

Soul In Motion

Study Guide

History of Group



In 1984 Michael Friend and his sister Khandi started performing as the Soul In Motion Players. The debut performance was at Michael's alma mater, Howard University during Black History Month. 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 fulltime touring company with its busy season occurring during Black History Month. The group would hit the road for week-long stints. While attending a NACA convention in October 1989, Michael began writing his first play, WE ARE AFRICA. This script was inspired by Tony Browder's book, From the Browder Files. Later that Fall, the script was completed, the roles were cast, and the group hit the road. Soul In Motion went on to tour WE ARE AFRICA for 13 seasons. During this timeframe, the group grew from just 4 company members to a full ensemble including drummers and dancers. Michael's longtime friend, Keith Stephens joined the tour as technical director. Keith's role continues to provide a key element to Soul In Motion's success.

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. Michael and Pam started collaborating on the idea of the Soul In Motion African Dancers and Drummers. This concept would slightly redefine Soul In Motion as the troupe approached the new millennium. The original members included drummer Jumbe Gilliam and dancer Phyllis Lewis.

Accepting the role of Associate Director, Pam would soon grow the group of dancers to six members while Michael built the drum battery. In a relatively short period of time Soul In Motion African Dancers and Drummers has become an energetic 11-member company, performing at some of the premier dance events in the Washington, DC area including the ever popular Dance Africa hosted by the Dance Place.

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.

About the Director



Michael Friend - Artistic Director, founded Soul In Motion Players, Inc. in 1984. Michael wrote and debuted *We Are Africa* in 1991. His other works include *Henrietta Marie*, *Malcolm*, *What If.*, and *Ile Ife - House of Love*. He started his music/acting career in 1969 with the world renowned Arthur Hall Afro-American Dance Ensemble and Theatre Advocate, in his hometown of Philadelphia, PA. Friend furthered his studies at Fisk University and graduated Howard University in 1980, receiving his B.A. degree in Communications. Michael has gone on to record/perform nationally and internationally, including a Jazz tour in 1989 to Cameroon, West Africa. Friend's regional accomplishments include performing in the Arena Stage production of Derrick Walcott's *The Odyssey* and with The Dance Theatre of Harlem at the Kennedy Center. He's a former board member of several local arts organizations: Black Rock Center for the Arts, Joe's Movement Emporium, and The Arts & Humanities Council of Montgomery County - serving as Vice President of Grants for 3 years. In 2011, as director of Soul in Motion, Michael won the prestigious Montgomery County Executive's Community Award for Excellence in the Arts and Humanities and in 2014 he was the recipient of the Empower Magazine Player Award.

The Drums

Soul In Motion plays African Drums from the Western Region of Africa including Senegal, Guinea, and Mali. The drum names are Djembe, Dununba, Sangba, and Kenkeni.



DUNUNBA

is the largest drum in the battery, has the lowest tone, and is played with 7/8 inch sticks.

SANGBA

is the medium sized drum in the battery, used to played the main melody of the rhythm, and is played with 3/4 inch sticks.

KENKENI

is the smallest drum in the battery, has the highest pitch, and is also played with 1/2 inch sticks.



DJEMBE

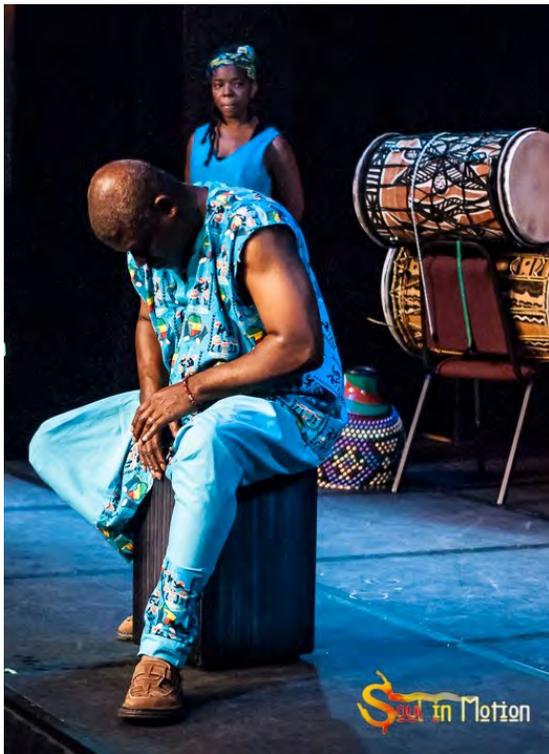
is played with your hands and is used to play the lead and accompaniment rhythms. The lead Djembefola plays the 'breaks' or 'calls' for the dancers and drummers like a conductor in an orchestra. The metal pieces protruding from the top are called KsinKsin, They make a shaker sound and add to the colorful resonance of the djembe.

Miscellaneous Instruments



SHEKERE

is a gourd that is beaded on the outside. The gourd itself is hollowed and produces a bass tone when played with the palm of your hand. The beads produce a maraca type sound when played with a back and forth motion. They vary in shape, color, and sound producing a beautiful mixture of tones when played in unison like a choir.



CAJON

(means Box in Spanish) is a popular instrument that originated in Peru. The instrument is played in a seated position and the sound is produced by striking the front portion of the *Cajon*. Like a traditional drum the *Cajon* can produce three major tones: Slap, Tone, and Bass. The *Cajon* has a hole cut in the back which allows the sound to escape. In addition, a miniature fixture of springs which gives the *Cajon* its drum snare like sound when played with the fingertips.



PANDERO

is an instrument that looks very much like a tambourine. It has a vibrant drum head along with conclave jingles on the side, which produces its unique sound. This instrument is very popular in Brazil.



ASALATUA

is made with two small gourds filled with beads and connected to a short piece of braided rope. With a slight up and down motion they make a clicking and shaker sound. Asalatua can be found in Ghana and Senegal West Africa.



QUICA

is a single-headed drum with a stick like stem attached to the middle of the drum head. It's played by rubbing a damp cloth on the stem and pressing on the drum head to generate its unique moaning sound. Its pitch ranges from very high to very low depending on the amount of pressure applied to the drum head.

Meaning of the Dances



AKROMA

The name of the dance means 'The Bird'. Since the 1950s, Akroma has been performed in Ghana to promote peace, love, and unity.



SUNU

is a rites of passage dance to celebrate the transition from childhood to being an adult. It's also performed for courtship purposes with the Mandingo culture in Mali and other parts of West Africa.



KUKU

originated in Guinea and the Ivory Coast West Africa. While it's a celebratory dance, it's also presented during the rites of passage ceremonies.



SOKO

is a dance that is presented to celebrate a good harvest. In addition Soko provides an opportunity of for young girls to show off their grace and beauty; young boys have a chance to demonstrate their strength, courage, and acrobatic skills.

Additional Information



CHAKABA (stilt walker)

is an integral part of the African dance and drum tradition. The stilt walker wears a variety of masks and costumes that represent different spirits and gods. The height of the stilt walker can be as high as 10 feet.

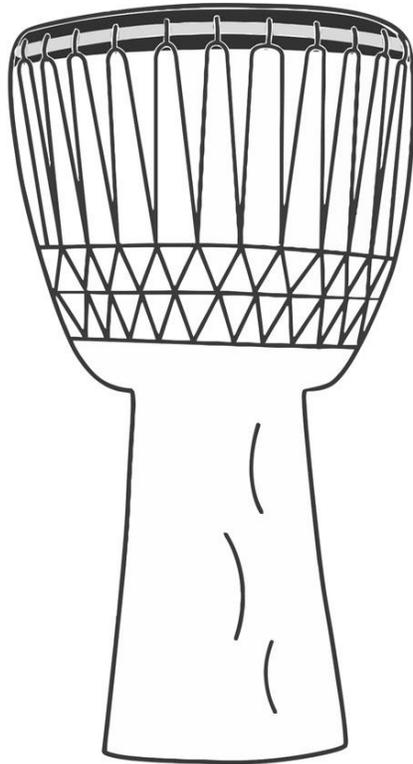
Fun stuff

Name the Countries in Africa and Color the Map



More Fun Stuff

Colorize your personal Djembe



Practice the Lamban Song

Name of song/rhythm: Lamban

Meaning of Rhythm: In parts of West Africa Lamban is played as a celebration and processional rhythm. Soul In Motion performs Lamban at the beginning of most performances. The song celebrates the lives of the Storytellers, Griots, or Jalis. The song states that we thank God for the lives of the Jalis, as they continue to bless us with the vibrant oral tradition of storytelling.

Lyrics (*call and response*):

Alla le ka jaliyaa a - Alla le ka jaliyaa a
Alla le ka jaliyaa a - Alla le ka jaliyaa a

Watch/hear Soul In Motion dance and sing Lamban at:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HMGPxVSbFNQ>

References

Baile's African Drum Works – <http://www.bailesadw.com>

Soul In Motion Players, Inc – <http://www.simpinc.org>

Pix Shark Djembe Drawing - <http://pixshark.com/djembe-drum-drawing.htm>

African Continent Drawing - <http://coloringpagesjos.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/220253-printable-map-of-the-continent-of-africa.gif>

Videos

Soul In Motion Performs on Shekere -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XIMcbVUW4ck>

Soul In Motion Interviewed on In Focus - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L0J-JPFL6Sg>

Soul In Motion Performs Kassa during 25th Anniversary -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a7aTcLbk9iU>

Soul In Motion Performs Yankadi/Makuru at the Smithsonian -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=muxtl1LDYw8>

Photo Credits

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