

Artist Teachers in Residence
(2005-2008)



Kwame Degbor (Ghana, Africa)

Kwame Degbor was born in the Kpando District of the Volta Region of Ghana, West Africa. His father was a chief; hence Kwame was literally born into drums, as there was a large collection of drums in his father's palace. At age six he started competing with elderly drummers on the talking drums, Borborbor, Zigi, Agbadza, Asafo, and Adowa. At Middle School, Kwame became the leader of the school's Cultural Troupe and at the Training College, he was a good dancer and drummer along side his beautiful voice, which landed him into the college choir. He was considered to be one of the best music students while in college. After training as a teacher, he developed more in the area of dance and raised a dance group in Agate village, where the Arts Council of Ghana was impressed with his abilities and appointed him as a representative for the Hohoe and Kpando Districts in 1982. Kwame also became an integral part of the Centre for National Culture in 1982. In 1999 he graduated from the University of Ghana, Legon with a major in Theatre Arts (Dance). After completing his degree, Kwame returned to the Centre for National Culture in Ho and was put in charge of Performing Arts, where he continued his training of the various traditional groups in the region. He also traveled outside the Volta Region to teach dances in other parts of the country. In fact, Kwame became so popular that people have said "there is no village or dance forms in the Volta Region that he does not know." Currently, Kwame holds three positions within the Centre for National Culture, Volta Region: (1) Director of Programme, (2) Artistic Director of the Centre's Folkloric Company, and (3) Acting Deputy Director for the Centre.



Yudhisthir Nayak (Orissa, India)

Yudhisthir Nayak was initiated to Gotipua dance at the age of seven. When he was fifteen, he started learning Odissi dance under the tutelage of Guru Bichitrananda Swain with direct supervision of Guru Gangadhar Pradhan. Yudhisthir is also trained in Odissi Singing, Odissi Mardal, and Chhau dance. His perfection in Odissi dance through supple and graceful body movements and expressive face reflects mastery in this art form. He has performed extensively in India as a solo artist as well as in groups. Some of the major venues where he has appeared are the Konark Dance Festival, the Puri Beach Festival, the Konark Dance and Music Festival, and the Chitrlekha Dance Academy (in Canada). He has participated in several lecture/demonstrations led by his guru. The Ministry of Human Resource Development in India has awarded him with a senior national scholarship for young talents in different cultural fields. He teaches Odissi dance to a number of students both in India and the USA. Currently, he is the Teacher-in-Residence for the Center for World Music in San Diego, California, where he teaches weekly classes of dance and Mardal.



Alex Khalil (Chinese Guqin & Balinese Gamelan)

Alex Khalil is an ethnomusicologist and composer who performs regularly as a chanter in the Greek Orthodox Church. He holds a Master of Fine Arts degree in Music Composition and Performance from the California Institute of the Arts and is currently a candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy in Music degree at the University of California, San Diego. Alex is currently writing his dissertation, which is focused on the relationship of oral to written tradition of Byzantine chant among current chanters of the Patriarchal church of Constantinople in Istanbul, Turkey. Alex has spent more than twelve years conducting research on Asian musics, particularly those of China, Japan, and Indonesia. He can speak both Mandarin Chinese and Indonesian. Dedicated to arts education and the preservation of traditional music, Alex served as Executive Director of the Center for World Music for three years where he administered educational programming and events in schools and universities throughout the United States. Today he teaches world music classes at the University of San Diego, California, where he also teaches the only class on Chinese guqin performance in America. He directs and teaches a comprehensive music program which he developed in 2000 at the San Diego Museum School. In 2003, this program won the "Best Practices in Education Award" presented by the business roundtable for education in San Diego.