

# Dance Africa



## Dance Africa Directors

**Rita J. Honka, Founder and Artistic Director,** received her Bachelor of Science in Dance Education at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan, and her Master of Science in Dance Science at the University of Oregon where she specialized in human motor control. Rita is currently a faculty member at UO teaching Modern and African Dance, African Folk Cultures and Somatics. She has choreographed extensively in the Modern and African genres at UO, Linfield College, Willamette University and for the *Co-Art Dance Company*. In addition she is a co-director of the UO-Repertory Dance Company and has recently founded the contemporary dance company *Rita Honka Dance*. A member of the African Studies Committee, she continues to research dance in Africa, choreography, education, and motor control.



**Brian West, Musical Director-Lead Drummer** of *Dance Africa* since 2001, graduated with a degree in Musical Performance from the Percussion Department at the University of Oregon in 1993. He has accompanied dance classes in the Department of Dance since 1991 and has been teaching music for over fifteen years. A dynamic and talented teacher, Brian teaches the ever popular African Drumming classes at UO. In addition to his years with *Dance Africa*, he performs professionally along the West Coast with musical groups such as *Calobo* and *Sugar Beets*.



*Dance Africa* is committed to service in our local and world communities by donating performances to Benefit Concerts throughout the year. Through these concerts, *Dance Africa* has aided such causes as Tariro, a non-profit organization supporting education for women and children in Zimbabwe, and ShelterCare here in Eugene.

*Dance Africa* is able to fulfill its purpose because of the generous support it receives from folks like you. We would like to invite you to be involved in our efforts as we continue forward.

## Dance Africa

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Our purpose is to learn about dance traditions from a variety of African cultural groups, to honor, celebrate, and work with those traditions, and to create educational and entertaining performances for children and adults.



Rita J. Honka  
Artistic Director

Brian West  
Musical Director

# The Vision of Dance Africa

To learn about dance traditions from a variety of African cultural groups

## About Dance Africa



Dance Africa performing at the University of Oregon

Since the founding of *Dance Africa* in 1993 by Rita Honka and Kouesan Gabriel Abaglo, the company has dedicated itself to celebrating the rich traditions of African dance, music and culture in and around the area of Eugene, Oregon. Every year *Dance Africa* attracts students from all over the University of Oregon campus as well as members of the community that are eager to work with the company. The majority of student members are in fact not affiliated with the School of Music and Dance but rather represent the many faces of academic life at the university. This diverse group of dancers, drummers and singers take their love and knowledge of African dance tradition and share it with the surrounding community. *Dance Africa* brings internationally known artists from many African cultural groups to campus throughout the year. During the exhilarating Artist-in-Residency week at the University of Oregon, guest artists teach dance and drumming classes, give lecture demonstrations, and choreograph a new performance piece for the company. The week culminates with a lively performance by the company dancing alongside these master performing artists. This exciting week, in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., kicks off *Dance Africa's* season and annual school tour.



Dancing with guests Mabiba Baegne and Fred Simpson

To honor, celebrate, and work with those traditions

## African Guest Artists

In addition to *Dance Africa's* Artist-In-Residency program, the company strives to bring professional touring companies and master teachers to the university and surrounding community throughout the year. *Dance Africa* has hosted performances by *The Women Drummers of Guinea*, the Cuban dance company *Conjunto Folklorico Omo Addara*, and has twice hosted *Les Ballets Africains*, the national company of Guinea. *Dance Africa* has established itself so well within this dance and drum community that many of these artists now call directly upon the company for assistance in performing or teaching in the area. Their invigorating presence continually influences *Dance Africa* by lending authenticity in terms of movement, intention, and honor of diverse cultural heritages. This inspires the company as it fashions a show which represents a dynamic variety of African traditions and aesthetics. In addition to its annual school tour, *Dance Africa* has performed at The Hult Center for the Performing Arts; its resident theater, The Dougherty Dance Theatre; The Shedd Theater; Lane Community College; and for programs such as Reach for Success; Girls on the Move; NAFSA: Association of International Educators; and ShelterCare.

## Recent guest artists

- ◆ Masankho Banda (Malawi) 2010
- ◆ Mandjou and Salif Koné (Mali and Burkina Faso) 2009
- ◆ Alex Addy and Allotey Pappoe Mensah (Ghana) 2007
- ◆ Mabiba Baegne and Massengo Constant (Congo) 2005

And to create educational and entertaining performances for children and adults

## Dance Africa on the Road

*Dance Africa's* touring season focuses on area elementary, middle and high schools, and reaches nearly 3000 schoolchildren every year.



Rita Honka teaching 'Fanga'

The company has become a unique part of the African Studies curriculum in many of these schools, with its interactive performance of traditional music, song and dance representing diverse African cultural groups. The company complements its performance by leading lessons in African geography, musical instrumentation and rhythms, storytelling, history, and culture. *Dance Africa* is also delighted to provide extensive educational experiences for many schools. Irving Elementary students were thrilled to learn the Liberian dance 'Fanga' from company members for their annual music concert that was also performed at the University of Oregon. Zimbabwean guest Lucky Moyo taught students from the Village School and Irving Elementary gumboot dancing for a performance at the UO that brought together various performing groups from the community and the university. These educational and



Schoolchildren getting hands-on experience with African drums

entertaining collaborations are once in a lifetime learning experiences for the children and the members of *Dance Africa*.