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A Note from the Editors

The appreciative messages so many of you sent after the publication last summer of our inaugural issue confirmed our belief that this Newsletter is an important part of celebrating and strengthening our community. It is a great pleasure to bring you this second issue, as we look back on academic year 2018–2019, and look forward to the fall.

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Council Chair Report
for AY 2018–2019

Report by Lynda Pickbourn, Chair of the
Five College African Studies Council

The year began with the annual end-of-summer faculty
get-together at the home of Frank Holmquist and Mary
Hoyer. In addition to regrouping and making plans for
the year, we also welcomed two new faculty members to
our community — Seyram Avle (UMass, Communication
Department) and Stephanie Sonekan (UMass, African-
American Studies).

The highlight of our programing this year were our community
dinners. These gatherings enable us to build community among
Five College faculty, students and area residents with an interest
in Africa and African Studies, and to let students know about
African Studies and language course offerings for the year.
The Fall community dinner was held at Alumni House, Amherst
College. Students from the Five College West African Music
Ensemble, led by Michael Ofori (Mount Holyoke College)
provided the evening’s entertainment. The dinner was well-
attended by students from all the five colleges, including
several graduate students from UMass. The Spring dinner was
held at the Red Barn, Hampshire College. Entertainment was
again provided by the Five College West African Music Ensemble,
this time led by Faith Conant (Mount Holyoke College) and
Kwabena Boateng, a visiting artist based in Springfield. This event
was also well-attended by students from across the five colleges.

The council’s monthly seminar series featured talks by Rachel
Engmann (Hampshire College), Léonce Ndikumana (University
of Massachusetts) and Nii Kotei Nikoi, a PhD candidate in the
Communications Department at UMass. The council was also
pleased to host Regine Romain, Haitian-American educator,
visual artist, writer and cultural activist, who gave a talk on
her work-in-progress film *Brooklyn to Benin A Vodou Pilgrimage,*
and Rama Thiaw, Senegalese filmmaker and screenwriter, who discussed her documentaries on Senegal.

The council also met with Kevin Kennedy, Communications Director for Five Colleges, Inc. to discuss communications strategies for the Council and its members. For the first time in several years, the council was able to sponsor a faculty member (Nathalie Arnold, Hampshire College) to attend the Association of African Studies Programs meetings, which were held at Johns Hopkins University in March 2019. This is an opportunity to re-engage more fully with other African Studies Programs in the country and to raise the profile of the Council, and Five Colleges, Inc. has agreed to provide financial support for a faculty member to attend next year and in subsequent years.

The year ended with a productive retreat at the Kern Center at Hampshire College. The council members who attended held a lengthy discussion about their vision for the Council for the next five years. The discussion focused on the need to build stronger links with other programs in the Five Colleges, and in particular, on strengthening the intellectual relationship between African Studies, Africana Studies, African-American and Black Studies programs and departments in the Five Colleges. One of the ways to do this is to develop a year-long seminar series on the cross-cutting theme of inequality/inequalities, and to invite faculty from across the Five Colleges with an interest in this theme to lead discussions and present their work.
February 6, 2019

We, members of the Five College African Studies Council, write to express our deep concern about the startling January 15 announcement that Hampshire College is seeking a strategic partner in a process that appears likely to entail significant terminations of Hampshire faculty.

Before all else, we offer our strongest support for all our faculty colleagues at Hampshire, in all their diverse areas of scholarship, creation, and practice. With this letter, we further assert the critical importance of Hampshire faculty to the exceptionally high quality of African and Africana Studies in the Five Colleges. Together, we, African and Africana Studies faculty members across the Consortium, have created a vibrant, lively and distinctive scholarly community that enriches not only our students across all of our institutions, but our own scholarly work, as well as our respective fields nationally and abroad. We have long relied on our Hampshire colleagues’ knowledge, drive, and unique expertise. We particularly acknowledge their distinctively collaborative approach to Council affairs. We would not be the same without them.

We also articulate here our strongest support for the experimental, interdisciplinary, justice-minded, student-centered pedagogy that generations of Hampshire faculty have made famous worldwide. Our students verifiably benefit from their work with Hampshire faculty. When Hampshire students enroll in our courses, we find in them the same spirit of inquiry, attachment to ethics in research, and commitment to deep interdisciplinary study that we cherish in our Hampshire colleagues.
Any reduction in the Hampshire College faculty would have severely detrimental consequences on the education of students enrolled at our youngest sister institution. But we further note with grave concern that any Hampshire faculty terminations would also have significant damaging effects on the education of all Five College students. Without the Hampshire faculty with whom we closely collaborate on all Council matters, African and Africana studies in the Five Colleges will be dramatically impoverished — this at a time in our history when thoughtful, rigorous, and justice-minded knowledge-creation about Africa and the African diaspora is more urgent than ever.

For the benefit of all of our institutions and students, we ask that Hampshire College, together with all members of our community, immediately put their best and most visionary efforts to the task of safeguarding African and Africana Studies in the valley, as well as all other Five College programs, without resorting to faculty terminations.

While we affirm our support for Hampshire College’s goal of securing a financially strong and stable future, and recognize that some kind of institutional transformation may be required, we have also heard our Hampshire colleagues say that they, like us, were surprised by the January 15, 2019 announcement, further expressing concern that they were not actively consulted in these crucial decisions. Such reports, coming from colleagues whose dedication to shared governance has been a shining light in our consortium, distress us deeply.

From many years of working with our Hampshire colleagues, we know their central commitment to shared decision-making well, and we have seen it wonderfully reflected in their students, who have historically gone on to be change-makers in their communities. We affirm that shared governance is a crucial function at institutions of higher learning. A lack of shared governance at Hampshire is unworthy of that outstanding college. We strongly urge the Hampshire College Board of Trustees and the Hampshire College administration to involve faculty, staff, and students in their work in the fullest way possible as Hampshire moves toward a stable future, one that we hope will explicitly and proudly retain the Hampshire we know as a critical member of our Five College Consortium.

As all members of the Five College community adapt to the news of Hampshire’s goal to secure a partner for the future, we call on our home institutions to seriously consider all possible means of supporting Hampshire faculty, without whom the distinctive and urgently necessary pedagogy that underwrites a ‘Hampshire education’ can certainly not be replicated.

We hope that, together, our institutions can prevent the loss to our larger community of Hampshire College’s unique, world-class faculty, the critical pedagogical interventions they continually make in higher education in this country, and their reliably courageous and visionary students.

Yours,
Lynda Pickbourn
Chair of the Five College African Studies Council,
on behalf of the council membership
Community Profile: Nii Kotei

What brought you into African Studies?

I came to African studies through Communication studies. My research interests centered on media making practices in postcolonial Ghana as I worked through underdeveloped questions of colonialism in communication theory. Drawing on the histories of coloniality, I sought to contribute to the project of decentering Euro-American centrism in communication theory.

What are you working on right now?

Currently, my research project examines the operation of development discourse in popular culture, how it is reproduced, contested and alternatives imagined. It is a post-development study of the production and consumption of Ghanaian hiplife music videos and culture. It is interested in how hiplife makers challenge development discourse and advance alternative ideas of social transformation. Considering the enduring (and damaging) legacies of colonialism, hiplife as a site of relative freedom of expression is fertile for the potential production of a decolonial vocabulary to heal colonial wounds — undoing colonial sensibilities imposed on the colonized.

What Africa-related text or film can you recommend to us, and why?

I recently watched the beautiful film, The Burial of Kojo directed by the hiphop artist and filmmaker Blitz the Ambassador. The movie tells a beautiful story about love and loss within the context of Africa’s continuous exploitation by foreign interests.
What are the most interesting and important issues in African Studies today?

I have become interested in debates around the geographies and politics of knowledge production. Particularly, questions about Africans producing knowledge in Africa and its associated challenges like the politics around publications and citations.

What is a project you would like to do one day, but haven’t done yet?

I am hoping to reach out to high schoolers in Ghana and engage them in media making. I envisage this would take the form of setting up production spaces equipped with audio-visual tools that allow these young minds to make culture and tell stories that matter to them, and thus open up possibilities to imagine worlds that enable them to thrive. This has been stewing in mind for a while.

What do you enjoy about working in the Five Colleges?

I have enjoyed the range of ideas I have been exposed to within the Five Colleges. The lectures and conversations with visiting artists, scholars and more, have greatly enriched my intellectual journey in the valley.

Biography

Nii Kotei studies popular culture in Africa. His current project examines development discourse in Ghanaian hiplife music and culture. He defended his PhD dissertation in May in the Department of Communication at UMASS.
What brought you into African Studies/Black Studies?

To answer this question, I need to say a few words about my undergraduate education. Africa was conspicuously marginalized in the undergraduate music curriculum in Nigeria in those days. We focused mainly on European music and many of us ended up graduating as performers, composers or teachers of Western classical music. By the time I was finishing my undergraduate education it had become clear to me that there was a huge gap in my training that needed to be addressed. So, I decided to proceed to the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ibadan to study African music and ethnomusicology for my master’s degree. As you know, ethnomusicology as a field of study emphasizes the uniqueness of individual music traditions in ways that challenge Western-oriented assumptions about musical aesthetics and performance practices. At Ibadan we were also made to take courses in anthropology, history, sociology, and linguistics — cognate disciplines that helped us contextualize the study of music and explore its cultural significance within the larger society and beyond aesthetic principles. My experience at Ibadan was particularly refreshing and indeed very crucial in helping me to decide on the path to follow when I went to study for my PhD at the University of Leicester, England.

What project are you working on right now? What excites you most about it?

I am presently expanding my research on modern African art music beyond Nigeria to include Ghana, South Africa, and possibly Uganda. This is a follow-up on my initial work on the
topic and a sequel to my first book publication, *Nigerian Art Music* (IFRA, 2005). Basically, I am interested in the kind of compositional decisions that modern African composers often take in their desire to create works that are conceived to appeal to local and global audiences, drawing on indigenous elements but also tapping on global musical resources.

**What do you think are the most interesting and important issues in Black Studies today?**

For me, as a musicologist, it is how to analyze travelling cultures, specifically, musical performances that move across national boundaries through human travel and migration and through technology. To state that musical sounds travel wider and faster these days would be an understatement. African musicians and composers travel back and forth, with many of them basically living simultaneously in Africa and Europe/North America. And boundaries of Africanist music practice continue to mutate in terms of aesthetic resources, performance contexts, and audience demographics, to mention but just a few of the parameters of music practice. Music scholars must be more creative in fine-tuning and sharpening their analytic methods to cope with the phenomenon of traveling musics.

**What is a project you would like to do one day, but haven’t done yet?**

There’s one that I have started but hope to complete one day. My mother is a good singer. And I guess that’s the source of my own musicality. A few years ago, I was able to organize an extended recording of her performing solo as well as in a duet with her brother—my uncle. Many of their songs are reflections about motherhood and family. Many are folktales carrying deep cultural thoughts about life generally. I look forward to pulling the songs together as an online digital publication complete with transcriptions, descriptions and translations of the songs and song-texts.

**Biography**

As Five College professor of music, Bode Omojola teaches at Mount Holyoke College and the Five College Consortium. He received his PhD from the University of Leicester, England. Prior to his appointment at Mount Holyoke College and the Five College Consortium, he taught in Nigeria and held a number of prestigious research fellowships, including Harvard University’s Radcliffe Institute fellowship in musicology and the Alexander von Humboldt fellowship in music at the University of Cologne, Germany. His research focuses on the musics of West Africa and the African Diaspora, with particular interests in intercultural aesthetics and Africanist performance practices. His publications include *Yoruba Music in the Twentieth Century: Identity, Agency and Performance Practice* (University of Rochester Press, 2012) and *Nigerian Art Music* (French Institute for Research in Africa, 1995). A former chair of the Five College African Studies Council, Omojola has directed the African Opera Series at Mount Holyoke College since 2007. His most recent opera (*Odyssey of a Dream*) was premiered in April 2018 by the Mount Holyoke Symphony Orchestra and Five College African opera students. Omojola is the recipient of the Mount Holyoke College 2019 Meribeth E. Cameron Award for Scholarship.
What are some blind spots in African Studies today?

African studies have come a long way, but there are still notable limitations in how we in the field are responding to the study of African peoples not only in African countries, but around the world. I will underscore four interrelated concerns. First, Africanist scholars should be more intentional in their engagement of transregional, transnational, and diasporic perspectives in how we approach our scholarship and pedagogy on African experiences. We need to be more attentive to the fact that rigid local, regional, and national categories are recent constructs, instigated largely by Western imperial and post-imperial agendas—categories such as North Africa and Egypt, West Africa, Central Africa, East Africa, Southern Africa, sub-Saharan Africa are obviously useful boundaries for Africanist discourse, but they have serious limitations. Second, Africanists need to work harder to transcend rigid pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial chronological framing that continue to shape the questions, issues, and problems that dominate our scholarship and pedagogy. In this context, we need to privilege dynamic African structures—alongside their practices, doctrines, ideas, and ideologies—in our research and teaching of African experiences. Such a perspective would underscore the significance Africa’s multiple longue durée by complicating these pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial moments in our scholarship and teaching. Third, Africanists need to be more skeptical of the nation-state and reified modern constructs of communal identities in our scholarship and pedagogy. Finally, as Africanists we need to move away from our enduring obsession with the West, especially in how we frame the questions that shape our research and pedagogical objectives.
What is your current fascination?

More recently, I am developing some interest in the vast and incredibly diverse Sahel because it doesn’t fit neatly into the rigid colonialist construct that continue to shape Africanist scholarship and teaching. This magnificent region has been a place of multi-layered interactions and transactions along many axes, over many centuries. The preoccupation with Atlantic Studies means that Africanists are not thinking hard enough about other regions — the Sahel’s connections to the Maghreb, Egypt, and Arabian peninsula; East and Southern Africa’s connections to the Indian Ocean world. As a scholar whose work has focused largely on Atlantic West Africa — and a bit on South Africa — I am thinking more carefully about how these other regions can further expand and deepen my work in African political and historical studies. Additionally, at this stage in my career I am beginning to explore how African ‘subjects’ can help complicate my analytical, methodological, and theoretical approaches derived from mainstream humanistic social science disciplines. Nuanced, subtle, and careful attention to what Africans are saying and doing has the potential to radically transform our understandings of the disciplines themselves — African ways of knowing/listening, African episteme can be profoundly theoretical in their own right. Africans are generating their own complicated modernities. Consequently, an important question for Africanists should be: how central are African subjects to our work and the disciplines that shape our scholarship in the arts, humanities, social sciences, and sciences?

What has your training been?

I was trained in the comparative politics and sociopolitical history of Africa (mainly West Africa and Nigeria) in the 1980s. With graduate teachers and mentors such as Anthony Kirk-Greene, Terence Ranger, and Gavin William in a vibrant Oxford Africanist community in the second half of the 1980s, I was fortunate to have what I consider a distinctive interdisciplinary training in African studies. With primary/joint appointments in interdisciplinary Africana Studies department — at Stony Brook, Bowdoin, and now Amherst — I have been able to connect my Africanist pre-occupations with African diaspora studies. I have reflected carefully on theoretical and methodological dexterity in the humanistic social sciences, but I also have strong commitment to locales and vectors. Without these entangled and interconnected ideas and experiences, there is no real sense of politics and history — alongside the complexities they inevitably generate.

What books do you recommend to our readers?

I would recommend Wole Soyinka’s Ake: years of childhood and Isara: a voyage around essay. When I read these two books many years ago, I saw clearly how my own experience growing up in Ibadan in southwestern Nigeria intersect with global forces. In these two important books, I saw how the vividness of African subjects owes much to imaginative literature. For a rigorous bottom-up approach to African knowledge production and critical discourse, I would recommend the groundbreaking book of Rowland Abiodun, Yoruba Art and Language: Seeking the African in African Art. In African political and historical studies, I still encourage my students to read the pioneering books of
Terence Ranger, Richard Sklar, James Coleman, C. S. Whitaker, Crawford Young, etc. In Africana intellectual traditions — one of my favorite areas of teaching — I would recommend a critical reading of DuBois’ *Souls of Black Folk*, C. L. R. James’ *Black Jacobins*, Frantz Fanon’s *Wretched of the Earth*, *Black Skin White Mask*, carefully reading of David Levering Lewis biography of DuBois, Taylor Branch’s volumes on Martin Luther King Jr. and the Civil Rights movement, Manning Marable’s biography on Malcolm X; Angela Davis, Alice Walker, bell hooks, and Patricia Hill Collins’ works on Black feminist and womanist thought. These days, though, I hardly read outside my area of scholarship and teaching. But there is one book completely outside my scholarly and teaching interest that I read recently in an Amherst College book group. The book is *Being Mortal* by Atul Gawande. The book underscore human vulnerabilities, courage, and imagination across cultures and experiences.

**What is a recent project you are proud of?**

Recently I have been involved as co-editor of the Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History, under the able leadership of the historian, Thomas Spear, as editor-in-chief. This monumental work — both online and in-print — consist of extensive chapters on all issues imaginable about the African past. Two volumes of the first section (Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African Historiography: Methods and Sources) — all 90 chapters — arrived only last week. It has been remarkable to collaborate with many Africanists on this landmark projec — and now to see the richness of the texts and the care that led to their production. I am also collaborating with an outstanding economist at Michigan State University, Adesoji Adelaja, on a long-term project at the intersection of social science research and public policy titled *The Nigeria Policy initiative* at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

**What do you hope to have time for?**

I hope to focus more attention on family letters that I “inherited” from my late father’s library. In Ibadan, my father was part of the first relatively large cohort of young men who attended pioneering Anglican CMS (Church Missionary Society) secondary schools in Yoruba communities starting at the turn of the twentieth century — CMS Grammar School, Lagos, Abeokuta Grammar School, Abeokuta, Ijebu-Ode Grammar School, Ijebu-Ode, Igbobi College, Lagos, and Ibadan Grammar School, Ibadan. After his graduation from Ibadan Grammar School and post-secondary training, my father and many of these young CMS Yoruba men — and many others from several other mission secondary and government schools — were recruited into the colonial service and posted all around colonial southern and northern Nigeria. It was in this context that he received letters from members of his family, friends, and associates, from the early 1930s to the 1950s when he retired from the colonial service. When he worked as a senior official of the regional cooperative bank, family members, friends, and associates continue to write up until the early 1990s. Altogether, he compiled about 3000 family documents — of which slightly less than 2000 — are letters from close relatives, friends, and associates from 1926 to 1994. With the support of several Gregory Call interns from the Dean’s Office at Amherst College, I am reviewing, mapping, and analyzing the letters with the hope of finally writing a book and eventually offering a seminar on family
letters in colonial Nigeria. These letters are a treasure trove of fascinating stories and characters during a transformative period in Nigerian colonial and post-colonial history. The letters came from different places. Many of the letters came from relatives and friends in Ibadan, Lagos, Abeokuta, Enugu, Zaria, Kaduna, Freetown, Sierra Leone, and London. The letters define notions of family ties, kinship, social networks, economic solidarity across three generations. Interestingly, the letters are about family matters and Yoruba modernity, not a pre-occupation with the colonial system or the West! I hope to take a stab at this project this summer.

Biography

Olufemi (Femi) Vaughan is Alfred Sargent Lee & Mary Ames Lee Professor of Black Studies at Amherst College. Femi Vaughan received his DPhil (PhD) in Politics from Oxford University in 1989. He is the author of three books, including Religion and the Making of Nigeria (Duke University Press, 2016; 2017 Nigerian Studies Association Book Prize) and Nigerian Chiefs: Traditional Power in Modern Politics, 1890s-1990s (University of Rochester Press, 2000; 2001 Association of Global South Studies Book Prize). Vaughan is also the author of over eighty scholarly articles and reviews, and editor and associate editor of nine books and volumes including, Legitimacy and the State in Twentieth-Century Africa (Macmillan, 1993), West African Migration and Globalization (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), Transnational Africa and Globalization, 2012), Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History (Oxford University Press, 2019), and Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Historiography: Methods and Sources (Oxford University Press, 2019). Vaughan was professor of Africana Studies & History and associate provost at the State University of New York, Stony Brook, and Geoffrey Canada Professor of Africana Studies & History at Bowdoin College. He is the recipient of several leading fellowships and awards, including a Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship, Woodrow Wilson public policy fellowships, Ford Foundation fellowships, Distinguished Scholar's Award, Association of Global South Studies, and a State University of New York Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching.
Impact of aid on health outcomes in Africa: Evidence from sectoral and micro-level analysis

Léonce Ndikumana
University of Massachusetts Amherst

The economics literature has not offered consistent evidence on the impact of aid on economic development. A key limitation of the literature is that the analysis has traditionally been at the aggregate level, seeking to establish links between trends of total volumes of foreign aid and progress in aggregate measures of growth and development such as GDP growth. A new and growing strand of the literature where analysis is conducted at the sectoral level has shown more promising results. Studies that use micro level indicators of aid and development outcomes appear to be the next frontier of a more fruitful analysis of the aid-development nexus. In this presentation, I share the results from two studies. The first paper (co-authored with Lynda Pickbourn) examines the impact of foreign aid to the health sector on diarrhea mortality in children under five in sub-Saharan African countries. We find that increased health aid and increased public health expenditure are associated with lower diarrhea mortality in children under five. The second paper (co-authored with Didier Wayoro) explores the impact of aid on infant mortality in Côte d’Ivoire. The study combines data on World Bank geo-located aid projects with three rounds of Demographic Health Surveys from Côte d’Ivoire and uses difference-in-difference estimation techniques. We find that proximity to aid funded projects is associated with reduced infant mortality. The effects operate notably through aid enabling access to prenatal and postnatal health care, which leads to lower infant mortality.
Hiplife music in Ghana: Postcolonial Performances of the Good Life

Nii Kotei Nikoi
University of Massachusetts, Amherst

This paper examines how commonsense ideas of the ‘good life’ are reinforced in Ghanaian popular culture. Specifically, using Sarkodie as case study, I analyze how he constructs a successful entrepreneurial branded self, which then becomes an index of a ‘good life,’ modern life. I also use participant observations and interviews conducted in Accra. I argue that hiplife artists’ success and their performances of success not only underscores their desire to access the good life but to create distance from notions of poverty and ‘backwardness’ associated with underdevelopment. Nonetheless, the images of success in mainstream hiplife do not necessarily reflect the everyday realities of most Ghanaians, and are, at times deemed inauthentic. However, these misrepresentations may reinforce the fallacy of developmentalism.

Autoarchaeology at Christiansborg Castle (Ghana): Decolonizing Knowledge, Pedagogy and Praxis

Rachel Engmann
Hampshire College

In the African postcolony, archaeologists engage with several communities of connection. It is inevitable that a decolonizing archaeological heritage inquiry would, in due course, seek a deeper engagement with an archaeological site’s living direct descendant constituencies. This talk introduces ‘autoarchaeology,’ a term I employ as part of a deliberate strategy to privilege direct descendants in an inclusive, collaborative, archaeological heritage project that foregrounds the Self. I suggest that autoarchaeology excavates, in layers, the politics of knowledge, historiography, historical inquiry, colonial realities, postcolonial legacies, subjectivities and subject positionings. This enables us to challenge dominant Western archaeological heritage paradigms vis-à-vis the study, use and management of the past, and offers possibilities for a decolonizing heritage praxis. I illustrate this point referencing autoarchaeology at Christiansborg Castle in Accra, Ghana — a UNESCO World Heritage site, former seat of Danish and British colonial government and Office of the President of Ghana — where we, Danish-Ga researchers and direct descendants, investigate the histories and legacies of the Danish transatlantic slave trade.
At their Spring 2019 April concert, the Five College West African Music Ensembles had the honor of performing with a stellar group of renowned Ghanaian guest artists: Nani Agbeli, Kwabena Boateng, Koblavi Dogah, Kwaku Manu and Michael Ofori (the latter new faculty in the theater department at Mount Holyoke), as well as three of Mr. Agbeli’s American students, Kevin Koteles, Jennelle Marchand, and Tony Carter-Hill, from the Boston-based Agbekor Society founded by Tufts University ethnomusicologist Dr. David Locke. Mr. Agbeli has graced performances at Mount Holyoke for many years, and has most recently been the director of African music and dance at Cal Arts. Nani Agbeli and Koblavi Dogah have performed together since their days in their village, Kopeyia, in the Volta region of Ghana. Another musical provenance was represented by performer/educators Kwabena Boateng and Kwaku Manu, both of whom have worked with the illustrious C.K. Ladzekpo in Ghana and at UC Berkeley. Kwaku Manu and Michael Ofori had previously collaborated at the University of Legon in Ghana.

Highlights of the performance included slow and fast movements of Agbekor, a masterwork of the Ewe people of Ghana believed to date from the 1700s, in which the lead drummer commands dancers to respond with precise choreography to specific calls on the drum. The beginning class, MUS 261, had worked on the support drumming for the slow movement, which provides an ostinato of phrases in drum language under the lead drum calls. The dance movements in Agbekor relate to events occurring during battles between the Fon and the Ewe peoples in the past. MUS 261 played excerpts from the (originally Beninese) piece Adjogbo, as learned by ensemble director Faith Conant in Togo. The music of Adjogbo is distinguished by its intimate relation to language: poems from a large corpus are recited, then played in
drum language, then danced. *Adjogbo* is also noteworthy for the flamboyant colorful skirts and raffia leggings of the costumes, which dazzle the audience as the dancers spin, leap and make gestures particular to each poem. Both pieces incorporate themes of perseverance in the face of adversity, pose defiant challenges to enemies, and feature singing as well as drumming and dance.

Although *Agbekor* and *Adjogbo* are well known masterpieces from Ghana, Togo and Benin region, having been featured in the Ghanaian National Dance Ensemble’s repertoire for many years, the opportunity to see these pieces performed by such distinguished artists in the United States is a rarity.

*In Fall of 2019, Michael Ofori and Faith Conant plan to have their theater and music classes collaborate on a combined performance, again with participation of African guest artists.*

*Faith Conant is Director of Five College West African Music Ensemble and Visiting Instructor in Music.*
Meet Our New Editor:
Stephanie Shonekan

Stephanie Shonekan is Professor and Chair of the W.E.B. Du Bois Department of Afro-American Studies at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. In 2003, she earned a PhD in Ethnomusicology and Folklore with a minor in African American Studies from Indiana University. From 2003-2011, she taught at Columbia College Chicago, and from 2011-2018, she was a faculty member at the University of Missouri in the Black Studies Department and the School of Music. From 2015-2018, she was chair of the Department of Black Studies at the University of Missouri. Her dual heritage combining West Africa with the West Indies allows her to straddle the black world comfortably. She has published articles on afrobeat, Fela Kuti, as well as American and Nigerian hip-hop. Her books The Life of Camilla Williams, African American Classical Singer and Opera Diva (2011) and Soul, Country, and the USA: Race and Identity in American Music Culture (2015) explore the intersection where identity, history, culture and music meet. Her co-edited book Black Lives Matter & Music was published by the Indiana University Press in the fall of 2018. In 2019, her co-edited book Black Resistance in the Americas was published by Routledge Press.

In 2008, inspired by the music and revolution of Fela’s mother and the Nigerian market women’s revolution of the 1940s, Dr. Shonekan wrote and produced a short live action film titled Lioness of Lisabi. The film was awarded first prize at the Chicago International Children’s Film Festival in 2010 and by the Girls Inc. Film Festival in March 2012.
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