



**African Dance and Drumming**  
**Artist: Nii Ardey Allotey**



Nii Ardey Allotey and students

**Grade Level:**  
K-12

**About the Artist:**

Nii Ardey Allotey began training at an early age in his native Ghana to be a drummer and dancer. He grew up in Accra, the capital city, in the family house, "Aade Akwawei," a training ground for professional drummers and dancers. Music was everywhere, in the streets and in the homes of his friends. They learned by watching the older drummers and dancers. Those who showed talent were given special attention. By age five, Nii Ardey was performing with his uncle, Okotei Frank Lee, one of the originators of the Kpanlogo style of music and dance. Nii Ardey performed with many professional groups in Ghana including the acclaimed Arts Council of Ghana, touring throughout Ghana, Africa, Russia, Rumania, Italy and other countries. He earned the titles "Master Drummer" and "Lead Dancer" before coming to the United States in 1983 to perform with a Ghanaian group on the East Coast. After joining that group and moving to Portland in 1988, Nii Ardey delighted audiences throughout the United States, Puerto Rico and Japan with his spirited dancing and drumming. Throughout this time, Nii Ardey Allotey has taught African drumming and dancing to beginners and professionals, adults and children alike. He has worked in the schools of Ghana and of the Pacific Northwest with *Young Audiences* and the *Oregon Ballet Theatre*. He currently performs with the traditional African dance troupe he founded in 1992 called "Kaagba Ohenaa." Nii Ardey has just released his second CD/cassette of original and traditional African music called "Namo Dzibo?"

**Objectives:**

- The African Dance and African Drumming residencies are treated separately, but it would work well for one school to have both groups going through each residency and then combining for a final performance.

**Activities:**

**African Dance (Grades K-12):** Students enjoy moving to the African rhythm. The students learn one of the dances of Ghana and how to time their movements to the rhythm of the drum beat. They experience some of the culture of Ghana, West Africa, through its rhythm and dance. The students gain experience moving with a group, listening to directions both from the instructor and the drums. Nii Ardey talks about his culture, sharing its strong values of respect for elders and working hard throughout your life. Students have an opportunity to perform the dance in front of an audience.

**African Drumming (Grades 6-12):** Students get to see and use traditional African handmade percussion instruments including several types of drums, gourd shakers and bells. The students learn to play these instruments, keep rhythm and, at the advanced level, play that rhythm with other complimentary rhythms in the African way while learning a traditional Ghanaian song at the same time. They develop hand/eye coordination and a sense of timing. They learn to listen well, follow directions and work as a group. In addition, Nii Ardey tells them about the role drumming plays in the culture and history of Ghana. At the final session some students will be given the opportunity to join Nii Ardey Allotey in a performance for a school assembly

**Workshop Size Limits:**

- **African Dance (Grades K-12):** up to 35 students
- **African Drumming (Grades 6-12):** up to 15 students per session with four to eight sessions total to prepare for the closing performance

**Special Equipment:**

- Electrical outlet and sound system with at least two microphones

**Space Needed:**

- **African Dance (Grades K-12):** A gymnasium, cafeteria or stage with a surface allowing barefoot or sock dancing
- **African Drumming (Grades 6-12):** A classroom with a chair for each student

**Connections to the Curriculum**

- History, social studies, art, drama, physical education and language arts