

ASASE YAA

AFRICAN AMERICAN DANCE THEATER



Founder and Artistic Director: Yao Ababio

ENRICH. EDUCATE. ENTERTAIN.

ABOUT THE ASASE YAA AFRICAN AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

The Asase Yaa African American Dance Theater was founded in the summer of 2001. Artistic Director Yao Ababio created the esteemed company based on his love for African traditions and his extensive performing arts experience. Under his leadership, the company has distinguished itself in the dance and drum world for its dynamic and high energy performances as well as for its commitment to excellence and discipline.

Wherever they perform, the Asase Yaa African American Dance Theater becomes the audience's favorite African dance and drum company, a reputation that we have worked diligently to maintain.



The architects, musicians, dancers and staff approach their work from a holistic position. They are lifelong students who are disciplined and committed to maintaining the daily rituals of African philosophy and culture. They have also traveled extensively throughout the continent, which as afforded them the opportunity to make their performances more informed, dynamic and reflective of the African aesthetic.

Our authentic and disciplined approach to the field has afforded them great opportunities in a relatively short period of time. They have had the honor of being a part of many hugely popular productions, including the VHI's Hip Hop Honors Awards, the premiere of HBO's Sing Your Song documentary about the life of Harry Belafonte (at the World Famous Apollo Theater), DanceAfrica New York (at the Brooklyn Academy of Music), Dance Africa Chicago, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in Harlem, the Hazlett Theater in Pittsburgh, Symphony Space on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, and the International African Arts Festival in Brooklyn. Around the world, the company has traveled and performed in Japan, Korea, Paris, Amsterdam, Iceland, Ghana, Guinea, Angola, and many other nations.

In the university and collegiate arena, we have performed at New York University's Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts and Long Island University's Kumble Theater. We have also performed (or conducted workshops at) Arizona State University, Bucknell, Princeton, Scranton, Howard, and many others.

OUR MISSION

Asase Yaa Cultural Arts Foundation is a 501c3 non-profit organization that is dedicated to fulfilling our core tenets to Enrich, Educate, Entertain, and promote the importance of cultural performing arts to youth and adults in our community. We aspire to empower and strengthen our youth by offering them an opportunity to learn, study, and experience the history, movement, and beauty of African Diasporic dance, music, and culture at its highest level. Our programs are designed to ensure that our youth understand the roots and value of culture in the arts, which we hope will inspire and propel them to become strong leaders capable of preserving and elevating our culture and communities in the future.

What Makes Asase Yaa Dance Theater Unique!!!

17 Original Productions

SINCE THE INCEPTION OF THE ASASE YAA AFRICAN DANCE THEATER PROGRAM WE HAVE SELF-PRODUCED AND PRESENTED 17 ORIGINAL PRODUCTIONS FEATURING DANCE AND DRUMS AND COLLABORATED WITH NEARLY TWO DOZEN OF THE MOST PRESTIGIOUS AFRICAN DANCE COMPANIES IN THE NATION. IN ADDITION, SOME 1000 PERFORMERS HAVE GRACED OUR STAGES.

Award Winning Honors

WE'RE THE FIRST US-BASED AFRICAN DANCE COMPANY IN HISTORY TO BE NOMINATED FOR THE HIGHLY-COVETED BESSIE AWARD FOR OUR PRODUCTION OF THE "DJEMBE IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM" (2014). IN 2017, WE ALSO WON OUR FIRST BESSIE AWARD FOR IN THE PLAY, "HEALING SEVENS."

Black Owned

WE ARE ONE OF THE FEW BLACK-OWNED AFRICAN CULTURAL ARTS ORGANIZATIONS IN BROOKLYN, SPURRED BY A GENERATIONAL TORCH THAT HAS BEEN PASSED ON AND MAINTAINED FOR OVER THREE AND A HALF DECADES, WHICH INCLUDES 17 YEARS WITH OUR CURRENT ORGANIZATION.



ASASE YAA AFRICAN AMERICAN DANCE THEATER REPERTOIRES

An Ananse Tale

“An Ananse Tale” is a concept that came from Asase Yaa African American Dance Theater, wanting to teach African culture through a method of storytelling used amongst the Akan of Ghana, West Africa, for centuries. These Ananse stories teach cultural and ethical values to the community at large. While telling our story we used a wide range of African dance and music styles from all over the Diaspora including Ghana, Guinea, Congo, Haiti, Cuba, Nigeria, Senegal, and African American art forms. We used these many cultures to show the connection of the many African cultures throughout the world. Ananse stories are now famous all over the world. This full length evening work was Asase Yaa African American Dance Theater first self produced concert. Executive Director K. Osei Williams and Founder and Artistic Director Yao Ababio conceptualized this performance in 2006 and finished the full concept in 2008. The full concert was performed at Kumble theater November 2008. This performance shows Ananse as a trickster, manipulator, and divisive figure. The community with the help of Nyame (Sky God) and Asase Yaa (Mother Earth) show Ananse these divisive antics could never gain you respect or power.



Drum love

'Drum Love' is a classic love story, rites of passage, and coming-of-age tale complete with a tragic heroine, suitors, and concerned family. The work follows the time-honored format of African ballets expertly produced by the touring national companies of West African countries. It is performed by Asase Yaa African-American Dance Theater, a recognized top traditional company whose artists have been raised within African traditions and enjoy international professional careers. This particular presentation of folkloric dance, song, and instrumentation, however, narrates a story told from a contemporary male perspective, inspired by urban experiences, and realistically reflects the kind of unbalanced love witnessed time and time again in the African dance community.

Conceived, choreographed, and directed by Artistic Director Yao Ababio, 'Drum Love' tells the story of a young girl who falls for three artists of The Big City. She ignores warnings to avoid them and becomes involved with all three. Eventually, she gets pregnant, is rejected, and realizes that she has created a situation that will bring shame to her family. In the end, she embraces the support of her family and friends. Incorporating dance, song, and live music, the completed work will engage audiences with the excitement and vigor of African dance while presenting an urban twist on traditional themes. It will be performed by seven dancers, five drummers, and a conventional Malian band.



GHANA: THE PLACE WHERE THE CHIEF SLEEPS

The high priestess representing Asase Yaa (mother goddess earth) was in control of all of the Animals and the four elements that made her complete: earth, water, fire, and wind. Two spirits, representing the balance of mankind, the male and the female initiate, walked with her. When it was time for the high priestess to groom and teach a young boy who was to be a great chief the ways of the world, she taught him about the four elements and gave him special powers - of strength, vision, and leadership.

As the high priestess was doing her work, scavengers disrupted the shrines of the four elements, not knowing the extraordinary powers they were dealing with. To the amusement of the high priestess, they became overwhelmed with the energy of the elements. The female initiates, seizing the opportunity to disrupt the order of things, manipulates the scavengers with evil, aggressive energy and steals the high priestess' primary source of power as the scavengers attack. Stripped of her powers, powerless, and abused, this high priestess was rescued by the male initiate and the four elements. They lift her and take them to the now-adult chief. The chief has matured and is being celebrated in his community when Asase Yaa arrives. The Chief attempts to remind her of her grace, power, and beauty, but she cannot remember. Asase Yaa regains her memory and strength, confronts the spirit, and strips her of the power. The chief and his warriors prepare to destroy the evil spirit completely, but in proper regal and divine form, Asase Yaa spares the spirit and explains that reform and upliftment are best.



DJEMBE IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

Djembe in the New Millennium is representative to the culture of Asase Yaa African American Dance Theater. Our company represents the next generation of traditional and contemporary African dance and music. Djembe in The New Millennium showcases the progression and experiences of the life of Djembe in modern day New York City. With the use of rhythms and dances derived from Guinea, Mali, Senegal, and Brooklyn, NY; this performance historicizes and documents significant moments of West African drumming and dance within New York City as a Mecca where artists of the genre continue to meet, exchange, and celebrate legacies old and new.



ASASE YAA

AFRICAN AMERICAN DANCE THEATER



**For all booking inquiries for the Asase Yaa African American Dance Theater
EMAIL: INFO@ASASEYAAENT.ORG PHONE: 646.468.0710
80 HANSON PLACE SUITE 204, BROOKLYN, NY11217**