

# **SOUNDS OF THE DESERT: LIGA GYIL**

## **BERNARD WOMA & MIKE VERCELLI**

### **LINER NOTES**

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Sounds of the Desert: Liga Gyl is a collaborative project highlighting Bernard Woma's virtuosity inspired by Steve Hemphill's 18-key gyl. While the 18-key gyl is regularly heard throughout the Dagara communities of Ghana and Burkina Faso, this particular instrument is one of the only 18-key instruments in North America.

On this recording, the musical ensemble of the Dagara gyl includes two gyile (plural), kuor (support drum), kpagru (the rhythmic support time line), and gangaa, a cylindrical double headed drum used by the Birifor people as the supporting drum of their gyl music.

**Bernard Woma** has shared the performance stage with renowned artists such as Maya Angelou, Yo Yo Ma, and Glen Velez. He has performed for international dignitaries and presidents such as U. S. president Bill Clinton, Nelson Mandela and Queen Elizabeth II. He was recently honored as the cultural resource person for President Barack Obama's family when they visited Ghana. He is a true cultural treasure from Ghana who has toured the world as xylophonist and lead drummer of the National Dance Company of Ghana. Bernard is an extremely dynamic artist and deeply experienced educator. His recent appearances in the US include a performance with New York Philharmonic at the Avery Fisher, Lincoln Center, South Dakota Symphony Orchestra and Minnesota Orchestra, residency with the Ethos Percussion group, performances and teaching at New York's AXF: African Xylophone Festival, and various universities and colleges. The performance of his composition "Gyl Nyog Me Na" in the spring of 2006 at Zankel Hall in Carnegie Hall is a testimony of his musicianship. Bernard is the Artistic Director of Saakumu Dance Troupe and the founder and director of the Dagara Music and Arts Center in Accra, Ghana.

**Dr. Michael B. Vercelli** is the director of the World Music Performance Center at West Virginia University. Michael holds a

Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Percussion Performance with a minor in Ethnomusicology from the University of Arizona. While well versed in the classical percussion repertoire, Michael's specialty lies in non-Western instruments. He has studied the traditional music of other countries and done fieldwork in Bali, Cuba, Brazil, and primarily, Ghana. Dr. Vercelli is a contributing author to the *World Percussion* chapter in the third edition of Gary Cook's *Teaching Percussion*. He is a participating member in the Society for Ethnomusicology and Percussive Arts Society where he serves on the World Percussion Committee. Michael has given lectures, performances and workshops, across the United States, Mexico, Brazil, China, and Iceland, and is a founding member of Zumbumba Percussion Trio.

### **Track Information** (by Bernard Woma)

**Degaar** is a song repertoire from the Bine music genre. Bine is both the funeral and social dance music of the Dagara people in northern Ghana and Burkina Faso. The music always begins with a particular song and moves within a cycle at the discretion of the gyil player. The song in track one (nang sob), addresses the poor and their struggle with poverty in their lives.

**Degaar Kaadaar** in track two, is a style of Bine music that requires two gyil players. Each musician uses one hand to play the melodic structure and keep the syncopated kpagru time line in the other, using the back end of the gyil mallet.

**Bilangni** is another song repertoire of the Bine music. The Dagara people consider Bilangni dance music for both funerals and social occasions. Like the Degaar music, Bilangni is played in a song cycle with the lead gyil player changing from one song to the next, while the other player supports them with the kpagru time line rhythm.

**Bewaa** is recreational music and a moonlight dance by the Dagara youth of the Upper West region of Ghana. The music communicates issues of social control and other vices in the community. The music entertains, informs, and educates the youth against these social vices. The expressive dance of Bewaa depicts the creative movements of the performers in response to the complex xylophone music.

**Lobri** is played to announce the death of elders. The music is played on the logyile, a different type of gyl tuned to a minor scale. Lobri music is gender specific. This particular track announces an adult male funeral.

Recorded April 22, 2008, University of Arizona  
Recording, mixing and mastering engineer, Wiley Ross  
Special Thanks: Steve Hemphill, Gary Cook, Norman Weinberg, Janet Sturman, Wiley Ross, and the University of Arizona School of Music.  
CD Design by Catherine Lovell

For booking and more information please contact Bernard Woma at [bbwoma@yahoo.com](mailto:bbwoma@yahoo.com) or visit [www.dagaramusic.com](http://www.dagaramusic.com). CDs can be ordered directly at [www.michaelvercelli.com](http://www.michaelvercelli.com).