

African Folk Festival Culturally Enlightening

by Azzie Wagner
Staff Writer

If you had an ear for music, the movement and spirit of rhythm, a hunger for food just a little different, but most of all a desire to delve into the cultural heritage of black people, then you should have witnessed last Saturday's African Folk Festival.

The Festival was originally scheduled for the Derry Street Parking Lot but inclement weather forced it inside at the Martin Luther King Recreation Center on Burton Street.

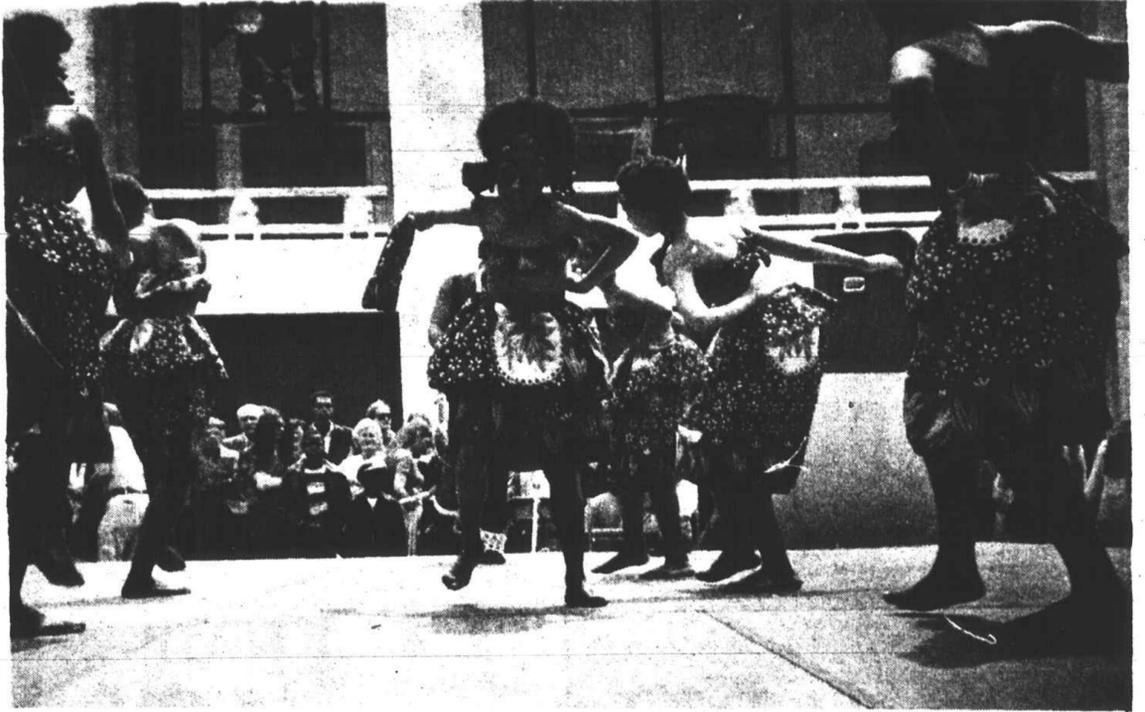
The Winston-Salem Recreation Department and Scene '76 (Urban Arts) of the Arts Council sponsored the festival for the fourth consecutive year.

The source of music for the many exhibitions of African dance numbers was an instrument called the calabash (a dried African gourd) and the throbbing, pulsating beat of drums. These were the instruments that supplied the music for the Otesha Dancers (of Winston-Salem) and the Henry Street Settlement Company of New York City.

Still a very unique, as well as cultural feature of the affair was the Jim Boyce Steel Band from Mecklenburg County. (Charlotte). Holding the crowd spellbound with their beautiful renditions of "I Can See Clearly Now" and Spanish "Harlem" the band, after each quiet number, would "awaken" the audience to a new experience in intensity with its dynamic follow-ups of very lively numbers.

According to Boyce, (originally from Trinidad - 16 years ago) his band has performed over 200 concerts this year and has made appearances on t.v. Boyce has also made appearances with such "greats" as Liberace, Mike Douglas, and Sergio Franchi.

The steel band consists of steel cans that were formerly sent to the West Indies filled with oil for planes and trucks during World War II. The music-loving natives of the W.I. converted them to drums by bending each into a different shape to produce a different note. The steel band consists of High school and other youth of the Mecklenburg County Youth



Henry Street Settlement Co. of New York City do their thing in recent African Folk Festival held here in the Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Center. The Otesha Dancers also put on a magnificent dance.

Council at Charlotte. Boyce is the Cultural Arts Specialist with the Council.

Highlight of the event was the selection of Miss African Folk Festival for 1976. Participating centers were Blum Park (Trina Dunlap),

North Hills (Queen Wright), Konnoak (Emma Singletary), Sprague (Deidra Brown), L.A. Cook (Lenetra Garner), and Traci Crawford (Easton). The queens were chosen on the basis of talent and dress (50/50). Two first place

winners were chosen -- Queen Wright of North Hills and Emma Singletary of Konnoak. Also receiving trophies were Deidra Brown of Sprague Center and Traci Crawford of Easton Center.



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