

presents

# Universal African Dance and Drum Ensemble



## Connecting Arts @ The Center Series

The Field Education/Outreach Center  
The Mann Center for the Performing Arts  
52<sup>nd</sup> and Parkside Avenue, Philadelphia

### Summer 2007

# About Universal African Dance and Drum Ensemble

The Universal African Dance & Drum Ensemble (UAD) was founded by Mr. Robert & Mrs. Wanda Dickerson in 1984. They are the directors of the ensemble, along with the dedicated assistance of their oldest son, Jamal, and his lovely wife, Ronsha. This program consists of African Dance, Drum, Masquerade, Creative, Aerobic, Modern, Line Dance and Praise Dance. The ensemble has been greatly blessed with the famous "Pasha" the Stilt walker / Dancer, who has been a member since 1984. The ensemble is based in Camden, New Jersey and is comprised of members from Camden, New Jersey and Philadelphia.

Since its inception, the ensemble has grown to be one of the largest professional African Dance & Drum Ensembles in the United States of America. The UAD has also been blessed and sanctioned as the best African-American Dance & Drum Troupe in America by scholars, historians and African Djelis (historians). The ensemble strives to be sensational and electrifying with their amazing Stilt Walkers, Dancers, Drummers, Ground Masquerades and exciting acrobatic show. The UAD is a very versatile and flexible troupe who are able to conform their troupe from 44 to 2 performers. They are known for their West African presentations of Guinea, Senegal, Mali, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Gambia, Liberia and more. They professionally perform song, dance and drum from many sections & cultures of Africa, such as West, East, South, Central and North Africa. They have performed at many prominent and prestigious events in this country, including performing for and honoring leaders of countries, celebrities, politicians, religious, business and community leaders. They have also been blessed to study extensive traditional and authentic dance, drum, song, language and instruments with Moussa and Tenenfig Dioubate, two of the greatest African Dance & Drum teachers, djelis, and scholars from the best African Dance & Drum Troupes in the world.

Les Ballet Africains is another group from West Africa (Guinea), that has served as mentors and role-models for the UAD. The UAD modeled themselves after Les Ballet Africains, and have personally received drums, instruments, costumes and teachings from members of Les Ballet Africains while they toured America and while some of the UAD's members were in Conakry, Guinea, Africa. While together, members of Les Ballet Africain have treated the UAD as family and boast about how they enjoyed playing their CD (called Dimedi Faabe) in Africa.

The Universal African Dance and Drum Ensemble are very honored to represent the beauty of African Culture in America. The UAD choreographs and presents powerful, and electrifying performances for everyone and especially encourages African-Americans in America to appreciate their culture. One of the UAD's goals is to help African Americans to understand the importance of honoring their place of origin (Africa, the Motherland,) while at the same time helping to build unity between the two by emphasizing history, education, and the performing arts.

The UAD is made up of various inner-city African-American families of contrasting religions and different ways of life. This proves through the understanding of love and discipline, while practicing, working and training together, that unity can exist in the inner cities of America and other communities. "The pulse of the drum is the spirit of the heart."



## Universal African Dance and Drum Ensemble

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# About West Africa



**DID YOU KNOW...**  
On March 6, 1957, Ghana became the first sub-Saharan country in Colonial Africa to gain its independence.

## GHANA AT A GLANCE

**AREA:** 239,460 sq km

**POPULATION:** 22,409,572

**CAPITAL:** Accra

**LANGUAGE:** English (official), African languages (including Akan, Moshi-Dagomba, Ewe, and Ga)

**PRESIDENT:** John Agyekum Kufuor

**HIGHEST ELEVATION:** Mount Afadjato 880 m

**MONETARY UNIT:** cedi

**CLIMATE:** tropical; warm and comparatively dry along southeast coast; hot and humid in southwest; hot and dry in north

**AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS:** cocoa, rice, coffee, cassava (tapioca), peanuts, corn, shea nuts, bananas; timber

**NATURAL RESOURCES:** gold, timber, industrial diamonds, bauxite, manganese, fish, rubber, hydropower, petroleum, silver, salt, limestone

## DID YOU KNOW...

That Masquerades in traditional African societies represent the beauty and the spirit of its ancestors? The masquerade on stilts, known as "Chakaba" in Western African societies and the Mocko Jumbi in other African/Caribbean societies, is actually the spiritual police of the village or community. The Chakaba brings blessings to the festivities, and is also used by parents and elders to teach values of discipline and mutual respect. It is also believed that the Chakaba heals women's hearts and helps women while giving birth.

**The African Drum** has been used to bring people together, communicate, celebrate, and is used for spiritual healing in Africa and many other parts of the world.

The African craftsmen would cut and hollow the drum from the trunk of trees, cut it to a perfect shape to produce extremely wonderful sounds, and cover it with the skin of an animal. They used powerful string, cord or animal skin to tune the drum for different levels of sounds. Certain animal skins would be used for different drums to produce sounds from low to high ranges.

The family of drums that the UAD specializes in using originated in West Africa, and is called the **Djembe** family of drums. The Djembe drums are said to be the healing drums and can be tuned to many levels of sounds. Djembe is normally the lead drum and is covered with goat skin. The **Sanbeni** is the middle sized drum and is covered with cow skin. The **Doundumba** is the largest with powerful bass sounds and is covered with cow skin. The **Kenkeni** with the bell is also considered a lead drum, and the player can produce two different rhythms and sounds. The Kenkeni is also covered with cow skin.





## About the Series

The **Connecting Arts @ the Center Series** invites select schools to the Field Education and Outreach Center. It is designed to connect children, teachers, and schools with the performing arts in deep and meaningful ways, and offers performances that both enhance the in-school curriculum and introduce students to worlds they have never known.

Our goal at The Mann Center is to give every young person the opportunity to be exposed, inspired, and enlightened by the performing arts. We want them to experience the sights, sounds and rhythms that celebrate the magic and richness of the performing arts.

Last year, we had a record-breaking attendance of more than 37,000 enthusiastic youngsters attending our Young People's Concert Series. With the continuous support of our sponsors, we will reach even more of our youth, providing them with the opportunity to travel the world without leaving Philadelphia!

Educational programming at the Field Education and Outreach Center at The Mann Center is made possible by  
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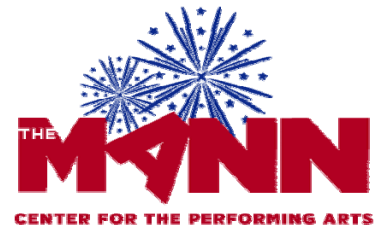


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