



FY2024 Annual Report
August 1, 2023—July 31, 2024



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LETTER FROM THE FOUNDER AND THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends of Step Afrika!,

With deep gratitude, we reflect on the first half of Step Afrika!’s remarkable 30th Anniversary season! Founded in 1994, Step Afrika! has evolved from a Johannesburg-based International Cultural Festival to Washington, D.C.’s largest African American arts organization, all while continuing its founding spirit of inclusivity, teamwork, community outreach, and artistic excellence.

Since its inception, Step Afrika! has garnered numerous honors and accolades. Step Afrika! has been named Washington, D.C.’s Cultural Ambassador, enjoyed enduring partnerships with prestigious venues like the Kennedy Center, toured in five continents, and performed for three U.S. presidents, mostly recently for Joe Biden at the White House’s first-ever Juneteenth Celebration. Step Afrika! is the largest employer of full-time African American dancers in the Washington, D.C. area and tours to more cities than almost any other dance Company in the country, ensuring our impact reaches every corner of our nation, as well as globally.

As Step Afrika! begins its next phase, it will build on its legacy of artistic and organizational innovation to bring stepping to communities in Washington, D.C., nationally, and internationally. During this past year, we set new standards for performance and outreach. Selling 78,483 tickets, Step Afrika! performed in 83 cities. The Company also had its longest-ever run with its revival of *The Migration: Reflections on Jacob Lawrence*, which returned for six weeks at the Arena Stage in Washington D.C. before touring to sold-out performances across the country. Step Afrika! also successfully implemented new avenues for our arts education programs, totaling outreach to 5,670 students in the Washington, D.C. metro area alone via in-school, summer camps, residency programs, and virtual initiatives, in addition to impacting 25,052 students at our tour stops. These programs are made possible by the generosity of our partners and donors.

As Step Afrika! celebrates the milestones of our thirty-year history, we look forward to our future in promoting our art form, providing industry leadership, and continuing our long tenure as an important fixture of the global dance community. Our vision for an impactful future honors stepping’s cultural significance and the communities in which we perform, from the DMV to Johannesburg.

Thank you for your steadfast support of Step Afrika!, and enjoy this report on the first half of our 30th Anniversary season.

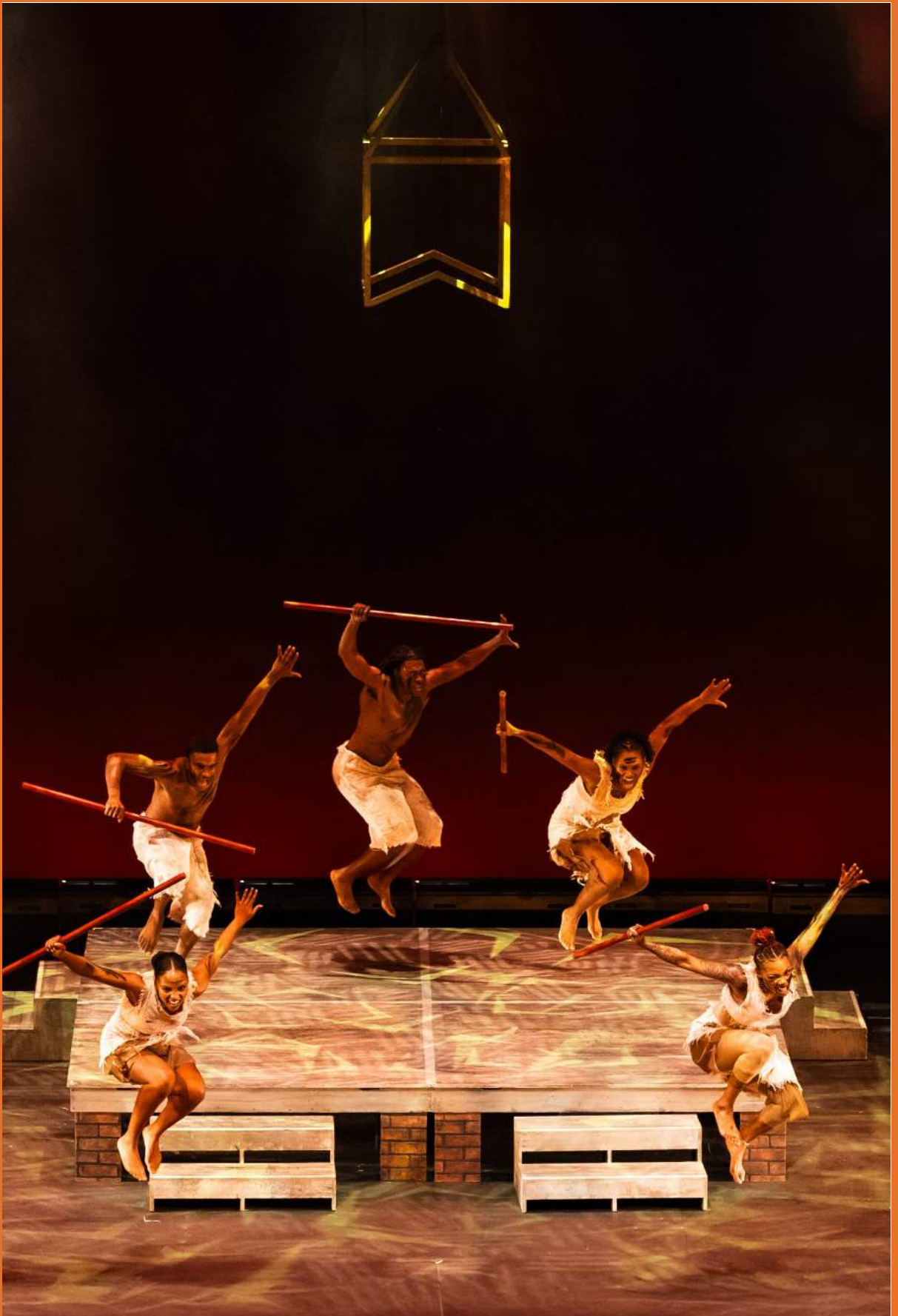
Warmly,



C. Brian Williams
Founder and Executive Producer



Lamar Lovelace
Executive Director



MISSION

Step Afrika!'s mission is to preserve, expand and promote an appreciation for stepping through professional performances and to educate, motivate and inspire young people in and out of school through arts education programs that emphasize teamwork, commitment, and discipline.



VISION

As one of the world's most celebrated African American dance companies, Step Afrika! deepens connections within the communities we serve and furthers our mission to preserve and promote the tradition of stepping. Our vision is to expand programmatic efforts to engage broader audiences.

10 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT STEP AFRIKA!

- 1** Founded in **1994** as a cultural exchange with Soweto Dance Theatre; now the world's leading authority on stepping.
- 2** Among the top **10 African American dance companies** in the U.S. and the **largest African American arts organization** in Washington, D.C.
- 3** Serves as **D.C.'s only cultural ambassador**, representing the city nationally and globally.
- 4** Ensemble includes **17-20 full-time dancers**, all college grads—many from **Historically Black Colleges and Universities** (HBCUs) and Black Greek organizations.
- 5** Engages **50,000 college students** and **20,000+ K-12 students nationwide** each year through culture-based arts education.
- 6** Promoted cultural dialogue and exchange in more than 60 countries, with tours to **Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and South America**
- 7** Featured in the **Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture** through the *Explore More!* interactive stepping exhibit.
- 8** In residence at **Arena Stage** through a five-year partnership supporting artistic and production development.
- 9** Founder **C. Brian Williams** was named a **2022 National Heritage Fellow**; and featured in *Roots of American Culture*.
- 10** In 2023, became the **first dance Company** inducted into the **National Association for Campus Activities Hall of Fame**.

“Step Afrika! has never wavered from its mission of supporting Black artists, introducing step to the community, and showcasing the brilliance of Black culture.” – Melissa Green, *Washington Informer*

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND IMPACT

In its thirtieth year, Step Afrika! continues to inspire audiences with groundbreaking performances, arts education programs, and cultural exchange. In FY24, we built on our commitment to showcasing Black culture through stepping and growing our arts educational programming while providing captivating performances for diverse audiences locally, nationally, and internationally. This section highlights our key programs, performances, and milestones, celebrating our rich history and exciting future.



Launch of the 30th Anniversary Timeline

Kicking off Black History Month 2024, Step Afrika! partnered with Bloomberg Philanthropies to debut Step Afrika!'s Interactive 30th Anniversary Timeline, commemorating the organization's 30-year history. With the support of Bloomberg Philanthropies' Digital Accelerator for Arts and Culture, the ambition of this partnership was to help arts organizations stabilize and thrive in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic through strategic improvements to technological structures. The Digital Accelerator has created a meaningful opportunity for key stakeholders to learn and engage with Step Afrika's unique history, increase fundraising, and drive revenue while concurrently highlighting its artistic and programmatic milestones. This timeline is an amazing repository of videos, photos, and interviews with past and present performers, board

members, partners, and, of course, supporters. Enjoy our rich history in one place, at one time at timeline.stepafrika.org.

Re-launch of *The Migration: Reflections on Jacob Lawrence* in June 2024

In celebration of our 30th Anniversary, Step Afrika! presented our most-acclaimed work, *The Migration: Reflections on Jacob Lawrence*, from June 7 to July 14, 2024 at Arena Stage. Drawing inspiration from American painter Jacob Lawrence's iconic *The Migration Series* (1940-41), this feature-length production delves into the profound narrative of millions of African Americans who migrated from the rural South to the industrial North. This six-week revival marked the longest performance run in Step Afrika!'s history, attracting an audience of 17,764 people over the course of 48 shows.

Arts Education

Step Afrika!'s award-winning arts education programs bring rhythm, confidence, and creativity into classrooms and communities across Washington, D.C.

Step Afrika! Reads: 380 students

Books come to life in this joyful, movement-filled program designed for Pre-K to 2nd graders. The 35-minute program uses drums, stepping, and storytelling to spark a love for reading—and for learning—for early scholars.



Stepping with Step Afrika!: 640 students

Part show and part interactive experience, our school-wide, signature K-12 performance gets students clapping, moving, and learning about the roots of stepping. Performers incorporate world traditions, demonstrated through the lively South African gumboot dance.

Step by Step: 4,130 Students

This school-wide workshop introduces students to the power of stepping—to Step Afrika!’s core values: teamwork, discipline, and commitment. Designed for grades Pre-K through 12, this program involves 45 minutes of highly energetic, percussive unity in motion where students enjoy learning step choreography and discovering how dance brings people together. It introduces the ties between stepping, college life, and academic achievement while discovering the rhythm, physicality, and history of stepping.

Step Up to College: 70 students

This weekly residency empowers 4th–12th grade students to express themselves through step while learning about college life. The program’s curriculum covers stepping, its history, tradition, preparation for college life, and wellness. Step Afrika! successfully conducted four *Step Up to College* residency programs via virtual and in-person platforms, where students built choreography, confidence, and real-world readiness with every beat.

Summer Steps with Step Afrika!: 70 students

Recognized as a 2023 “Best Summer Camp” Finalist by Washington City Paper, Summer Steps immerses 4th–12th grade students into stepping and South African Gumboot dance for a week while building leadership skills and exploring college prep. The camp culminates in a dynamic showcase of student work.

COMPANY

Step Afrika!’s dancers are more than performers—they are storytellers, educators, and cultural ambassadors. The Company is home to 17 full-time artists, many of whom are proud HBCU alumni and members of Divine 9 organizations. Through the tradition of stepping, they bring narratives of academic excellence, perseverance, and creativity to life on stages worldwide.



Conrad R. Kelly,
Assistant Artistic Director

Kenneth L. Alexander Jr.
Nya Christian
Jerod Coleman
Ariel Dykes
Keomi Givens Jr.
Kamala Hargrove
Terrence Johnson

Isaiah O’Connor
Valencia Springer
Ericka Still
Brie Turner
Joseph Vasquez
Pelham Warner Jr.
Robert Warnsley

TOURING

In 2024, Step Afrika! toured 71 cities nationwide, performing to sold-out audiences. The Company celebrated its distinguished past and vibrant future through the rich tradition of stepping. By integrating percussive dance from historically African American fraternities and sororities, traditional African dance, and contemporary art forms, Step Afrika! delivered performances filled with song, humor, and audience engagement. This work continues to build a powerful cultural and community bridge—one performance at a time.

Local And National

The Migration: Reflections on Jacob Lawrence

is a signature work inspired by legendary visual artist Jacob Lawrence's 60-panel masterpiece. Step Afrika! paid tribute with this captivating dance interpretation, celebrating our history and progress through the lens of the northern migration. This work combines Lawrence's powerful images with our dancers, revealing the beauty and grit of that chapter in American history. We were pleased to return this revered piece to sold-out crowds and to present it to new audiences during our 30th Anniversary season.

Step Afrika!'s Magical Musical Holiday Step Show

has truly become part of what makes the holiday season unique in Washington, D.C. The pageantry and wonder of this Step Show—which includes a dance battle between the Gingerbread Men and Peppermint Candies—has made the program a Step Afrika! staple. Generations of families have enjoyed this dance party meets Step Show, making it a must-see holiday experience. Over 8,000 people attended the performances in December 2023.

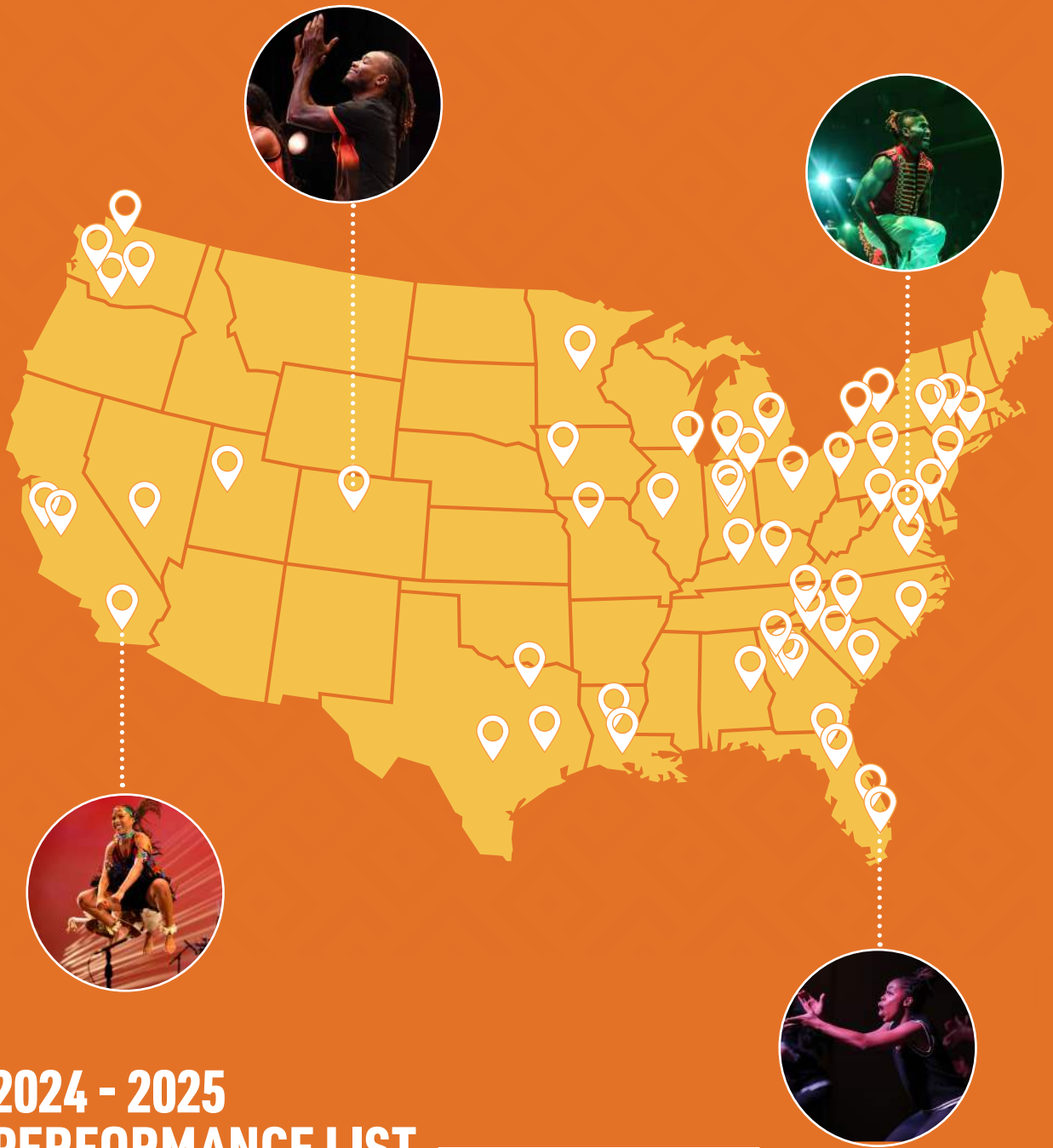
Step Afrika! 101 Tour is an energetic, educational introduction to the art form of stepping. Merging the steps and strolls created and practiced by Black Greek-letter organizations alongside the sounds of AfroBeats and popular music, Step Afrika! 101 fuses explosive footwork, vibrant choreography, and contemporary

African movement for young adults throughout the country. During the 2023-2024 season, 12,106 individuals attended performances at 29 universities and two high schools.

Drumfolk is inspired by the Stono Rebellion of 1739. Step Afrika! blended songs, storytelling, and dance to explore an event in history that transformed African American life and culture. When Africans lost the right to use their drums, the beats found their way into the body of the people, the Drumfolk. New percussive forms took root leading to the development of some of our country's most distinct performance traditions like ring shout, tap, and stepping.

International

Step Afrika! continued its tradition as Cultural Ambassadors of Stepping and Cultural Exchange during Year 30. We joined the highly anticipated and wildly popular Capital Jazz Annual SuperCruise XI with ports of call to the Bahamas, Aruba, and Curacao. These audiences traveled from all over the country to enjoy the sights and sounds of jazz on the water. During this unforgettable tour stop, Step Afrika! captivated audiences with its rhythmic, percussive stepping.



2024 - 2025 PERFORMANCE LIST

The First Half of our 30th Anniversary Season

Local Venues
Arena Stage (Washington, D.C.)

National

Academy Center of the Arts (Lynchburg, VA)
AFLV Central Conference 2024 (Indianapolis, IN)
American Group Psychotherapy Association Connect (National Harbor, MD)
Anderson Center for the Performing Arts (Binghamton, NY)
Appell Center for the Performing Arts (York, PA)
The Argyros (Ketchum, ID)
Barry University (Miami Shores, FL)
Butler Arts and Events Center (Indianapolis, IN)
Capitol Center for the Arts (Concord, NH)
The Capitol Theatre (Yakima, WA)
The Carolina Theatre (Durham, NC)
Carver Community Cultural Center (San Antonio, TX)
Center for the Performing Arts at Penn State University (University Park, PA)
Charleston Gaillard Center (Charleston, SC)
Charles W. Eisemann Center (Richardson, TX)
Charles Wadsworth Auditorium (Newnan, GA)
Chrysler Hall (Norfolk, VA)
Concord University (Athens, WV)
Cottey College (Nevada, MO)
Cullen Theater (Houston, TX)
Ellen Eccles Theatre (Logan, UT)
Emory and Henry College (Emory, VA)
Fairfield Arts & Convention Center (Fairfield, IA)
Fashion Institute of Technology (New York, NY)
Folly Theater (Kansas City, MO)
The Fox Cities Performing Arts Center (Appleton, WI)
Gogue Performing Arts Center’s Woltosz Theatre (Auburn, AL)
The Grand Opera House (Macon, GA)
Gulliver Prep (Miami, FL)
Harris Center (Folsom, CA)
Indiana University Auditorium (Bloomington, IN)
Indiana Wesleyan University (Marion, IN)
Irvine Barclay Theatre (Irvine, CA)
Jorgensen Center for the Performing Arts (Storrs, CT)
Kingsbury Hall (Salt Lake City, UT)
The Raymond F. Kravis Center (West Palm Beach, FL)
Lebanon Valley College (Annville, PA)

Lenfest Center for the Arts (Lexington, VA)
Levine Center for the Arts (Charlotte, NC)
Manchester University (North Manchester, IN)
Manship Theatre (Baton Rouge, LA)
Mary D’Angelo Performing Arts Center (Erie, PA)
McCain Auditorium (Manhattan, KS)
The Mendel Center (Benton Harbor, MI)
Metropolitan Community College (Omaha, NE)
Miami Country Day School (Miami, FL)
Miami University (Hamilton, OH)
Mount Baker Theatre (Bellingham, WA)
Mount St. Mary’s University (Emmitsburg, MD)
Newberry Opera House (Newberry, SC)
Nicholls State University (Thibodaux, LA)
Norfolk State University (Norfolk, VA)
Northrop (Minneapolis, MN)
NW Missouri State (Maryville, MO)
NYU Skirball (New York, NY)
Pantages Theater (Tacoma, WA)
Peace Center (Greenville, SC)
PepsiCo Theatre (Purchase, NY)
Phillips Center (Gainesville, FL)
Prairie Center (Schaumburg, IL)
Proctors Theatre (Schenectady, NY)
Sanford Performing Arts Center (Sanford, ME)
Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center (The Villages, FL)
St. Mary’s College (St Marys City, MD)
SUNY Geneseo (Geneseo, NY)
UMass Amherst Fine Arts Center (Amherst, MA)
University of Charleston (Charleston, WV)
University of Colorado Boulder (Boulder, CO)
University of Louisville (Louisville, KY)
University of Nebraska Kearney (Kearney, NE)
University of Pittsburgh at Bradford (Bradford, PA)
Vacaville Performing Arts Theatre (Vacaville, CA)
Vincennes University (Vincennes, IN)
Weinberg Center for the Arts (Frederick, MD)
Wharton Center (East Lansing, MI)
William Paterson University (Wayne, NJ)
Wilson Center (Wilmington, NC)
Wortham Center (Asheville, NC)
Youngstown State University (Youngstown, OH)

International

Capital Jazz Annual SuperCruise
(Bahamas, Aruba, Curacao)

“ Step Afrika!’s work bringing stepping into the American theater and around the world has been vital to the preservation, appreciation, and evolution of this important art form. Their fluidity in uniting traditional stepping with untold stories of the African American experience is a privilege to witness. We are thrilled to be long-term funding partners of Step Afrika! and are committed to supporting their success. ”

– Emil Kang, Program Director for Arts and Culture at the Mellon Foundation





DONOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Step Afrika! expresses its gratitude for its foundational and corporate sponsors. Thanks to major gifts from the Mellon Foundation and Bloomberg Philanthropies, Step Afrika! has been able to put on critically acclaimed dance performances and share stepping with audiences worldwide.

Step Afrika! 30th Anniversary Gala

On a beautiful summer night in Washington, D.C., patrons, staff, and board members gathered to celebrate our journey to 30 years. A tapestry of cultures, culinary treats, and community filled Arena Stage in merriment. There was much to celebrate in Step Afrika!'s past, present and future as we looked back on our organization's growth and forward to our continued honoring of stepping's history and cultural significance.

The evening featured performances by Step Afrika! and special guests Pastor Smokie Norful, DJ Tanz, and The Wave. Donations from generous supporters were used to continue the organization's local performances, outreach, arts educational programming, as well as to fund our two-week tour in South Africa in August and September 2024.





\$100,000 AND UP

DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities
Events DC
Mellon Foundation
National Capital Arts and Cultural Affairs
The Hearst Foundation

\$50,000 – \$99,999

Reg Brown and Tiffeny Sanchez
The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation

\$25,000 – \$49,999

Bank of America
CoStar Group
DC Housing Finance Agency
Fortitude RE
International Association of Blacks in Dance
National Endowment for the Arts
Philip L. Graham Fund

\$10,000 – \$24,999

Amazon
Ann Belkov
CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield
Dallas Morse Coors Foundation
Elizabeth Bettelheim Family Foundation
Eugene M. Lang Foundation
Exelon Corporation
John W. Hill
Pepco
Safeway/Albertson's
SHARE Fund
Washington Gas

\$5,000 – \$9,999

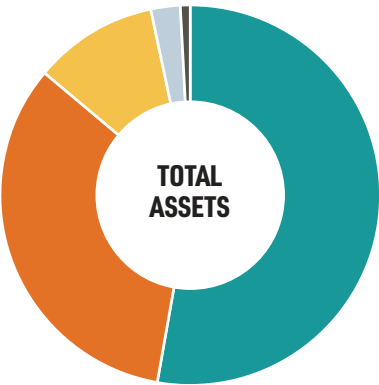
Brady Birdsong
C. Brian Williams
Connie and Patricia Williams
Davis Wright Tremaine LLP
Katherine Kane
Lapine Group, Inc.
Natasha & Dr. Benjamin Watkins
Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.
SodexoMagic
The Menkiti Group & Keller Williams Capital Properties
The Pohanka Family Foundation
The Venable Foundation, Inc.
Troy Patterson
Verizon Inc

\$2,500 – \$4,999

Caroline Ahern
Daphne and N. William Jarvis
David & Monique Canada
DC Water
Destination DC
Dyonicia "Dy" Brown
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Jeffery D. Kennerly & Erica A. Green
Kym & Steve Taylor
Maria Rooney
Nicole Venable
Phillip Randall
Robert H. Kapp Charitable Fund
Sean McIntosh
Victor Bonett

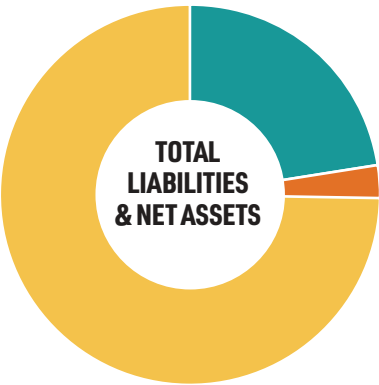
FY2024 FINANCIALS

Assets and Liabilities



- Cash and cash equivalents: \$3,032,893 – 53.0%
- Investments: \$1,908,490 – 33.3%
- Property and equipment: \$601,311 – 10.5%
- Accounts receivable: \$137,745 – 2.4%
- Prepaid expenses: \$42,820 – 0.7%

TOTAL ASSETS: \$5,723,259



- Current Liabilities: \$1,298,607 – 22.7%
- Long-Term Liabilities: \$148,142 – 2.6%
- Net Assets: \$4,276,510 – 74.7%

TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS: \$5,723,259

FY2024 FINANCIALS

Revenue and Expenses



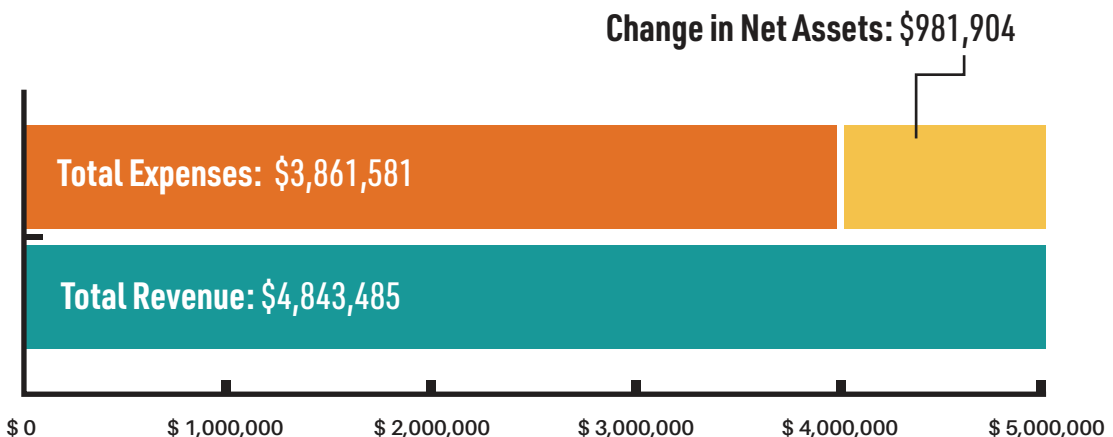
- Contributions, Gifts, & Grant Income: \$2,251,389 – 46.5%
- Performance Income: \$2,463,629 – 50.9%
- Other Income: \$128,467 – 2.6%

TOTAL SUPPORT & REVENUE: \$4,843,485



- Program Services: \$2,703,063 – 70.0%
- Management and General: \$926,598 – 24.0%
- Fundraising: \$231,920 – 6.0%

TOTAL EXPENSES: \$3,861,581



PRESS

For 30 years, we have shared our journey through the cultivation of relationships with various media outlets, earning features on magazine covers, and in national and international publications. Below, please find a few of the more notable outlets and excerpts.



1	Step Afrika! on KHOU 11's Great Day Houston
2	Step Afrika! Joins KPRC 2 Houston's Houston Life
3	Perception Magazine honors The Legacy of Step Afrika!
4	BET celebrates Step Afrika's 30 Years
5	Step Afrika! Stomps into its 30th Year with Ebony
6	FOX5 welcomes Step Afrika! to discuss 30 years and the return of <i>The Migration</i>
7	Review: BroadwayWorld Unpacks the Importance and Victory of Step Afrika!'s <i>The Migration</i>
8	ESSENCE Celebrates Step Afrika!'s "30 Years of Connecting Black America and Beyond"
9	The Company steps into the NBC4 Studio

BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND STAFF

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Founder and Executive Producer of Step Afrika!

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