African Diaspora

The term "African Diaspora" refers to dispersion through the slave trade of African peoples and cultures. In its second year, the Festival's "African Diaspora" program continues to emphasize the strengths of one of America's most vital ethnic groups, the Black Americans. The organizing principle is to document those aspects of culture that link Black Americans to Africa, the mother continent, via the Caribbean Islands and Latin America.

Arabbers or street vendors from Baltimore have been an important part of the Festival for several years as much for their fresh fruit and gayly decorated carts, as for their significance as living folklore.

Artists and craftspeople were invited to this Festival from the African nation of Ghana, the Caribbean nations of Jamaica and Haiti, and from cities across the United States.

Presentations represent basic societal activities—worship, family, and trade. Worship activities by all participants take place on an altar setting that is a prototype of a rural U.S. church. Trade activities take place in a typical Caribbean market place. An African house, the traditional center of family activities, becomes the setting for small group presentations which allow for intimate interchange between participants and visitors.

Workshops will establish the family of cultural experiences linked by common origins. For example, a music workshop on the Black American blues form will present the urban blues of "Hounddog" Taylor, the country blues of Bukka White, and the comparable African music of Salisu Mahama from northern Ghana. The vocal and instrumental continuum heard in these forms will be strengthened by the music of a group of Black Cajuns from southwestern Louisiana. Mahama's instrument, the gonje, is of the violin or fiddle family; Fontenot of the Cajuns plays the fiddle; the guitar sounds of Bukka White and "Hounddog" Taylor represent a change in string instrument, but not in use or quality of musical sound.

Craft presentations will demonstrate a direct link between traditions in the U.S., the Caribbean and Africa. Hair preparations have carried over without change from Africa. Cornrowing or hair-braiding and hair threading, part of a rich revival presence sweeping Black American communities, will be demonstrated by a Black American and a Ghanaian hair dresser. Basketweavers from Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina, working with sea grass and split palmetto in woven coils, will sit beside craftspeople from Ghana and Jamaica as they use comparable materials and techniques to produce similar baskets.

In the garden behind the African house, foodstuffs common to the Black community such as okra, turnips, and root vegetables will be growing. In the food demonstration area many of these foodstuffs will be used in versions of recipes prepared by cooks from Chicago, Ill., Accra, Ghana, and Kingston, Jamaica.

Cultural presentations, children's games, cooking, and sacred ceremonies, will express the commonality of experiences of Black people. The languages heard throughout the area—English, French, Spanish, and the African languages of Twi, Ga, and Dagboni—reflect aspects of the historical dispersion of Black people.

To supplement the live presentations movies, filmstrips, photographic exhibits, lectures, books and records will be used.

The performing artists and craftspeople of the African Diaspora express the unity within diversity that characterizes African culture wherever it exists. Musicians, dancers, cooks, woodcarvers, hairdressers, basketweavers and fishnet makers from three continents represent urban and rural, secular and sacred, home and community activities of Black people.
Participants

DOMESTIC

Juliet Amoah: Ghanaian cook
Elizabeth and Beatrice Coakley: Basket weavers
Ardoin Brothers: Cajun musicians
Alphonse Ardoin: Accordianist, singer
Laurence Ardoin: Drummer
Morris Ardoin: Guitarist
Russell Ardoin: Bassist
Cannay Fontenot: Fiddler, singer
BibleWay Church World Wide Congregation: Gospel singers
D. C. Black Repertory Vocal Workshop
Sonny Digs: Arabber (fruit vendor)
Rev. William E. Faulkner: Storyteller
George Ferrell, Jr.: Metal sculptor, woodcarver
George Ferrell, Sr.: Woodcarver
Freelows Express: Black American dancers
Charles Freeneey: Cook
Anna Fuller: Hairbraider
Linda Goss: Storyteller
William Hines: Streetsinger
Walter Kelly: Arabber (fruit vendor)
Rev. Leon Pinson: Gospel singer, guitarist
Rising Star Fife and Drum Band:
Napoleon Strickland: Fife player
Bernice Turner: Drummer
Otha Turner: Drummer
G. D. Young: Drummer
Charles Sayles: Streetsinger, Blues harpist
Sweet Honey in the Rock: Acapella female vocal group
Evelyn Harris: Singer
Pat Johnson: Singer
Carol Maillard: Singer
Bernice Reagon: Singer
Louise Robinson: Singer
Randy Weston: Jazz pianist
Wiregrass Sacred Harp Singers: Black American Sacred harp musicians
Freelows Express: Black American dancers
Theodric Erskine
Lester Brooks
Morris Hardy
Joseph Lewis
Michael McKinstry
Hulie Reynolds
Big Walter Horton and his Blues Band:

Chicago urban blues band
Walter Horton: harmonica player
S. P. Levy: drummer
Richard Molina: bass player
Bo Tuneslam: guitarist
St. Helenas Island Community Center
Singers: Black American traditional sacred musicians
Harold Lawrence
Ezekial Cohen
Roberta Simmons
Henry Simmons
Carol Bowles
Joe Bostic
Elsie Hamilton
Caroline Bowles
John Shine: blues guitarist

FOREIGN

Jamaica

Kumina Group:
Elizabeth Alexander
Beatrice Bonner
Donald Carty
Maureen Ellis:
Clifford Flemmings
Roy Francis
Bertram Kelly
Clinton Kennedy
Imogene Kennedy

Maroons:
George Sterling
Marie Harris
Charles Aarons
Josephine DaCosta

Mento Band:
Theodore Miller: Violinist
Gerald Miller: Thumb piano
Jocelyn Power: Drummer
Adam Roach: Banjo player, guitarist
Joseph Salmon: Drummer, cow horn player

Craftspeople:
Claudia Nelson: Basket weaver
Una Griffith: Cook
Celeste Robinson: Cook
Zachaeus Powell: Woodcarver
Peggy Warmington: Chaperone

Ghana

Wulomei:
Nii Ashitey: Leader, drummer, flutist

Jean Edner Guerrier: Dancer
Helene Jeannis: Dancer
Andre Jeanty: Dancer
Fritz Jolicoeur: Dancer
Aline Jules: Dancer
Herve Maxi: Dancer
Anne Alourdes Murat: Dancer
Jean Alphonse: Drummer
Edner Cherisme: Drummer
Andre Duplan: Drummer
Julien Nemorin: Drummer
Attemat Ulysse: Drummer
Marie Bastiania LaGuere: Singer
Marie Ernicia LaGuere: Singer
Antalciadas Murat: Singer
Claudette Pierre-Louis: Singer

Ensemble Meringue:
Dieujuste Dorlette: Contrebasse
Eddy Dorlette: Saxophone
Lehem Biral Felican: Saxophone
Adonis Joseph: Trompette
Roland C. Montreuil: Accordeon
Dr. Michael Lamartiniere Honorat: Cultural Representative
Andre Narcisse: Group leader

The bottleneck style guitar playing and the powerful voice of Flora Molton, Lady Streetsinger, have been heard on the streets of Washington, D. C. since the 1940's.