

West African drummer Fode Sylla bringing skills to Cottage Grove

Drumming classes take place weekly in October

BY JON STINNETT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

Fode Sylla has been drumming and dancing the native music of his home in Guinea, West Africa since he was nine years old, and according to a Cottage Grove resident who's one of his biggest fans, "it shows."

BJ Jones has been a fan and devotee of West African music for years, but Jones said she couldn't find many like-minded drum enthusiasts locally until she happened upon a group in Eugene. FeFaFe, a troupe of drummers, dancers and acrobats from Guinea, performs often there, and they have recently graced the stage at Bohemia Park in Cottage Grove.

There, Sylla and company showcased not just the dances and music of their homeland, but the culture behind them.

"People who are into the dancing and drumming are often way into the culture behind it," Jones said.

For his part, Sylla, who boasts a resume that includes performances with Cirque de Soleil and with circus troupes in Canada, said that the music, dance and culture of West Africa are inextricably intertwined.

"There's always a reason we play; it always means something," he said. "It's often for an occasion — we have rhythms for workers, the strongman tunes, welcome dances. Teaching is something I can do for myself and others; it's sharing my culture and everything I've been learning since I was nine years old."

Sylla describes Guinea as a beautiful country but one that is devoid of opportunities for young people, and he said he knew early on that dance and drumming would be his ticket to something bigger.

"I had to hang onto something, to have an outlet," he said, "to have an opportunity to work at something meaningful outside the country. I am the hope for my family."

These days, Sylla lives on a hillside west of Creswell, where he can drum at all hours. He also teaches his craft, and he'll be teaching at the Odd Fellows Hall in Cottage Grove this month. Classes begin Wednesday, Oct. 7 and continue for five weeks. A kids' introductory class starts at 4 p.m. The adult drumming class starts at 6 p.m., and the adult dance class follows at 7:15. The five-week class costs \$50, and pre-registration is required. Those interested in registering may call 541-505-6399 or 707-498-4999.



Fode Sylla has been performing for most of his life, and he'll share the music and culture of his homeland here starting Oct. 7.

LORANE COUNTRY NEWS

BY LIL THOMPSON
For the Sentinel

Lorane Grange meets this Thursday, Oct. 1 at 7:30 p.m. The Grangers are excited to have finished the re-roofing of the main hall. A special thanks is due to all who helped.

There was a fair turnout at the Grange spaghetti dinner and bingo on Saturday evening. Bingo was great, with 15 players enjoying lots of laughter and great prizes. Mark your calendars for the next dinner and bingo on Oct. 23 at 5:30 p.m.

Crow Middle/High School will hold its open house on Monday, Oct. 5 from 6-7:30 p.m. Parents will go through their student's schedules with seven-minute classes. They hope many will attend.

Remember to enjoy coffee and muffins each Wednesday morning at the Rebekah Lodge from 7-9 a.m.

Applegate Elementary has begun an after-school program for its students from 3:25-5 p.m. Space is limited, so those interested are asked to check with the office at 541-686-5140.

A free ukulele lesson club is starting up on Oct. 15 at Crow Middle/High School. Those interested in participating can talk to Mr. Dixon at pdixon@cal.k12.or.us or Lisa Livelybrooks at ruralartcenter@gmail.com.

Helpers are WANTED to help artists teach K-6 with half-day art classes. Contact ruralartcenter@gmail.com or call Alyssa at 541-556-8151. There are exciting art projects planned.

Please put Oct. 24 down and plan to attend the Crow Booster Club fundraiser, the annual Sportsman Auction. Classes K-12 will participate with projects and the middle/high school will have themed baskets for auction. Remember, the Booster Club raises money to help all the students.

OFFBEAT

Continued from page 4A

maybe-lover — there was the testimony of his brutality to his family to deny even that.

"Friends and neighbors of the Bradley family said that he not only abused his wife, but that his children, too, came in for a share of his cruelty," the Oregonian reported.

That last remark was delivered in the Oregonian article that announced, in July of 1909, that the fugitive murderer had at last been caught in Idaho and was on his way back to Portland for trial. It also suggested that Bradley would try to invoke the Unwritten Law at his trial, since the man he was accused of killing had been his wife's home-wrecking lover — or so he claimed to have supposed.

But it scarcely mattered any more. The story had utterly subverted the clean morality play that lay behind every Unwritten Law honor killing.

As for the final denouement of Bradley's case, I haven't been able to

learn it. It wasn't in the paper. Toward the end, it was clear that people were weary of it and just wanted it all to go away.

There is one final chapter, though, in this sordid drama. It was published in March of 1909 — just over a year after the murder. It seems Policeman Gittings' widow — whose first name is never mentioned — had plunged once more into desperate poverty.

"They have had nothing to eat but cornmeal and water for some time," the Oregonian's reporter noted. "At the time of Gittings' death, the police of Portland made a fund out of which was purchased a home, and private citizens and philanthropic people furnished the house, purchased a cow and chickens and sent provisions and wood. ... The cow has since died, the children are too young to assist and the mother cannot leave them to secure employment."

Many a jaundiced eye was probably cocked at this assertion, since most Portlanders knew the oldest Gittings

boy was now 10 — plenty old enough for babysitting duties. Also, not mentioned was the fact that the Police Officers' Social and Aid Society had been sending her monthly support payments of \$11 each month — not a lot, but plenty enough to buy food other than cornmeal mush.

The community rallied around once again to relieve the need and succor the children, who were clearly getting the brunt of their mother's lack of overall competence.

Then the helpful community members did something that likely wasn't what Mrs. Gittings had in mind:

"As a result of investigations made into conditions existing in the family of J.W. Gittings ... steps have been taken to place the children in the Children's Home, and to send the mother either to the Home for Feeble-Minded Persons or to the County Poorhouse," the paper announced.

And so the whole affair ended, with a clear demonstration of a credible mo-



This tear-jerker cartoon by Oregonian cartoonist Harry Murphy motivated a flood of Portland residents to contribute to the relief of Officer Gittings' widow and orphan children.

neglecting his family.

But there did seem to be one clear take-away from the whole sordid mess: Life was just not simple enough for The Unwritten Law to be any kind of true justice.

It was a lesson that seems to have taken hold in Portland, for even as the honor killings continued elsewhere in the country, Oregon, after this, saw very few of them.

There were a couple more, though. One of these raged in Linn County at roughly the same time as the Gittings affair. The other, which also played out in Portland, seemed mostly to drive home the hard lessons of the Gittings debacle. We'll talk about that one next week.

(Sources: Portland Morning Oregonian: 19-23 Dec 1907, 19 Jan 1908, 06 Feb 1909, 13 Mar 1909, 02-03 Mar 1909, and 11 Jul 1909.)

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