

## Workshops and Performances Testimonials

I first met the Mensah brothers while pursuing a Ph.D. in ethnomusicology at the University of Colorado in Boulder (2003). At the time, Boulder was quickly becoming a hub of West African music and dance in the U.S., consisting of outstanding artists from Guinea, Mali, Senegal, and Ghana. Not only were Maputo and Mawuenyega among the most skilled performers among them, they were gifted teachers, drawing over one hundred students a week to their drum and dance classes. Soon after starting a position in the School of Music at Northern Arizona University, I invited Maputo and Mawuenyega to perform at the university and conduct a dance class for the Flagstaff community. Their performance (attended by well over 300 people) and teaching left an indelible impression. While I was at Washington State University during the 2010-2011 academic year, I didn't hesitate to extend the Mensahs another invitation. Once again, they were a wonderful source of energy and inspiration for the university community.

In my role as an ethnomusicologist at NAU and Co-Director of the Center for Indigenous Music and Culture, I consistently work with musicians and dancers from around the world. I have enjoyed working with Maputo and Mawuenyega in particular, not only because they are great artists, but because they are uniquely positive and professional.

### **Chad Hamill**

Northern Arizona University

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The Aspen Dance Connection was honored to sponsor Maputo and LOGO LIGI African Dance during the fall 2014 Western Slope Tour. The company performed for 7 elementary and middle schools in New Castle, Rifle, Grand Junction, and Paonia, CO. They taught Drumming Master Classes for the Music Department at Colorado Mesa University in Grand Junction and they were the opening act for the Mesa County Libraries annual CULTURE FEST. LOGO LIGI performed for 3,500 enthusiastic people on this tour. LOGO LIGI was able to keep 650 middle schools children engaged and clapping in rhythm with the drummers. The group had EVERY CHILD, TEACHER, AND PRINCIPAL up dancing in EVERY SCHOOL they performed for. The excitement was overwhelming and it was a day none of the schools will ever forget.

The Aspen Dance Connection is looking forward to this year's LOGO LIGI AFRICAN DANCE tour of the western slope November 4-7, 2015, for Carbondale, New Castle, Rifle, Grand Junction, and Paonia, CO.

**Fran Page**

Artistic/Executive Director  
Aspen Dance Connection

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Maputo and Mawue came up to our little studio in Frisco, CO, Summit School of Dance, to offer a workshop on the basics of kpanlogo. None of our students previously had experience with African dance and they had a blast! We had all ages from 7 - 50! Maputo kept our heart rates up throughout and we learned quite a bit about the use of dance and song in West African culture. Mawue on the djembe gave our students a lesson about how listening to the music can tell you what step to do next. I think one of the greatest lessons is to dance **with** the music instead of **to** the music, and the Ga people of Ghana know how it is done!

**Kelly Threlkeld**

Summit School of Dance

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My name is Erica Joos and I am the Arts Director for an elementary school in Boulder, Colorado. Last year, Maputo Mensah and his performance group Logo Ligi did an evening show for our school's students and parents. The school community was so impressed by the energy and talent of the dancers and the drummers! The students were enchanted by the rapid rhythms of the drums, beautiful melodies of the songs, and vibrant colors of the performers' dress; Maputo engaged the adults through teaching call and response songs. By the end of the performance, the entire audience was on their feet, singing, dancing, smiling, and sharing the wonderful talent Logo Ligi offers. We can't wait to host them again this year!

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Intercambio has partnered with Logo Ligi at many intercultural events for the past 10 years, and every time they bring amazing energy and put huge smiles on everyone's face, from kids to seniors. They know how to engage an audience and get everyone participating and loving it.

They are fun to work with, and their love for the music, dance, and culture they share is contagious.

**Lee Shainis**

Executive Director and Co-Founder, Intercambio Uniting Communities

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We have had Logo Ligi back to perform at our place numerous times, and now they are a regular seasonal feature that we look forward to. The performances are vibrant, energetic and dynamic! They always pack the place with an excited audience, and bring the space to life with energy! The room is filled with beaming smiles and dancing, sweating bodies—a kind of communal joy and connection that is a rare and special opportunity in our culture. Having them perform in our place is always a treat, a very special and memorable night that people talk about long after.

**John Jenkins**

Owner, Laughing Goat Coffeehouse  
Boulder, Colorado

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The Double Rainbow Ranch, an outdoor performance space near Boulder, Colorado, has had *Logo Ligi African Drum & Dance* perform several times over the past years. They always both attract and thrill our audience. The ecstatic energy of their dancing, drumming and singing is highly contagious, leaving the audience whooping and hollering for more. Every time they play we have a full house - they are highly respected and sought after performers in our community. They are world-class musicians and dancers with an electrifying presence.

**Paul Temple**

Proprietor, Double Rainbow Ranch

## **Classes Testimonials**

Taking Dance of Africa with Maputo Mensah has not only enriched my knowledge about the Ghanaian culture of dance and music, among the cultures of other West African countries, but it has enabled me to appreciate the importance of dance in community. I have realized how healing dance can be when you are doing it for yourself and as a way of connecting with others and with the land. I have not been able to find such pure joy and letting go when dancing in any other class.

**Stephanie Zuñiga**

Naropa University student

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Maputo, I just wanted to email you because oftentimes I have a hard time vocalizing how I feel and writing comes easier! I love your class, and I look forward to it always, and I just want to thank you for being exactly who you are and so compassionate and sharing your wisdom with us. We all learn from each other, and I really appreciate that you emphasize that. This is by far one of my favorite classes, I love the dance, what we learn, and the other students. It really has been healing and wonderful for me! So thank you. I was feeling sad on Tuesday and your class always makes me feel better!

**Awa Ndiaye**

Naropa University student

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I started African dance by taking Maputo's class at Naropa University. Having a ballet background, the grounded movement was very foreign to me, but I found a particular grace in the movement when I watched Maputo.

I joined Logo Ligi, Maputo's African dancing and drumming group, a few weeks later. Logo Ligi became my second family. They meet a few times a week to learn and rehearse traditional African songs and dances. It forced me to face many of my personal anxieties about singing and performing, but everyone was very supportive. Inspired by this new dance form and culture, I decided to take a deeper plunge and sign up to go to Ghana and learn more.

I went on Maputo and Mawue's trip to Ghana during the summer of 2014. It was one of the most incredible experiences of my life. I loved having dance and drumming classes twice a day as well as an hour for language lessons. The teachers (including Mawue and Maputo) are very welcoming, patient, and kind. Maputo never led us astray, taking us to the best local food joints and fabric markets. As a group we bonded instantly and went everywhere together so I always felt safe. The traditional food is well worth a step out of your comfort zone (you learn to eat with your hands); I had seconds almost every meal!

The most important lessons that I learned from my experiences are that a positive attitude makes all the difference (smile!), don't be afraid to ask questions, and respect and politeness are the most important aspect of learning a new culture.

**Galen Temple-Wood**

Naropa University student

Taking African Dance with Maputo Mensah through the Libby program was an absolute joy. Not only did this course challenge me to become a better dancer, it also allowed me to find a deeper appreciation for a culture completely different from my own. Each class was accompanied by live drummers: Mawuenyega Mensah, Atta Addo Vanderpauye, and Selasee Atiase, who all originate from Ghana. Each drummer brings in their own unique experiences and bright personalities to each class. I adored the class, drummers, and instructor so much during the fall semester that I decided to take it again in the spring. The judgment-free zone was the perfect setting to make mistakes, dance, play, and have fun. Many different levels of dance experience are always welcome to Maputo's class. So if you are a long time veteran or a first timer, Maputo personally gets to know each student so he can accurately evaluate and best challenge each person based on their individual skills. This course allowed me to be myself in a safe environment while also pushing my skills as a dancer. As a freshman I was able to make many long-lasting relationships in each of the courses that I still keep as a junior to this day. After taking the course two semesters in a row, Maputo saw that I had a passion for the material and asked me to join his dance troupe, named Logo Ligi. I have now been in Logo Ligi for one year and have performed at many venues all around Colorado such as the Boulder Creek Festival. This course has heightened my appreciation for African Dance and Culture and I would recommend this class to anyone.

**Cheyenne-Marie Theberge**  
University of Colorado student

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To Maputo,  
Thank you for making me feel at home and teaching me more than you had known. Throughout the semester I've been taking in your wisdom and putting it into words and stories.

Sincerely,  
**Gabi**  
University of Colorado student

Today was my second day of college. I haven't truly felt connected to any classes, teachers, or new people until today. A few months ago, I took a leap and signed up for an African dance class offered by my school. Maputo, my teacher, is from Ghana, as well as the three drummers who provide a beat for us during class. Right off the bat, I felt at home. My teacher must have been the happiest, most positive man I have ever met. Each word he spoke came with a smile. Each sentence came

with good intention. He said a few things that stuck with me, but one comment especially. After we learned an unfamiliar dance and song, several people's faces began to tighten and frustration set in. "How long did it take you to get where you are now?" he asked a boy to my right.

"Eighteen years," he replied.

"Everything in life takes time. You can't expect to understand something in a day. Everything will always take time."

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"Being judged is good. It means you exist and you are human. You should want to be judged. I love being judged. It's cool, man."

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"Don't let your mistakes interfere with your happiness. Your happiness should dominate your mistakes. Smile. Smiling will bring us closer to each other. If we all smile, we won't be afraid of one another."

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I have been dancing almost all my life, and I took criticism very seriously, often to heart. I would dread particular classes because I knew the teacher would correct me and inform me of my mistakes. I'd almost always be holding back tears in response. I wanted to be right all the time.

Yesterday, Maputo called me out several times. He told me to show him, in front of the entire class, a particular move, that he clearly knew, and I clearly knew, I was performing incorrectly. So with a smile, I executed that move erroneously, and happily let him teach me the correct way. He said, in his adorable Ga accent, "She has no ego. See, she makes a mistake, and listens, and then she fixes it. She is going to live longer because of that." I then realized just how much I have grown. Judgment is good. Criticism is good. They each invite growth, graciously.