

FINAL REPORT

Urbana's West African Dance and Drum Extravaganza – Creative Mix 2014

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From September 12-14, 2014, Urbana was treated to a three days of outstanding West African dancing and drumming by seven leading artists and instructors. Originally named “Urbana’s West African Dance and Drum Extravaganza”, the event was renamed “Midwest Mandeng” for marketing purposes and to make it more regionally inclusive. The artists were Abass Camara, Djibril Camara, Bolokada Conde, Youssouf Koumbassa, Djeneba Sako, Assane Seck, and Moussa Traore. The artists hail originally from Guinea, Mali, and Senegal and now all are based in the US. The festivities attracted 127 attendees from near and far including: Calgary, Santa Cruz, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Indianapolis, St. Louis, Madison, Chicago, Bloomington (IN), as well as Champaign, and Urbana – to name just a few communities.

The weekend began with a performance by all seven artists at The Urbana Free Library, launching their “Prairie Breezes: Mini Concerts for Kids” series. This performance attracted a full-house with standing-room only in the library’s Lewis Auditorium, and the artists also engaged the audience with a question and answer period following their performances, helping to give socio-cultural context to their art forms.

The dance and drumming workshops began Friday evening and continued through Sunday evening. These events were held at the Urbana Landmark Hotel in downtown Urbana and at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Urbana-Champaign on Green Street. These facilities provided easy access to dining, hotel, and shopping options as well as wonderful spaces for the workshops. A total of 18 workshop sessions were held throughout the weekend, and attendance was strong throughout.

In addition to the workshops, we organized a performance by a local Afro-pop band, Super Mazumzum, who performed at Black Rock Pizza in Lincoln Square Mall. An open dance party, referred to as a *dundunba* party, also enabled visiting guests and artists the opportunity to showcase their moves and rhythms with an area audience. Attendance at this event topped 75 people.

In addition to the performances and workshops, the weekend opened up the opportunity for small businesses to sell their artifacts and arts in an “African marketplace.” We had 6 business people (4 of whom were African American and 5 were women) rent tables at the Urbana Landmark Hotel, and speaking to all of these business people – all made a profit. We also engaged the local business community by inviting them to advertise on our website (www.cuwaddc.weebly.com), in our program, and on t-shirts. In addition, sponsoring organizations, including the Urbana Public Arts Program and the City of Urbana, were featured on these media based on their generous support of the program.

To serve low income individuals, children, and senior citizens, we incorporated several strategies into our efforts. All children under the age of 13 were invited to participate for free, and we extended this same offer to senior citizens over the age of 65. Low-income individuals were enabled to save money on their registration by volunteering some hours; thereby earning credit to participate in the workshops. These efforts were well-received by all three constituencies. We also offered volume discounts to groups registering with multiple people.

To attract a diverse audience, we reached out to at least 25 communities around the Midwest and beyond – through listservs, Facebook, leaving flyers and postcards at key venues and events, a presentation at the U of I’s Bruce D. Nesbitt African American Cultural Center, developing YouTube videos, and sending direct email invitations. While we did not track attendance by race or gender, we would note that attendance was very racially diverse, an outcome that we were ardently committed to.

As a result of this first year of activities, we learned a number of important lessons that will favorably impact our implementation of this event in future. These lessons include: 1) conduct a volunteer training, 2) establish a reimbursement policy and post it online, 3) start the workshops at 10:00 a.m. rather than 8:30 a.m., 4) avoid running dance and drum workshops concurrently, and 5) host an event like this again in Urbana.

Revised Project Budget:

A: Personnel (Project Related)	Amount Awarded from City	Matching Funds	In-Kind Donations	Total	Expenditure Notes (if Applicable)
Artistic		\$ 7,300.00		\$ 7,300.00	\$1000 honoraria to 7 performers; \$300 for band
Administration			\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	We contributed 5-10 hours/week for 9 months
Technical		\$ 200.00		\$ 200.00	Lighting & sound technician for the band
Total Personnel Expenditures	\$ -	\$ 7,500.00	\$ 5000.00	\$ 12,500.00	
B: Implementation (Cost of Project)					
Supplies and Materials			\$40.01	\$40.01	Rosin, wristbands, tickets, office supplies
Promotion/Printing		\$ 1,304.97		\$ 1,304.97	150 Programs -\$183, Posters - \$300.86, 1000 Postcards- \$138.11, ad in FolkFire Newsletter-\$150, t-shirts -\$533
Postage			\$ 4.13	\$ 4.13	Mailing postcards
Artistic Services			\$ 350	\$ 350	Design work for posters, t-shirts, postcards, programs
Space/Equipment Rental	\$ 1,950.00	\$ 240		\$ 2190.00	Rental of Landmark Hotel space and United Universalist church space
Travel/Transportation	\$ 1,800.00	\$ 303.67		\$ 2,103.67	Air travel, bus travel, taxis, mileage at state rate
Other		\$1,092.99		\$ 1092.99	State rate per diem and meals for visiting artists
Total Implementation Expenditures	\$ 3,750.00	\$ 2941.63	\$394.14	\$ 7085.77	
Total Expenditures (A + B)	\$ 3,750.00	\$ 10,441.63	\$ 5,394.14	\$ 19,585.77	