Rita’s World

We were taking questions at our final school performance this year when a woman, who I assumed to be a teacher, in a panicked voice, wondered if we would still be together when her daughter matriculated to UO in four years. The following day I ran into an ex-student, of my generation, who invited me to stay at her family resort because, as I understood it, she had great memories of how I “worked her butt off” in class 15 years ago. I was roller skating on a recent Sunday evening when a sweet little kindergartener approached me, dragging her mother over by her pant leg. She wanted her mom to meet me—we had performed at her school that past week. It’s a small town. I regularly run into students of all ages with vivid memories of Dance Africa. They have seen us at their school, the UO, the Hult, or maybe the library. Without sounding unduly reminiscent, these offer prime opportunities to take stock of one’s life work. Sometimes, after 20 years, I ponder. What have I accomplished? Well, if you were to measure accomplishment by the number of lives Dance Africa has touched—the multitude of children, some now adults, that recount detailed memories of performances long past—the thousands of college students we have informed—the theater patrons we have entertained—then I suppose I have, we have, accomplished a lot. It is easy to take what we do for granted. And every single person that has ever been a part of Dance Africa, either as a performer or patron was, and is, pivotal to this achievement. Thank you. And if you ever ponder, I hope all of you remember that.

Notes from the Drum Front.

“If in doubt...SING”  

Brian West

Often, in this drummer’s perspective article, I’m looking for a way to express the “crux” or “point of no return” of our week with the guest artist(s) who come through each year for our special concert week. I might mention that pivotal moment where the new complex polyrhythm finally lines up just in time for our opening show, and how we did it by feverishly tapping on the dance department walls between classes. This year we didn’t have a drum specialist with a decade of experience in a famous touring group, who challenged us almost beyond our means. When Masankho stepped into the drum section he taught us only a couple of rather simple rhythms that would remain the undercurrent of most of the new dances we would incorporate into our concerts. Although the rhythms were wonderful, I wasn’t sure we would be challenged with the usual array of complex patterns.

We soon realized that we were expected to sing traditional Malawian songs along with everything we played! Not just singing, but also doing it “loudly and proudly,” which included singing in rhythms that were different than our drum beats. This proved to be wonderfully challenging. We were now not only creating polyrhythm between our drum parts, but also between our voices and our hands. The bigger picture however was that it just felt good! It seemed we were tapping into a primal blueprint for experiencing rhythm and expressing ourselves through song. This added a fresh and joyous perspective to an often-stressful week of learning new material. I noticed that, during our week with Masankho, we had smiles on our faces and a confident feeling that we would be ready to put on a great show. We were excited to come to rehearsal and express ourselves with our newfound vocal power. We found this power by experiencing our guest’s uncanny energy and presence firsthand. He is truly a legendary singer and storyteller that we will never forget!

It turns out that our love for singing and playing rhythms or dancing at the same time permeated our entire program. All of the African dance classes now warm up with one of Masankho’s songs and rhythms. My drumming classes are no exception. At nearly every session, one of my students corners me and is in dire need to play and sing one of these soulful songs. The students feel the connection with something ancient, yet eternally present, while forgetting, if just for a moment, the stress of college life. Thank you Massankho for bringing us such a gift!

I believe we will be ramping up our vocals in the years to come. We are keeping many of our current students and community drummers in the fold for next year and I know they will be pushing for a song at every corner. Our new drumming incumbent, Julianna Urban, will, no doubt, keep us honest next season, as she is one of the School of Music’s finest vocalists with a natural ability to drum at the same time. Thanks to our fine drumming section, Patrick Sponsler, Rhian Pyke, Ryan Ball, and of course our Dun Dun specialist Glenn Bonney, for being such a reliable gang, and for being so much fun to work with. Thanks to our traveling member Justin Simpson for stepping in to help when he’s not on an amazing African adventure. Hats off to our inspirational and tireless leader Rita, for keeping us on track. Oh, and how can we forget—thanks to the Dancers for sharing with us your smiles, energy, and passion for all things African!
Masankho Banda

Rita J Honka

Madododo. To stumble through. This is the approach Masankho Banda took in rehearsals with Dance Africa during the guest artist residency week January 17-24. A very disconcerting one to our group of American-trained dancers and musicians accustomed to explicit and definitive direction. This traditional approach of—learn as you do, do what you see, improvise as you go was quite a new experience for us and took an adjustment in mindset. So, as Masankho began rehearsal by simultaneously dancing and drumming and singing in chechewa (the language of the Chewa in Malawi), our band of industrious and talented artists stumbled through.

Masankho was not the usual guest artist. In addition to his traditional training, he earned a Bachelor of Arts in Theater and Dance Arts from the College of Wooster in Ohio in 1987, and received his Master of Arts in Creation Spirituality from Holy Names University in 2001. Since then he has devoted his life to using dance, theater, music, drumming, and storytelling to inspire people of all ages around the world to work together to bring about peace, social justice, and cultural understanding.

So, it was not surprising to find ourselves immersed in ritual throughout the week. In addition to the normal array of dance and drum classes, rehearsals and performances, Masankho also presented two public lectures, one in Dougherty Dance Theatre on the role of dance in traditional Malawian village life, and one in Beall Concert Hall on the use of music in political uprising, comparing the music of the Civil Rights movement in the US to that of the anti-Apartheid movement of South Africa. And, regardless of content, venue, or audience, something extraordinary, something ancestral, occurred. It occurred when he simply expected that drummers would dance, dancers would sing (and improvise!), audiences would join in on stage, and all would welcome each other and the experience without hesitation or insecurity. And they did. It was not so surprising when the audience flooded the stage in the dance theater to learn a welcoming dance. But it was surprising when Masankho pulled our very pregnant Emily Crocker up, joined by seven women she did not know, and had all of us sing a ceremonial baby blessing song to her. It was not surprising that the music students sang in Beall Concert Hall. But it was profound to see an entire audience, many too young to understand its significance, standing and singing Wade in the Water, filling us with ancestral memories rarely experienced in our lives.

I think Masankho’s most profound gift to us is that he erased doubt. We could trust, we could experiment, we could have unexpected ‘solos’ while learning. Madododo. Not really “stumbling through”, but working through, figuring out. And experiencing freedom, ritual, and a connection to the experience, whether our present or our past.

We would like to thank our village, without whom this event and season would not have been possible. We thank Brad Foley, Dean of the School of Music and Dance, for awarding Dance Africa this year’s Diversity Presence Initiative Grant. Jenifer Craig and the Department of Dance went above and beyond in their assistance both financial and physical. Much obliged! Thank you to the African Studies Committee for their continued support. And, for those who contribute in a multitude of creative and financial ways, thank you. We are able to continue to learn, teach and perform because of you. And over 3000 children, in schools hit hard by the financial crisis, were able to experience dance, music and African cultures again this year.

Masankho Banda most influenced me with his explanation of the role of dance in his life. I especially appreciated his story about the conversation he had with his grandmother at only five years old when he began to ponder his relationship with dance.

In his story, the ongoing performances of dance in his communities seemed like constant negotiations between the past and future of the dancers, their communities and the world. Many aspects of our class reflect this balance: strength and yielding, self and group, dancers and drummers, core and extremities. For Banda, dance is not just an expression of self and culture, but an act of self-definition through constant, dynamic balancing. What is most valuable for western academics about Banda’s path is that it embodies a self-understanding centered on compromise, movement, and history. In contrast to the competitive, individualistic, white, Western, upper middle class ways of knowing myself, Banda’s lesson offered me an opportunity to bring my mind and body together through giving thanks to my ancestors, seeing my community, and considering the significance of my own adaptations of traditional dance.

Sincerely, Rosalie Roberts, African 1 student in A.T.’s class.
“Burkina”

When I first started playing African percussion, I wondered what it would be like to live in Africa, experience the culture, and learn music straight from its creators. Well, because of Salif Koné and family, this last December I got that opportunity.

Salif and I arrived in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso in mid-December, a couple of weeks before the workshop he was holding began. My first impressions of Ouaga, besides it being so hot were….well, major culture shock. In Ouaga everything is flat, dry and dusty. The sun is extremely hot and I think it took me about a week to get acclimated to the climate before truly appreciating my surroundings. Once I was able to do this though, it changed my perspective.

**The Culture:** For the first week or two in Burkina Faso, I could not get past the poverty. This country has one of the lowest GDP per capita in the world. Many people live on less than a dollar a day and malnourishment and begging is evident. The country itself has very little resources to increase trade. No oil, little gold, etc. Although this makes it difficult to provide a steady job industry for the people, Burkina is extremely peaceful. Once I was able to look beyond the poverty, the true culture of this country emerged. Most people there are happy. They have very little in comparison to US standards of living; family, music and dance mean much more than material objects. This is a place where, in many ways, happiness is pure and simple, the way I think it should be. Take weddings for example. I went to three or four weddings, as everyone is invited. There are no guest lists, seating arrangements or reserved venues, just a celebration of commitment and happiness through music and dance where anyone can join in; Salif played at every one.

**African Time:** Time is an interesting thing when it comes to West African music. In many rhythms, there are no designated time signatures. The way to learn is by feel and, as I experienced many times there, you often hear the music completely different from start to finish of the learning process. I think that this is one of the great things about different types of world music. Everything is so structured in the Western world that there is little room for interpretation. The African music that I studied allowed for multiple ways of hearing the poly-rhythms.

This also is true with general life tasks in Burkina. We struggled daily with “time”. Just as there is room for interpretation in African music, work schedules—or any schedules—are up for interpretation. There is a very relaxed sense of time in this culture. If someone is an hour late to work it doesn’t much matter. If it takes thirty minutes to say hello, then so be it. Closing work for three hours during lunch is pretty common. A very relaxed lifestyle.

**The Music:** For those who don’t know, Salif Koné is part of a family of Griots. They pass down the history of their tribe through oral tradition, which is music, dance, song and stories. Before Salif could walk, he was learning rhythms and so were his siblings. Because of this, most of his family has been fortunate enough to make careers using their musical talent in West Africa, Europe, and America. So, naturally, I wanted to absorb as much information as possible while I was surrounded by some of the best musicians in the world.

The first thing we did was pick out a Djembe and go through the process of carving it, making the rings, choosing the rope, and shaving and installing the goat skins. This was no easy task. I picked out the shell from a shop with hundreds of Djembes of all sizes; Salif and I looked at the shape, size of the bowl, thickness and density of the wood, height of the drum, and whether or not it had cracks or knots. After picking my shell, I took several days preparing my drum. I sanded the wood, shaped the rim of the bowl, fitted the rings, and passed the rope before stretching multiple goat skins over the rim, as two tore during installation. For several days I sat in agony waiting for the chance to play my Djembe. What I learned more than anything during this process is that your Djembe is an extension of you and, when you put your time and energy into creating your drum, it will, in turn, speak for you when you are playing. After it was done, this was indeed the case. Well worth the wait.

During the three week workshop, multiple teachers taught us a total of six rhythms. On a normal day there was balaphone and djembe class in the morning, lunch, then dance class and song/story in the late afternoon. Every rhythm had multiple accompaniments for djembe, balaphone, and doundoun, as well as dance movements. Playing all of the parts, and learning through traditional ways, was amazing. When I allowed my mind to escape from western timing, I could understand where each rhythm came from and look at them differently.

Many of us have gone to dance and drumming workshops and learned from very talented artists. Burkina was no different! I learned from extremely talented artists. What separates the two is the experience. Being in West Africa for two months was a life changing adventure. I re-taught myself technique, coordination, and timing. I experienced the food, people, and lifestyles in Burkina. It taught me to look at the world in a different light and to appreciate the littlest things that I am blessed with on a daily basis. If you ever have a chance to go, I highly recommend it! You won’t be disappointed. www.erynsburkina.blogspot.com/

—Justin Simpson
Dance Africa - The Early Years

Bruce—All I can think of now is what FUN it was! I know it was educational and entertaining and all that, too, but working with all the great musicians and dancers (including our wonderful director!) was fun and enriched my life greatly. I looked forward to every rehearsal and performance. Learning from and frolicking with Kouessan during a rehearsal or two and learning Gumboots from the ground up with Matshabe certainly were a couple of highlights for me. Best wishes to you — and Dance Africa!

Gina—Thinking back to 1993 when I took my first African Dance class from Rita, it was so different from anything I had ever done with dance before. I can’t remember exactly what possessed me—a ballerina through and through—to consider auditioning for the first Dance Africa company, but I am so fortunate that I did. I DO remember, during the audition, watching Dianna and thinking, “What on Earth am I doing here??!”... but, I guess Rita saw potential, and Pollyanna continually projected her “pelvis power” onto me, a concept which has stuck with me to this day! There was one dance that I think just Dianna, Pollyanna and Julie performed...very beautiful. It was my son Cameron’s (now almost 21!) favorite...he always wanted to “watch the dance with the ladies.” [Rita’s note—Fanga, brought to us by Jenifer Craig]—I remember working with incredible musicians/drummers and Matshabe and Kouessan. I can say that I don’t think I’ve ever been as enamored by talent and spirit since that time. ...Never being able to fully master the necessary gravity for African dance, or keeping the little shells in the coconut husks! Remember that one??

Nothing like saggy sky blue diapers on Oregon men whose skin hadn’t seen the sun in decades. That was one of the costumes Kouessan had the men of the first company wear at Beall Concert Hall in the early years. We joked and laughed, but they wore them. That was the kind of company they were.

For the past few weeks I have had the pleasure of reminiscing with some of the first DA company members. In large part we were trying to remember who exactly was the first company? What I discovered was that the first true company—the members who stuck around for years, helped to create our signature piece Gumboots, and have been life-long friends, even if we don’t see each other as often as we think of each other—decided on a couple of auditions to solidify. But when it did, it was magic! The photo above is (l-r) Michael, Julie, Gina, Elise, Emily, Dianna, and Bruce. Missing are Pollyanna, Alli, and drummers Charlie, Glenn, and Joe, occasionally Brian, and for a show or two, David. Of course, Kouessan and I were still dancing then.

What made the magic? I think the creation of Gumboots exemplifies the character of this company and the spirit of our time together. First, we didn’t know a thing—there were no videos of Gumboots at this time. I had an audio tape that I constantly listened to and Matshabe, my dear friend from South Africa, who danced about trying to show us what he had grown up with. He wasn’t a choreographer but a Political Science student. But there is no single dance, each group creates their own. So there we were, a new company with no Gumbooting experience, creating our own. And we did. We did by experimenting, improvising, rehearsing, laughing, rehearsing, swearing, eating french fries, rehearsing. Everyone added a little something. Even Kouessan, who, I believe, made it to one or two Gumboot rehearsals—we still shout out his name when we perform the short rhythmic phrase he created. I remember developing rhythms in my car, singing incessantly during my two hour, bi-weekly commute to Linfield College. I remember how Emily started dancing a 3 over 4 rhythm that became her signature phrase when she improvised. Or the look in Michael’s eyes when he finally understood the concepts and took off in his creative process. And Bruce, ever the trickster, entertaining us and audiences with his humorous, usually butt-oriented, rhythmically rich solos. Gina on Gumboots: “How honored I am to have been a part of that process! I remembered it for YEARS afterwards since we performed it so often. I recall one performance in particular when Bruce had just started seeing Peg (his future wife) and she came to the show we did at a school. Bruce was the "rhythm leader" and he was so nervous that we literally FLEW through Gumboots like we were on fire.” That is the nature of the dance: every dancer, every movement, every sound is dependent and influenced by every other one.

That is the nature of Dance Africa, established so long ago. We fought for everything. Dancers decoded movement, trying to emulate Kouessan!! “You do this, you do this, you do this—then you dance.” Drummers deciphered rhythms found on scratchy tapes, or that were simply sung to them. Polly made costumes, Charlie made Munduns. Bruce even wrote the purpose statement we use today that is found on the first page of this newsletter. And I tried to balance leadership and friendship. Every dancer, every drummer, every sound and every silence, every movement, every stillness is part of the whole. Whether it is Gumboots dancing or creating a company and a legacy. I wasn’t expecting a legacy—we were just a bunch of friends, a group of dancers and drummers working on a project. But a legacy is what you get when you start with a company that is so talented and so generous that they won’t let you fall, fail, or quit.

Rita J Honka
Where Are You Now?

Ida Danks (Anbar) (97-00). I have been married and living in IA since 2004. In March of '08 my husband Troy and I had our daughter, Bella. This summer we are moving back out to Oregon where I hope to introduce Bella to Dance Africa first-hand. I loved every minute from rehearsals to post show breakfasts.

Melissa Durham (96-98). I work for The Oregon Community Foundation (Portland) now and coordinate a statewide initiative. It's a lot of work, but I love it. I don't get to dance as much as I used to, but I take a hip hop class once in awhile and teach my own dance class on Friday mornings.

Charmaine Gaffrey (00-02). I live south of Eugene with my husband and 2 month old boy, Ukiah. I teach contemporary dance at Oregon Ballet Academy, perform with Traduza Dance Company and am a certified Gyrotonic instructor. I work as Export Manager for a local nutritional supplement company.

Drew Christina Gonrowski (06-07). Since graduating from the UO in 2003, I moved to Honolulu to attend graduate school at the University of Hawai’i. I received my M.A. in 2009 in Hawaiian and Pacific Islands History. I'm currently working toward my Ph.D. in Hawaiian History. While living in Honolulu I have learned about the importance of hula (dance), mele (song), and 'oli (chant) to Hawaiian culture and history. I am grateful that I am able to continue learning about dance in different cultures while living on the beautiful island of O'ahu! Miss and love you all!

Valerie Ifill (08-09) Since graduating with my MFA in Dance from the UO, I have continued teaching both youth and adults at the REACH Community Center here in Eugene. I was also involved in a collaborative project with UO graduate students A.T. Moffett and David Horton, creating and producing a concert at Conduit in Portland. I’ve recently joined a new dance community in Philadelphia, where I am looking forward continue to share work in dance.

Lindsey Primich (05-06). Totally miss you guys and Dance Africa!!! I have been traveling around the globe again; I spent 6 months in New Zealand. I was able to get back to South America, and traveled through Venezuela, Columbia, Ecuador, Peru and Argentina. I have had some crazy adventures and traveled with people from all over the world. I have been working at Dancers’ Workshop, in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. I teach anything I can get my hands on. To switch things up I'll throw in some African Dance and bring my drum to class. I love trying to get those little ballerinas to GET LOW and stick their booties out!! I'm in the process of moving to San Francisco—I can't wait to take dance classes again!!! I'm also applying to physical therapy programs, so wish me luck!!!

Jillian (Kacalek) Vanderbeek (03-04). Sadly, I am not making my way back to Eugene any time soon. I really wanted to join Dance Africa again—I miss it! So, I am living in Silverton, OR. I got married two years ago to Pieter Vanderbeek, my high school sweetheart (that was a surprise to me). No kids yet, but hopefully soon. I work at A-dec Inc., in Newberg, OR. We design and manufacture dental equipment. I am the Facilities Coordinator for our Education Center and also coordinate 60 national tradeshows. I am very involved in Relay for Life, benefiting the American Cancer Society, and I am also an Advisor for Pi Beta Phi at the UO. I dance here and there, not as often as I would like to. I danced with DA as a senior. I wish I would have joined earlier in my college career because I feel that it was one of the most worthwhile experiences I had in college. Thank you Rita for the special opportunity and I miss everyone!

Sarah (Daily) Wall (06-07). I am living in Portland with my husband, 2 1/2 year old son Loic—an amazing little boy—and my teen-age step-daughter Jess. I start my student teaching in the fall and will finish my Masters in Teaching Secondary Education in December (math). I am hoping to do some after school dance programs, or teach Dance Team, or choreograph for the school play, wherever I can find a dance niche in the school. Life is good.

Carina Zevely (06-07). Aaaah Man! I miss being down there and dancing everyday. I was laid off from my carpenter assistant job. I am doing some childcare for an autistic boy and I am a volunteer intern for a really cool non-profit called Soltrekker. I hope to be a volunteer administrative assistant for Cascadia Green Building Council. Oh! I train Capoeira now! I love it! I am a student of Grupo Capoeira Raca; Pedro Cruz is our Maestre.

Etopi, Bea where are you now? And Drew and Julie, 2007
Drums, Drums, Drums!!

Rhian Pyke

This year, Dance Africa purchased our incredibly anticipated Ngoma drums. The day they arrived, the drummers were like kids on Christmas morning! We ooohed and ahhhed, each eagerly awaiting to take a turn to beat them. Standing nearly four feet high and carved out of one solid log, the drums seemed to whisper “play us”. Our palms itched to hit their goat skin heads and, when we did, they seemed to emanate the sound of the jungle with their rich basses and dark tones. “The new Ngomas have been so fun to play. They’re like giant rocket ships, and add a really great mix to the rhythms we usually play on conga,” describes Dance Africa drummer, Ryan Ball.

Originating from the Bantu people of Central, Eastern, and Southern Africa, the Ngoma is often used during rituals, celebrations and official ceremonies. It only seemed appropriate that our guest artist this year, Masankho Banda is from Malawi, a country populated by the Bantu people. The deep, resonant sound produced by the Ngoma enriched the dances we received from Masankho, virtually teleporting us to an African village, as we learned the ritual dances and rhythms. Dance Africa Director Rita Honka notes, “We have wanted Ngomas for awhile but bought them specifically this year because of Masankho’s visit.”

Dance Africa has been lucky to obtain a sizeable collection of drums throughout the last 17 years. In 1993, the company began with only two Congas. A few years later, lead drummer Charlie Doggett made a set of Dunduns and, soon after that, Dance Africa bought it’s first Djembe. Since then, we have acquired seven more Congas, a wide assortment of Djembes, three Ngomas, a set of a Kpanlogo drums, a set of Agbagja drums, and a variety of shakers and bells. Each instrument has a distinct sound, creating a special combination of rhythms that complement and drive the dances. It’s hard to imagine not having the array of drums that we have to choose from, and we are continuously thankful for the learning opportunity that each of these drums provides us.

Djembe A goblet-shaped hand drum. Traditionally the body of the drum is carved from hardwood, and the head of the drum is covered by goatskin. The Djembe originates from the class of Mandika blacksmiths known as Numu, but is widely played throughout West Africa, and now is one of the most popular hand drums around the world.

Ballet Dundun A set of three cylindrical drums played with sticks. The deepest drum is the Dundun, the middle is the Sangban, and the highest is the Kenkeni. Dunduns were developed alongside the Djembe and are mainly played in West Africa. The Dunduns create the main melody, and also keep dancers and drummers in time.

Ngoma A tall, cylindrical-shaped hand drum. Traditionally, the body of the drum is carved from one solid log, and the head of the drum is covered by goatskin. The Ngoma originates from the Bantu people of Central, Eastern, and Southern Africa, and is played during celebrations, dances, and ceremonies.

Conga A barrel-shaped hand drum. In the beginning, Congas were often made from salvaged barrels, but modern congas have staved wood or fiberglass shells, and screw-tensioned drumheads. When slaves were brought from Africa to Cuba, they shortened their drums to be able to sneak them on the ships, thus creating the Conga.

Kpanlogo A barrel shaped drum. The Kpanlogo drum is carved from a single piece of wood, and is similar in shape to the conga. The head is made of animal skin (goat, cow, or antelope) and is stretched over the drum, then tightened by tapping on the six wooden pegs it is attached to. The drum originates from the Ga people of Ghana, in West Africa.

Agbagza The percussion ensemble of the Anlo-Ewe society of Ghana and Togo features a master drum, three supporting drums and various bells and rattles. We own three: a Sogo, Kidi, and Kaganu. Agbagza is the traditional dance performed to this ensemble.

Sometimes, one of our African guests, often confronted with English as their 4th or 5th language, will say something so unique that it stays with us for years to come. Sometimes it becomes comedic in retrospect or it is simply a serious note that really drives the point home. Here are a few that we remember.

-Chata Addy. This was the first time one of the famed Addies came down from Portland to do a workshop at the UO. He was in the music department and someone pointed to a set of Timpani, such as you would find in the orchestra and asked him if he knew how to play them. Much to the late UO professor Charles Dowd's amusement, who has studied and taught Timpani nearly all of his life, Chata replied, “It's just a drum. I can play that drum.”

-Mamadouba Camara once taught a very difficult odd metered rhythm to my beginning drumming class. At the end of the class the students finally got the basics of the music in their hands. Our classes are so short in length that it can be tricky to teach something that complex in one session. I asked Mamadouba if he realized this was the beginning class. His reply: "I don't tell them it's difficult."

-Co-founder Kouessan Abaglo would often say, in what first seemed, simply, an instructional manner, but I later found to be the essence of the spirit of African Dance, "You do this—you do this—then you dance!"

-Concerned about over-using Kouessan’s goat drum, Glenn commented on how the goat hair was wearing very thin in the middle. Kouessan’s reply: "That's what happens when you hit it."

-Most of our guests want us to play with more feeling and conviction. These three words have been uttered by nearly every guest teacher we have ever had at the UO: "Hit the drum!"
Yewo/Tikulandilane
From the Tonga people of Malawi, Yewo is used to say thank you. From the Chewa people of Malawi, Tikulandilane is a dance of welcome.

Nzobi
From the Mbeti people of Congo, Nzobi is a very powerful, protective spirit called upon to heal an agitated person. The Nganga (spiritual healer) and religious initiates play, sing, and dance until the person calms down.

Gbegbe
From the Bete people of Cote d’Ivoire, Gbegbe remembers the search for a new home.

Palo
Palo is a dance with movements based in traditional African religion, experiences of the slaves, and the toil of working on sugar cane plantations in Cuba. This secular dance is continually evolving, representing the Afro-Cubans’ familiar roots from Nigeria.

Kassa
From the Mandinko people of Guinea, Kassa is a dance for the rice harvest.

Arr Pionnier/Mutwashi
Arr Pionnier is a contemporary rhythm from the Congo created for young people. Mutwashi is a festival rhythm from the Baluba people of Congo.

Gumboot dancing evolved in the South African mines first as a form of communication and continued as a form of recreation. It arose from a mixture of cultural groups that worked and lived together in the mining camps.

Djansa
From the Mande of West Africa, Djansa is used to publicly thank someone for their good deeds.

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**DANCE AFRICA SCHOOL TOUR 2010**

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2010 TOUR PROGRAM

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From the Mandinko people of Guinea, Kassa is a dance for the rice harvest.

Arr Pionnier/Mutwashi
Arr Pionnier is a contemporary rhythm from the Congo created for young people. Mutwashi is a festival rhythm from the Baluba people of Congo.

Gumboot dancing evolved in the South African mines first as a form of communication and continued as a form of recreation. It arose from a mixture of cultural groups that worked and lived together in the mining camps.

Djansa
From the Mande of West Africa, Djansa is used to publicly thank someone for their good deeds.

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On behalf of the entire Howard School Community, I would like to thank you for sharing Dance Africa with our school during a recent assembly. Being a high poverty school, with 80% of our students qualifying for free/reduced lunch, your generosity in bringing this assembly to our school free of charge is greatly appreciated. Because many of our students do not have the financial means to experience live theater and/or musical performances, the experience you provided our students is especially meaningful. In addition, it is so important for our children to learn about other cultures and traditions, broadening their understanding and appreciation of the world and other people. Music and dance are a great way to do just that! The students and staff thoroughly enjoyed the Dance Africa performance. Your performers’ talents are impressive; you have an open invitation to our school any time!

Susan Price, Principal, Howard Elementary
Company 2009–2010

Rita J Honka, Director  Brian West, Musical Director  Glenn Bonney, Dunduns

Ryan Ball (2011) Environmental Studies and Cultural Anthropology. Ryan has had an interest in music since he first started banging chop sticks on his parents’ kitchenware as a toddler. This is Ryan's first year with Dance Africa, and he is really enjoying being a member of this community.

Liana Conyers (2012) MFA Dance. As a UO Graduate Teaching Fellow, Liana teaches Modern, Ballet, Jazz, and Hip Hop. This is her first year with Dance Africa and she is enjoying being a part of this supportive community.

Emily Crocker (2003) Dance. Emily has been with Dance Africa for ten years. She is currently teaching dance at Linfield College and coaching UO Colorguard. She became a new mommy to Vivian Fahye in April.

Jana Meszaros (2009) Dance Major/Business Minor. She first got to know Dance Africa as an administrative intern during her senior year of college while studying hard, dancing with UO Repertory Dance Company and choreographing for the Spring Student Dance Concert. This is her first year as a dancer for Dance Africa and she is enjoying being a part of the community.

A.T. Moffet (2010) MFA Dance. As a UO Graduate Teaching Fellow, she teaches Modern, Ballet, Jazz, and African dance. She loves being a part of the UO African dance community.

Jessie Newell (2005) Human Physiology and Dance Kinesiology. Jessie is pursuing a career in dance medicine and finds her days full of excitement with her loving husband and wonderful kiddos: Elizabeth (12), Alyssa (the cutest 2-1/2 year old Gumbooter), and Ryan the “little man” (1).

Julie Polhemus (2002) MS Environmental Studies. Julie has been with the company since 1999. She currently hops, shimmies, and skips through her days with two lively children: Sylvan, 4, and Elena, 1. She occasionally climbs Oregon’s volcanoes by leaving the munchkins home with Daddy, Chris Jones.

Rhian Pyke (2008) Masters in Teaching and Learning with an emphasis in ESOL. Rhian is currently teaching Kindergarten in the Eugene Public School District. This is her second year in Dance Africa, and she appreciates the knowledge and experiences she has gained from this community.

Rachel Quinn (2011) Business Marketing Major and Spanish Minor. Rachel grew up doing West African dance alongside her mother since she was a toddler, and enjoys hip-hop, salsa and merengue but African dance is what she calls home. This is her first year in Dance Africa, and she enjoys being a part of the UO African dance community.

Justin Simpson (2009) Sociology. Justin loves playing drums of all types and racing cars (legally, of course). He just finished a 40 day drum workshop in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso and is now studying to get his Masters in counseling.

Nicci Schaefer (2010) Dance. Nicci began studies in dance at Casper College in Wyoming before transferring to the UO. She has studied and performed Modern, Ballet and Jazz Dance. She is excited to perform with Dance Africa.

Patrick Sponsler (2012) Conflict Management. As well as playing the djembe, Patrick enjoys working the rope and goat skin to bring the drum sound to life. This is his second year in Dance Africa. West African drums and rhythms have opened Patrick’s heart to the intertwining relationship of music, dance, and community.

Eileen Walters (2000) BS in Mass Communications, Minor in Marketing from Miami University. Mother to Eva and Naomi, Eileen and her husband have lived in Oregon for more than six years now. She enjoys spending her days caring for her two small children and teaching at the Eugene Ballet Academy.

Elena Polhemus, and Naomi and Eva Walters in rehearsal