Dogon Masks

The Dogon are a tribe of people in Mali, Africa who create masks which are worn by certain members to perform in for ceremonies. Dogon masks can be placed in 3 categories; Masks that represent: 1. Concepts or ideas 2. Humans 3. Animals

One of these ceremonies, called Dama, is a funerary ceremony held once every 10 to 15 years. Part of the Dama celebration is for men of the Awa association to dance and jump in a line formation wearing sirige (seer-ee-gay) masks. These masks are simple and square over the face but have a long plank sticking upward which is brightly painted and represents a house of many stories or floor levels.

Sirige masks, google images

Kanaga masks, google images

Kanaga masks have a secret meaning which is only truly known by the group that wears them. Both Sirige and Kanaga masks represent concepts, or ideas of Dogon culture.

Another kind of mask, Satimbwe masks, are important to women and are symbolic of female figures. These are worn to celebrate fertility of farmland and people and especially the power of Dogon women. Satimbwe masks are the only masks in Dogon culture about women.
Animal masks in Dogon culture represent the factual strengths and mythological personalities of animals to Dogon culture. Most have the same square shape of all Dogon masks which covers the face of the person wearing the mask, but with simple (or abstracted) elements of the animal they represent. This simple, squared shape is thought to come from Dogon buildings (which are made of mud with small holes for windows) and cliff dwellings.
As with most cultures who make masks, the wearing of the mask is incomplete without a change in body movement - usually expressed though dance. Here are many Dogon men jumping in unison in a line. Can you remember the name of their masks?

Here are more images of the Awa Men's Association wearing Sirige masks which will give you an idea of how tall the masks are:

Do you recall what the masks concept, or meaning is?
Clue: skyscrapers

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