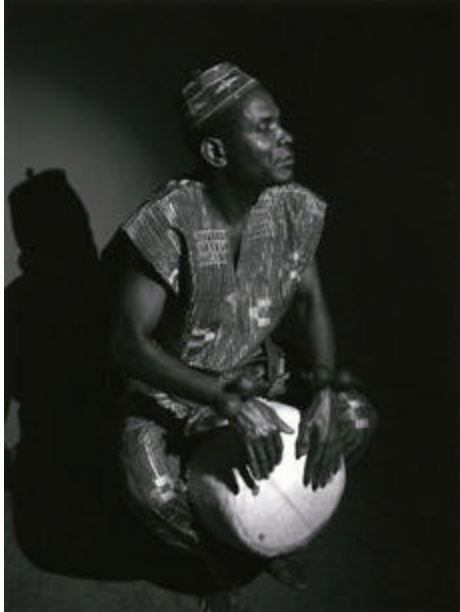


Titos Somba

Founder and Artistic Director of Mbongi Dance Theater Project



Originating from the Congo (Brazzaville), Titos Somba is a charismatic and extraordinarily gifted performing artist, teacher, and healer. Since arriving in America from Paris, where he taught music and dance and toured Europe with his band, Les Echos Noir, he has inspired artists, students and audiences with his African cultural orientation that holistically integrated music, dance, singing, folklore and spirituality. Mr. Somba was the first to introduce the earthly and fluid Congolese style of simultaneous dancing and singing to America audiences. In the early 1970's, he and lead drummer, Coster Massamba, brought Congolese culture to the New York artistic scene.

A renown dancer, choreographer, and musician, noted especially as a master Congolese drummer, percussionist, and kalimba player, Mr. Somba utilizes his multiple talents to make known and keep alive Congolese musical and cultural traditions that offer healing, spiritual grounding, and affirming community to the Western world.

He is a supremely gifted singer, composer, recording artist, choreographer, storyteller, artisan of African folk crafts, producer, director, trainer, and teacher. Mr. Somba founded the first Congolese dance company (Tanawa Dance Company) in America. He joined the New York dance and theater scene, and performed with James Earl Jones and Ann Miller, along with such jazz greats as Elvin Jones, Eddie Jefferson, Sun Ra, Ron Carter, Leon Thomas, Pharaoh Sanders, Dave Murray, Arthur Blythe, Olu Dara, and Chico Freeman, among others, before relocating in California where he became a magnet for the Congolese artistic community. Over the years he has trained and nurtured numerous Congolese artists, including Mbemba Jean Louis, Malonga Casquelourd, and Samba Ngo, as well as Fred Simpson, Oba Babatunde, and Monte Hallison, who later became masters in their own right. In 1988, Mr. Somba founded Mbongi Dance Theatre Project, a nonprofit corporation dedicated to advancing and celebrating the cultural arts of Africa, especially the music and dance of the Congo.

Seeing African culture as a sustaining force, Mr. Somba has taken on the responsibility of preserving and passing on Congolese culture. His task involves dispelling all the ignorance, mythology and distortions about Africa, while he makes known the wisdom, variety, beauty, inspiration, and power of African cultures. Through spirituality, he enables people to tap into the power within and the guidance of our ancestors. "African dance is about opening up your heart and bringing for the essence of your soul. It is a way of letting go," he observes. His qualities as a healer, his gentle teaching style that encourages the student to feel communication with self, and his commitment to

community building, make Mr. Sompa stand out as an artist. He devotes special attention to young people. He designs educational programs, primarily for elementary & high school age students, as well as students of the university, that teach self-esteem, promote values and behaviors that build community awareness, and help them imagine a future.

"It is important that we pay attention to the young people in our community. We need to let them know who they are and where they come from. If they can grab onto it, then they can be the teachers for future generations... We must listen to what our children say to have better communication with them. If we respect one another, then we are able to learn from one another. That is what African teaching is all about."



Mr. Sompa is a powerful messenger with powerful gifts, which he shares through the performing, teaching, producing, and a variety of community-building activities.