William Anku

William Anku taught Ewe drumming for the Center for World Music from 1995 to 1996. Affectionately known by his students and professional colleagues as "Willie," he was a music theorist, ethnomusicologist, composer, and performer from the Volta Region of Ghana. His theoretical work combined Western set theory, computer programming, and his own extensive experience collaborating with performers of various West African musical traditions—all to create a comprehensive theory of African rhythm. He was unique among Africa-based music theorists in attracting the attention of the Society for Music Theory.

Willie rejected the relevance of simple concepts of "polymeter" in understanding West African music and is noted for attempting to create a more natural, but non-indigenous, system of music notation for the study of African music. His so-called "circular notation" shows the various "combinatoric aspects of [a] pattern relative to different metrical positions, based on how the rhythmic pattern is aligned with [a] regulative metric pattern." Willie was considered to be among the top five contemporary scholars who have most influenced ideas about African rhythm.

Willie received a Master of Music Education degree from the University of Montana, Missoula in 1976 and an M.A. and Ph.D. in ethnomusicology from the University of Pittsburgh in 1986 and 1988 respectively. He was head of the School of Performing Arts at the University of Ghana, Legon until just prior to his death in 2010.

In addition to its impact on understanding African music, Willie's theories are cited in a scholarly study of the music of György Ligeti, the distinguished Hungarian-Austrian composer of contemporary avant-garde classical music. Willie's work was also an influence on the general geometric theory of musical timelines created by Godfried Toussaint, a Canadian computer scientist and former Head of the Computer Science Program at New York University in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.