

For Immediate Release
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Rotunda Dance Series: Opening of the 36th annual San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival
A Tribute to Nelson Mandela

Presented by Dancers' Group and World Arts West,
in partnership with San Francisco Grants for the Arts and
San Francisco City Hall

Free

Thursday, June 5, 2014
12 Noon
San Francisco City Hall

SAN FRANCISCO, CA—May 1, 2014—On Thursday, June 5, the Rotunda Dance Series will honor the late South African leader Nelson Mandela, with a traditional African “homegoing” ceremony, which will include a performance by Diamano Coura West African Dance Company, and the singing of the South African national anthem and sacred Zulu rituals, led by Jikelele Dance Theater’s Thamsanqa Hlatywayo and Diamano Coura’s Naomi Diouf. This celebration of Mandela’s life will also include a community-led African drumming tribute, under the direction of the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival’s Artistic Director CK Ladzekpo.

This event will serve as the grand opening of the 2014 San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival, which will run June 5 – June 29, featuring 30 local dance companies sustaining cultural traditions from around the world. The “classic” Festival performances, featuring a collage format of 8 – 10 dance forms in one two-hour show, begin at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts on June 14, and Festival subscribers have the opportunity to see three entirely different line-ups, as each weekend features a different roster of artists. This year’s Festival includes 11 world premiere pieces and numerous cross-cultural collaborations. For more information, visit sfethnicedancefestival.org.

The San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival celebrates and fosters appreciation for the world dance and music artists living throughout the greater Bay Area’s diverse ethnic communities. On the Festival stages, audiences have the opportunity to experience dance from over 75 distinct world cultures. The New York Times called the annual San Francisco Ethnic Dance festival "a glorious achievement...one of the finest of all American dreams: a setting where cultures can celebrate their own traditions while honoring and applauding others."

The Rotunda Dance Series brings many of the Bay Area’s most renowned dance companies to San Francisco City Hall’s rotunda space for free noon-time performances taking place the first Friday of each month (with occasional calendar adjustments). Events primarily involve dance, but often also include live music, theater or other performing art disciplines.

About Diamano Coura West African Dance Company (diamanocoura.org) Diamano Coura West African Dance Company is a nonprofit cultural organization dedicated to the preservation,

education, and appreciation of traditional West African music, dance, theater, and culture. Since its inception in 1975, Diamano Coura, under the direction of Emmy Award-winner Dr. Zak Diouf and Artistic Director Naomi Diouf, has implemented its mission through ongoing workshops, performances, youth programs, national and international touring engagements, lecture demonstrations, community outreach, and creative partnership programs with renowned artists and performing companies. Diamano Coura in the Senegalese Wolof language means "those who bring the message."

About Thamsanqa Hlatywayo, artistic director of Jikelele Dance Theater (jikelele.com)

Thamsanqa Hlatywayo was born in Johannesburg, South Africa, where he began learning traditional songs and dances of many different ethnic groups at an early age. Later, he studied with Gibson Kente, considered the father of township theater, a storytelling tradition involving music and dance. After moving to the US, Thamsanqa joined the Tony-nominated Broadway show *Sarafina!* He founded Jikelele Dance Theater when he was the Laney College dance department's township theater guest artist in 2011.

About CK Ladzekpo CK Ladzekpo is the director of the African music program at the University of California, Berkeley. His is a distinguished career as a performer, choreographer, composer, teacher and published scholar in the African performing arts. He is a member of a renowned family of African musicians and dancers who traditionally serve as lead drummers and composers among the Anlo-Ewe people of southeastern Ghana in West Africa. He has been a lead drummer and instructor with the Ghana National Dance Ensemble, the University of Ghana's Institute of African Studies and the Arts Council of Ghana. He joined the music faculty of the University of California Berkeley in 1973 and continues to be an influential catalyst of the African perspective in the performing arts.

About World Arts West (worldartswest.org) For over three and a half decades, World Arts West has supported and presented world dance artists throughout the San Francisco Bay Area. The main presenting program of the organization is the nationally acclaimed *San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival*, which presents over 100 distinct dance forms and thousands of local dancers who are sustaining and innovating within those forms. The organization works year round to advance cultural literacy and build bridges of cultural understanding.

About Dancers' Group (dancersgroup.org) Dancers' Group promotes the visibility and viability of dance. Founded in 1982, we serve San Francisco Bay Area artists, the dance community and audiences through programs and services that are as collaborative and innovative as the creative process. As the primary dance service organization for the second largest dance community in the country, Dancers' Group's many programs help artists produce work, build audiences, and connect with their peers and the community.

The 2014 Rotunda Dance Series will continue with the following schedule:

August 1: Dohee Lee

September 5: Garrett + Moulton Productions

October 3: Dimensions Dance Theater

November 7: Fall Festival Feature Performance with Bal Anat and Karavansaray Dance Company

December 5: Sean Dorsey Dance

Calendar Editors please note:

Who: Rotunda Dance Series: Opening of the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival

What: Free monthly dance performance, presented by Dancers' Group and World Arts West, in partnership with San Francisco Grants for the Arts and San Francisco City Hall.

Cost: Free

Where: City Hall, San Francisco

When: Thursday, June 5, 2014, Noon

Info: Terry Conway, (415) 474-3914, terry@worldartswest.org

Images available for download:

CK Ladzekpo, co-Artistic Director of the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival, photo by RJ

Muna: http://dancersgroup.org/?attachment_id=7767

Naomi Diouf, Artistic Director of Diamano Coura West African Dance Company, photo by RJ

Muna: http://dancersgroup.org/?attachment_id=7768

Thamsanqa Hlatywayo, Artistic Director of Jikelele Dance Theater, photo by RJ Muna:

http://dancersgroup.org/?attachment_id=7770

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