



College of Music  
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

# **MSU African Diaspora Percussion Ensemble**

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Kevin Jones, director  
Angel Hernandez, assistant director

Shangojinmi Ruff, vocalist and drummer

Friday, April 24, 2026  
Murray Hall, 7:30 p.m.

# PROGRAM

## Rhythms and Songs from Congo

Yembala	Titos Sompá
Aire Pinoeré	Traditional arr. Kevin Jones
Nzobi	Traditional arr. Kevin Jones
Ngoma Ba Congo	Traditional
Ganza	Titos Sompá

## Rhythms and Songs from Cuba

Songs of the Orisa – Rhythm Bembe Ellegua, Oshun, Yemaya, & Shango Shangojinmi Ruff, vocalist and drummer	Traditional Yoruba
Rumba Guaguancó	Traditional Congo and West Africa
Rumba Columbia	Traditional Cuban Rhythm Angel Hernandez, soloist
Four Beat Mambo	Tito Puente (1923–2000)
Mozambiqué	Traditional Cuban Music
La Conga	Traditional Cuban Rhythm

## Intermission

### Djembe Orchestra

Sorsonet	Traditional Guinea
Sunu & Baku Mani (Song)	Traditional West African
Sunu	Traditional Mali
Sinte	Traditional West Africa
Zaouli and Kuku	arr. Mamady Keita & Djobi Irie Simon

## PROGRAM NOTES

**African Diaspora music** is a vital global force, acting as a tool for resistance, cultural preservation, and social commentary. It is the foundation for multiple genres of music such as jazz, blues, rock and roll, and hip-hop. Without these African based traditions there is no Samba, no Mambo, no Rumba, and no Bluegrass or Country music. Even the names: Samba, Rumba, and Mambo, are derived from African languages.

Tonight, our ensemble will present a brief look into the streams of rhythms and melodies based firmly in African Traditions.

**Yembala**, by composer and arranger Titos Somba (born, unknown, in Brazzaville, Congo), is a song and arrangement utilized for villagers to bless hunters' safety and success. The rhythm is a traditional rhythm called **Zebola**.

**Aire Pionéré** is a traditional celebration rhythm that was played all over the Kongo Kingdom. This rhythm can be heard in such celebrations as marriage, harvest, and other celebrations in the community.

**Nzobi** is a traditional rhythm from Congo Brazzaville (Republic of Congo). This rhythm is from the northern region of this country and used to revive spiritual energy. It is said that if you have a problem or ailment, be it physical, mental or emotional, this is when those gathered would play and dance this rhythm.

**Ngoma Ba Congo** is a traditional rhythm of the Ba Congo People. Ngoma Ba Congo literally means "Drums or Rhythm of the Ba Congo People". It is played all over various parts of both Congos (Republic of Congo and Democratic Republic of Congo). Very much like the rhythm Aire Pionéré, Ngoma Ba Congo is a secular Dance and Rhythm.

**Ganza**, by composer and arranger Titos Somba, is a traditional rhythm, dance and song to celebrate the rite of passage for young boys to become men.

**Songs of the Orisa - Rhythm Bembe** - Presentation of traditional rhythms and songs out of the Yoruba traditions including Ellegua, Oshun, Yemaya, and Shango

## PROGRAM NOTES (cont.)

**Rumba Guaguancó** – Rumba is a group of rhythms that have their origins in Africa particularly Congo and West Africa. Havana Rumba Guaguancó is traditional Rhythm from Havana region of Cuba.

**Rumba Columbia** is a traditional rhythm and dance from Cuba. Created by dock workers in Cuba, it was traditionally danced by only men to show off their skill and machismo.

**Mozambique** – The "Mozambique" rhythm is a style of Cuban music and dance that was invented by Pello El Afrokan (Pedro Izquierdo) in 1963 and is derived from Cuban street carnival music, featuring conga drums, bombos (bass drums), cowbells, and various brass instruments. The Mozambique rhythm, like the conga, originated from the music of Cuban street carnivals or comparsas.

**La Conga** is a Cuban rhythm and dance characterized by staccato rhythms played on various conga drums, bombos, and cowbells in which dancers and musicians form a line and move in a snake-like fashion, often during carnivals or street parades. These musicians and dancers developed Cuban conga music from rhythmic street parade performances by groups called comparsas and its origins are from the eastern Cuban city of Santiago de Cuba.

**Djembe** drumming has been around for centuries, originating in the Mali Empire, now the West African countries of Guinea and Mali. In this region, people have been playing this percussive music for all daily life events for so long that eventually the music has blended into the culture and traditions, and has been such ever since. A Guinean traditional orchestra is composed of eight percussive instruments or more, the Djembe being one of them. The bass drums of the orchestra are called Dundunba drums. Each instrument of the orchestra plays a different percussive pattern.

**Sorsonet** - "Sorsonet" refers to a mask and associated rhythm/dance from the Baga people of the coastal region of Guinea, West Africa, believed to bring good luck especially before harvest and protect against evil, with priests traditionally keeping the mask hidden in the forest and bringing it out once a year for predictions and ceremonies.

**Sunu & Baku Mani (Song)** - Origin Unknown - Traditional West African Rhythm played and taught by Bababtunde Lea.

## PROGRAM NOTES (cont.)

**Sunu** – Traditional rhythm from Mali – **Sunu(n)** is a popular rhythm played at all popular festivities. Originally named after a female dancer named Sunun, the rhythm has many variations over the years and most of the songs are about weddings or marriage.

**Sinte** is a popular West African traditional rhythm and dance, originating from the Nalu people in the Boke region of Guinea. Often called the "firewalker" dance, it was traditionally played on krin (hollow log drums) for celebrations and is now widely played on djembes during drum and dance classes.

**Zaouli and Kuku** – Zaouli is a mask dance originating from the Gouro people from Coté d'Ivoire. Each village and family has their own mask and typically the movements of the dancers are coordinated with the drummers. In modern times and with the advent of ballet, Zaouli is often paired with Guinean rhythms Kassa (Harvest Dance) or Kuku, a celebration rhythm known as the "fishing dance".

## ARTIST-FACULTY BIO

Percussionist, bandleader, producer and educator **“Bujo” Kevin Jones** has played percussion for 56 years. Growing up in Englewood, New Jersey, he was immersed in jazz, soul, gospel and blues. Surrounded by excellent teachers like Master Drummers Karl Potter and Babatunde Lea, he was touring by age thirteen with “Spoonbread”, a soul group opening for acts like The Four Tops, War, and The Chi-Lites. At the age of sixteen, Jones joined Tanawa, a Drum and Dance Company under the leadership of Congolese Master Drummers and Dancers Titos Sompá, Coster Massamba, and Malonga Casquelourde. He studied with Max Roach and Archie Shepp at UMASS Amherst. His studies and playing led him to a number of disparate stages, including years of touring and recording with The Isley Brothers, Whitney Houston, and jazz greats Archie Shepp, Reggie Workman, Winard Harper, Charles McPherson, John Benitez, and Hilton Ruiz. An eternal student of the drum, Jones continues his study of multiple African Diaspora musics with Djobi Irie Simon (Ivory Coast) and M’bemba Bangoura (Guinea), as well as Afro-Caribbean music with Luisito Quintero. Jones currently resides in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and has been teaching African Diaspora World Percussion to students at MSU for five years.

**Shangojinni Ruff** – Shangojinmi (meaning Shango gives this gift to me) is a singer, drummer, diviner, psychotherapist, adventurer, and builder of community through rhythm, sound, and movement. For more than 30 years he has steeped himself in the study, participation, and presentation of African-centered, Native American, and Asian traditions and lore. These traditions have taken him to Brazil, Belize, Nigeria, around the U.S., and Thailand to apprentice with master percussionists, diviners, and healers. He has worked as a collaborator, performer, and tradition bearer involving multiple contexts from secular performances to deeply sacred ceremonies and healing encounters.

## STUDENT BIO

Originally from Grand Rapids, **Angel Hernandez** is a first year D.M.A. student here at MSU and has spent his entire college years at the MSU College Of Music. He is a former Instructor of Percussion at MSU Community Music School. Angel excels in multiple genres of music from Classical to African Diaspora Music. Angel is currently the Co-Director of Salsa Verde and plays regularly with the Bluewater Kings Band, Orquesta Ritmo, Aguankó, and Armando Vega Y Su Orquesta.

# **PERSONNEL**

## **African Diaspora Percussion Ensemble**

Angel Hernandez – assistant director

Noah Avelar

Jacob Danca

Cadence Miller

Kayla Mears

Peter Nonaka

Isaac Hinshaw

Ben Lober

Zander Swon

Sam Melkonian

Max Gage

Charlie Snyder

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- **Jenny Chung and Family for Human Rights Fund** (Rucker, Feb. 15)
- **Joanne and Bill Church** (West Circle Series)
- **April Clobes and Glen Brough** (USA at 250 Years)
- **Trustee Emerita Dee Cook in memory of her husband Byron Cook** (Four Seasons)
- **Susan Davis** (Spring Opera)
- **Dean Transportation** (Celebrating the Spectrum)
- **Alena Fabian, M.D.** (Votapek, Mar. 23; Khristenko, Mar. 30)
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- **John and Gretchen Forsyth** (Wagner, Sept. 19)
- **Barbara and Bill Given** (Four Seasons; Alegría Navideña)
- **Anonymous** (Rucker, Feb. 15)
- **Howard and Pam Gourwitz** (Lulloff, Oct. 30)
- **Kevin and Amy Guskiewicz** (Alegría Navideña)
- **Hamilton-Dodson African Diaspora Endowment for the College of Music** (Musekiwa Chingodza, Oct. 2)
- **Lauren Harris** (Symphonic Dialogues; Celebrating the Spectrum)
- **Anne Hiller** (Celebrating the Spectrum)
- **Stanley and Selma Hollander Endowment for Chamber Music** (Gems for Cello)
- **Eileen G. Houston** (Wagner/Johnson/Wang, Sept. 19; Thompkins/Dease/Tang, Oct. 14; Trombone Ensemble, Nov. 8; Kanda, Nov. 18; Tuba/Euphonium, Jan. 28; Huiet, Feb. 24)
- **Taylor Johnston Early Music Series Endowment established by Taylor Johnston** (Taylor Johnston Early Music Series)
- **Mary and Ron Junttonen** (A Celebration of the Beautiful Voice)
- **Hari Kern and the late Ralph R. Edminster, M.D.** (Votapek, Mar. 23)
- **Henry Kopek and Patricia Foreman** (Red Cedar Organ Series)
- **Michael and Paula Koppisch** (Votapek Piano Festival, Aug. 15-17; Spectrum Festival)
- **Lansing Chapter of the American Guild of Organists** (Organist Nicole Keller, Sept. 14; Organist Peter Sykes, Mar. 22)
- **Jill Canny and Robert Last** (MSU Federal Credit Union Jazz Artist in Residence, A. Cohen, April 18; Jazz Spectacular Finale Concert)

- Eleanor H. and Harold E. Leichenko Opera Endowment established by Lauren Julius Harris (Fall and Spring Opera)
- Ann, John and Abby Lindley (Alegría Navideña)
- Merritt Lutz (Celebrating the Spectrum)
- Joseph and Jeanne Maguire (A Jazzy Little Christmas)
- Marshall Music Co. (Symphonic Dialogues)
- Pat and Mary McPharlin (Jazz Infusion; Jazz: Spirituals Prayer and Protest)
- Friends of Jay D. Meetz (Fall Opera)
- Dr. Roy and Christine Meland (Four Seasons)
- Gordon E. Miracle (Four Seasons; Votapek, Mar. 23)
- MSU Federal Credit Union (Showcase Series; Spartan Spectacular; Celebrating the Spectrum; MSU Music on The Road in Detroit)
- George Orban and Rae Ramsdell (Jang/Moriarty, Feb. 8)
- Liz and Tony Raduazo (Pass a Good Time, Oct. 5; Sensory Friendly Spartan Concerts)
- Charles and Nancy Seebeck (Bagratuni, Mar. 16)
- Leonard and Sharon Tabaka (Jazz Spectacular Finale Concert)
- TechSmith (Celebrating the Spectrum)
- Dr. Robert W. Uphaus and Dr. Lois M. Rosen (Symphonic Dialogues; Four Seasons; Beethoven; Happy Birthday Mozart!; Yehuda/Warren, Jan. 29; Bagratuni, Mar. 16; and Bagratuni, Mar. 31)
- Linn Van Dyne and Mike Knox (Happy Birthday Mozart!)
- Barbara E. Wagner (Wagner Chamber Music Competition)
- Anonymous (Beacon Hill Music Series)
- Richard Witter (A Celebration of the Beautiful Voice)
- Richard and Joan Witter Endowment for MSU Opera Theatre (Fall and Spring Opera)
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- Andrea L. Wulf (Piano Monster)

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## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

4/25 Saturday  
**Wind Symphony and Choirs**  
Cobb Great Hall, 7:30 p.m. \$

4/26 Sunday  
**Symphony Band & SYWS**  
Cobb Great Hall, 3:00 p.m. \$

4/30 Thursday  
Artist-Faculty Recital Series sponsored by WKAR  
Sergei Kvitko, piano  
Cook Recital Hall, 7:30 p.m.

5/3 Sunday  
MSUFCU Showcase Series  
**Piano Monster**  
Fairchild Theatre, 3:00 p.m. \$\$\$

6/7 Sunday  
**Music in the Garden**  
Beal Botanical Gardens  
1:00 p.m. Activity | 2:00 p.m. Concert, free

6/28 Sunday  
**Music in the Garden**  
Beal Botanical Gardens  
1:00 p.m. Activity | 2:00 p.m. Concert, free

7/1 – 8/5 Wednesdays  
**29<sup>th</sup> Annual Muelder Summer Carillon Series**  
Beaumont Tower  
6:00 p.m., free

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**\$\$** \$19 Adults, \$17 Seniors, \$9 Students with ID and anyone under age 18.  
**\$\$\$** \$24 Adults, \$22 Seniors, \$14 Students and those under age 18.

Please note: *All events scheduled in Murray Hall are general admission seating.*

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

7/19 Sunday

**Music in the Garden**

Beal Botanical Gardens

1:00 p.m. Activity | 2:00 p.m. Concert, free

7/26-7/31

**Celebrating the Spectrum, free**

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