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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**Community Education Center presents first-ever *DanceAfrica Philadelphia*,
a 4-day festival of African dance, music, visual art, shopping and wellness**
*Performances from Illstyle and Peace Productions, Kùlú Mèlé African Dance and Drum
Ensemble, Farafina Kan and more run Nov. 8-9 at Drexel University's Main Auditorium*

PHILADELPHIA — Promoting the preservation of African dance and culture, West Philadelphia's **Community Education Center (CEC)** presents the first-ever **DanceAfrica Philadelphia**, a local adaptation of the long-running Brooklyn Academy of Music annual festival. Combining live traditional and contemporary dance, music, workshops, visual art and an African market, DanceAfrica Philadelphia uses the umbrella title "Our African Legacy: Treasured Reflections" to encourage community-building among people of African descent and members of all ethnicities. DanceAfrica Philadelphia, a partnership with Drexel University made possible through funding from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, runs **November 6-9, 2013** at various locations throughout West Philadelphia.

Created by **Charles "Baba Chuck" Davis** in 1977 to heighten awareness of African culture, DanceAfrica has evolved into a high-spirited weeklong annual celebration in New York as well as a traveling series, showcased in six cities across the country, now including Philadelphia. The first-ever DanceAfrica Philadelphia (or DAP!) features performances from local troupes ranging from traditional to contemporary, including **Kùlú Mèlé African Dance and Drum Ensemble, Kariamou and Company: Traditions** and **Illstyle and Peace Productions**, plus special guests **Farafina Kan** from Washington, D.C. In addition, the celebration will include the Afro Beauty, Health and Wellness Marketplace, the Philadelphia Folklore Project exhibition "Honoring Ancestors of Rhythm, Movement and Place," family workshops and a lecture on African dance in America. *(Full schedule follows.)*

The festival, under the guidance of artistic director/founding elder Davis, plays a major role in the preservation of African dance, and also brings the opportunity to connect audiences to their roots. Baba Chuck will infuse DanceAfrica Philadelphia with traditions and a sense of reverence for the African heritage of the black community, including an opening ceremony in which a libation is poured to ask the ancestors to shine on the event and a procession that pays homage to the elders of the community.

Says **Theresa Shockley**, CEC executive director, "As a participant from both the performer and the audience side of DanceAfrica, I can say that I have enjoyed the event thoroughly and I always learn new things about the culture. It's a celebration for everyone, and I'm thrilled that the Community Education Center has a hand in bringing that joy to Philadelphia."

Tickets range from \$5-\$25, and can be purchased online at brownpapertickets.com/event/428884. For more information, call the Community Education Center (3500 Lancaster Ave.) at 215 387-1911 or visit cecarts.org.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Lecture: “African Dance in America: Reclaiming, Embodying, and Dialoguing with Traditions”

Wednesday, November 6, 7-8:30 p.m.

FREE; pre-registration suggested by calling 215 387-1911 or emailing cec@cecarts.org

Community Education Center, 3500 Lancaster Ave.

Roundtable discussion on African dance in America will be led by members of the local African dance and drumming community, many who are featured in the local African dance history exhibition on view at the Philadelphia Folklore Project (see below). The discussion will be monitored by Dr. Kariamu Welsh from Temple University, whose company will be performing as part of DanceAfrica Philadelphia, November 8-9 (see below).

Exhibition/Open House: “Honoring Ancestors of Rhythm, Movement and Place”

Thursday, November 7, 6-8:30 p.m.

FREE, no registration required

Philadelphia Folklore Project, 735 S. 50th St.

Developed and presented through the Philadelphia Folklore Project’s Folk Arts and Social Change Residency in partnership with the CEC and local African dancers and drummers, this exhibition honors people, places and social/political movements important in the establishment of African dance and drumming traditions among African-Americans in Philadelphia. The exhibition, on view at the Philadelphia Folklore Project through November 30, shares decades of stories, images and memorabilia of teaching, learning, performing and community-building.

Event: “Afro Beauty, Health and Wellness Marketplace”

Friday-Saturday, November 8-9, 5:30-7:30 and 9:30-10:30 p.m.

FREE, no registration required

Drexel University Main Building, Great Court, 3141 Chestnut St.

This traditional African marketplace/health fair, geared toward the African/African-American community, is a “mini-Odunde marketplace” with African clothing and jewelry vendors selling their wares before and after DanceAfrica’s evening performances. In addition, there will be organizations on hand with information on health issues important to the African-American community.

Performance: DanceAfrica Philadelphia — Our African Legacy: Treasured Reflections

Friday-Saturday, November 8-9, 7:30 p.m.

\$20 (until Oct. 21)-\$25 (\$15 for seniors/students; \$10 for children under 17)

Drexel University, Main Auditorium, 3141 Chestnut St.; tickets at brownpapertickets.com/event/428884

DanceAfrica Philadelphia will present four outstanding African-American dance companies whose works range from traditional to contemporary dance. The four companies are: Kùlú Mèlé African Dance and Drum Ensemble (Phila.), Illstyle and Peace Productions (Phila.), Kariamu and Co.: Traditions (Phila.), and special guest Farafina Kan (DC). *(Company bios follow below.)*

Workshops: Dance and Drumming

Saturday, November 9, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

\$10 (\$5 for children under 17), registration suggested at brownpapertickets.com/event/428884

Drexel University, Drexel Dance Studio, 3141 Chestnut St.

Baba Chuck and each of the four dance companies will teach a special dance class, open to both dance professionals and the general community. These classes, ranging from hip-hop and African dance to Malian drum technique and more, are open to all ages and experience levels. For tickets and schedule, visit brownpapertickets.com/event/428884.

About the Performers

Founded in 1969, **Kùlú Mèlé African Dance and Drum Ensemble** is highly respected as the longest-running African dance company in Philadelphia. Dedicated to preserving the culture and aesthetic of traditional dance and music of Africa and the African Diaspora, the touring company performs nationally and internationally, in addition to presenting workshops, residencies, apprenticeships and study tours to reclaim traditional cultural practices. Kùlú Mèlé African Dance and Drum Ensemble has performed during DanceAfrica at the Brooklyn Academy of Music on several occasions and has won numerous awards and grants, including from the Pew Center of Arts and Heritage and the Knight Foundation. For more information, visit kulumele.org.

Founded in 2002 by Brandon “Peace” Albright, formerly of Rennie Harris Puremovement, and Forrest Webb of the Illstyle Rockers, the Philadelphia-based **Illstyle & Peace Productions** fuses the movement and spirit of old-school hip-hop with other styles of dance such as ballet, jazz and tap. Of this young company’s participation in DanceAfrica’s 33rd year at BAM, *The New York Times* said: “The[y] brought a welcome, raucous humor to the stage with killer dancing.” The company also has a passion for working with young people, especially around nonviolence issues. Illstyle tours extensively, both nationally and internationally; this past season, the company was selected by the U.S. State Department to tour Russia, Belarus and the Ukraine through DanceMotion USA.

Farafina Kan (*The Sound of Africa*) is a Washington, D.C.-based professional performing arts company dedicated to enhancing the history, integrity and representation of traditional African dance and music through high-quality performances. Under the tutelage of international performing arts legends, the company prides itself on professionalism, artistry and continual learning and is known for its highly developed arts and education program. This will be a return to DanceAfrica for the troupe.

Founded in 1970, **Kariamü and Company: Traditions** is a Philadelphia-based collection of dancers who seek to broaden and deepen the genre of African dance with contemporary choreography, music and poetry. Using the Umfundalai technique created by company founder Dr. Kariamü Welsh, Kariamü & Company reaches its audiences with political, social and cultural commentary situated in African and African Diasporan contexts. In its 43 years of excellence, the base of the company has moved from Buffalo, N.Y., to Zimbabwe, to its current home in Philadelphia. For more information, visit www.umfundalai.org.

About Charles “Baba Chuck” Davis

Dr. Charles “Baba Chuck” Davis is the artistic director and founding elder of DanceAfrica. Founded in 1977, the now-weeklong festival DanceAfrica NYC grew out of a daylong festival that began with an African bazaar and a showcase of many of New York’s best known and respected African dance companies. The now-36-year-old

festival has quickly grown to include master classes, and today includes film, music, art and a huge outdoor bazaar. DanceAfrica is now the largest and longest-running festival of African diasporic dance, culture and community engagement in the country. DanceAfrica is presented in Dallas, TX; Washington, D.C.; Denver, CO; Chicago; Durham, NC; and now Philadelphia.

Baba Chuck is one of the leading teachers and choreographers of traditional African dance in America. At 70-something, he has traveled extensively to Africa and all points on the globe where African dance flourishes, studying and to curate dance for the festival. He is the founder the African American Dance Ensemble (1983-present), based in his hometown of Durham, NC. He has received numerous awards for his work and his contributions to the field and community, including two honorary doctoral degrees. Most recently, Baba Chuck and DanceAfrica were cited as one of "America's Irreplaceable Dance Treasures: The First 100" by the Dance Heritage Coalition.

Funders and Sponsors:

Event Sponsors: John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and Dougherty Electric

Other Sponsors: PA Council on the Arts, Philadelphia Cultural Fund, PECO, Odunde, Inc., , and Councilwoman Blackwell's Office

Media Sponsors: Greater Philadelphia Tour and Marketing, *Philadelphia City Paper*, *University City Review*

Community Partners: Philadelphia Folklore Project, Acana African Cultural Alliance of North America, the African Family Health Organization – AFAHO, 5 On the Go, Penn Museum, First Person Arts, and Drexel University

DanceAfrica Committee: Ayoka Wilks (consultant), Joan Myers Brown (Philadelphia Dance Company), Dr. Kariamuwelsh (Kariamuwelsh and Company: Traditions and Temple University), Kemal Nance (dancer and educator, Swarthmore College), Debra Kodish (Philadelphia Folklore Project), Dorothy Wilkie (Kùlù Mèlé African Dance and Drum Ensemble) and Paulette Adams (CEC Board Chair and Jannie Blackwell's Office).

About the Community Education Center

The Community Education Center, located at 3500 Lancaster Ave. in West Philadelphia, PA, is a nonprofit performing arts center and artists incubator space. The Center is known and respected by artists and audiences alike for its support of the local arts community and its presentations of outstanding dance and performance. The Center also offers the community opportunities to explore their creativity through classes in the performing arts as well as performance opportunities. For more information, call 215-387-1911 or visit cecarts.org.

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To request photos, interviews and more information, please contact:

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