



Batalo East One Project Report – Traditional Meets Urban

Background

Batalo East, a Kampala-based dance organization integrating traditional art forms with urban and hip-hop culture, launched a pilot dance festival, Batalo East One, on 7 & 8 December 2013 at Lohana Academy in Kololo, Kampala.

The aim of the event was to test the idea and appeal of mixing urban and traditional dance forms in a dance battle and showcase environment, developing:

- young people and communities who nurture traditional arts as part of their identity in a rapidly modernizing and globalizing world, and
- artists who represent the region on the international urban dance stage, bringing a strong traditional dance culture, fused with internationally-recognized urban dance styles.



Results – Facts and Figures

- Approximately 700 spectators passed through the doors of Lohana Academy to take part in and view the eliminations, finals and showcases for both days of the event
- Over 70 dancers competed on 7 December for final spots in the six competition categories: Top Rock, Hip Hop, Krumping, Style Yake, Crew Battle and Afro House
- Nearly 50 dancers attended popping and locking workshops at the National Theatre given by Batalo East during the week of the festival
- Batalo East reached out to over 30 inmates at Lira Prison, as well as providing instruction on traditional/urban dance fusion and youth empowerment training to several youth workers overseeing a street kids dance program reaching over 35 children in Lira

Highlights of the festival include:

- Guests from Goma, DRC, were finalists in the Krumping and Hip Hop categories, pushing their Ugandan neighbours with their Congolese style and confidence
- The Krumping battle was judged by the audience, who took their role seriously, jumping up from their seats and cheering the dancers in true street battle style
- Street kids in Lira offered their drumming and traditional dance skills to the traditional/urban dance cypher, with girls being the most active in the dance circle!





- Traditional drummers from the National Theatre accompanied the Afro House and Top Rock battles, challenging dancers to work with live and recorded drumbeats
- The Afro House category, debuting in a battle for the first time in Uganda, was hotly contested and won by first-time battle dancer, Roz Atim, a Music, Dance and Drama student at Makerere
- Respected traditional dance artist and teacher, Amina, from Ndere Centre, presided as a judge for a number of battles and cheering spectator for the rest of the time!



- Batalo East One Hip Hop and Style Yake winner Faizal Mostrixx went on to reach the finals of Juste Debout, the world's biggest street dance battle, in Paris, France in March 2014



Batalo East is already seeing results!

Next Steps

Based on the success of Batalo East One, the Batalo East team has developed a program of jams, workshops and the second installment of the dance festival and other one-off events for 2014/15. This includes:

- A scaled-up and high-profile Batalo East festival in August 2014, with international guest judges/choreographers specialized in urban/traditional dance fusion, new showcases, an expanded and revamped Urban Market, selling locally-made hip hop and traditional fusion designs
- Monthly informal 'jam' sessions to build interest in the traditional/urban discussion, particularly among young girls, and hone the skills of all interested dancers
- Regular workshops for dancers as well as at-risk youth on dance style basics, traditional/urban fusion, Afro hip-hop theatre and storytelling through dance, etc.
- Collaborations with schools, youth-oriented organizations, traditional music and dance centres to develop a solid basis for Afro house, hip hop and other dance fusions
- Taking Batalo East partnerships to the next level – given the positive reception of winners' t-shirts by Definition, water by Aqua Sipi, space rental by Arts2Hearts, sound by Breakdance Project Uganda, lighting by Fenon Entertainment and prize bags by Mountain Dew





We greatly valued your participation in Batalo East One, and look forward to discussing with you possibilities for collaboration in 2014/15 on the Batalo East program at your earliest convenience!

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