  
dagomba  
dance-bands - instrumental line-up

- origin
- repertoire
- symbolism
- venues

'Dear Si Abotar'  
Decca  
'De Ehuo'  
Delta Dandies  
Doku, Adolf  
Downbeats  
Dynamic Ghana Trio

Dzee Ashwe'

## E

Edu Magicians

Ekole'

Elephant Walk

Entertainment Critics and Reviewers Association of Ghana

Esheo Heko'

Essie Mercy'

E.T., see Mensah, E.T.

European Club

Everybody Likes Saturday Night'

Excelsior Orchestra

## F

Farmers

fees

fireman

Forson, Patrick

frame-drums

Freeman Methodist Church

Friday, Bill

## G

GBC

'Gbe Be He'

Gbehoe, Phillip

GHACIMS

Ghana Association of Recordists

Ghana Film Corporation

'Ghana Freedom (Highlife)'

Ghana Musicians' Union  
Ghanaba, Kofi  
Gillespie, Dizzy  
Globe Masters  
gome  
Goodman, Benny  
Graham, Kenny  
G-ram  
Greater Accra Musicians Welfare Association  
Greater Accra Regional Cultural Centre  
Gripman, Tommy  
gumbe  
'Gye Ko Didi'

## H

Hammond, Quartey  
Hansen, Jerry  
Happy Trio  
Harriman, Arthur Leonard  
Harrogate  
Hawkins, Coleman  
Hedzoleh Sounz  
Helwani, Faisal  
Hesse, Fifi  
highlife - adapted by dance-bands  
    - origin of term  
HMV (His Master's Voice)  
Hotshots  
Houphouët-Boigny, Felix  
Hughes, Papa  
Hutchinson, Lesley  
'Hwe Nea Nyame Aye'

## I

IASPM  
I.E.

Isa, Jibril  
'I Told You So'

## J

jazz  
Jazz Kings  
Johnson, Ami  
Johnson, Snakeship  
Johnston, Bob  
Jordan, Louis  
Jovial Jokers  
j—j£

## K

Kakaiku  
kalela  
Kamkam  
Kanta, Kwah  
'Kasa Bere'w'  
'Kedzi Mile'  
Kelly, Joe  
'Keng Keng'  
kenka  
Kinder, Major  
Kingsway  
Koforidua Royal Orchestra  
kolomashie  
konkomba  
Korley, Satchmo  
koyin  
'Kpanlogo Lolo Mashi'  
'Kron Kron'  
Kru  
Kumasi Trio, see Asare, Kwame  
Kwamin  
'Kwemo Ni Okagbi'

## L

Lagos City Orchestra  
Lampitey, Teacher  
Larte, Otoo  
Lawson, Rex  
Leopard, Sergeant Jack  
Liberia  
Lions Heart  
London  
London Academy of Music  
London Palladium  
Lord Kitchener  
Lyttleton, Humphrey

## M

Mabireh, Kofi  
MacPartland, Marian  
'Madanfo Paa'  
Madison Square Gardens (Tudu)  
mainline  
Mann, C.K.  
maringa  
Maroons  
Maye Maye'  
McKay, Albert  
'Medaho Mao'  
'Meele Ni Yaa E'  
'Me Kaperba'  
'Mena Wom'  
'Meni Agye'  
Mensah, E.T.  
Mensah, Kwaa  
Mensah, Kwabina  
Mensah, Yebuah

Menu, Kwesi  
'Menyiber Sem'  
'Menyo Wo Bokor'  
Merry Villas  
Methodists  
mganda  
'Mikuu Mise Mibaa Don'  
Miller, Glen  
'Minani Mina'  
Mireku  
'Misumo Bo Tamo She'  
'Mo Fe Ron Re'  
'Mohammadu'  
music pirates  
MUSIGA

## N

'Naabu Le Ke Tso'  
Napoleon Night Club  
native blues  
Nelson, Small  
Nigeria  
Nkansah, Smart  
'Nkase Din'  
'Nkome Nkomo'  
Nkrumah, Kwame  
'Nne Asem Ato Me'  
'Nnomo Noko'  
Nyame, E.K.

## O

'Obiele'  
'Obra Bo'  
'Odo Bra'  
Odoh, Sammy  
odonso



Ofori, Agyare T. 'Oscarmore'  
ohugua  
Okai, Kwabena  
Olaiya, Victor  
'Onyiemo Feo Mi Feo'  
Onyina  
opim  
Opoku, 'Bertie' Mawere  
opposition to playing  
Orpheus Choir  
'Oshija'  
osibisaaba  
ownership of instruments  
'Owo Ko Ni Fe'

## P

Palladium Cinema  
palm-wine music [in general]  
    - origin  
Papa Dan Jazz Band  
Paperah, Kwesi  
Parkers Brass Studio  
Parlophone  
Parrots  
Performing Rights Society  
Philips

## Q

Quansah, Eddie  
Quarcoo, Dan  
'Queen's Visit'

## R

Rakers  
Ramblers  
recording-sessions  
Red Spots  
Regal  
'Regular As A Record Changer'  
'Rekpete'  
Rhythm Aces  
Rodger Club  
Ross, Edmundo  
royalties

## S

Sackey, Roland  
sailors  
Sam, see Asare, Kwame  
Sam, Billy  
'Sanbra'  
Sarpei  
'Saturday Fish Fry'  
'Sauvo Vou'  
saw (musical)  
Sawaaba Soundz  
seamen, see sailors  
Sea-View Hotel  
Seidu, Kojo  
'Sekondi Market'  
Sekondi Nanshamang  
'Se Nea Woti Ara'  
Senafone  
Shambros  
Shaw, Artie  
'She Mi Ni Oya'  
Shrewsbury  
Sierra Leone  
something (dance)

soshi owo nli (dance)  
spinners  
'Srotoi Ye Mli'  
Star Gazers  
Sunsum  
'Suumo Gboo Ke Moo Shi'  
Swansey, Kwaa  
swing

## T

Tagoe, 'Big' Daniel Tetteh  
Tamakloe, Tommy 'Darling'  
Teemon Sane'  
'Telephone Lobi'  
Tempos  
Tetchie-Menson  
Thompson, Emmanuel Kpakpo  
Ticklers  
timo  
Togo  
Torto, Frank  
Tricity School of Dancing  
Triumph Orchestra  
tsiboder  
'Tso No Tsatsa'  
'Tsutsu Blema Beneke'  
'Tsutsu Tsosemo'  
Turner, Bruce

## U

Uhurus  
U.T.C.

## W

Wadawa, Mike Lewis

Warren, Guy, see Ghanaba, Kofi

West African Review

Winneba Orchestra

'Won Ma Menka'

'Wo Owoo Lo'

'Wosompa Nti'

## Y

'Yaa Amponsah'

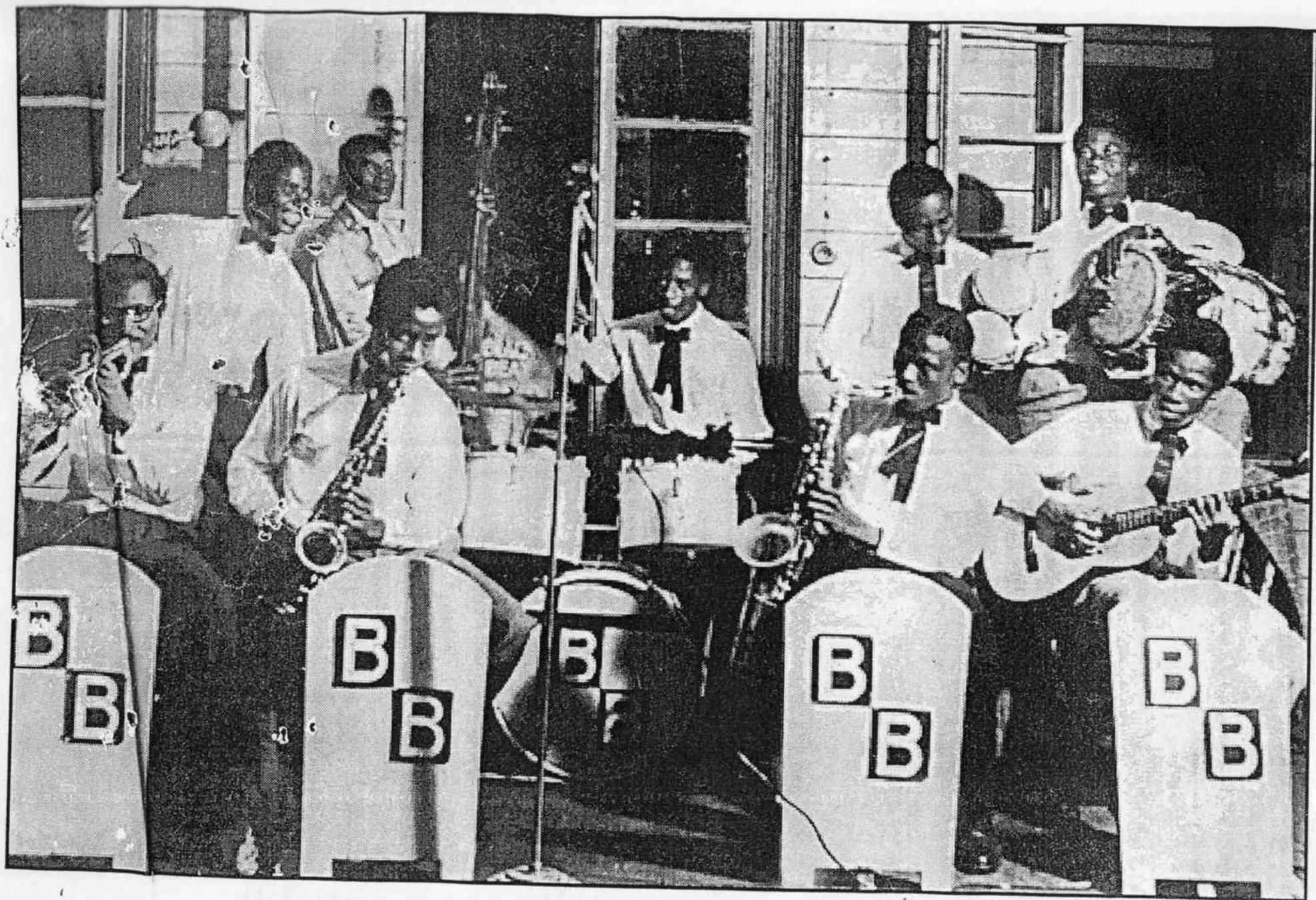
Yamoah

'Yoryi'

'You Broke Your Promise'

## Z

Zonophone







No. 4 • King Bruce & the Black Beats at dance-band competition • Accra Community Centre 1955



No. 8 • 2nd generation of the Black Beats, 1962





No. 18 • 2nd generation of the Black Beats, Accra 1972



No. 27 • 3rd and 4th generation of the Black Beats, 1976





No. 7 • 1st generation of the Black Beats, ca. 1957





King Barnes  
John Holmes  
Rokoa Studio  
Acura 1987

