



NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Emily Everett at 413-545-4482 or emilyeverett@admin.umass.edu

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 5, 2014

- WHAT:** SPIRIT OF UGANDA
- WHEN:** Wednesday, March 5, 7:30 p.m.
- WHERE:** Fine Arts Center Concert Hall
University of Massachusetts Amherst
- TICKETS:** Call 1-800-999-UMAS or 545-2511 for tickets or go online to <http://www.fineartscenter.com/>
- IMAGES:** To download images relating to this press release please go online to <https://fac.umass.edu/Online/PressImages>

“There is so much grief coming out of Africa that it’s good to report something upbeat for a change. The dynamic host, artistic director and performer Peter Kasule, whose energy sets the pace for his dancers and singers, can also galvanize an audience into dancing in its seats. This show makes it clear there is still plenty of spirit in Uganda.”

– *Financial Times*

MUSIC AND DANCE OF UGANDA COMES TO UMASS’ FINE ARTS CENTER

Produced by Empower African Children, Spirit of Uganda is a professional training and touring program that brings its theatrical song and dance performances to North America every other year. Under the artistic direction of Peter Kasule, these young dancers and musicians share cultural traditions from East Africa and introduce some of the dynamic music and dance forms that are being created now. To the melodic tones of standing drums, with dramatic choreography, bright, layered rhythms, and call-and-response vocals, a vibrant cast of 22 performers, ages 10–20, bring to life these sounds and movements at the UMass Fine Arts Center on Wednesday, March 5th at 7:30 p.m. There will be a pre-concert talk by Alexis Hefley, Founder/President, Empower African Children at 6:30 p.m. at the University Club.

The performance will include a wide range of styles, from a capella duets to raucously drummed dance numbers including the entire company. While drumming and vocals are the focus of the music, traditional instruments like *embaire*, a large long xylophone, and *omukuri*, a flute most often used to herd cattle, are also used to enhance the arrangements.

Artistic Director Peter Kasule helps to explain the meaning behind the songs and dances – whether a common tribal courtship dance, or a personal tale of heartbreak and betrayal. The program includes popular favorites like “Obutebenkevu,” a street dance performed by the company’s girls while they balance traditional clay pots on their heads, and “Kyemuli Kyetwaali, Kyetuli Kyemuliba,” which showcases the boys’ drumming skills in a selection of rhythms from Uganda and elsewhere in Africa.

Repertory works may be named after a featured instrument, a song’s lyric, a particular rhythm or phrase, or its place of origin. Some pieces 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. Other pieces are suites that may link rhythms and phrases from several regions, playing with differences and similarities to combine sounds and movements in new ways.

Kasule explains that the music and dances have significance beyond the obvious themes. “For those of us who have lost our parents, our elders and neighbors, who witness the daily struggle to carry on, these rhythms and patterns are a comfort, they are our teachers and tools of survival,” Kasule writes. “Music and dance in Uganda today are fluid and dynamic – a shifting mix of traditional and new forms that celebrate the country’s rich and multiple heritages and embody the connections among peoples and across borders.”

Tickets for Spirit of Uganda are \$38, \$35 and \$15; Five College, GCC, STCC students and youth 17 and under are \$10. For tickets call the Box Office at 545-2511, toll-free at 800-999-UMAS, or purchase online at fineartscenter.com. The Fine Arts Center’s season is sponsored by Baystate Health and Health New England, with additional event support coming from WEIB 106.3 Smooth FM.

PHOTOS

Hi-res photos available for download: <https://fac.umass.edu/Online/article/Images>.

PRESS PASSES

A limited number of press passes are available. Please contact Shawn Farley at 413-545-4159 or sfarley@admin.umass.edu.

ABOUT THE FAC

The Fine Arts Center, located on the UMass Amherst campus, is a presenter of music, dance, theater and the visual arts, bringing hundreds of outstanding and provocative artists to the Pioneer Valley for over 35 years.

-END-