

Les Ballets Africains to Present Guinean Culture Through Dance

■ The Company will tell the legend of an instrument known as the Balaphone.

BY LILY THAYER
STAFF WRITER

The University and the local community can expect to be dazzled when Les Ballets Africains, the National Dance Company of the Republic of Guinea, takes Memorial Hall by storm with their blend of traditional dance, music and storytelling April 17 for one performance at 8 p.m.

For more than forty years, the 35-member company of dancers/singers and musicians has toured the world giving performances reflecting the culture and spirit of Guinea and the entire continent of Africa.

The complex, varied repertoire reflects a cultural legacy which has been preserved in the daily life of modern Africa.

Their current program, "Heritage," will

swirl together acrobatics, theatrical spectacle, comedy and pantomime to spin the traditional tales of a rich past and present.

"Heritage" will tell the story of a 12th-century griot, or storyteller, named Bala Fassake Kouyate.

According to legend, Bala Fassake Kouyate was preoccupied with an instrument known as the Balaphone. As the performers take the audience through a world of demons, spirits, fantastical creatures and brave humans, they will explore the significance of the Balaphone, a precursor to the modern xylophone, and of the drum.

These instruments historically signified communication and healing. In the course of the narration, "Heritage" will highlight the generation-to-generation transition of accomplishment and values — the codes of "right-living," compassion and respect for elders and the young that characterize the magnificent Guinean society.

Joan Blanchard, marketing manager of the Student Union, said of Les Ballets Africains, "It's a great opportunity for students to explore another culture."

In addition to representing the common culture of Africa, the Ballets' performers reflect their own individual tribal and re-

gional cultures.

Guinea is divided into four geographic regions, each with its own languages and customs. Each region offering a unique flavor, similar yet different from the surrounding regions.

Les Ballets Africains features company members from each of these four regions. In order to fulfill their roles as cultural ambassadors, therefore, each performer must have a command of every other performer's heritage in addition to his or her own. The performance is extremely difficult and strenuous on the performers, however what results is a powerful show which not only amazes but captivates the audience. That commitment to a common cultural legacy perpetuates what has been the mission of Les Ballets Africains since a renowned Guinean choreographer created the company in 1952: The dancers/singers and musicians strive to provide a unifying message to their global audience.

The result should be a dynamic show April 17, elaborately staged, rhythmically complex, yet accessible in its universal power and meaning.

Tickets are \$14-\$22 for the general public and \$8-\$12 for UNC students at the Carolina Union Ticket Office.



Les Ballets Africains will appear at Memorial Hall on April 17.

Group Conveys Social Themes in Dance

BY SOPHIE MILAM
STAFF WRITER

Modern dance is "an artistic expression of feelings, emotions, or social themes," said Bonnie Seigler, a junior member of the UNC dance group ModernExtension. "If you have never seen it, it is something you need to see to understand; you can't put it into words."

Those unfamiliar with the art form will get their chance to become acquainted with dance this weekend with ModernExtension's spring performance. Seigler said she definitely encourages people to come. "It is a wonderful opportunity to see fellow students perform. Everyone can appreciate it on different levels."

The eight dances the group will perform range from serious to fun; some have deep social themes, but others — a satire on insomnia, for example — are merely "food for thought," Seigler said.

Seven of the pieces are student-choreographed and range from solo to group dances.

ModernExtension currently includes both undergraduate and graduate students, with 23 females and 1 male. Marian Turner-



UNC's dance group, ModernExtension, moves with strong, beautiful forms.

Hopkins, a faculty member in the physical education department, has been the group's advisor since she formed it in 1988.

Because the University does not offer either a major or a minor in dance, ModernExtension serves as an outlet for the variety of student talent this campus possesses.

Through the group, students can bring together a variety of styles based on their unique talents and backgrounds.

Although ModernExtension is based

on interest and enjoyment, the current members take their commitment very seriously, Seigler said. The entire group attends company class each Sunday, and guest teachers come in once or twice a month.

An average member rehearses two nights each week for four to five hours, although some rehearse as many as 12 hours a week. The students also try to take dance classes through the University's physical education department, and each finds individual outlets during the summer, Seigler said.

'Art in Heaven' Focuses on McCarthyism

BY LILY THAYER
STAFF WRITER

The upcoming Lab! Theatre production, "Art in Heaven" focuses on a single, fundamental question: How far will a person go for his art? The play opens Saturday night and runs through April 16, was written by its director, senior Catherine Trieschmann of Athens, Ga. A first-time director, Trieschmann said she wrote the play over a year ago, but didn't consider producing it until this year's fourth

Lab! production set. Directing her own script has been a learning process, she said. "The challenge was to try and let go of my vision of the play. It's a very different play from the one I conceived in my head; I've tried to let it grow through the actors, through their discoveries."

Set during the 1950s when Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin led the so-called Red Scare with his Senate Committee on Un-American Activities, "Art in Heaven" is, according to its writer and director, "a dialogue between two opposing viewpoints" on McCarthyism. The two ideologies are represented by Elia Kazan, a well-known Hollywood director who directed Marlon Brando in "On The Waterfront," and his friend and collaborator Arthur Miller, the playwright whose

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on Broadway, refused to submit to McCarthy's coercive tactics, choosing to suffer any fallout rather than betray both the innocent and the guilty.

"Art in Heaven," is a "not completely historically accurate" account of the conflict between these two talented, thoughtful men who responded very differently to the same terrifying situation. This opposition is played out when Miller, played in the Lab! production by freshman David Azzarello of Cary, comes to Kazan (junior Ted Shaffner of Highlands) to write a play about his experiences with the Un-American Activities Committee, and Kazan must justify his actions to himself and his friends.

According to Trieschmann, the core of the play and what attracted her to the story in the first place, was that each of the five principal characters "has a calling." Each person: Miller, Kazan, Kazan's wife, Kate (freshman Autumn Dornfeld of St. Louis, Mo.), his lover Constance (sophomore Jordana Davis of Dix Hills, N.Y.) and fellow playwright Clifford Odets (freshman Laura Blake of Lexington, Ky.). Trieschmann said, had a passion for their art. "For Elia it's his directing, for Arthur Miller it's his writing, for Elia's wife it's her love." She said, "Everyone has certain sacrifices they're willing to make for their art, and yet everyone has a limit on those sacrifices, except for Elia." In the end the play asks, "Was it worth it to make all the sacrifices necessary to feed that passion?"

"Art in Heaven" goes up Saturday at 8 p.m., Sunday and Monday at 4 and 8 p.m., and Tuesday at 5 p.m. in Graham Memorial Hall.

"Death of a Salesman" and "The Crucible" have become American classics.

Kazan and Miller, along with several prominent and lesser-known entertainers and entertainment-industry workers, were called before McCarthy's committee to testify about their alleged involvement with the Communist party in the United States. Some of those called to testify cooperated, naming their closest friends and coworkers as Communist sympathizers in an effort to save their own careers. Those who refused to testify, along with those implicated by others, were "blacklisted" in Hollywood — officially banned from working in the industry until McCarthy's panicked reign of terror came to a close.

Kazan, fearing for his livelihood, cooperated fully with the committee, in the process contributing to the potential ruin of several other people's livelihoods. Miller, whose "Crucible" Kazan directed

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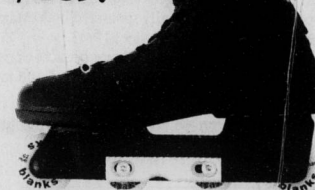
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