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DANCE

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gram, 38, a dancer with the ensemble.

In a thrilling performance of Agbekor — a war dance of the Ewe people of the southeast Volta regions of Ghana, Togo and Benin — one woman acted as a tribal leader on the eve of battle. She leapt and thrust using movements to mimic battlefield tactics and yelled war cries as she stared fiercely into the audience.

"She represents Yaa Asantewaa. She was the first woman to

lead her men to war," Ingram said. The Kulu Mele ensemble, under the artistic direction of dancer Dorothy Wilkie and founder/drummer Baba Crowder, is dubbed the longest-lived African Dance company in Philadelphia.

The dancers range in age from 23 to 62 and all have been with the company for at least 10 years, Wilkie said.

"It took a long time to get to this level," Crowder said in a soft voice. "People died, women were having children; it took a long time. We carry on because there is interest in it and it is important to our people."

The performance was made

possible by the Cultural Arts Programming Fund at Rutgers-Newark, and is partially supported by a grant from Pennsylvania Performing Arts on Tour, a program developed and funded by The Heinz Endowments; the William Penn Foundation; the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, a state agency; The Pew Charitable Trusts; and is administered by Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation.

For more information on The Institute on Ethnicity, Culture and the Modern Experience, visit www.ethnicity.rutgers.edu. For more information on The Kulu Mele African American Dance Ensemble, visit www.kulumele.org.