

Arts and Africa

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ALEX TETTEH-LARTEY

Welcome to 'Arts and Africa'. This is Alex Tetteh-Lartey and today we feature the music of 'Dagarti.

MUSIC "Search" by Dagarti.

Mario Diekuuroh is a young Ghanaian musician and leader of Dagarti, a pop band based in London. Mario began his career as a member of the Arts Council Dance Team in Ghana, where he both danced and played the xylophone. He was part of the Company which presented Ghana's drama "The Lost Fishermen" at FESTAC in 1977.

After the Festival a promotor suggested that Mario should form a dance group of his own - which he did. He called the group "Dabuo" and he toured Britain with it the same year. On "Dabuo's" return to Ghana, Mario studied choreography at the Institute of African Studies at the University of Legon and later came back to Britain to further his career. Here Mario met a few enthusiastic musicians - mostly English - keen on studying African percussion techniques. With some of them he formed Dagarti. The extremely versatile Mario not only plays various percussion instruments in the group - he's also the lead vocalist.

Well Mario, am I right to describe your band as 'pop'? One usually associates pop with rock music - but you do something a little different don't you?

MARIO DIEKUURCH

The music that Dagarti plays varies from pop to rock and we have the African texture in it most times and its more linked to American type of music - so the music is not to be designated on one particular level as a pop group but we could call it an Afro-rock group, a pop group - but I would say it depends on the listeners really.

MUSIC "Malaika" by Dagarti

TETTEH-LARTEY

Well, the one we've just heard was distinctly South American, or Latin American, "Malaika". How did you come to do it?

DIEKUUROH

Yes. "Malaika" is a piece of music played by Miriam Makeba. She came out with a song "Malaika" which means "My Angel". I listened to this music when I was in Ghana and I liked it, and when I formed Dagarti I used it, and all the players enjoyed playing the same tune.

TETTEH-LARTEY

Well, what's your favourite tune ?

DIEKUUROH

My favourite tune is "Mpaebo". Looking at the audience I think they really like a tune that will inspire me to "stick to them".

TETTEH-LARTEY

"Mpaebo" is a Ghanaian title - at this point let's listen to it.

MUSIC "Mpaebo" by Dagarti.

TETTEH-LARTEY

Well you did say your favourite is "Mpaebo", but the favourite of the audience is a tune which invites you to stay with them - what tune is that ?

DIEKUUROH

Looking at the audience you see they enjoy the music we are playing and sometimes, we try and keep "Happiness", to the last. But the audience start to yell out - "Happiness", "Happiness", we want to hear "Happiness".

MUSIC "Happiness", by Dagarti.

TETTEH-LARTEY

That was Mario Diekuuroh the leader of the pop group "Daigarti".

And with another sound from Dagarti we end this week's edition of "Arts and Africa". This is Alex Tetteh-Lartey saying goodbye.

MUSIC "Bamamiya" by Dagarti.