



## Batalo Dance Fest – August 23 and 24 2014

### Background

Batalo East, a Kampala-based not-for-profit company, limited by guarantee, integrating traditional art forms with urban and hip-hop culture, held the second annual Batalo Dance Fest at the National Theatre in Kampala on August 23 and 24 2014.

The Dance Fest capped off lessons learned from the pilot Dance Fest in December 2013 and the success of four traditional and urban dance workshops – The Equation – held at the National Theatre during the first half of 2014. In collaboration with partners, Batalo East aimed to do the following through this Dance Fest:

- Build on the success of earlier events to show the relevance and salience of urban and traditional dance styles for young people in Uganda
- Promote a regional and international network of like-minded artists, young people and community in support of the development of traditional and urban dance
- Cultivate a public in support of developing traditional dance as a professional artistic endeavor and as an important element in the development of young people



Introductory top rock and Afrika Arts Kollektive musical instrument workshop, Afro House eliminations and Makerere University Drummers

### Results – Facts and Figures

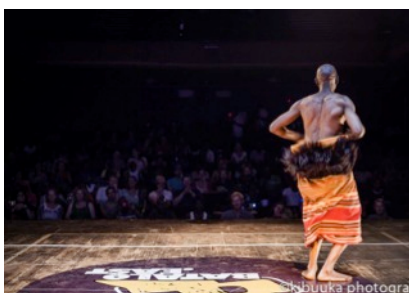
- Over the course of the two day event, over 500 spectators took in the eliminations, finals and showcases at the CICP space and the National Theatre Main Auditorium
- Over 80 dancers competed on 23 August for final spots in the six competition categories: Top Rock, Hip Hop, Krumping, Style Yake, Crew Battle and Afro House
- Over 100 dancers and young people participated in Afro House Spirit workshops given by Babson of Serial Stepperz and Wanted Posse, thanks to the support of Alliance Francaise Kampala. Babson delivered a series of daily Afro House Spirit workshops from 25 – 31 August, at the National Theatre and the community with Breakdance Project Uganda at Sharing Youth Centre, Nsambya, engaging young professional dancers in a progressive introduction to House and Afro House basics and techniques – culminating in a dance video shot throughout Kampala inner-city streets, and featuring Babson and members of the Afro House workshops.
- Over 50 young dancers participated in a Hip Hop Fundamentals workshop delivered by Issa from Sarakasi Trust in Kenya, who joined the Batalo East team for the Dance Fest to kick off regional collaboration in traditional-meets urban dance, providing professional judging for the Dance Fest as well as Hip Hop workshops.



Afro House Eliminations, Sosolya Dance Company performing, and Hip Hop Judging Panel, including Issa from Sarakasi Trust

#### Highlights of the festival include:

- A mixed crew of the Rina and Street Dancers crew were supported by Batalo East and the Nyavu Network in Goma, DRC, to showcase and compete in the Crew Battle, Hip Hop, Afro House and Krumping categories. An improvement on their performance in 2013, the Goma crew took first place in the Crew Battles and second in Krumping. They also delivered a powerful traditional meets urban showcase performance.
- The Dance Fest also saw participants coming from as far away as Kitgum, Jinja and Kasese to compete at the Dance Fest, highlighting the salience and reach of the 'traditional meets urban' concept for young people and artists throughout Uganda.
- In addition to the performance by the Goma crew, the Dance Fest featured a number of unique traditional meets urban showcases by Waiswa, a renowned dancer from Kamuli in eastern Uganda, the Sosolya Dance Company, Makerere University Drummers, Arafat Sengoma (Winner of Uganda's Hot Steps), Inspirations Dance Company, and Ousman 'Babson' Sy of France's Serial Stepperz.
- In partnership with Guerilla Arts, Batalo organized the inaugural Dance Lab in advance of the Finals on 24 August, bringing together several dozen dancers to engage with panelists on the issues of where dance is and should be going in Uganda. This concept will be developed further in the coming months, as we gain feedback and momentum on this issue! Panelists for this inaugural session included Jill Pribyl from Makerere University, Sam Okello of Mzizi Ensemble, Samuel Lutaaya Tebandeke from Guerilla Arts, Abramz Tekya from Breakdance Project Uganda, Roger Masaba from Footsteps Dance Company, and Julius Lugaya from Dance Week.
- Batalo also piloted a collaboration with Afrika Arts Collective, focusing on making dance and musical instruments out of trash and recycled material.
- Fenon Entertainment produced lighting for the National Theatre's first urban meets traditional dance battle unlike anything the Theatre had seen before, raising the standard for performances at the Uganda National Cultural Centre.
- An active supporter of the arts in Kampala, The Sound Cup, run by musician Maurice Kirya, sponsored the DJs who spun for the Dance Fest and Definition Africa provided the winner's and team t-shirts for the event
- In partnership with Alliance Francaise Kampala and Sarakasi Trust, Batalo hosted Babson and Issa as guest judges and teacher of Afro House Spirit and Hip Hop, respectively, forming new partnerships regionally and internationally – setting the stage for future collaborations.
- Female finalists in Afro House, Top Rock and Crew Battles showed the increased presence of strong female dancers and young people in the Batalo movement – setting the bar for future events.
- Respected traditional dance artist and teacher, Amina, from Ndere Centre, who is also a member of the Board of Governors of Batalo, presided as a judge for a number of battles and cheering spectator for the rest of the time!



Traditional Dancer Waiswa, Judges Babson, Issa, and Amina, Dance Lab Panelists



**Next Steps**

Building on the success of this Dance Fest, the Batalo East team will continue to develop the skills and identity of young people and dancers through The Equation, both in Kampala and elsewhere in Uganda, through 2014/15, and actively pursue regional and international collaborative opportunities to continue to build the network of traditional meets urban and introduce additional concepts of story-telling through hip hop dance theatre, and advocacy for the arts through the Dance Lab.

We greatly valued your participation in Batalo Dance Fest, and look forward to discussing with you possibilities for collaboration in 2015/16 on the Batalo East program at your earliest convenience!



Batalo Dance Fest was made possible in partnership with:



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