



kranert center

**YOUTH
SERIES**

16-17

STEP AFIKA!

COLLEGE OF
FINE + APPLIED
ARTS



STEP AFRIKA!

ABOUT THE COMPANY

Step Afrika! is the first professional company in the world dedicated to the tradition of stepping. It began as an exchange program with the Soweto Dance Theatre of Johannesburg, South Africa, and has expanded to become a top national and international touring company. Step Afrika! promotes an appreciation for stepping and its use as an educational, motivational, and health tool for young people. It accomplishes this mission through arts education activities, international cultural exchange programs, and performances worldwide. The company believes in the values of teamwork, discipline, and commitment as essential elements of stepping and life. Its programs and performances are structured to connect with audiences and positively influence the lives of young people. Step Afrika! gets people moving—toward college, toward a greater appreciation for the arts, and toward a better understanding of each other.

The Migration is a collaborative project of Step Afrika! and The Phillips Collection. Images from Jacob Lawrence's "The Migration Series" generously provided by The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC and the Jacob and Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence Foundation, Seattle/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

DID YOU KNOW?

You can see *The Migration Series* in full at the Phillips Collection website. Head to lawrencemigration.phillipscollection.org.

WHAT IS STEPPING?

Stepping is based on a long and rich tradition in African communities that presents the human body as an instrument by using synchronized movement, words (often in call and response form), and polyrhythmic (meaning several different rhythms used at the same time) sounds to communicate allegiance to a group.

The choreography (a connected series of movements) in stepping draws upon military marching and importantly, from African foot dances such as Isicathulo or "the gumboot dance," which was originally conceived by miners wearing rubber boots in South Africa as an alternative to drumming. Drumming was banned by authorities because of its cultural importance and use as a communications tool. Step Afrika! also performs in the highly athletic Indlamu and Ingoma dance traditions of the Zulu people.

Stepping is an important part of America's own artistic and cultural heritage. The stepping tradition in the United States sprang to life in the early 1900s in the song and dance rituals practiced by historically African-American fraternities and sororities who used hard-soled shoes to create one of stepping's signature sounds. Today, the practice of stepping has spread to school and church teams as well as dance and fitness classes.

WORD UP

Each of the words listed below has a connection to the work of Step Afrika! After seeing the performance and reading this guide, write a few words of your own to explain the meaning of each term below and its connection to Step Afrika!

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| CHOREOGRAPHY | MIGRATION |
| TEAMWORK | SYNCHRONIZED |
| GUMBOOT | POLYRHYTHMIC |
| FRATERNITY | DISCIPLINE |
| INDLAMU | ISICATHULO |

DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know we have stepping groups right here in our community? Many sororities and fraternities in the University of Illinois' Black Greek Council have their own stepping teams. Every October, they gather for a Step Down show to celebrate these traditions in friendly competition.

THE MIGRATION

Celebrated painter Jacob Lawrence was barely in his twenties when he created his powerful 60-panel work, *The Migration Series*. Paintings with captions tell the story of The Great Migration of millions of African-Americans from the South to the North after World War I. The war had caused a labor shortage in the North. People traveled to cities like Chicago and New York to seek jobs and escape poverty, a lack of schooling, violence, injustice, and failing farms due to floods and boll weevils. In the North, they found jobs and greater freedom, but also hardship in the forms of overcrowded and unhealthy housing, and continued discrimination. Step Afrika! brings this story to the stage through dance, live music, and images that share the resilient culture of African-Americans in transition.

ACTIVITY

The final panel of *The Migration Series* has the caption "And the migrants kept coming." What does migration mean to you? How does the story of migration continue in our time? The Phillips Collection museum invites you to take part in an international conversation by answering the question: What does #Panel 61 look like to you? Through the Phillips Collection web site, you can share your panel and see images that others have made.

ON THE MAP

STEP AFRIKA! COMES FROM . . .

WASHINGTON, D.C.

*THE TROUPE ALSO HAS STRONG TIES TO JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA



STEP AFRIKA!

C. Brian Williams, Founder &
Executive Director

Step Afrika! appears by arrangement with
General Arts Touring, Inc.
Tom Gallant, President
www.generalartstouring.com

Youth Series Performances

Thursday, April 20, 2017, at 10am
Friday, April 21, 2017, at 10am
Colwell Playhouse
Approximately 50 minutes +
10-minute Q&A

Recommended for grades 3-12

Marquee public performances of *The Migration*

Thursday, April 20, 2017, at 7:30pm
Friday, April 21, 2017, at 7:30pm

Campaign for Young Audiences

Phyllis and Kyle Robeson, Lead Sponsors
JSM
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Dr. Donna Murray Tiedge and
Robert Tiedge
WCIA3
Anonymous (2)

Youth Series Programming

Dorothy Buzzard
Karen Grano
Brenda and Stephen Pacey
Jill and James Quisenberry
Anne and David Sharpe
Prudence and Bernard Spodek
The Susan Sargeant McDonald Endowed
Fund for Youth Programming (Suzi was
the founder/developer of the Krannert
Center Youth Series)
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Step Afrika!

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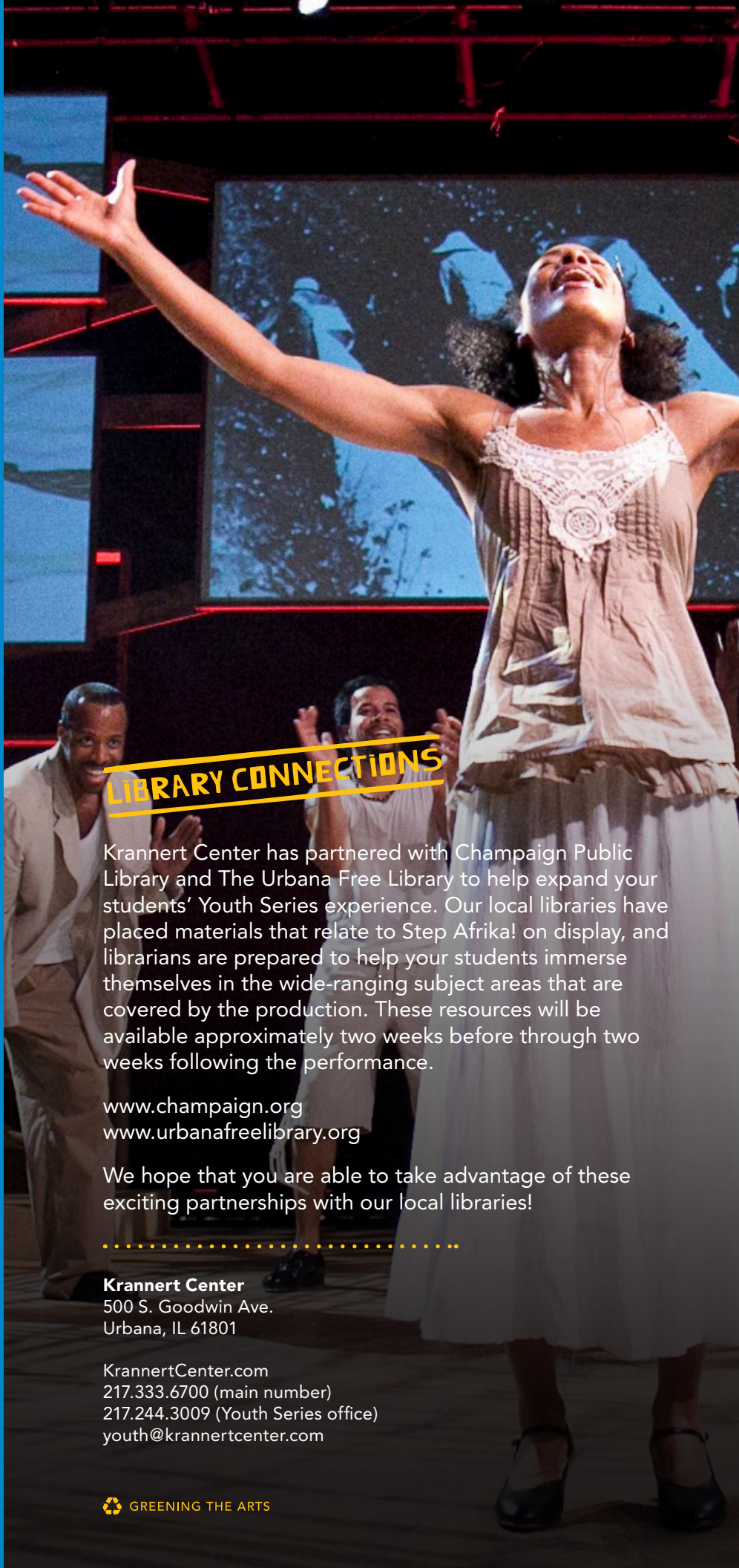
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University of Washington.

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LIBRARY CONNECTIONS

Krannert Center has partnered with Champaign Public Library and The Urbana Free Library to help expand your students' Youth Series experience. Our local libraries have placed materials that relate to Step Afrika! on display, and librarians are prepared to help your students immerse themselves in the wide-ranging subject areas that are covered by the production. These resources will be available approximately two weeks before through two weeks following the performance.

www.champaign.org
www.urbanafreelibrary.org

We hope that you are able to take advantage of these exciting partnerships with our local libraries!

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