

DANCE ANALYSIS

HIGH LIFE

(Nigerian name)

"High Life" originated in Ghana (West Africa) about twenty years ago. It has been absorbed now by most West African countries. It can be referred to with little reservation as an International Dance. The dance "High Life" is used for many festive occasions, for example, naming ceremonies, harvest, birth, and death. The rhythm is the same for all occasions, but the song indicates the specific occasion. It is a "happy-occasion" dance. The tempo could be fast or slow, depending on the atmosphere created by the dancers.

Since there is no line of direction or formation, all steps described can be done in any direction and with changes of direction in the steps as the dancer desires.

To begin the dance, the band or orchestra starts to play, the dancers or spectators who have been outside the dancing area come to dance two by two. In western fashion, they join hands and dance the "basic." Afterwards the M may freely lead the dance, or the W may lead. The hands are not joined for the "individual" free leading of any of the patterns which follows the initial dancing of the "basic" step.

Basic Forward: Knees remain flexed throughout step: Begin R, step sdwd, and slightly fwd on inside ball of big toe keeping wt on L (ct 1). Pushing against inside R, slip L slightly twd R turning L toe very slightly diag L; keep wt on L side (ct &). Close R flat to L, wt remains on L (ct 2). Transfer wt to R (ct &).

Beginning L repeat action of Basic reversing ft pattern (cts 3, 4).

Note: In the sand, the ft prints are clear and heavy in the ctr, dotted to the side.

Body: Either erect or slightly bent fwd from hips. Both elbows slightly bent (45 degrees); wrists straight, hands at ease, palms down or up, arms held fwd, slightly below waistline, swaying easily with the body.

Head: Moves from side to side with face down twd outer part of the ft carrying wt.

Basic Backward: Knees remain flexed through step. Step sdwd and slightly bkwd R on inside ball of big toe keeping wt on L (ct 1). Pushing against inside R, slip L slightly bkwd twd R, turning L toe diag R keep wt on L side (ct &). Close R flat to L, wt remains on L (ct 2). Transfer wt to R (ct &).

Beginning L repeat action of Basic, reversing ft pattern (cts 3 & 4).

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HIGH LIFE (continued)

Body and Head: The movement is the same as in Basic Fwd.

Transition for Walk: Repeat action of "Basic" cts 1, 2. On ct 3, L is placed bkwd instead of sdwd. Step L fwd beside R with L knee bent, at the same time locking R knee (ct 4).

Walk II: With R knee bent, wt on L, L knee locked; begin R, step fwd with a flat dragging step until R heel is even with instep of L (ct 1). Keep heel of stepping ft on floor. As wt shifts to R, lock R knee and bend L knee as L ft drags fwd, heel even with instep of R (ct 2).

Repeat action of "walk" (ct 3, 4).

Note: As knees are alternately locked, hip raises naturally to that side.

Body: Face diag R (ct 1, 2). Face front (ct 3, 4). Repeat (ct 1-4) to L.

Note: The turning from side to side is smooth drawing a continuous S on the floor.

Arms: Arm is bent, elbow held at waistline with forearm extended, wrist straight, palms facing, hands relaxed.

As dancer faces diag R, R arm moves in a lazy half-circle from outside to inside raising slightly on the outside and dipping inward to finish (cts 1-4). Repeat action to L; elbow remains bent throughout the movement and is never more than 9" from the body.

Walk Variation I: Step pattern same as walk. Ct 1 now becomes cts 1, 2). Step R (ct 1) slightly straighten R knee (ct &) bend knee (ct 2). Accent bend of knee on ct 1, 2, straighten (ct &). Bend, straighten, Bend, straighten.

Arms: R arm moves fwd with R ft. L with L ft. Arm bent at elbow, wrist straight, hands relaxed. Elbows move in and out, like pigeon wings. In on ct 1, ct &. Upper body turns naturally as R and L arms are fwd.

Walk Variation II: Begin R, step fwd with a flat dragging step until R heel is even with instep of L; keep wt on both ft, both knees bent (ct 1). Place ball of L ft 3" back of R heel (ct &). Push off with ball of L (ct ah) pushing R flat ft fwd about 3" (ct 2). NOTE: The push-off is like a grace note.

Repeat action of "Walk Variation II, reversing ft pattern (cts 3-4).

Arms: Easy with feeling of step -- shoulders keep slight rhythm.

Presented by Joseph Oyewusi