



◆ Envoys of the liberating power of art. ◆ Ambassadors of East African culture. ◆ Change agents.

"Invigorating the stage with that elusive thing called joy." – New York Times

Spirit of Uganda presents riveting programs of music and dance for audiences of all ages complemented by outstanding residency programs.

To the melodic tones of standing drums, with dramatic choreography, bright, layered rhythms, and gorgeous call-and-response vocals, a vibrant cast of performers, aged 8-18, oscillates between ferocity and softness as they bring to life the sounds and movements of East Africa.

Ambassadors for Uganda's 2.4 million orphans, these children personify the resilience and promise of Africa's next generation as they promote awareness of Uganda's dual crises of AIDS and civil war, and raise funds to support themselves and others displaced in their homeland.

"An ebullient guide, Artistic Director Peter Kasule ushers us into the patchwork of ancient kingdoms and ethnic groups that constitutes modern Uganda, combining traditional rhythms with new forms into numbers so dynamic they are transformative." – Newsday

Spirit of Uganda will tour to major venues across the USA in January-May, 2008. Confirmed engagements already include week-long engagements at the Mondavi Center in Davis (CA), the Carlsen Center (KS) and at University of Florida/Gainesville.

Tour Management & Information

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www.empowerafricanchildren.org

From the Artistic Director

"Africa has given us the soundtrack of modernity. African music, like language, has been the site of endless mutation, within Africa and beyond. It is Africa's most triumphant export. Music is where the traditions of Europe and Africa meet on equal terms. And – here is one generalization it is safe to make – Africa is where we all come from."¹



During colonization and civil war, despite poverty and other calamities, the arts have survived in Uganda and throughout all of Africa though borders may have moved and country names changed. Dance, music, and storytelling record histories and instill values. They help raise children, observe milestones, provide assurance, dispense justice, proclaim beliefs and sustain societies. They are a teacher and tool of survival.

Twenty years ago Uganda emerged from decades of brutal repression to face an even greater challenge – HIV/AIDS. Hundreds of thousands of our mothers and fathers died; our sisters and brothers were scattered and lost. Uganda's peoples were isolated from one another politically, culturally, socially and economically.

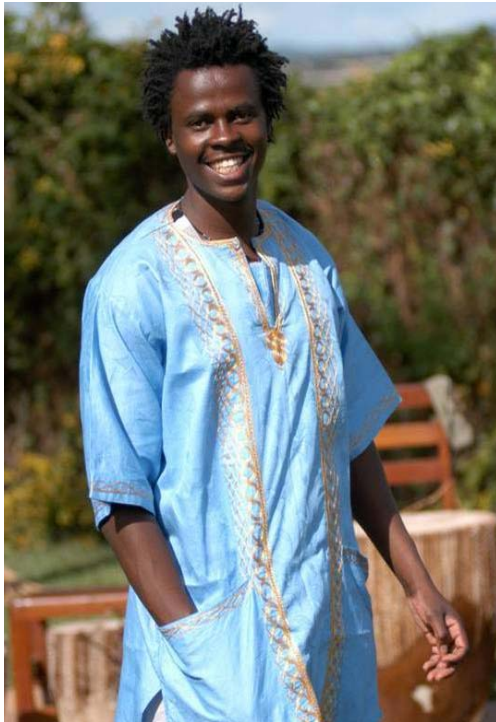
Today, thanks to a measure of stability and development in a region still torn by conflict, Uganda's culture grows thicker and richer, and also more diverse and contemporary. In this age of technology, from across our borders with Rwanda, Sudan, Republic of Congo, Tanzania and Kenya, and around the globe, ideas and experiences flow into and around our country.

The dances and songs that are performed here reflect the history, legends and beliefs of East Africa and introduce some of the new and dynamic forms that we are creating now. The music and dance we preserve, adapt and create today are integral to Uganda's renewal and will help shape tomorrow's generations.

– Peter Kasule, Artistic Director

¹ John Ryle, *Introduction: The Many Voices of Africa* in [Granta 92: The View from Africa](#) (January 2006)

Peter Kasule, Artistic Director



I was born into a family where music was all around me; it was used to educate, to praise good deeds, and express our joy and sadness.

When my parents died, there were times when my only thoughts were: what am I going to eat, where am I going to sleep, what am I going to do? And now I ask myself: how can I make a positive impact on the world?

I know that it takes just one person to make a difference in the life of a Ugandan child; I am that child. Now, I also know that it can take just one child to make a change in Africa.

Peter Kasule, Artistic Director, is a musician, choreographer and composer. As a young boy his exceptional musical talent landed him a place in the original Children of Uganda company. With “sheer exuberance” (*The New Yorker*), he directed the 2004 and 2006 tours by that group to critical and popular acclaim. He now leads Empower African Children’s artistic initiatives and training programs including the 2008 Spirit of Uganda tour. Peter researches, creates, arranges and directs all repertory and serves as Master of Ceremonies for Spirit of Uganda performances. He directs the company’s video and music recordings, develops and leads residency programs and classes on tour, and is an articulate speaker and advocate in lectures and panel discussions.

Peter was born in Kampala, Uganda in 1981. His father was a composer, dancer and teacher and his mother sang in a choir. His mother died when he was nine, his father died 4 years later of AIDS. He and his sisters and brother then lived at the Daughters of Charity Orphanage. In 1994, Peter traveled to Germany for the International Children’s Festival where his dance troupe was awarded “Best Performers.” In 1996, he traveled to the US as a scholarship student. From 1998-2001 he was the lead drummer for the African Dance Ensemble at Dallas’ prestigious Booker T. Washington High School for the Visual and Performing Arts. Peter won “Best Percussionist” at the 2000 International Jazz Festival in New Orleans and “Best Performer” at the Collin County Jazz Festival in 1998, 1999, 2000. Peter graduated in 2006 with a bachelor’s degree in Music Technology from College of Santa Fe.

“Dignified but informal, amusing but not corny, informative but never preachy, and a fine storyteller, Kasule hit the mark. He is an accomplished percussionist and if his dances are beautifully choreographed, they are even better danced.”
– Ann Arbor News

Profiles

"The artists are not just entertaining audiences. They are reaching out from an unbearable place of loss, drawing from their inner reserves the multifaceted rhythms that bear at the heart of Ugandan culture." – Chicago Tribune



My name is **Bernard Sserwanga**. I was born in a slum area called Katwe in the central part of Kampala. I was raised up by my mother after my father abandoned us when I was three years old. As I grew up, I joined a small group called Namunye troupe where I learned how to play traditional instruments and how to dance traditional dances.

In 1999 when my mother left us, I thought that my life had come to an end. In 2000, I earned the opportunity to tour to the USA and I returned again in 2004 and 2006. I have gone from performing in a slum to dancing in the most beautiful theaters. I am 17 years old and now look after my three siblings. I am expanding my skills at the Kampala Music School and plan to seek a diploma in Music, Dance and Drama at Makerere University.



My name is **Miriam Namala**. I am 8 years old and in the 3rd grade at Taibah Junior School in Kampala. My father died of AIDS when I was an infant and my mother is HIV-positive. I toured to the USA for the first time in 2006. I like to read and hope to become a teacher.

"Miriam Namala commanded the stage with an uncanny maturity. Her sweet voice and silky movement, executed while balancing a pot on her head, seemed to emanate from a profound inner vibration."
– New York Times

Repertory & Context



Larakaraka (above) In northern Uganda near the Sudanese border, this has become a rallying cry and therapeutic dance for those who have been abducted by rebels of the Lord's Resistance Army. Originally a courtship dance of the Acholi people, this fierce piece is accompanied by rhythms pounded out on gourds struck with bike spokes to attract attention. Gourds or calabashes are multi-purpose vessels -- used to fetch water, sat upon as stools; as umbrellas to limit the effects of the hot sun; when babies cry mothers lightly tap out rhythms on them to help them fall asleep.

Music and dance in Uganda today are fluid and mutable; a shifting mix of traditional and new forms that celebrate the country's rich and multiple heritages and make manifest a rich lineage of contact among cultures. With Artistic Director Peter Kasule serving as Master of Ceremonies, **Spirit of Uganda's** repertory programs explore the roots and newer offshoots of this lush and diverse nation.

Full programs feature 12-15 repertory pieces and run approximately 2 hours (with an intermission); student performances of 50 minutes are performed without intermission.

Pieces may be named after a featured instrument, a song's lyric, a particular rhythm or phrase or its place of origin. Some repertory works are drawn from specific peoples – such as the Acholi who live in northern Uganda and southern Sudan or the Baganda whose centuries-old kingdom Buganda is rooted in the court where the king was a primary patron of culture. Other works link rhythms and phrases from different regions, playing with differences and similarities to create dynamic mixes of sound and movement.

As in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa, in Uganda, music, song and dance are not generally thought of as distinct from one another; they are a continuum of expression. Depending on the originating culture, these expressions can encompass court, sacred and folk traditions. Some forms of traditional Ugandan music and dance is or was performed by individual professionals.

Many Ugandan languages are tonal and often determine the rhythms and patterns that are created. Improvisation is a hallmark of creativity and the best performers are great innovators whose moves and sounds are absorbed, transmuted and transmitted. In this way, traditions are continually evolving; as they draw from the past, each generation adds its own voices, rhythms and movements.

Sample Repertory...

Agwara This piece is inspired by a custom of the Lugbara people of the west Nile region where Uganda borders the Democratic Republic of Congo. To help pass the time and keep their spirits up on walks from village to village, horn trumpets called Agwara often accompanied travelers on their way. This piece is based on the walking patterns and tempos created in response the rhythms and melodies that the Agwara played out.

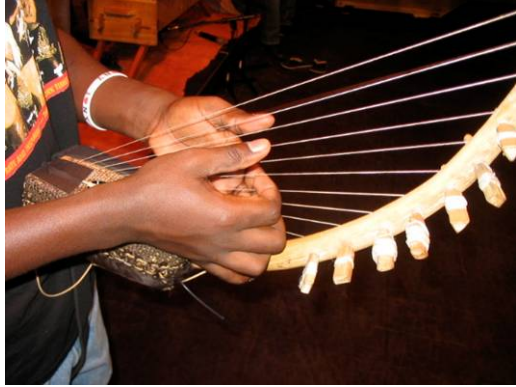
Ekimandwa Drums, Kimandwa Drums and Dance Drums are ubiquitous in Ugandan cultures, used in prayer and as a vehicle of worship, as an accompaniment at work, and played in celebration and in mourning. This ceremonial piece from the Banyankole of southwest Uganda features Ekimandwa and Kimandwa drums. Its rhythms, melodies, lyrics and movements praise the gods. It was originally only performed by elders, as the large steps and forceful movements used were thought inappropriate for young women in their traditionally brief attire.



Anjolinaye/Watoto-Bamagala 'Anjolinaye' praises the beauty of an African girl, admiring her gleaming eyes, long neck, the great teeth, etc., while 'Watoto-Bamagala' proclaims "We children of Uganda are happy to be who we are and to be awakened by such singing birds to do our chores." 'Kanyonza' (pot dance) is set to these songs, highlighting the grace and talent of the performers and showing appreciation for women of three different Ugandan regions: Ankole in the west, the Swahili-speaking people of the East, and the Acholi of the north.

Titi Katitila The Bunyoro-Kitara people celebrate one of the many extraordinary birds found in eastern Uganda in this song whose lyrics say that the titi katitila always sleeps better after seeing a friend.

Ding Ding This dance originates with the Acholi people in the northern part of Uganda who are highly regarded for their dark complexions and tall statures. Girls developing into young women freely improvise as they perform this high-energy dance with its engaging melodies and intense, syncopated rhythms. 'Ding Ding' features drums, adungu (9-string plucked harp, seen at left), okalele (a type of flute), xylophone, and a whistle.



'Omwoyo Guli Kudungudha' : 'My Heart is Pounding'

The original lyrics of this song tell of the nervous pumping heart of a man who is about to be married. Here the tune is played on the Embaire, one of the largest xylophones in the world which originated with the Abanore peoples of Northeast Uganda near the Kenyan border and was later adopted by the Basoga in the southeast of Uganda. With its full range of pitches and great resonance, the Embaire is often played by itself, without the accompaniment of drums, by six people divided into a rhythm section and a melody section. The

Embaire is played at all types of occasions.

Ekitaguriro This dance originated in the nomadic Banyankole of western Uganda who cherish the cattle they tend for a living and are sometimes ribbed by their country-men for their great devotion. This dance praises the long-horned cows of Ankole and Rwanda – found nowhere else on earth. The dancers imitate the sounds, rhythms, and the movements of the graceful cows. This piece features the omukuri, a flute used to herd the cattle.

Bakisimba This is a traditional dance of the court of Buganda, the largest ethnic group of Uganda. Originally performed only by women, it celebrates the creation of banana wine for the King. The drummers' rhythms and the dancers' movements mirror the king's words of thanks, "speaking" for him and reflecting his increasingly celebratory mood.

Photo Gallery



"Peter Kasule, a charming soul ... sparked an immediate connection with the audience – so much so that there were standing ovations, whistles and clapping." – Chicago Sun-Times



Photo Gallery

Envoys for the transformational power of art, emissaries for Ugandan and East African culture.



"Peter Kasule knows how to generate lightning-quick steps, silky muscle articulations, and wide, fun-loving smiles." – The New Yorker



"6-year-old Miriam Namala further brightens the exuberant illumination on stage. A tiny girl with an unforced powerful-yet-impish aura, she performs a solo called 'Titi Katitila' paying homage to a resplendent bird of eastern Uganda. In it, she combines hip gyrations and sweet vocalizations while balancing a ceramic pot on her head. She, like her fellow artists, is a personification of hope and resilience." – Chicago Tribune

Empower African Children & Alexis Hefley

Empower African Children is a nonprofit organization founded by Alexis Hefley to create and develop opportunities for Africa's orphaned and vulnerable children to realize their full potential. EAC is focused on providing a holistic, dynamic education so that the children who will become the next generation of African citizens are empowered to fully participate and assume leadership roles in their communities.

War, poverty and AIDS know no borders. Empower African Children's programs are initially focused in Uganda, with the aim of expanding its reach to neighboring nations. Culturally, economically, politically and geographically, Uganda is linked to the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Rwanda, Tanzania and Kenya. Empower African Children's strategies address the many and complex challenges children face in this region of the world as they strive to succeed.

EAC's Programs: Spirit of Uganda, US Scholarship Program, Holistic Care for Children, Empower African Children Secondary School.



Alexis Hefley, Executive and Producing Director

Recognized internationally for her work in nurturing Uganda's most vulnerable children, Hefley first traveled to Uganda in 1993, where she lived and worked with AIDS orphans in Kampala for 18 months before returning to the U.S. to found Uganda Children's Charity Foundation. She led UCCF and initiated and produced the award-winning Children of Uganda touring program for 10 years before launching Empower African Children in 2006.

Alexis's dedicated approach, passionate advocacy and extensive experience are at the center of Empower African Children. Working in partnership with individuals, government agencies, public institutions and corporations in the U.S. and Uganda, she has developed and implemented a wide range of initiatives that support thousands of Ugandan children and their families. Children of Uganda, the critically acclaimed performing arts company that introduced millions of Americans to East Africa's rich cultures and markedly raised awareness of the impact of AIDS and war was initiated by Alexis. In 2004, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni presented Alexis with the Ugandan North American Association's Philly Bongole Lutaaya award for her leadership role in increasing AIDS awareness.

About Uganda



Overview

The Republic of Uganda is slightly smaller than the state of Oregon and is located at the center of East Africa in one of the continent's most fertile and resource-rich areas. Uganda's borders, determined by colonial Britain, joined together more than 50 different ethnic groups and kingdoms, each with venerable and distinct governing systems, languages, beliefs and cultures. The imposition of this artificial geography prevented the establishment of a cohesive political community after independence was achieved in 1962.

The dictatorial regime of Idi Amin (1971-79) was responsible for the deaths of some 300,000 Ugandans. Guerilla war and human rights abuses under Milton Obote (1980-85) claimed at least 100,000 lives. President Yoweri Museveni has held power since 1986 and was reelected in 2006 (term expires in 2011).

In Uganda today, 50% of the population is under the age of 14. The average Ugandan lives on less than US\$1 per day. Over the last 20 years, 2.4 million children have been orphaned by HIV/AIDS and civil war and other calamities.

Nonetheless, and in the face of enormous odds, Uganda's peoples today are shaping a path notable for its relative political stability, commitment to education, cultural dynamism, and steady, if modest economic growth.

Uganda's Dual Crises

HIV/AIDS

- 40 million persons are HIV-infected worldwide (5 million new cases in 2005), 28 million in Sub-Saharan Africa (70%)
- Of more than 15 million AIDS orphans worldwide, 12 million live in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1 million are Ugandan
- AIDS kills 250 people each day in Uganda
- Ugandan HIV infection rates have leveled off to 5%; in 1993, rates were as high 30% in some regions
- Of 600,000 HIV infected persons in Uganda, only 6-8% have access to antiretroviral drugs
- HIV/AIDS has had a severe and long-term impact on the family and community structures which previously nourished a highly developed generational transfer of knowledge, resources and culture.

Map above courtesy CIA World Factbook.

Civil War

Children are at the center of Africa's longest running and most overlooked armed conflict. For twenty years, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has waged a brutal insurgency against the Ugandan government. Based in Uganda's northern districts, the LRA operates across the porous border with southern Sudan, and also along Uganda's frontiers with the Democratic Republic of Congo and Kenya.

As part of its campaign, the LRA has deliberately targeted children. The United Nations estimates that 25,000 children have been kidnapped by the LRA since 1987, but this number is now seen as woefully undercounted and may be as high as 66,000. Often forced to carry items from looted villages, many abductees are brutally exploited as soldiers and sex slaves. The majority (60%) of schools in the war regions of northern Uganda are closed.

Tens of thousands of people have been killed in the violence, with many more dying from disease and malnutrition. To date, it is estimated that 2 million people have been displaced due to the fighting. The conflict continues to drain Uganda's resources and hamper its development, costing the country's economy a cumulative total of at least \$1.33 billion, which is equivalent to 3% of GDP, or \$100 million annually.

Uganda: Other Statistics

Population

- 28,196,000 (July 2006)
- 50% of the population is under the age of 14 (compared to 20% in the U.S.)
- The median age of a Ugandan is 15 (compared to age 37 in the U.S.)
- 500,000 Ugandans are internet users (2005)
- 1.525 million Ugandans use cell phones (2005)

Literacy

- 70% of the population is literate
- Most Ugandans are bi or multi-lingual (compared to 18% of Americans)
- English is the official national language, taught in grade schools, used in courts of law and by most newspapers and some radio broadcasts. Ganda or Luganda, is the most widely used of the Niger-Congo languages, preferred for native language publications in the capital and may be taught in school. Other Niger-Congo languages, Nilo-Saharan languages, Swahili, and Arabic are also spoken.

Education

- Primary school is provided to all Ugandans under Universal Primary Education policy
- Secondary schooling (including vocational training) must be paid for at a cost of between \$300 and \$1500 per year). Only 15% of primary school graduates attend secondary school.
- A Ugandan equipped with a secondary education can expect to earn 1.7 times more than an individual with only a primary education (World Bank).

Neighbors

Uganda's rich cultures are shared across national borders. As the **Spirit of Uganda** program traverses this diverse cultural landscape, below are brief descriptions of these nations in the context of their current-day relationships with Uganda.



Sudan

The genocide in the Darfur region of Sudan lies only 500 miles to the north of Uganda's border. Sudanese refugees spill over across the border in Uganda seeking safety. After 20 years of armed conflict with the LRA which operates out of southern Sudan, the Ugandan government has now engaged the Sudanese government in peace talks.

Kenya

Largely known by most Americans from photos of safaris and Maasai tribesmen, Kenya is the main hub of economic activity in East Africa and its capital, Nairobi, has the most developed infrastructure in the

region. Uganda maintains close ties with Kenya and is its primary trade partner.

Tanzania

A neighbor to the south of Lake Victoria, Tanzania is partially responsible for establishing peace in Uganda through the overthrow of Idi Amin in 1979 after Amin invaded Tanzania. The country is widely known for Mount Kilimanjaro (19,340 feet) and its numerous game parks including the famous Serengeti National Park.

Rwanda

The small country of Rwanda is now infamous for the 1994 genocide in which an estimated one million people were killed in a period of 100 days by Hutu militias. Since then, Rwanda has been rebuilding and is peaceful neighbor to the southwest of Uganda.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

Following the genocide in Rwanda, the conflict between the Hutu and Tutsi raged on in the DRC leading to a civil war that took the lives of an estimated 3.8 million people, the largest death toll of any war since World War II. The conflict engaged nine neighboring nations, including Uganda, from 1996-2003. Despite a formal end to the war, violent conflict and instability continue today in the eastern part of the country near the Uganda and Rwanda borders.