

## Muntu Dance makes its way from Senegal to Simone

Chicago Tribune - Chicago, Ill.  
 Author: Sid Smith  
 Date: Jul 11, 2008  
 Start Page: 20  
 Section: On The Town  
 Text Word Count: 514

### Document Text

The one and only Muntu Dance Theatre of Chicago can be counted on to brighten and fire up the weekend with a concert including the world premiere by a noted Senegalese choreographer and a salute to Nina Simone.

"N'Dage Mandingo" is a brand new work by Senegal's Babacar N'Diaye, former principal dancer of the National Ballet of Senegal, on Saturday's "Our Culture, Our Voice" lineup at the Harris Theater. N'Diaye is known for his high energy. And though originally slated to come in, choreograph and depart, the veteran dancer is now set to perform in the new piece as well, joining the company and Muntu's stellar, trademark team of musicians. The two-part work will end the first act and open the second, separated by an intermission.

"Suite Nina," danced to such Simone classics as "Sinnerman," choreographed by Deidre Dawkins and Kwame Opare, is also on tap, a fusion of African and modern dance that speaks in particular to Simone's commitment to social justice and change. "Ayo's Dream," by Muntu's Tosha Alston, is also on the list.

Music is as ever a critical component of any Muntu performance, and the instrumental works this time around include "We Bow Down," featuring Babu Atiba, one of the troupe's musical directors and assistant artistic director.

Muntu, now in its 36th season, is led by artistic director Amaniyea Payne. A separate benefit gala will follow the concert.

Thodos Dance Chicago's summer new-dance fest is in its eighth year, and, appropriately enough, will boast eight premieres Friday through Sunday at the Ruth Page Center for the Arts.

Each year, the fest unveils work by company dancers, along with that by a guest choreographer invited to participate. This year's guest is Zachary Whittenburg, the strong, engaging dancer who has worked with various troupes about town, including Same Planet Different World. He says the intent of the choreography in this work, "Three on Beach House," is to capture a "dreamlike sense of the Beach House songs, like music remembered but not heard in a long while, or something heard faintly from another room, or spilling out an open window at dusk." The music, by the way, shuffles back and forth among various time signatures.

Jackie Stewart's "Under the Long Hand" is a quartet "dealing with human existence and its response to the inevitable progression of time." Dori Santarsiere's "Lanterna (Universal Timekeepers)" is set in part to Michael Nyman's soundtrack to the movie "The Piano." Jessica Miller Tomlinson (to Led Zeppelin), Kelsey Yates, Jeremy Blair, Kellie Hodges and Ryan Miller round out the choreographic roster.

The Thodos troupe's "New Dances 2008" plays Friday through Sunday at Ruth Page, 1016 N. Dearborn St. For tickets: \$35, 312-266-6255 or [www.thodosdancechicago.org](http://www.thodosdancechicago.org).

### OUR CULTURE, OUR VOICE"

Fusing African and modern dance

When: 7 p.m. Saturday

Where: Harris Theater for Music and Dance, 205 E. Randolph St.

Price: \$25-\$50; 312-334-7777 or [www.harristheaterchicago.org](http://www.harristheaterchicago.org).

-----

sismith@tribune.com

Credit: By Sid Smith, TRIBUNE CRITIC

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction or distribution is prohibited without permission.

---

**Abstract** (Document Summary)

---

Music is as ever a critical component of any Muntu performance, and the instrumental works this time around include "We Bow Down," featuring Babu Atiba, one of the troupe's musical directors and assistant artistic director.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction or distribution is prohibited without permission.