



MOSS
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CENTER

24/
25

cirque kalabanté
afrique en cirque

Wednesday, November 13, 2024, 7:30 PM

Street and Davis Performance Hall, Anne and Ellen Fife Theatre

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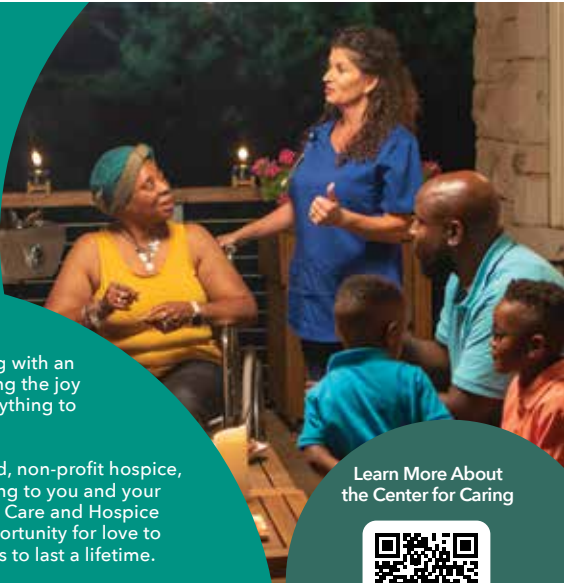
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cirque kalabanté

afrique en cirque

Yamoussa Bangoura, juggler, singer, kora player, wheel artist, acrobat, and dancer; founder of Kalabanté Productions

Mama Adama Soumah, contortionist and dancer

Mmahawa Soumah, contortionist and dancer

Mohamed Ben Sylla, contortionist

Alya Sylla, acrobat

Ismael Bangoura, acrobat

Alseny Camara, acrobat

Yamoussa Soumah, acrobat

Moussa Youla, acrobat

Seuss Fu-Rubin, saxophone

Abdelhak Benmedjebari, bass

Kevin T. Jones, drums

Chloé Drolet, technical manager

This performance is supported in part by gifts from the Easels and Mrs. Candi M. Kelly and Dr. J. Michael Kelly, and is dedicated to the memory of Patricia Buckley Moss.



This engagement of Cirque Kalabanté is made possible in part through the ArtsCONNECT program of Mid Atlantic Arts with support from the National Endowment for the Arts.



Additional support comes from the Québec Government Office in New York.



program notes

Afrique en Cirque is a show by Yamoussa Bangoura inspired by daily life in Guinea. This performance shares the beauty, youth, and artistry of African culture. A colorful show even beyond its scenery, costumes, and staging, it makes any theatre vibrate with energy and represents the strength, agility, and joys of young Africans. The audience will see acrobats execute gravity-defying moves and human pyramids, accompanied by the contemporary sounds of live Afro-jazz, percussion, and *kora*. Welcome to the universe of Kalabanté Productions, and prepare for an unforgettable journey.

guest essay

This essay is part of a series of writings by Virginia Tech faculty, staff, and community members that contextualize Moss Arts Center visiting artist performances.

Cirque Kalabanté, a Montreal-based Guinean acrobatics group, embodies the characteristics that make the arts of Africa dynamic and special. Founder Yamoussa Bengoura started the group in 2007 to introduce the arts of Guinea to wider audiences around the world. Today's performance, *Afrique en Cirque (Africa in Circus)*, is an example of how Bangoura's vision to create an African circus group that incorporates European acrobatic techniques has become a reality.

The African continent is extraordinarily diverse and is comprised of 54 countries with an estimated 3,000 languages spoken. It also has the youngest population by age, which means that many traditions and cultural practices are heavily influenced by young people. To appreciate Cirque Kalabanté's work, it is important to understand Yamoussa Bengoura's country of birth: Guinea, West Africa. The nation of Guinea is a predominantly Muslim country. It borders the Atlantic Ocean, but it is also mountainous and has stunning forested landscapes. The people

guest essay, cont.

speak several languages, including Fulani, Malinke, and Susu. Guineans have a long history of relations with European countries, trading with Portuguese explorers in the 15th century and eventually becoming part of the French colonial empire from 1895-1958. Since its independence, Guinea has worked to establish itself as an economic and political power in West Africa as well as a leader in the arts.

Afrique en Cirque is a powerful introduction to Guinean arts and to the dynamism of African arts in general. This production will help viewers understand how to think holistically about African artistic expression. Cirque Kalabanté builds on the long tradition of ensemble in African art. African arts embrace the concept of ensemble, or the idea that several artistic elements work together to produce something that is aesthetically pleasing and transmits a cultural message. When many people think of African art, they often think of carved wooden sculptures encased in clear plastic boxes in museum exhibitions. Although sculpture is a crucial aspect of cultural expression in Africa, the arts are much more complex. Sculpture, for example, is usually created as part of a religious altar or a masquerade performance, which could also include music, dance, poetry, and audience interaction, in addition to carved wooden masks. This is what you will discover with *Afrique en Cirque*, a sensory-stimulating combination of dance, acrobatics, intricate costumes, and Afro-jazz. Embracing the concept of ensemble, *Afrique en Cirque* delivers a performance that embodies the holistic ways in which African arts are meant to be appreciated.

Another important theme in African arts is innovation. Culture is not static; it is constantly changing and evolving. African artists recognize and embrace innovation by frequently searching for and incorporating new themes, materials, techniques, and media into their work. This is particularly evident in African encounters with cultures outside of the continent. In Nigeria, for example, artists have been inspired by plastic American “kewpie” dolls, using them to represent *ere ibeji* or figures that commemorate the birth of twins. In a similar way, *Afrique en Cirque* merges African arts of dance, music, and masquerade with European acrobatic traditions that emphasize athleticism and rhythmically

synthesized movements. The fusion of African and European artistic approaches in this performance demonstrates why cultural exchange is critical for artistic innovation.

Music is an essential aspect of almost all African cultural production. In *Afrique en Cirque*, you will hear a variety of different African musical styles, including Afro-jazz and traditional Guinean music. You will also see examples of musical instruments such as the drums and the *kora*, which is a stringed instrument made from a hollowed-out gourd. In addition to their unique sounds, African instruments are also decorated with intricate carvings and other designs.

Cirque Kalabanté is a performance company with a cause. The group's proceeds benefit communities in Guinea, highlighting a final theme in African creative expression — the connection between the arts and social justice. African artists are heavily influenced by the continent's collective political resistance against colonialism, racism, and economic exploitation. They use their work as a platform both to display Africa's rich cultural heritage but also to call attention to struggles for freedom and equality.

Please enjoy this performance and be inspired to learn more about Guinea and the arts of Africa.

LaNitra M. Berger, Ph.D., is an associate professor of history and art history and director of African and African American Studies at George Mason University.

biography

cirque kalabanté

Kalabanté Productions was created by Guinean multidisciplinary artist Yamoussa Bangoura. Bangoura's dream was to found a school of circus arts and to direct his own multidisciplinary company specializing in the African arts.

Bangoura first became interested in the circus arts as a young man growing up in Conakry, Guinea in the 1990s. He studied the circus performers he saw on European TV and practiced on the beach and dirt around his home. He also studied the Nyamakala tradition of circus, practiced by the Fula people of West Africa. He eventually joined Guinea's original circus company, Circus Baobob, with whom he toured Africa and Europe.

In the early 2000s Bangoura was recruited to come to Canada with Cirque Éloize, a Montreal-based Canadian cirque company. While in Canada, he also performed with Cirque du Soleil and Cavalia (cirque with horses). In 2007 Bangoura realized his dream and opened his own company, Kalabanté Productions, in Montreal, Canada. He recruited many of his extended family members to join the company, including his twin sisters, brothers, and cousins.

The company began doing shows in Québec, over the years expanded to all of Canada and the U.S., and now performs all over the world. In 2018 Kalabanté opened its own studio and school in Montreal, where it offers classes in African dance, cirque, and drumming.

Kalabanté Productions is proud to be able to share its work, achievements, and skills to inspire others and to assist with the humanitarian mission to help the Guinean community, from which Yamoussa and many of his company members come.

This is Cirque Kalabanté's first performance at the Moss Arts Center.



tell us what you think!



We'd love your feedback on this performance. If you complete the short survey, you can enter for a chance to win two tickets to Lakecia Benjamin on Friday, February 14, 2025.

bit.ly/kalabante-feedback

Please note, survey responses are anonymous. If you would like a response to your feedback, please email mossartscenter@vt.edu.

engagement events

This morning, Cirque Kalabanté performed a school time matinee for 800 students grades 3-7, from counties and communities such as Pulaski, Montgomery, Floyd, Radford, and Roanoke.

The artists also led an African Dance and Drumming Workshop in the Cube on Tuesday, presented in conjunction with International Education Week.

Special thanks to LaNitra M. Berger, Rachel Fitzgerald, Cranwell International Center, and the Global Education Office at Virginia Tech

MOSS ARTS CENTER

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Your gift to the Moss Arts Center helps to support access to the arts, student engagement, and cultural diversity.

Through gifts like yours, we have been able to expand opportunities for PK-12 students in our region, deepen relationships with academic partners, continue to offer \$10 tickets to performances for Virginia Tech students, and provide experiential learning opportunities for students.

Help us continue this work!



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PK-12 PROGRAMS AT THE MOSS ARTS CENTER

Each year, wildly enthusiastic students — from PK through 12th grade — fill our theatre for free matinee performances by artists from all over the world. They explore our visual arts galleries during school tours and create and learn during hands-on workshops with artists. For many students, visiting the Moss Arts Center is the first time they've ever been to a performing arts facility or gallery. Why do kids need access to the arts? Engaging in artistic activities offers a wide range of skills that they will use throughout their lives.


Learn more at bit.ly/moss-k12.

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Virginia Tech acknowledges that we live and work on the Tutelo/Monacan People's homeland, and we recognize their continued relationships with their lands and waterways. We further acknowledge that the Morrill Land-Grant College Act (1862) enabled the commonwealth of Virginia to finance and found Virginia Tech through the forced removal of Native Nations from their lands in California and other areas in the West.

LABOR RECOGNITION

Virginia Tech acknowledges that its Blacksburg campus sits partly on land that was previously the site of the Smithfield and Solitude Plantations, owned by members of the Preston family. Between the 1770s and the 1860s, the Prestons and other local White families that owned parcels of what became Virginia Tech also owned hundreds of enslaved people. Enslaved Black people generated resources that financed Virginia Tech's predecessor institution, the Preston and Olin Institute, and they also worked on the construction of its building.





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FALL 2024
EXHIBITION



Never Spoken Again: Rogue Stories of Science and Collections

Curated by David Ayala-Alfonso

Through Sat., Dec. 14, 2024

All galleries

Explore a traveling exhibition that reflects on the birth of modern collections, the art institutions that sustain them, and their contingent origin stories to reveal a universe of erasures, violence, and fortuity. Considering how institutional collections organize our lives, *Never Spoken Again* brings together artists whose works open up a critique of material culture, iconography, and political ecologies.

Free Related Event

Beyond the Frame

Gallery Tours

Thurs., Nov. 14, and Dec. 12, 12 pm

Moss Arts Center Grand Lobby

Michael Rakowitz; *The invisible enemy should not exist – Seated Nude Male Figure, Wearing Belt Around Waist (IM77823) (Recovered, Missing, Stolen Series)*, 2018; Middle Eastern packaging and newspapers, glue, and cardboard; 37 4/5 in. x 28 3/4 x 28 3/4 inches; courtesy of the artist and Barbara Wien Gallery



COMING SOON

TUESDAY, JANUARY 7-SUNDAY, JANUARY 12, 2025

YOUNG ARTISTS: SHAWSVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL

THURSDAY, JANUARY 23-SATURDAY, MARCH 29, 2025

SPRING 2025 EXHIBITIONS

Shaunté Gates and Charisse Pearlina Weston

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THURSDAY, JUNE 5-SATURDAY, AUGUST 23, 2025

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fri., feb. 14, 7:30 pm
lakecia benjamin

check out the great performances coming this season.

sat., dec. 7, 4 pm
**roanoke symphony
orchestra**
holiday pops spectacular

fri., jan. 31, and
sat., feb. 1, 7:30 pm
jaha koo
cuckoo

thurs., feb. 6, and
fri., feb. 7, 7:30 pm
beowulf:
the epic in performance
benjamin bagby,
voice and medieval harp

fri., feb. 14, 7:30 pm
lakecia benjamin

tues., feb. 18, 7:30 pm
**czech national
symphony orchestra**
maxim lando, piano

sat., feb. 22, 7 and 9 pm
native comedy jam

thurs., feb. 27, 7:30 pm
kodo
one earth tour 2025:
warabe

thurs., march 6, 7:30 pm
the dante quartet
brian thorsett, tenor

tues., march 18, 7:30 pm
broadway in blacksburg
the book of mormon

sat., march 22, 7:30 pm
a.i.m by kyle abraham

tues., march 25, 7:30 pm
**an evening with
charles yu**

fri., march 28, 7:30 pm
circa
opus

wed., april 2, 7:30 pm
les arts florissants
*vivaldi's four seasons
at 300*
théotime langlois de
swarte, violin

thurs., april 24, and
fri., april 25, 7:30 pm
george emilio sanchez
*in the court of the
conqueror*

sat., may 10, 7:30 pm
**chucho valdés and
irakere 50**

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YMCA AT VIRGINIA TECH



Visit the 55th annual YMCA Artisan Fair

Nov 15- Nov 16, 2024
at The Y Center
1000 N. Main St. Blacksburg

Friday, November 15 from 9:00am-7:00pm
Saturday, November 16 from 9:00am-5:00pm



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Key Moments in the YMCA at Virginia Tech's History

- 1873 The YMCA forms at Virginia Tech, focusing on religious and extracurricular activities for students
- 1892 71 out of 177 students of Virginia Tech are members of the YMCA
- 1893 YMCA publishes the first Student Handbook for Virginia Tech
- 1899 The cornerstone for the YMCA building, the first "Hokie Stone" building, is laid
- 1902 The YMCA building opens its doors and serves as the first Student Center at Virginia Tech
- 1918 Paul Derring, the longest serving General Secretary (40 years), begins work for YMCA
- 1970 Emily Stuart becomes Director of YMCA and begins the Int'l Programs and the Crafts Fair
- 1971 Open University, Y Hikes, and Soup & Substance Program were founded
- 1975 YMCA Thrift Shop opens in Blacksburg (Radford store opens in 2002)
- 1986 Project Home Repair returns to focus on general repairs for the at-need & elderly
- 1989 Lucy Lee Lancaster donates her home to the YMCA and the After School Program was founded
- 2006 YMCA purchases 1000 North Main and moves the Thrift Shop to that location
- 2019 50th annual Y Craft Fair
- 2020 The Y develops Meals on Main to address increased food insecurity during the Pandemic
- 2023 The Y Senior Connections Program partners with the Center for Gerontology at Virginia Tech and rebrands as "Joining Generations"
- 2024 55th annual Y Craft Fair & 150 years of the YMCA at Virginia Tech

