

DANCE PLACE PRESENTS

DanceAfrica, DC 2021

Together Again: Celebrating Life, Love,

Unity, and Hope!

*In honor and loving memory
of Mama Faye Walker*

FRI, JUN 5 AT 7PM
SAT, JUN 6 AT 2PM
SUN, JUN 7 AT 1PM



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DANCE PLACE
3225 8TH ST NE
WASHINGTON, DC 20017

Words from Griot Mama Sylvia

I have loved African Dance and music since I was a teenager. Growing up in the mid-west, folks thought I was nuts. People would say, “why do you want to listen and dance to that type of music?” and I would simply reply, “because I like it!” I also enjoyed Sam Cooke, Otis Redding and the O’Jays, just to name a few. So, when I was introduced to Caribbean and African Music, Miriam Makeba, Bob Marley, Steel Pulse, Black Uhuru, Salif Keita, Baaba Maal, and Youssou N’dor, I was in love. The culture, food and practices of these genres fed my soul and shaped the person I am today.

African Music and Dance demands that you respect those who came before you and their contributions to Life. As Aretha Franklin said: RESPECT..... Just a little bit.

This year’s festival is titled: Together Again: Celebrating Life, Love, Unity, and Hope!

“Life”

Dance Africa DC will Celebrate the Life of “Mama” Faye Walker, (Ancestor 2020) Co-Founder of Ezibu Muntu. Mama Faye was instrumental in establishing one of the first African Dance Companies in Richmond, Virginia.

“Love’

DanceAfrica, DC, along with International Blacks in Dance and Washington Performing Arts will celebrate and honor Baba Melvin Deal for 58 years of Achievement in Dance. Baba Melvin Deal and Baba Chuck Davis are the reason we have African dance, music, and Kwanzaa throughout the United States of America. I am so glad we’re able to give him roses while he is still with us! What a blessing.

“Unity”

This Pandemic has unified us in so many ways and made folks aware of social and economic inequalities. We all know when we stand together, no one can break us apart!

“Hope”

I hope this DanceAfrica, DC has brought you some joy, but let us not lose sight of the bigger picture. This pandemic humbled everyone; no one was spared. This pandemic gave me my family back, and I am so grateful for this and I hope you are too! It was great to see families at the park and riding bikes together.

Hey folks: we know ALL Lives MATTER, but some lives matter more than others. Until we realize we are all one, all races, genders and people, we “Gotta Keep on PUSHIN” for a more perfect union, as the late great Curtis Mayfield said, KEEP ON PUSHIN!

Thank you for joining us this year for DanceAfrica, DC 2021, and I look forward to seeing and greeting you all in 2022.

One Love, One Heart,
Let’s Stay Together and Feel Alright,

With Love & Gratitude,
Mama Sylvia Soumah

Welcome to

DANCEAFRICA DC

Thank you for joining us for DanceAfrica, DC 2021; Together Again: Celebrating Life, Love, Unity, and Hope! This year marks the 34th annual festival celebrating the dance, music, and spirit of the African Diaspora, under the leadership of Griot Mama Sylvia Soumah.

This year's festival will honor the memory of Mama Faye Walker, who has joined the ancestors. Mama Faye was the Artistic Director, and one of the original dancers, of Ezibu Muntu, a Virginia-based African dance company. Ezibu Muntu has performed at several past DanceAfrica, DC festivals and is part of this year's festival. Mama Faye was also a performer, choreographer, and teacher throughout the DC metro area. Her photo is featured on this year's lead artwork and shirt design.

Visit our website, danceplace.org/dadc2021, for more information on this year's festival including the full schedule of events, oral histories, and virtual marketplace.

The DanceAfrica, DC Festival is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts. To find out more about how National Endowment for the Arts grants impact individuals and communities, visit www.arts.gov.

This year's festival is also supported by the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities.

The Deal-Davis DanceAfrica DC Commission Project commission is made possible with direct financial and administrative support from Dance Place and the financial support of The International Association of Blacks in Dance.



Friday at 7pm

(virtual)

Candle Bearing Ceremony

Direction: Donna Kearney

Choreography: Princess Riddick & Yaa Ade Cunningham

Performers: Yaa Ade Cunningham, Abena Crittendon, Mikalah Davis, Jalia Inman, Mama Makini Niliwambieni, Ama Sumbry

Musicians: Kweku Sumbry and Adrian Somerville

Tribute to Mama Faye

A Tribute to Baba Melvin Deal, a living legend

In association with the International Association of Blacks in Dance, African Heritage Dancers and Drummers, and the Kennedy Center's Cultural Caucus

Special Presentations

The Pola Nirenska Lifetime Achievement Award

The International Association of Blacks in Dance

The Dance Community

Performances and Reflections

African Heritage Dancers and Drummers

Various Artists

Family and Special Guests

Former Students

Ni Dembaya African Drum & Dance Ensemble

African Resilience

Lead Choreographer: Shaleena Capers

Dancers: Shaleena Capers, Khetnu Nefer, Amtyh Osunbunmi Asili, Paul Joseph

Musicians: Bobo Earl Rahjae Bellomee, Yuma "Docta Yew" Bellomee, Baba William Caudle, Master Ashep Neter El, Precious Porter, Robert Myers

Farafina Kan

Percussion Suite

Vocalists: Lesina Martin, Bintou Kouyate, Ama Sumbry

Musicians: Jamal Dickerson, Agyei Keita Edwards, Sanu Basu, Kweku Sumbry, Yao Akoto, Jabulani Clay, Wayne Goss, Adrian Sommerville, Zion Utsey

Videographer: Denaise Seals

Saturday

(at Meridian Hill/Malcolm X Park)

2:00pm: Candle Bearing Ceremony

Direction: Donna Kearney

Choreography: Princess Riddick & Yaa Ade Cunningham

Performers: Yaa Ade Cunningham, Abena Crittendon, Mikalah Davis, Jalia Inman, Mama Makini Niliwambieni, Ama Sumbry

Musicians: Kweku Sumbry and Adrian Somerville

3:30pm: KanKouran West African Dance Company

Jubilee

Artistic Director: Assane Konte

Assistant Artistic Director: Sue Ann Forde

Dancers & Musicians: KanKouran Senior Company Dancers and Drummers

4:45pm: Ezibu Muntu

Present

Choreographers: Mayah Walker-Taylor Mbaye and Jessica Couser

Musical Director: Roderick Davis

Guest Master Drummers: Assane Mbaye, Momar Mbaye, Ayende Von Hendricks

6:00pm: Akoma de Gado Dance and Drum Performance Ensemble, Inc.

Bettina!

Founder/Creative Director/Choreographer: Babadunjo Olagunke

Assistant Creative Director: Zena P. Ray

Business Managers: Patra Brodie, Tammy McCain

Publicity: Natasha McCain, Zena P. Ray, Tyann Taylor, Janell Levister

Sunday 1pm

(virtual)

Candle Bearing Ceremony

Direction: Donna Kearney

Choreography: Princess Riddick & Yaa Ade Cunningham

Performers: Yaa Ade Cunningham, Abena Crittendon, Mikalah Davis, Jalia Inman, Mama Makini Niliwambieni, Ama Sumbry

Musicians: Kweku Sumbry and Adrian Somerville

Tribute to Mama Faye

Coyaba Dance Theater Annual Youth Academy Village Celebration

Konkonba/Kuku & Kuku

Choreography: Tiffany Harris and Sylvia Soumah

Performers: Rania Ahokpossi, Pearl Chisolm, Reyna DeBruhi, Marley Edwards, Lauren Harris, Alyssa Mbenoun, Gabriella Seay, Sarah Topping,

Zenebech Woodland

Drummers: Kofi Agyie, Yuma Bellome, Khalif Muhummad

Coyaba Academy Coordinator: Mama Marcia Howard

Tam Tam Mandingue

Kassa & Dununba

Director: Mahiri Keita-Edwards

Dancers: Denu Company and Youth Ensemble

Soul In Motion

Transformation

Artistic Director: Michael Friend

Associate Director: Pam Lassiter

Choreographer: Adjetey Klufio

Deal-Davis Commissioned Artist: Samantha Salters

In Association with the International Association of Blacks in Dance

Mama's love

Artistic Director and Choreography: Samantha Salters

Performers: Angela Ingram, Samantha Salters, Jasmine Andrews, Ifanike Osuntoyin Omowale, Omisola Omowale, Nyasha Woods

Musicians: Isaac Nii Adjei, Michael Kweku Owusu, Di Andree Dukes

Company Bios

AKOMA DE GADO PERFORMANCE ENSEMBLE is dedicated to the promotion of African diaspora principles, culture, and appreciation of pageantry performance arts. We desire to build, motivate, and inspire generations through performance theatre, workshops, conferences, seminars, and classes. We promote educational and quality entertainment with our programs to our youth, audiences, donors, and a diversified community at large. Founded in 2019 and under the direction of Babadunjo Olagunke', Akoma de Gado is devoted to preserving African folkloric art forms with a connection to the 21st Century. This year's presentation is entitled, "Bettina!" Paying homage to my first African dance educator, Sister Faye Walker. Sharing some movements, nuances, and songs that are my favorites. Enjoy Family! Ase'ohhhhhhhhh

Contact and Follow us: Akomarva.org (804) 293-0503, Facebook.com, Youtube.com, Instagram.com

COYABA DANCE THEATER is a professional contemporary West African dance company specializing in traditional dance and rhythms from the Mali Empire (Guinea, Mali, Senegal) Coyabdance is a 501(c)3 organization mission is to present dance, music, and culture to help alleviate the stereotypes that exist about the diverse and rich cultural ethnic groups in dance and music from the Continent of Africa! Coyaba Dance Theater/Coyaba Youth Academy will Celebrate 25 Years of West African Dance and Music Dance Place February 2022.

EZIBU MUNTU is a professional organization of dancers, drummers, entertainers, teachers, students, and other individuals who are dedicated to invoking a better educated, more positive understanding of African culture, values and traditions, with cultural arts. We exist to enrich the lives of children and community through the resources of African Dance, rhythms, while promoting knowledge of cultural art forms, customs, and traditions.

"While we dance/drum, we cannot judge, we cannot hate, we cannot separate ourselves from life. We can only be JOYFUL and whole. This is WHY WE DANCE!" For 48 years Ezibu Muntu has successfully emulated this quote. There have been many moments that we were tested, but we triumphantly pulled through. This phenomenon is based on the caliber of our traditions (from creator, our founder, the ancestors, and family) but mostly....humility. This year we purposefully focus on being in the present. Fully alive, fully aware. We have experienced significant change within the past few years. Whether good or bad; being present and able to receive the presents (gifts) passed down to us from our Mama Faye B. Walker has been rewarding thus far. We continuously honor her and will uphold her legacy for years to come. Suffice it to say, we proudly show our appreciation and dedication through our talents throughout this performance season. Enjoy family...Asé.

FARAFINA KAN is a professional West African Percussion Orchestra and dance troupe dedicated to maintaining the history and integrity of traditional African music and dance. Under the tutelage of international performing arts legends like Mamady Keita, Famadou Konate, and Djimo Kouyate, Farafina Kan seeks to sustain the work initiated by these legends through professionalism, artistry, continual learning and proactive intergenerational transmission of African culture through music and movement. Farafina Kan was founded in

Company Bios (cont.)

2004 by Mahiri F. Keita and is now under the direction of Mahiri's son and nephew; Agyei Keita, and Kweku Sumbry, respectively. With their predecessors blessing, and vision this next generation of musicians and dancers are carrying the culture to higher heights around the world.

KANKOURAN WEST AFRICAN DANCE COMPANY was founded for the purpose of contributing to the extension of the arts by introducing the essence of traditional African dancing and drumming to audiences; enriching American cultural heritage through the integration of authentic West African performing arts; and promoting intercultural understanding through education and the performing arts. KanKouran was formed in 1983, in Washington, DC, by Artistic Director Assane Konte and former Director of Music, Abdou Kounta, who grew up together in Dakar, Senegal. After many months of recruiting, training and performing at local venues, the Company presented its first full-length concert, "A Visit to Africa" in 1985. And with that performance, an institution was born. Although many dancers and drummers have come and gone over the years, KanKouran continues under the leadership of its co-founder and Artistic Director, Assane Konte.

NI DEMBAYA AFRICAN DRUM & DANCE ENSEMBLE is a performance group started in Washington, DC, founded by Yuma "Docta Yew" Bellomee and "Bobo" Earl Rahjae Bellomee, that has grown to include many members both local and abroad. Ni Dembaya's directors have devoted much time to the study of music, dance, artistry and traditions from various areas throughout the African diaspora, to share for cultural, social, & historical awareness. Ni Dembaya's mission is to present traditional & modern rhythms, songs, and dances from African people worldwide as a tool to educate, inspire, uplift, promote wellness, empower, and connect people all over, especially those of African descent.

SOUL IN MOTION In 1984 Michael Friend and his sister Khandi started performing as the Soul In Motion Players. The debut performance was at Michael's alma mater, Howard University during Black History Month. Original members included HU Fine Arts Department Grads Cheryl Butler Poole, Gregory H. Poole, Gisele Jackson, & Wanda Whiteside. The troupe began touring to other colleges and universities on the East Coast. SIMPINC was performing famous works from highly acclaimed writers including the Last Poets, Maya Angelou, & James Baldwin. In 1989 Michael resigned from his government job to pursue the SIMPINC dream. Soul In Motion became a full-time touring company with its busy season occurring during Black History Month. During the late 90's Michael was introduced to choreographer/dancer Pam Lassiter Rhone. Pam began performing with Soul In Motion during the final few years of the WE ARE AFRICA era. Michael and Pam started collaborating on the idea of the Soul In Motion African Dancers and Drummers. In a relatively short period of time Soul In Motion African Dancers and Drummers has become an energetic 11-member company, performing at some of the premier dance events in the Washington, DC area including the ever popular Dance Africa hosted by the Dance Place. Soul In Motion's schedule continues to highlight a busy Black History Month season and a full calendar of annual events including festivals, weddings, and a wide variety of corporate events.

LEARN MORE ABOUT DANCE PLACE

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