

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



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PLACE

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](https://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](https://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 Imana

**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) Coyabadance 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 2004 by Mahiri F. Keita and is now under the direction of Mahiri's son and nephew; Agyei

# Company Bios (cont.)

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.

**SAMANTHA SALTERS** is a native of Washington, DC, a member of Coyaba Dance Theater, an Adjunct Professor at George Mason University and the inaugural recipient of the DanceAfrica DC, Deal-Davis Commission. She holds an M.F.A. in Dance from the University of Colorado Boulder, where she studied Ghanaian dance with Nii Armah Sowah and Logo Ligi Dance Ensemble. Salters' has studied dance in Ghana and her interests are in the traditional and contemporary expressions of the African diaspora.

**SOUL IN MOTION** In 1984 Michael Friend and his sister Khandi started performing as the Soul In Motion Players. 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. In a relatively short period of time, Soul In Motion African Dancers and Drummers has become an energetic 11-member company. 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.



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