



PERÚ NEGRO

Dance Migration

Double dose of music and dance for good

Two performances in the next two weeks span centuries of cultural survival and thousands of miles of the music and dance migrations that ribbon the globe.

Let your ticket dollars do some good when Zimbabwean mbira master Musekiwa Chingodza with Jennifer Kyker, Loveness Wesa and Kgotso African Dance Theatre come together in Eugene for **Zimbabwe Live**. The event benefits Tariro (www.tariro.org), a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing hope and health for orphaned teenaged girls whose families have been

affected by HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe.

UNICEF says stopping the global spread of AIDS hinges on elevating the human rights of women and girls. The World Bank concurs, stating that women and girls' lack of education places them at greater risk of contracting the HIV virus, due to "inequalities in gender, power and access to resources."

According to the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS, "Evidence from Zimbabwe shows that among 15-18 year old girls, those who are enrolled in school are more than five times less likely to have HIV

than those who have dropped out."

Nestled in Southern Africa between Zambia and Botswana, Zimbabwe is home to Victoria Falls, a natural wonder of the world, and was a center of international trade starting in the 12th century. In the early 19th century, Ndebele people fleeing Boer Migration settled into the landscape, which was colonized for tobacco growth in the late 1800's by British and Europeans like Cecil Rhodes. Ensuing white settlement and subsequent decolonization led to sharp falls in production and economic collapse. With rampant inflation, food and fuel shortages and routinely violent uprisings, the government's 2005 urban slum demolition, according to the UN, left 700,000 homeless.

Should dances be preserved? Do original expressions of a culture, or the remnants of what's remembered, deserve to be passed along to surviving generations? The Zimbabwe National Traditional Dance Association used to serve this mission — until it was discontinued in 2001.

In Zimbabwe's Shona language, Tariro means "hope," and this modest benefit and auction will feature dance, music and poetry from some of the orphans currently supported by Tariro. The poetry will be read by Willamette High School students. This event takes place at 5:30 pm Saturday, March 15, at Agate Hall on the UO campus. Tix at the door are \$10, \$8 stu.

And next Saturday, March 22, the Hult presents **Perú Negro**, a 30-year old company founded to preserve Peru's African heritage. Appointed as "Ambassadors of

Peruvian Culture" by their government, the group offers outreach to their own community with a Lima-based school and junior troupe, and they continue to share Peru's African legacy across the world.

The ancestors of Peruvian-Africans, "Mandinga," were brought in the 16th and 17th centuries by the tens of thousands. Mostly from Western Africa, Angola and the Congo, they arrived in slave ships at Peru's coast south of Lima, originally to replace the indigenous labor force in the mines. But when the conditions proved fatal to them, too, they were sent to sugar and cotton plantations along the coast.

Today, the Peruvian coastal dances share similarities to the syncopated poly-rhythms of American tap dance and jazz music, which also share their roots in African traditions. Though the music and lyrics are Spanish, the footwork of the *zapateo*, the isolated torso and pelvis in the *festejo*, show off the indelible intricacies of West African rhythms.

When a people fall victim to disease, war and economic disparity, so too do their arts face extinction. But throughout history, across the globe, as languages and religious traditions are lost, somehow, perhaps due to creativity, adaptability, or sheer determination, a few dances and songs have managed to survive. When they're dancing or playing their music, perhaps a people remember that once they were kings.

Perú Negro starts at 8 pm Saturday, March 22, at the Hult. \$18-30. www.hultcenter.org or 682-5000 for tix. **EW**

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