

Kofago Dance Ensemble

KASSOUMAI (COME TOGETHER) PRODUCTION PACKET



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EXPERIENCE THE POWER OF AFRICAN DANCE TRADITIONS AND THE BLACK EXPERIENCE IN AMERICA WITH KOFAGO DANCE ENSEMBLE!

About The Company

Kofago Dance Ensemble is a company that uses the performing arts to highlight social justice issues and promote healing. The company was founded in 2015 by Kevin McEwen, and began as an all-male company that focused on dance training from Senegal. After relocating to New York City, McEwen revived the company with a new vision that includes highlighting social justice issues and the need for healing through the performing arts. Kofago aims to use its platform to create dialogue and inspire change.

In its latest iteration Kofago's first piece entitled *Daughters of the Moon* (2018), tells the story of several young women who have dealt with multiple forms of domestic abuse and sexual assault living within the era of the #METOO movement.

Creative Approach

Kofago Dance Ensemble is a company dedicated to the healing power of dance and drumming. Founded by choreographer and dancer, Kevin McEwen, Kofago offers choreography and dance workshops that facilitate ritualistic healing processes.

Using the conventions of traditional African dance technique as their foundation, the company's work is designed to bring people into wholeness, through song and dance performance. "Each dance is done with an intention to heal," says Kevin McEwen. "It is a powerful way to push through and to elevate for our dancers, who are often facing situations of marginalization within our society. Our work allows us commune with a deeper level of who we are as a people, creating new possibilities for ourselves in the future."

Kofago's performances are truly remarkable. Combining traditional African dance technique with modern expression and healing, the company creates powerful, experiences that transport audiences to an entirely different world. Through their dances, they explore themes of joy, peace, connection and self-expression in ways that can be deeply meaningful for those who take part or watch. With their workshops and classes, they give people the opportunity to come together in a safe space where there is no judgement-allowing them to find new ways to heal emotionally and spiritually within the experience.

Kofago Dance Ensemble's repertoire spans the African Diaspora, from traditional to modern. Their dances and performances draw on a range of styles, including modern contemporary, traditional African dance forms, Afro-Caribbean dance forms, and Afro-beats choreography. Through these diverse repertoires they create powerful experiences that bring people together in an exploration of joy, peace, connection and self-expression. Every performance is imbued with meaning as Kofago works to heal individuals and communities through song and dance performance.

KEY COMPANY MEMBERS

Kevin McEwen – Founder / Director



Kevin McEwen is an accomplished dancer, educator and advocate for the African diaspora. He is the Founder/Artistic Director of Kofago Dance Ensemble, Professor at Queensborough Community College, New York University, and Lehman College.

As a researcher, lecturer, producer, and director who creates safe spaces and opportunities for Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) aspiring artists and communities, his work is rooted in the belief that everyone should have access to quality arts education, regardless of socio-economic status. His goal is to use the power of African Diaspora arts and media to amplify unheard voices and create social change.

Bakary Fall – Lead Choreographer/Fitness Coordinator



A principal choreographer with Kofago Dance Ensemble, Bakary Fall is a dancer and choreographer of traditional and contemporary West African, Capoeira, and urban dances from Dakar, Senegal. Bakary launched his career at the Third World Festival of Black Arts in Dakar, originally established by Senegalese poet and president Leopold Sedar Senghor. Bakary notably studied with Bessie award winning dancer Germaine Acogny.

His dancing and choreography has been featured in several documentaries and music videos, including Grammy award winning artists.

Crystal Craigen – Choreographer/Rehearsal Coordinator



Crystal "Ife Sekhem", is a multifaceted artist, with talents that are spread across the fields of both visual and performing arts. As a creative visual artist and holistic expressionist, her focus study is the art of rejuvenation. As a dance and dance educator, Crystal's intention is to unconditionally channel compassion and empowerment through her work, inspiring the next generation of traditional West African dancers (here favorite genre of dance).

Crystal is currently a guest artist working as the choreographer of the Queensborough Community College Dance Program, under the direction of Kevin McEwen.

Paige Stewart – Production / Stage Manager



Paige Stewart has a Business Administration degree from LaGuardia College with skills in administrative assisting, stage management and social media marketing. She is an individual whom encompasses experience with non-profit and profit arts organizations, and public schools & LLCs. She also has experience in coordination of arts, fundraising teams and also recitals/showcases. She has been managing and curating programs and shows for over a decade with organizations such as Jamaica Center for Arts & Learning, Arts East New York, National Sorority of Phi Delta Kappa Beta Omicron Chapter Inc. and Kofago Dance Ensemble, which equips her with quintessential knowledge as it relates to the sustainability and support of a growing company and successful events.

PRESENTERS TESTIMONIALS

"From the moment the dancers took the stage, the audience was captivated by their grace, energy, and passion. The combination of traditional African dance styles with contemporary movements was both innovative and mesmerizing."

TANA SIROIS - CULTURE LAB L.I.C.



"Kofago had their first show at our "Making Moves Dance Festival" in 2018. We've seen their growth over the past five years and we truly value what they bring to our organization and the community."

COURTNEY FRENCH - JAMAICA CENTER
FOR ARTS AND LEARNING

"As a presenter at the Jamaica Performing Arts Center, I have had the privilege of hosting numerous talented artists and performers, but I must say, Kofago's "KASSOUMAI" show premiere in August 2022 was truly a stand-out performance."

STEPHEN PINK - JAMAICA PERFORMING ARTS
CENTER



"It was an absolute privilege to have Kofago perform on our stage at Jersey City Theater Company. The level of talent and professionalism displayed by the entire cast was truly awe-inspiring. From the moment the lights went down and the music started playing, the audience was completely mesmerized. Kofago's performance was a beautiful fusion of dance, music, and storytelling that left everyone in the room captivated."

OLGA LEVINA - JERSEY CITY THEATER
COMPANY

KOFAGO REPERTOIRE



Kofago Dance Ensemble boasts a wide range of dances from across the African diaspora, from traditional Senegalese “Sabar” technique to Haitian folkloric dance technique, Modern contemporary to Guinea and Mali traditional West African. Each piece reflects the complexity and diversity within the African heritage, and each performance is an opportunity for audiences to explore cultures through movement. Kofago’s repertoire is not only expansive in its scope but also in its reach and impact - it seeks to bridge cultures, create conversations, and foster understanding between people from all walks of life.

Please go to our website for selections of our repertoire: <https://kofagodance.net/repertoire>

Past Presenting Venues

New York

Queensborough Performing Arts Center
Culture Lab LIC
Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning
Jamaica Performing Arts Center
Black Spectrum Theater
Queens Theater
Gibney Studios
Weeksville Cultural Center
Abrons Center
Malcolm X and Betty Shabazz Cultural Center
The Ailey Citigroup Theater

New Jersey

Jersey City Theater Company
Hudson County Schools of Technology
South Orange Performing Arts Center

Washington, DC

Joy of Motion Dance Center

Baltimore, MD

Eubie Blake Cultural Center



KASSOUMAI (COME TOGETHER)

Show run time: **90 minutes**

Number of dancers: 15

Number of Musicians: 5

Music: Various Artists

"Kassoumai" is a dynamic and colorful performance that showcases the diverse and vibrant culture of Africa through dance. The show consists of four distinct choreographies that each offer a unique and captivating representation of the continent's rich cultural heritage.

The first piece is a modern dance that showcases the contemporary spirit of Africa, incorporating cutting-edge movements and innovative styling. The second piece is a Caribbean-inspired dance that brings to life the energetic rhythms and dynamic beats of the Caribbean islands.

The third and fourth pieces are both West African-inspired dances that draw on the rich history and traditions of the region. These pieces incorporate intricate and graceful movements, accompanied by lively and rhythmic music, to create a truly unforgettable performance.

"Kassoumai" can be performed at any theater location, as the show is designed to be flexible and adaptable to different spaces. The talented performers, with their captivating energy and passion for dance, will bring the magic of the African diaspora to any stage.

Whether you're a fan of dance, music, or culture, "Kassoumai" is a must-see performance that promises to leave you enthralled and inspired.





An Immigrants Story



Choreography by Annelise Berthelot

"An Immigrants Story" is a modern contemporary choreography created by Annelise Berthelot, a talented dancer and choreographer. This powerful piece is a representation of Berthelot's own personal journey as an immigrant, leaving her home country in search of new opportunities and a passion for the performing arts.

The choreography tells the story of her journey, from the struggles and challenges she faced, to the triumphs and successes she achieved along the way. Through fluid movements and intricate footwork, Berthelot masterfully communicates the emotions and experiences that come with leaving behind everything you know and starting a new life in a foreign land.

This piece is not only a testament to Berthelot's incredible talent and creativity, but it also serves as a symbol of hope and resilience for all those who have faced similar challenges in their own lives.



Krormoussou Dogomoussou

Choreography by Aicha Konate

"Krormoussou Dogomoussou," choreographed by Aicha Konate, is a poignant and evocative dance piece that explores the themes of journey and coming of age through the lens of sisterhood. The choreography beautifully narrates the individual paths of each sister, depicting their unique experiences and growth as they navigate through life's complexities. The movements are intricately designed to reflect their personal struggles, triumphs, and the evolving dynamics of their relationships.

As the dance progresses, there is a powerful rekindling of shared memories and moments, which is expressed through a series of synchronized and emotive sequences. These moments capture the essence of their bond, highlighting both the joys and challenges of reuniting after significant personal change.

The choreography utilizes a blend of contemporary dance and traditional elements, creating a rich, layered narrative that is both universal and deeply personal. "Dormoso Koromoso" is not just a dance; it is a celebration of sisterhood, resilience, and the enduring connection that remains, no matter where life takes us.





Remembrance



Choreography by Kevin McEwen

"Remembrance," a poignant choreographic work by Kevin McEwen, stands as a moving tribute to the loved ones who have passed away over the past year, with a special focus on those who were associated with the company. This piece uniquely blends the emotional depth of loss with the rich traditions of African dance, creating a narrative that is both personal and universally resonant.

At the heart of "Remembrance" are two central African dance techniques: "Bara" and "Madacadon." The Bara dance, deeply spiritual in nature, is a key element of the choreography. It symbolizes the act of pulling down ancestral spiritual energy, allowing the dancers to connect with and honor the spirits of the departed. This connection is visualized through movements that seem to reach upwards towards the heavens, then cascade gracefully down, as if drawing celestial comfort and wisdom to the earthly realm.

"Remembrance" is a journey through grief, memory, and ultimately, celebration. The dancers embody the sorrow of loss, the reverence of remembrance, and the joy of celebrating the lives of those who have moved on. Through this piece, McEwen not only showcases his mastery of African dance techniques but also crafts an emotional landscape that invites the audience to reflect, remember, and rejoice in the memories of those no longer physically present but forever cherished in spirit.



Wongo

Choreographer: Bakary Fall

"Wongo" is a traditional courtship dance from the Peul people of Senegal, reinterpreted by the acclaimed choreographer Bakary Fall. The dance is performed by the family of the bride, who brings the bride and offerings to the family of the groom to celebrate the union of two families through the marriage of the bride and groom.

The choreography is a celebration of love, tradition, and community, and is characterized by vibrant, energetic movements. The dancers move in unison to the fast-paced beat, using their bodies to express the joy and excitement of the occasion.

The performance is a visual feast, with the dancers adorned in brightly colored traditional costumes, adding to the festive atmosphere. "Wongo" is a powerful representation of the rich cultural heritage of the Peul people and a thrilling celebration of love and unity.





The POWER of N'dup Lii



Choreographer: Bakary Fall

"The POWER of N'dup Lii" is a breathtaking piece of choreography that showcases the national dance of Senegal, Sabar. Conceived and choreographed by Bakary Fall, this performance brings together various Sabar dances such as Bara M'baye, Fas, Yaba, and Kaolack to create a harmonious and electrifying fusion of movement and rhythm.

The Sabar dance is named after the drums used to play the music for the dance, and is steeped in the rich cultural heritage of Senegal. In "The POWER of N'dup Lii," Bakary has expertly blended these different dances to create a mesmerizing performance that showcases the grace and energy of Sabar. The intricate footwork and fluid movements are synchronized with the pulsating beats of the drums to create a mesmerizing visual and auditory experience.

The performers' energy and passion are evident in every movement as they bring the dance to life with their skillful footwork, fluid gestures, and energetic jumps. The interplay of light and shadows, combined with the lively music, creates a visual feast that is sure to captivate audiences of all ages.

It is a must-see performance that brings the beauty and excitement of the Sabar dance genre to life. With its blend of traditional and contemporary elements, this piece of choreography is a testament to the timeless appeal of Sabar and the rich cultural heritage of Senegal.



Soul Resonance: The Spiritual Journey

Choreographer: Patriann Edwards

"Soul Resonance," is a choreographic work that transcends the boundaries of afro diasporic spirituality. This empowering and passionate dance work by US based Trinidad and Tobago Interdisciplinary artist, & multicultural educator Patriann Edwards, serves as a conduit for fellowship, divine gratitude, and a call to a higher understanding that the spirit of God resides within and around us, guiding our journey through life's myriad experiences.

The choreography invites the audience into the sacred realm of the Spiritual Baptist faith to connect with their natural rhythmic vibrations, and find joy, satisfaction and gratitude in the present moment. Rooted in the movement phenomena of the Spiritual Baptist faith, this work embodies the essence of a spiritual congregation, exhibiting the ever powerful presence connecting "the earthly", to the divine Creator. It gives artistic testament to the profound vibration of the Holy Spirit as the guiding force, in the Spiritual Baptist faith. A divine transformation for the performing ensemble, it brings increased awareness and deep appreciation to the presence of the Afro-Diasporic Spiritual community.

Each gesture communicates the vibrations, faith, resilience, strength, togetherness, and enduring spirit that characterize Kofago's journey, mirroring the resilience, & strength of the Spiritual Baptist faith.

"Soul Resonance" is more than a performance; it is a testament to the enduring power of faith, art, and the human spirit, beautifully articulated through the artistic prowess of Kofago.





Foundation



Choreographer: Crystal Craigen

“Foundation” by Crystal Craigen, is a mesmerizing fusion of various West African dance styles.

The piece begins with the SORSONET rhythm from the Boke maritime region of Guinea, typically performed by young girls during initiation and to thank their mothers after the harvest. The dancers move gracefully and rhythmically to the beats of the SORSONET, portraying the beauty and joy of the Baga people’s culture.

The dance then transitions to the DOUDOUMBA rhythm from the Kurussa region of Guinea, originally a warrior dance where boys of different age groups competed against each other. Now, it is practiced more peacefully on all holiday occasions, and even women participate in it. The dancers perform with strength and energy, showcasing the power and resilience of the Hamana people’s traditions.

The piece concludes with the SOKO rhythm from the Faranah region of Guinea, originally used to accompany the dance of the un-initiated males in the months before the initiation ritual. Nowadays, SOKO is popularly played and danced throughout Guinea for weddings, ceremonies, and other festive occasions. The dancers move with joy and enthusiasm, celebrating the vibrant and lively Komanko people’s culture.

Overall, “Foundation” is a captivating dance piece that showcases the diversity and richness of West African dance traditions. Crystal’s choreography brilliantly fuses different styles and rhythms, creating a beautiful and engaging performance that celebrates the heritage and spirit of the people of Guinea.

SUGGESTED PROGRAM PAIRINGS



Kofago has multiple choreography options that can be put together for a show. The needs of the presenter i dictated by what show is put together. Our most requested performances are associated with cultural holidays that come around on an annual basis:

Black History Month
Caribbean Heritage Month
Juneteenth
Kwanzaa

Here are some examples of performances below that can be adjusted to fit the needs of any presenter:

KWANZAA PRESENTATION

1. Black Dance History Video 1 (5 minutes)
2. An Immigrants Story (5 minutes)
3. Black Dance History Video 2 (5 minutes)
4. Foundation (10 minutes)
5. Soul Resonance (7 minutes)
6. Black Dance History Video 3 (5 minutes)
7. Drum Call (5 minutes)
8. Krormouso Dogomouso (5 minutes)
9. Wongo (15 minutes)

BLACK HISTORY MONTH PRESENTATION

1. What is Kwanzaa Video (10 minutes)
2. Krormouso Dogomouso (5 minutes)
3. Wongo (15 minutes)
4. Soul Resonance (12 minutes)
5. An Immigrants Story (5 minutes)
6. Drum Call (5 minutes)
7. Sabar Suite (15 minutes)

CARIBBEAN HERITAGE MONTH PRESENTATION

1. An Immigrants Story (5 minutes)
3. Caribbean Culture Video(5 minutes)
4. Soul Resonance (7 minutes)
5. Drum Call (5 minutes)
6. Remembrance (12 minutes)
7. Is WE! (20 minutes)

JUNETEENTH PRESENTATION

1. Juneteenth history video (7 minutes)
2. Drum Call (5 minutes)
3. Krormouso Dogomouso (5 minutes)
4. Soul Resonance (7 minutes)
5. Foundation (12 minutes)
6. An Immigrants Story (5 minutes)
7. Sabar Suite (15 minutes)

PROGRAM INFORMATION

Kofago Dance Ensemble is a dynamic group of dancers and musicians that are dedicated to preserving and promoting the rich cultural heritage of the African diapsora. With a focus on both traditional and contemporary dance forms, the ensemble brings the energy, beauty, and excitement of the African diapsora to audiences all over the world.

Kofago is comprised of talented dancers who are trained in a wide range of traditional dance styles, including Sabar, Kutiro, Guinean, Haitian, Malian, Caribbean folklore, modern contemporary and more. They perform with an incredible level of energy, passion, and skill, capturing the essence of each dance form and bringing it to life for audiences of all ages.

In addition to their electrifying performances, Kofago is also committed to educating audiences about the cultural significance of each dance form. They strive to create a deeper appreciation for African diasporic dance and music by sharing its history, meaning, and traditions.

Whether you are a seasoned dance aficionado or a newcomer to African diasporic dance, Kofago Dance Ensemble promises to transport you to a world of rhythm, beauty, and energy. Come and experience the vibrant and captivating world of African diapsora dance with Kofago Dance Ensemble!



Full length performances and abbreviated performances can be designed for audiences of all ages and backgrounds.

Even wood floor, preferably sprung (must not be a concrete floor).

Marley dance flooring covering entire dance surface.

Minimum stage dimensions 40 feet wide by 32 feet deep.

House sound system with sufficient amplification and speaker coverage of entire auditorium, as well as a minimum of two stage monitors with independent control.

Computer for audio playback.

Speaker system with iPhone media playback aux cable for company classes.

Minimum 6-8 hour tech time (not including setup of lighting and floor)

OUTREACH AND WORKSHOPS

Kofago is known for its versatility and flexibility when it comes to working with organizations with diverse needs and requirements. Whether you are looking for a dynamic and high-energy dance performance, or a fun and interactive workshop, the ensemble has the expertise to meet your specific needs.

At the request of the organization, Kofago can offer both dance and drum classes. These classes are taught by experienced and knowledgeable instructors who are passionate about sharing the cultural heritage of African diaspora. Participants will have the opportunity to learn the basic steps, movements, and rhythms of traditional African dances in a fun and interactive setting.

Whether you are looking to add some excitement to your event, or simply want to learn more about African diasporic dance and music, Kofago is the ideal choice for organizations with diverse needs and requirements.

Traditional Dance Workshops

An exclusive dance experience designed for individuals looking to improve their dancing skills and take their abilities to the next level. This workshop focuses on a range of traditional West African dance styles including Guinea, Senegal and Mali and offers a supportive and challenging learning environment for students of all levels. Whether you're a beginner or an advanced dancer, Kofago Traditional Dance Workshop offers a unique opportunity to further your dance training and reach your full potential.

African Diaspora Drum Workshops

A dynamic and immersive drumming experience for individuals seeking to master the art of percussion. Taught by our resident drummers, this workshop covers a variety of styles including Senegalese, Guinean, Malian, and Haitian drumming styles. Students will learn a variety of drumming styles through structured lessons, opportunities for hands-on practice, and opportunities for performance and feedback. Whether you're a beginner looking to pick up a new hobby or an experienced drummer looking to take your skills to the next level, our Drum Class offers a unique and exciting opportunity to explore the world of percussion.







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