

**Digital Program**  
**Dance on the Lunar Lawn | Coyaba Dance Theater, "It Takes a Village"**  
July 20, 21, and 22, 2023, 7 p.m.



**Order of the Program**

**Processional**, with Coyaba Dance Theater, Coyaba Youth Academy, and Adult Repertoire Class

**Drum Call**, Calling of the Ancestors. Performed by: Coyaba Dance Theater

**Kuku** is a very popular rhythm played at all kinds of festivals, including fall and full moon celebrations. Originally kuku was played when women came back from fishing.

Choreographed by: Sylvia Soumah. Performed by: Coyaba Youth Academy (4-6)

**Mendiani** is a rhythm and dance for young pre-pubescent youths. Mothers of these girls and other leaders protect and initiate them into the secrets and mysteries of becoming a woman.

Choreographed by: Sylvia Soumah. Performed by: Coyaba Youth Academy (7-12)

**Kassa** is a rhythm for the farmers. The word *kass* means granary. The rhythm is played during work in the fields and it accompanies the harvest.

Choreographed by Sylvia Soumah. Performed by: Coyaba Repertoire Class & Coyaba Dance Theater

**Audience Participation**

Led by: Sylvia Soumah & Coyaba Dance Theater

**Dununba** is the name of a family of rhythms consisting of approximately twenty to thirty traditional malinke rhythms. This dance was traditionally performed by men to determine their superiority between the different age groups in the village.

Choreographed by: Tiffany Harris & Sylvia Soumah. Performed by: CYA Teens & Coyaba Dance Theater

**Harmony Drum Suite (2013)**: This drum piece was commissioned by Coyaba Dance Theater to showcase the beauty and power of women drumming together in harmony.

Composed by: Malari Moore

Performed by: Coyaba Dance Theater

**Finale.** Performed by: Full cast

## **The Cast**

### **Coyaba Dance Theater Coyaba Youth Academy**

Dancers  
Tiffany Harris  
Ana Johnson  
Marcia Howard  
Sylvia Soumah

Drummers  
Baba Aziz  
Yao Hunt  
Robert Meyers  
Gregory Martin  
Kendall Reeves  
Yuma Bellomee

Youth Drummer  
Khalif Muhammad

### **Repertoire Class**

Jamie Majdi  
Starria Bully  
LaNisha Washington

### **Youth Class (Ages 4-6)**

Analsisia Gormley-Goldstein  
Amy Gormley-Goldstein

### **Youth Class (Ages 7-12)**

Alysa Belibi  
Zadie Mae Elias  
Gabriela Seay  
Amara Ihejeto  
Reyna DeBrul  
Abigail Elias  
Katelyn Copeland  
Zoe Hazelwood  
Brooke Williams

### **Teen African**

Arnold Anderson  
Micah Brown  
Morgan Harris  
Nasiah Ingram  
Amira Muhummad  
Jasmine Wooten  
Cymande Brown  
Akousa Hawkins  
Mandy Johnson  
Khyia Smallwood

## **Special Thanks**

I want to thank Hillwood for asking Coyaba to perform in your beautiful garden!  
The staff has been outstanding and supportive. We are thrilled to have this opportunity.

Thank you to all the CYA parents: I really appreciate you all. I know this was a lot...  
CYA students you all are ROCK STARS!!!! Thanks for working so hard.  
Coyaba Dance Theater: Dancers and Drummers thank you all for your hard work and flexibility.  
You guys have been amazing all this year and I truly appreciate each and everyone of you.  
Thank you Mr. Tucker for helping me, moving the drums and cleaning costumes. You have made  
my job a little less stressful.  
I also want to thank the folks that came out to see our show.  
We hope you will enjoy it!!!!

With Gratitude,  
Sylvia Soumah  
Founder/Artistic Director  
Coyaba Dance Theater

## About the Artists

**Coyaba Dance Theater** was founded in 1997 by founder/artistic director Sylvia Soumah. The mission of Coyaba Dance Theater is to present traditional and contemporary West African dance and music focusing on the diverse ethnic groups and various humanitarian themes of West African culture. Coyaba dancers and drummers bring a unifying musical experience to audiences of all ages. Through concerts and workshops, Coyaba presents a mixture of authentic African dance and folklore from the culture of Guinea, West Africa. Coyaba Dance Theater performs throughout the year and has been featured at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, The Publick Playhouse, the Lincoln Theater, the Lisner Auditorium, Dance Place, the Chicago Theater, and the World Culture Open in Seoul, South Korea.



**Marcia Howard** has been dancing professionally for over 40 years. She started her professional dance career with *The Baltimore Dance Theater*. In 1995, Ms. Howard became company member of Coyaba Dance Theater in Washington, D.C., specializing in traditional West African Dance from Guinea, Mali and Senegal. She continues her studies in traditional dance forms, traveling to Havana, Cuba and Accra, Ghana. Ms. Howard has been on faculty at Dance Place, American University and Imagination Stage. Performing nationally and internationally with Coyaba Dance Theater,

highlights include Seoul, Korea, Dance Africa Chicago, for Michael Jackson at the Ethiopian Embassy in Washington, DC, and Uncommon Heights, a celebration by Dorothy Height (NCNW) honoring Oprah Winfrey.

**Tiffany Harris** is a native of Washington D.C. and has been a member of Coyaba Dance Theater since 1999. She began her studies of West African Dance under the instruction of Sylvia Soumah and has traveled to Dakar, Senegal in 2001, to study with Bouly Sonko of Les Ballet du Senegal. She has performed at various venues such as The Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, The State Theatre in Austin, Texas, and The Chicago Theatre. She has also performed in Seoul, Korea and for Michael Jackson at the Ethiopian Embassy. Ms. Harris is a former member of The Dance Place Step Team and The Dance Place Moving Company. As an instructor she has been on faculty at Dance Place, The Davis Center, The Washington Ballet and Coyaba Youth Academy.



**Sylvia Soumah's** formal training began in Cincinnati, Ohio where she majored in modern dance and vocal music with various modern, jazz, and vocal instructors at the School for Creative and Performing Arts. In those early years, Sylvia performed with the Cincinnati Opera in productions such as *Carmen*, *Show Boat*, and *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, in musical theater productions such as *The Music Man*, *Guys & Dolls*, and *The Wiz* at the National Theater, Washington, DC. Further studies in modern dance and creative movement led Ms. Soumah to expand her interest to early childhood education at the University of Cincinnati.

In 1986 she moved to Washington, D.C., to focus her skills in modern dance under the direction of Carla Perlo, Carla & Company, where she was exposed to many choreographers including: Lesa McLaughlin, Nancy Havlik, Debra Riley, and Alvin Mayes. During this time, Sylvia Soumah also performed with Improvisation Unlimited at the University of Maryland under the direction of Mim Rosen. In 1992, she began her extensive study of West African dance under the tutelage of Aidoo Holmes, founder/artistic director of Wose Dance Theater, and with this company Sylvia not only learned the importance of the African dance technique and solo performance, but she also learned to drum and sing as well.

In 2015 she was awarded the Pola Nirenska Award for outstanding contributions to the field of dance and education.

Sylvia has collaborated with Daniel Burkholder (*My Ocean is Never Blue*), StepAfrika, Kingsman Island Festival (DC), Usuthu Arts Productions (South Africa), Salamata from Ghana, West Africa, Jessica Phillips Silver [*Finding Rhythm! The Journey Through The Musical Brain* (2020)], and Inspired Child (educational music video "A to Z This is MY DC" music & dance video), and was the co-choreographer/performer with What's Going On touring company under the direction of Vincent Thomas.

Photos courtesy of Coyaba Dance Theater.