



**Brandeis University Intercultural Residency Series
2006-07**

A program of MusicUnitesUS

Executive Summary

by
**Faris A. Khan, Assessment Coordinator of Intercultural Residency Series
M.A. Cultural Production**

with assistance from **Sarah Baer, Documentation Coordinator of Intercultural Residency
Series and M.A. Music & Women's/Gender Studies**

September 2007

Table of Contents

■ Introduction	1
Purpose of Report	2
Theoretical Questions	2
Goals of ICRS	3
Description of Evaluation Process	3
■ Assessment of the Spring 2007 Intercultural Residency	4
Overview of Events	4
Responses to Theoretical Questions	5
Assessment of Progress Toward Residency Goals	14
■ Recommendations	20
■ Conclusion	21

Intercultural Residency Series Brandeis University Assessment Report, Spring 2007

A program of MusicUnitesUS

■ Introduction

The Intercultural Residency Series (ICRS) was founded in the 2005 as an initiative to bring to Brandeis University artists of high accomplishment from around the world. A program of MusicUnitesUS, the goal of the ICRS is to deepen understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures through exploring artistic traditions, promoting intellectual inquiry, and encouraging cultural exchange.

In the fall of 2006, the second year of the ICRS program, Brandeis welcomed Kayhan Kalhor, an Iranian well-known for his performance on the kamancheh, and Erdal Erzincan, a master baglama player from Turkey, together in concert.

This report focuses on the Spring 2007 residency for which Brandeis welcomed the artists of Amazones, Master Women Drummers of Guinea, celebrated for having reclaimed their own musical heritage by mastering the djembe- a traditional drum historically forbidden to women. The women artists have been persecuted by their families and have suffered severe economic hardship as a result of picking up these

sacred instruments. Amazones, named after the fierce warrior- women of the ancient kingdom of Dahomey, narrate their story of courage and strength, and aim to empower women the world over by encouraging them to become self-supporting. The West African artists have engendered a completely modern and liberated evolution of an ancient, intricate tradition, and in the process have also achieved their own economic independence.

The three-day residency featuring Amazones included a public school outreach program, concerts, workshops highlighting West African dance and drumming, panel discussions, open classes, and symposia on West African culture and Women and the Arts. The ICRS initiative gave students and members of the Brandeis and Waltham communities the opportunity to experience the musical tradition of Amazones, and to understand and appreciate the power of art in facilitating communication across cultural boundaries.



Performance at an open class

Purpose of Report

This report is a product of the documentation and assessment process of the Spring 2007 residency. The purpose of the assessment report will be to evaluate the extent to which the Amazonas residency was able to contribute to the understanding of the theoretical and philosophical questions upon which the ICRS is built. It will also assess the extent to which the goals of the ICRS were achieved, especially in relation to its original objectives addressed in the 2005-2006 Intercultural Residency Assessment.

Included here is a description of the assessment process, the assessment of each event of the Spring 2007 residency, recommendations, and reflections of the assessment process. This document addresses some of the following questions: Who attended the events? Did the arts contribute to a deeper understanding, a deeper way of knowing ourselves and the Other? Can the arts suggest alternative roads to peace and reconciliation? Did the residency offer a platform for dialogue and the opportunity for experiential learning?

We hope that this evaluation will help the ICRS planning committee realize the strengths and weaknesses of this semester's residency, and aid them in designing future series. The assessment may also be helpful to the artists who participated in the ICRS, the Brandeis community, funders and supporters of the residency, as well as those in other institutions and communities who intend to organize similar events.

Theoretical Questions

At the heart of the Intercultural Residency Series is a set of theoretical and philosophical questions that we hope to shed light on through the assessment process. The following is a list of six questions that were taken into consideration when planning the various events of the series:

- To what extent does music represent a medium for communication across barriers of language and cultural difference?
- How can engaging with music- as composers, performers, audience members, critics and producers- strengthen the sensibilities that are required for robust coexistence and peace?
- How can we hold conflict and dissonance in our communities with the same sense of balance, beauty and vitality that artists value in their work?
- How can the experiences of music contribute to the understanding of cultures and to the reciprocal rehumanization among people or groups that have become alienated from each other by virtue of violence or longstanding dynamics or oppression?
- How can music contribute to other aspects of peacebuilding and coexistence work, such as supporting people to mourn losses, empathize with other's suffering, address injustices, confront painful history and imagine a new future?
- How can we preserve the ideal of great art while we explore the usefulness of cultural work in strengthening communities and facilitating communication across differences?

Hence, this report examines some of the assumptions that guide the ICRS. Recommendations will be made based on the analysis of data in relation to the theory of change and goals of the residency. These suggestions will help guide the development, planning, and implementation of future residencies.

Goals of the ICRS

In addition to the above-mentioned philosophical questions, the planning committee identified the following goals for the residency:

- Members of the Brandeis community will be engaged in artistic and cultural experiences of the highest quality. The musical tradition of the women of Amazonas will have an impact on those participating in the residency.
- Members of the Brandeis community will learn about the world's cultures and develop deeper appreciation of their expressive forms. We aim to counteract stereotypes, deepen people's understanding of both similarities and differences, and stimulate a sense of wonder.
- New relationships and collaborations (across differences in religion, culture, political convictions and university status) will develop through the residency. For most participants, the residency will put people in proximity to others they might not otherwise encounter; for those involved in leadership roles, we hope that new relationships will form.
- Students will provide leadership to aspects of the residency.
- The residency will increase the audience's understanding of feminism in Guinea.

Description of Evaluation Process

For each goal, we wanted to document and to understand: To what extent was the outcome achieved? What factors contributed to such achievements? To what extent were the goals of the ICRS not achieved? What obstacles did we encounter? What, if any, were the unanticipated outcomes (both positive and negative)? Has this residency benefited from the university's spirit of reflective inquiry? If so, how?

The assessment was based on a body of data collected from a targeted audience, for the purpose of improving future Intercultural Residency Series at Brandeis University. Data was primarily gathered through the methods of observation, conversation, and reflection. Our multifaceted documentation process included the following techniques:

- Observation/field notes were taken by student interns and students from participating classes.
- Focus groups involving students and faculty/staff/

administration were held before and after the residency.

- Written reports, pre- and post residency surveys, and in-class discussions from COEX 250: The Arts of Building Peace formed a bulk of the data used in this report.
- Surveys were handed out to attendees before the two open classes.



Attendees drawing at the Informal Concert

- Attendees of the informal concert were asked to participate in free-writes and drawing exercises as a way to allow a free and immediate response to the impacts of music.
- Informal interviews were conducted with randomly selected participants at the end of certain events.

The data gathered through the various data collection techniques was analyzed in light of the theoretical perspectives and goals of the residency series by the author of this report, with support from the members of the ICRS executive committee.

■ Assessment of the Spring 2007 Intercultural Residency Series

4

Overview of Events:

The Spring 2007 Residency consisted of 18 events including 3 film screenings, 1 candle light vigil, 2 focus groups, 3 symposia and lectures, 2 open classes, 2 workshops, 4 concerts, and 1 student-led dinner. These events brought together students, scholars, and artists from various backgrounds, and created opportunities for them to be engaged in meaningful conversations inspired by the featured artists.

The overall turn out for the Residency events was approximately 2377 individuals, some of whom attended multiple functions. Included in this figure were close to 400 Waltham Public School students and their teachers who attended the MusicUnitesUs Outreach concerts, and more than 747 Brandeis and Waltham community members who appeared at the World Music Concert.

Participating University Departments and Programs:

- African and Afro-American Studies
- Anthropology Department
- Cultural Production MA Program
- International Center for Ethics, Justice, and Public Life
- Music Department
- Office of the Arts
- Office of the Dean of Arts and Sciences
- Office of the Provost
- Office of Residence Life
- Poses Foundation
- Rose Art Museum
- Slifka Program in

- Intercommunal Existence
- Theater Arts
- Women's and Gender Studies
- Women's Studies Research Center

Students, Faculty, and Staff Participating in Organization:

- Rachel Dainer-Best, Art History
- Adi Grabiner Keinan, Cultural Production
- Molly Haas-Hooven, Theater Arts
- Daniella Gold, Art History, International and Global Studies
- Hannah Chalew, Anthropology
- Kimberly Burk, Cultural Production
- Fernanda Senatori, Cultural Production
- Rosella Camte-Bahni, Cultural Production
- Crystal M. Trulove, Anthropology, Peace, Conflict and Coexistence Studies
- Sarah E. Baer, Music & Women's/Gender Studies
- John Hyland, Cultural Production
- Amanda Brown, Theater Arts
- Jennifer Jeanne El-Far, Cultural Production
- Erica Lipschultz, International and Global Studies
- Robin Hancock, Anthropology
- Mark Auslander, Department of Anthropology, Cultural Production
- Cynthia Cohen, Coexistence Research and International Collaborations
- Susan Curnan, Heller School
- Judith Eissenberg, Music Department, Cultural Production

- Shawna Kelley, Department of Music
- Marsha MacEachern, Media Relations
Ingrid Schorr, Office of the Arts
- Leah Zaiger Schwartz, Women's Studies Research Center
- Julie Smith-Bartoloni, Development and Alumni Relations
- Leigh Swigart, International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life
- Elaine Wong, Office of the Dean of Arts and Sciences
- Scott Edmiston, Office of the Arts
- Stephen Goodwin, Waltham Public Schools
- Marya R. Levenson, Education Program
- Shipley Robertson Salewski, Lesson Plan Writer
- Mike Lovett, Brandeis Photography
- Evan Hirsch, Website
- Aaron Gaynor, Design

Sponsorship:

- CDQ Charitable Trust
- Linda K. Fenton
- Janet L. Kolodner, in memory of Michael S. Klein
- Ellyn Levine
- Jay A. Mandel '80 and his life partner Jeffrey M. Scheckner
- Saul O Sidore Memorial Foundation
- Ann Tanenbaum '66, in memory of Ann Sternberg, class of 1966
- Timbre Drums: Fine Crafted, Handmade Drums
- Elaine and Peter Wong
- Whole Foods Market -- 916 Walnut Street, Newton, Mass.

Responses to Theoretical Questions:



Participants at the Dance Workshop

■ Theoretical Question 1

To what extent does music represent a medium for communication across barriers of language and cultural difference?

The data collected from Amazonas musical performances indicate that music transcends language barriers because listeners can understand it on a spiritual level, be affected by it emotionally, and recognize it as a mode of expression even when song lyrics are incomprehensible and the music has an unfamiliar rhythm. To some attendees, the music of Amazonas conveyed, despite the language barrier, a sense of the pain and suffering that the artists have experienced. One respondent claimed that she “felt like a part of the puzzle” because she could relate to the artistic expression of women in difficult circumstances. Hence, even though the audience did not understand the song lyrics of Amazonas they were able to feel the music and the sentiment it conveyed. Others reported that the music conveyed to them the empowerment, strength, pride, and courage of the the artists.

“

The singing really resonated with me even though I couldn’t understand what was being said; it was plaintive and haunting and beautiful.”

“

These women tried to have us connect with them through their culture, their music. Here, it makes sense for me to bond with them on an artistic level. That person communicating with me is more valuable than any textbook. It’s beyond words; it’s the image, it’s the body language, it’s what I feel when they look into my eyes. The whole point of this thing is that music unites us.”

“

You can see the meaning behind the music through their facial expressions. The women were very emphatic and animated. When they blew kisses out to the audience you could definitely see there was a message. I didn't necessarily understand it, but [it] seems like [it is] peace when you're blowing kisses to an audience.”

Similarly, two research assistants who participated in the dance workshop suggested that the Guinean dance presented to them a form of “universal language” that required no words. No verbal speech was used and the dance instructor used bodily movements to pass on her talent to the participants. The participants felt that they learned something about Guinean culture through their dance movements. For some students, the dances conveyed a sense of time and history, or as one participant described it, a form of storytelling. “Every movement has a detail and a specific meaning.”

“

Dance is a language through which people can express themselves and certain emotions.”

Additionally, the performative aspects that were infused in the concert, such as facial expressions, hand gestures, and solo and group dancing and drumming are important forms of communication that help break language and cultural barriers. Even the interactions on stage between the artists, who encouraged each other, provide some insight into the musical tradition of Amazones.



Open Class

“

We have to live this life to the fullest. I feel you want us to realize that we exist, exist for love, for music, and that we can be any way we want to be. I hear the beat of the drums. I feel a calling towards life.”

■ Theoretical Question 2

How can engaging with music- as composers, performers, audience members, critics and producers- strengthen the sensibilities that are required for robust coexistence and peace?

Experiential learning through art is an effective means of evoking a sense of empathy, mutual understanding, and trust, and these qualities have the potential of contributing to coexistence and peace-building activities. We found evidence that empathy, understanding, listening, trust, interdependence, and reciprocity are sensibilities that can promote robust coexistence and peace.

One particular method of engagement with music employed by the artists that we believe can contribute to community building and bridging cross-cultural differences between artists and performers is to make the experiences of music increasingly interactive. The dance and drumming workshops, for example, brought together people from diverse backgrounds, put them in close



Participants at the Drumming Workshop

proximity to each other, and gave them the opportunity to collectively communicate. Direct interaction with artists through such workshops allows for effective community building through shared and synchronized experiences where participants are held together through rhythm and movement. At these workshops, the participants and the artists shared the same energy and had the kind of valuable collective experience that can strengthen ties between communities.

“

The drums resonated in my chest, and made me feel connected to every other person in the room.”

Additionally, community building and communication across differences can be achieved through direct involvement and active participation in the cultural activities of others. Putting oneself in the shoes of the artist is an effective way of gaining knowledge and inculcating, from the perspective of the performers, an understanding of their culture. A participant at the dance workshop suggested that Guinean dance allowed her to transcend cultural and geographical barriers and to envision that which the master drummers have experienced. In spirit, their dance enabled her to travel through time and space, and despite cultural and language barriers it allowed the artists to speak directly to her, making her feel closer to the women, their roots, and their struggles.

Moreover, the drumming workshop allowed the artists and participants to collectively engage with music and to temporarily be held in a relationship of interdependence. For those present at the workshop, the act of drumming momentarily created a sense of interdependency that can assist in the process of strengthening communities and promoting mutual trust.

Evidence also suggested that, as members of the audience, engaging with music through more active listening could strengthen the sensibilities required for peacebuilding. Having students draw and write during the musical performances, an initiative of the evaluation team, encouraged active listening, because, “you’re not mindlessly listening to music, but are actively engaged in thinking about what it means to you and how it is affecting you.” For instance, some of the drawings made by volunteers at the informal concert suggest that students were able to empathize with and relate to the women artists. Illustrations of light, fire, and images of the heart are evocative of the struggle of the performers, and they demonstrate that some volunteers took the music of Amazonas very personally. The drawing exercise helped the student participants engage with the music through active listening and pushed them to visually express and document their own emotions.

“

It’s nice to be a part of somebody else’s culture and experience ecstasy from their point of view. [This event] was incredible on an artistic level because it involved dance and movement. It was also incredibly personal. African dance is probably as close as I can get to Africa- the roots, the Earth, the ground experience. Except that we were under fluorescent light instead of the sun, I felt like we were there.”

“

At the workshop, all fifty of us performed together as a solid unit. Everyone was dependent on one another, and worked to help each other out.”

The residency events and attendee feedback suggested that reciprocity is the key to peacebuilding efforts through music, and those involved should have the opportunity to learn from each other’s experiences. However, in relation to reciprocity, feedback indicates that on the whole, students felt that a majority of the events were lacking in the mutual sharing of information. While there were a few moments, such as, during the student-led dinner when members of the Brandeis community had the opportunity to thank the artists, most of the events of the residency did not adequately reciprocate the women of Amazonas for sharing their knowledge and experiences. Students thought that the members of Amazonas were unable to fully benefit from University resources and participate in any substantial way in the knowledge-sharing aspect of the residency because the numerous presentations, lectures, and conversations were not translated to them. Students felt that the peacebuilding goals of the residency could be strengthened by the reciprocal sharing of knowledge.

■ Theoretical Question 3

How can we hold conflict and dissonance in our communities with the same sense of balance, beauty and vitality that artists value in their work?

The Guinean artists did demonstrate holding conflict and dissonance with a sense of balance, beauty, and vitality. They showed that music can assist in bringing to the surface those conflicts and dissonances that have created rifts between people, and that these dissonances can be voiced through passionate performances. The music of Amazonas was produced with integrity and accompanied by humility, patience, courage, perseverance and mutual support and respect, and it seemed that the balance and beauty of their music was in these qualities. Such aspects of the performances by Amazonas could be applied to the conflicts and dissonances within our own communities.

The sense of harmony of Amazonas was radiated through their apparent solidarity. One student noted that she, “loved the collective feeling [that the] group exuded when they played...they are really into performances, seem to like each other, and play well.” Similarly, a research assistant noted that the interactions between the women on stage are significant because they encourage a sense of camaraderie and mutual support between members of the group.

“Drummers share the spotlight,” she said, “and rotate power on stage. I think that taking different roles enables them to collectively produce music that is fierce.” This sharing of power and the limelight is an instance of the kind of balance, beauty, and vitality through which conflicts and dissonances can be voiced.



Fatumata Kouyate, musician

In addition to maintaining their own unity, artists may also find it useful to create a harmonious relationship with their audiences. For instance, after singing in a strong and powerful voice and playing the balafone, Amazones musician, Fatoumata Kouyate exclaimed that her performance was a gift from her to her listeners. The humility and generosity of spirit of the women drummers touched the hearts of many individuals who found the event to be “extraordinary”, “enriching”, “magical”, and “inspiring”.



Amazones at an open class

A student at the dance workshop commented on the integrity and respect with which the lead dancer imparted her skills: “It’s an oral tradition... it’s big...and she was teaching us just as she would teach anyone else.” Implicit in the student participant’s statement is the notion that Amazones treat everyone with respect and equality, which only enhances the beauty and vitality of their art and its purpose. Further, a research assistant suggested that there was a sense of reciprocity between the instructor and the participants; this reciprocity came from sharing and learning a valuable art form. Hence, reciprocity, it seems, could hold conflict and dissonance in a way that is honorable and beautiful.

A student at the focus group suggested that during the performances, “everything about the artists was there- they were wholly present.” The implication of being “wholly present” within the context of Amazones performances is twofold: to produce powerful music that evokes unrest; and as an artist and activist, one has to be honest and open to sharing talent and experiences with community members with whom one is interacting. Perhaps it is with such baring of oneself and putting out one’s best can artists achieve balance, beauty, and vitality that can enrapt audiences and call attention to conflicts and dissonances.

“

During the performances everyone’s humanity was just a little closer together.”

■ Theoretical Question 4

How can the experiences of music contribute to the understanding of cultures and to the reciprocal rehumanization among people or groups that have become alienated from each other by virtue of violence or longstanding dynamics or oppression?

The current world order, consisting of developed and undeveloped countries, brings with it a sense of alienation that is not only produced as a result of geographical displacement but also from the unbalanced distribution of power and resources. This sense of alienation between the artists of Amazonas and the Brandeis community was abridged over the course of the residency. Attendees at a number of Amazonas performances claimed that being in the presence of artists from a foreign country, watching them perform firsthand, and learning about their culture and musical traditions directly from them helped deepen their understanding of Guinean culture. An event like the open class, for instance, one that involves a musical performance, provides information about the cultural and historical context that the group represents, and also allows some verbal interaction between the musicians and the audience is effective on many levels; not only is it a “great opportunity to explore a culture that [receives] little exposure,” but it also serves as “a window into an artistic representation of culture.” Hence, the quality of the connection that was established between members of the Brandeis community and Amazonas came from an exploration of the gap between the two groups.

Similar sentiments were expressed at the Women Crossing Borders Symposium, where panelists and respondents suggested that engagement with music should not be limited to a focus on musical style, use of instruments, and the history of a musical tradition, but also for the role it has played in the lives of those who have made a difference through music. “Being able to see culture as living and breathing through musical representation, through the lens of the social reality of Africa,” is essential in sharpening the sensibilities that are required for coexistence work. Informant responses indicate that the experiences of music could propel our understanding of cultures if the

music is received as an expression of the artist’s history and emotions, and treated as a living and breathing facet of culture that is not isolated from other social institutions but intersects with them, affects them, and is in turn affected by them.

Several comments also suggest that music can broaden our perspective and reduce ethnocentric bias. One student explained that she was alarmed by certain aspects of the performances of Amazonas because they were acting outside of the social rules that she was accustomed to. She thought that their facial expression were amazing yet odd, and was unable to identify with the Guinean dances because the body movements were unfamiliar to her. However, the same informant added that she, “relished that feeling because that’s one of the things these artists can bring to us by showing how other people behave.” Learning about foreign peoples and cultures through their musical performances is an effective method of stretching one’s knowledge and increasing one’s receptivity to foreign cultures. Culturally defined notions of propriety are difficult to reconfigure, but as indicated by students at the focus group, engagement in artistic enterprises can contribute not only to a better understanding of the world’s cultures and their expressive forms, but also facilitate openness.

■ Theoretical Question 5

How can music contribute to other aspects of peacebuilding and coexistence work, such as supporting people to mourn losses, empathize with other's suffering, address injustices, confront painful history and imagine a new future?



Amazones at the Outreach Concert

Several residency events that included facilitated conversations and opportunities for experiential learning allowed the artists to address injustices and evoked in participants empathy for the artist's struggles. On the one hand, events like the candle light vigil were designed to support the artists to mourn the loss of their loved ones. On the other hand, the open classes and symposia, with their question and answer sessions, provided the artists the opportunity to speak about their suffering and gave the members of the audience the chance to empathize with them. A number of participants who completed the open class survey suggested that the entire event was extremely effective because it gave them the opportunity to get to know the artists personally and it gave them a sense of who they are as human beings. Moreover, the workshops gave participants the opportunity to put themselves in the shoes of the artists, and by taking the initiative to learn their skills, express support for it and for their courage.

Amazones emphasized through their performances their empathy for the suffering of other women, addressed the injustices faced by them, and aimed to help them imagine a new future. The members of the ensemble used their music not only as a tool to empower themselves but they also "call out to other women to love what they are trying to do and not be afraid of change". The lyrics of their songs have allowed them to address injustices, and they and their personal life stories have become the sources of inspiration for many women in Guinea. The success of Amazones women drummers has given other Guinean women hope, the opportunity to imagine a new future, and the courage to follow their dreams.

■ Theoretical Question 6

How can we preserve the ideal of great art while we explore the usefulness of cultural work in strengthening communities and facilitating communication across differences?

Assessment data gathered during the residency events presented conflicting ideas relating to the relationship between the preservation of great art and cultural work. The residency suggested that it may be possible to preserve the ideal of great art alongside peace-building activities through artistic endeavors if artists maintain integrity, perform passionately, and remain open to criticism and audience feedback. However, according to some respondents, while the aforementioned qualities may be effective in such fields as cultural work, and for establishing trust in sustained relationship-building, their role in the preservation of great art is unclear.

At the Tillie K. Lubin Symposium, for instance, panelist Anne Gottlieb's comments on the movement from positional bargaining to mutual understanding and mentoring between women on collaborative projects emphasized the challenges of balancing multiple viewpoints on creative projects. The artist argued that in order to maintain its beauty and vitality, art should be presented with the conviction and passion that moves the artist, and yet it is also important to balance ones principles by listening to and internalizing the aims and objectives of other artists in collaborative projects in order to strengthen bonds not only with them but also with audiences.

“

Part of the process of collaboration is learning how to listen to people without going into a place of constriction and without backing down from [your] own strong ideas.”

Similarly, when questioned about the meaning of one of their songs at an open class, a drummer stated that, “we are calling all women drummers in the capital of Guinea, Konakri, requesting them to tell us if they do not like the way we play.” It can be implied from the lyrics of this song that strengthening our communities may be possible through humility, patience, courage, and perseverance. Despite their status as master drummers, these artists were humble and open to criticism. Not only do they request the assistance of other women to give them honest feedback about their music, but they also reach out to all of them in a respectful and friendly manner.

Alternatively, a few respondents felt that while the qualities described above (humility, patience, courage, etc.) may be effective in creative projects, they alone do not determine, and may not be relevant to the preservation of great art as we continue to explore the usefulness of cultural work. For example, Judith Eissenberg, a faculty member at the Brandeis Music Department and the Founder and Director of MusicUnitesUS, questioned the idea that integrity, openness to criticism, and passion could be the ingredients to the creation of great art. “I do, [however,] think great art has to do with quality, innovation, imagination, [and] complexity...and here I do not mean that art has to be complexly wrought, only that it has the capacity to affect on multiple layers, and that imagination is a key part of the artistic process. Furthermore, there are many examples of artistic creation in the field of cultural work and the arts that I would not consider ‘great’ art, and there is art I consider ‘great’ that does not have an immediate connection to cultural work. My interest is in the relationship of great art to effective cultural work. What can the ideals of great art offer to cultural work? What can artists and cultural workers teach each other, and how can the ideals of both work together toward a more peaceful and just world?” The varied perspectives voiced throughout the residency demonstrate the diversity of thought relating to cultural work through the arts.

Assessment of Progress Toward Residency Goals:

14

■ Goal 1

Members of the Brandeis community will be engaged in artistic and cultural experiences of the highest quality. The musical tradition of Amazonas will have an impact on those participating in the residency.

That the Brandeis and Waltham communities were engaged in cultural experiences of high quality is evident in participant responses that describe the performances of Amazonas as nothing less than magical and powerful. Students were not short of words in expressing how they felt about the events; while some noted the passion and talent of the performers, others commented on the effect the events as a whole had on them. Respondents described the performances as “enriching”, “spiritual”, “eye-opening”, “magical and powerful”, “enlightening and inspiring”, and “indescribable and extraordinary”. One participant said that, “the experience was extremely important in broadening [his] cultural perspective”.

“
I was moved by the “energy, acoustics, and the sheer power of the music.”

Participants claimed that the Guinean music left them emotional yet optimistic and inspired. At one of the open classes, a research assistant mentioned that the music evoked a constructive response that helped create dialogue during the question and answer session of the event. A dance workshop participant noted that he felt the energy of the drums and that it was infectious and liberating. One of the research assistants at the workshop observed that she “learned how to express [herself] in a new medium,” while others indicated that they were thrilled with the self-awareness that they gained about parts of their body, such as their muscles and joints, through the Guinean dances. For some, the experience was uplifting in a way that it allowed them to transcend physical boundaries and feel a connection with the drummers and their homeland.

Similarly, audience members reported that the musical performances of Amazonas were extremely powerful. An interviewee at the informal concert suggested that the music compelled her to get up and dance and express herself freely. A free write participant stated that he/she felt energized, powerful, and confident at the concert, and that he/she was overcome by a sense of hope for the prospect of peaceful relations between all peoples and communities.

“
With every beat of the drum I wish more and more for peace in the world. Now I can envision a world without barriers, where kids have the opportunity to play and dream, and I see myself playing with them even though I am so shy.”

Even the drawings made by participants at the informal concert were indicative of the impacts of music. Images depicting bright and explosive fireworks, a frenzy of figures in motion, and muscular arms and legs attached to musical instruments illustrate not only the trance-like states that music and dancing can induce but also the great power and energy that is needed to play the drums and that, in turn, music produces. The sketches that were made during the concert capture not only a sense of energy in the quick, intense, and sometimes even dark strokes of shading, but they also give a sense of whether or not the artist’s enjoyed the music. On his experience of the drawing exercise, a student intern stated that, “at times it’s difficult to expose your vulnerability and your inner emotions and so at first I felt inhibited to draw, but eventually the music helped me ease my way into drawing what I was thinking and feeling.”

“
Watching these women dance was like watching mother earth- it was holy, beautiful, and perfect.”

“
I think they were able to touch our souls and there are no words for that because it’s a magical place inside of us that we cannot see.”

■ Goal 2

Members of the Brandeis community will learn about the world's cultures and develop deeper appreciation of their expressive forms. We aim to counteract stereotypes, deepen people's understanding of both similarities and differences, and stimulate a sense of wonder.

For many participants, the residency was a unique learning opportunity that helped them gain valuable knowledge about the cultural and historical background of the master drummers. A number of students at an open class who knew nothing about Amazones and their culture said that they left the class having gained valuable information about the cultural and historical backgrounds of the artists of Amazones, their musical styles and instruments, and the form of feminism they practice through their art. Similar responses were received from the attendees of the Women Crossing Borders Symposium who learned about the power of the female voice and issues relating to women and music in other parts of the world. The symposium provided a valuable parallel to the women artists of Amazones.

By listening to their music and watching them perform, and then communicating directly with them, one student felt "a part of the puzzle, and a part of expression through art [that is] performed by women [in] difficult circumstances". Another respondent mentioned that there was a spiritual dimension to the music of Amazones and that the goals of the group enabled her to connect with the women drummers. The implication in these statements is that artistic expression and "the experiences of music" can, through events like this open class, increase our understanding and sensitivity for people who, in other situations, we would find difficult to relate to. Hence, in this case, music served as a medium through which people in the audience were able to realize the similarities they had with the women drummers, in terms of their struggle and the expression of their struggle through art.

“
I learned that the music they play is much more than just entertainment.”



While every event was designed to allow residency participants to learn about Guinean culture, functions that presented the opportunity for experiential learning in particular enabled students and other community members to develop a deeper appreciation for the expressive forms of Amazones. For example, participants at the dance workshop found the event to be “exhilarating and passionate”, and practicing the West African dance was “an incredible release” for them. Another attendee said that, “it made him curious to learn more,” and that it taught him about another culture and, “the forms of movements that are so important to it.”

“

While in the West drumming became, due to the colonial legacy, an index of uncivilized and ignorant communities, in African cultures it was associated with spreading knowledge, creating energy, and reconnecting people.”

Moreover, being in the presence of the women drummers and watching them perform helped the members of the audience deconstruct the stereotypes that they had of Guinean women. Students at the open class said that they were surprised to see a group of strong and courageous African women. Attendees at Amazones concerts observed that contrary to the common misconception about gender roles in developing countries, women can, in fact, master men’s activities. Attendees at the Women Crossing Borders Symposium learned about the centrality of music and art in African cultures and its significance in times of celebration and mourning.

“

It was wonderful to see these women so confident and sure of themselves, reasserting their beauty and their confidence in themselves. Amazones have a beautiful tradition, but it is unfortunate that in the mainstream only the negative images receive publicity.”

■ Goal 3

New relationships and collaborations (across differences in religion, culture, political convictions and university status) will develop through the residency. For most participants, the residency will put people in proximity to others; for those involved in leadership roles, we hope that new relationships will form.

Through interactive exercises, culturally diverse people, who varied by age, status, and gender, were put in close proximity to one another in an environment that was conducive to learning and strengthening the bonds of friendship. The dance and drumming workshop, for example, not only provided opportunities for experiential learning but they also brought together individuals from different backgrounds, and enabled them to have a valuable and memorable collective experience. The workshops encouraged trust and created a sense of interdependency amongst the participants. The symposia helped build bridges across different parts of the university by bringing together scholars from various disciplines, and these inter- and trans-disciplinary efforts enabled students, faculty, artists to be engaged in meaningful conversations.

Moreover, alliances were formed between different University departments, programs, and student organizations, and off-campus sponsors. The planning committee focus group, for instance, brought together members of the ICRS planning committee, consisting of students, faculty and staff, who rarely come into contact with one another. Some of the people who were present met each other for the first time and learned how they were involved in the residency. The meeting also served as a support group for committee members who were anxious about the logistics for the residency, and it gave them the opportunity to encourage and applaud each other's efforts.



Student-Led Dinner

In addition, for those students who helped with the planning and assessment of the Amazonas residency, new relationships were formed with student organizations, administrative departments, academic programs, other student interns, and assessment experts. The Residency provided a unique opportunity for individuals with varied ideas about organization and implementation to work with one another and to maintain cordial relationships.

■ Goal 4

Students will provide leadership to aspects of the residency.

Brandeis students demonstrated leadership skills not only in planning and organizing events or aspects of events but also in facilitating the assessment process. Student leadership during the Spring 2007 events marked a striking improvement from previous residencies. The student-led dinner was a prime example of student leadership and initiative. Student interns successfully organized the entire program, which took almost a month to plan. In order to accomplish all the goals of the event, tasks were divided between the group of interns who worked individually and as a team to complete their designated duties. The organizing committee met regularly to discuss their progress and to coordinate with one another. The interns were responsible for inviting guests, arranging the entertainment segment of the evening in collaborating with Brandeis student organizations, ordering food and beverages, and setting up and decorating the Atrium space for the sit down dinner.

Moreover, with student interns heading the Residency assessment, the entire process was more streamlined in comparison to the evaluation of previous Residency Series. With the cooperation of the ICRS planning committee, students devised improved data gathering and documenting techniques keeping in mind the nature and format of each event. Assessment tasks were assigned in advance to student interns and to students of COEX 250 to ensure that each event of the residency was properly documented and that sufficient data was available for final analysis. Assessment scripts were provided to research assistants to ensure that the assessment process moved smoothly during each day of the residency. Hand-written responses were typed out, and conversations that were recorded using a voice recorder were transcribed before being assessed.

Student leaders also took the initiative in guiding attendees and encouraging participation in several other events. For instance, “the informal concert was a pretty powerful community-oriented event where everyone was working together.” Research assistants took down observation notes and interviewed students, student photographers and videographers documented the entire event, student leaders encouraged members of the audience to volunteer to draw and participate in free writing activities, and some even took the lead in animating audiences by dancing with the artists during the concert.



■ Goal 5

The residency will increase the audience's understanding of feminism in Guinea.

A number of events, especially those that involved verbal interchanges between the artists and the audience, focused on the feminist practices of Amazones women. In numerous facilitated conversations, the master drummers discussed their struggles as women and the ways in which they resisted patriarchal dominance and achieved economic and social empowerment. Students at the open class mentioned that they were not aware that traditionally Guinean women were not allowed to play the drums, and that they were surprised to learn how drumming eventually became for them the means of empowerment. Their music not only gave them the strength they need to contest cultural norms but it is also the embodiment of their feminist movement especially since it is a "calling out to other women to love what they are trying to do and to not be afraid of change." A research assistant who was present at the Women Making Arts symposium stated that the activism of Amazones is worth acknowledging and celebrating, and that their feminist practices should be used as an example in our own efforts at mitigating conflict and in creating a sense of solidarity.

“

Feminism can be expressed in many different ways, and this is an exceedingly culturally symbolic way of finding empowerment.”

In addition, the residency events themselves underscored the gender dynamics in Guinean culture, helping attendees to understand the feminism of Amazones. A number of students commented on the various interactions that they witnessed taking place between the male manager of Amazones and the women drummers. They understood this gendered behavior as a form of power play. A research assistant at the candle light vigil, for instance, thought that the manager, Mamoudou Conde, forced the women artists to dance soon after the drummers broke out crying. Alternatively, Dr. Mark Auslander, also a participant at this event stated that, "while it is standard at such events for men to call out for dancing, that doesn't imply coercion." He added that, "[such events are] complicated, and there were significant discrepancies in how the participants understood what they witnessed, as is to be expected in any meaningful intercultural event." Similar misinterpretations were dispelled at a number of proceeding class discussions that focused on the gendered interchange and on the feminism of the women of Amazones.

■ Recommendations

Despite its overall success, the Amazonas residency also started numerous conversations and debates about the shortcomings of the Spring 2007 series. After considering the concerns of the Residency participants and the planning committee, and reviewing the theoretical concerns and goals of the Amazonas residency, we would like to make the following recommendations for future ICRS:

- **Address the problem of language translation.** To guarantee an honest translation, the interpreter should not be affiliated with the performing group.
- **Address issues relating to intercultural exchange,** such as, working with students to help them be more open-minded and culturally relative, and to assist them in accurately interpreting the behavior of foreign artists.
- **Empower artists,** especially those who have a history of being marginalized. In order to give artists a voice and to make their presence felt, they should be asked to speak directly into the microphone. If their speech is delivered in a language other than English, a seasoned translator should interpret them word-for-word.
- **Adequately reciprocate artists for their efforts.** Non-English speaking musicians should be allowed to benefit from the academic resources that are available to them during their stay on the University premises. To enhance communication between the artists and the audience, to facilitate a two-way flow of information and sharing of knowledge, and to strengthen a sense of community and reciprocal relationships, all conversations that take place in the presence of the artists must be translated to them.
- **Make residency events comprehensive.** Background information about the performers, their culture and musical traditions, and their sociopolitical agendas should be provided at every event. In addition to posting information on the MusicUnitesUS website, handouts should be distributed to attendees at events where they will not otherwise learn about the artist's background.
- **Select suitable event venue and seating.** The seating arrangement at each residency event should be determined by the nature of the event, keeping in mind problems relating to unequal power dynamics and restrictions on movement.
- **Greater focus on featured artists.** Students felt that they could have learned much more about the master drummers and connected with them on an intimate level had there been fewer non-Amazones related presentations.
- **Improve coordination with ICRS partners.** To ensure that the featured musicians are integrated into conversations at all residency events, there needs to be better coordination and communication with other university units.
- **Assess the impact of events on curriculum.** Develop a systematic approach, such as surveys or open ended question sessions, to evaluate the effect of residency events on participating classes.
- **Document faculty and artist experience of residency.** Interview members of the faculty about the impacts of the ICRS programs on future syllabi, course content, teaching, and intellectual development. Solicit responses from the visiting artists about their experience of the residency to understand their perspective on incidents that occurred during their time at Brandeis.
- **Streamline the assessment process and assessment coordinator position.** The assessment of the ICRS should be conducted by two student coordinators. In the future, duties should be divided between the two coordinators who manage and delegate tasks to participating students and interns throughout the semester in order to ensure a final product that is comprehensive and outstanding.



Participants at the Drumming Workshop

■ Conclusion

On the whole, the assessment process of the Amazonas residency was enlightening, and an intense inquiry into the intricate details of each of the events in the series has provided much insight into the theoretical questions and goals that make up the building blocks of the ICRS. In spite of their limitations, the improved research methods, such as the interviews and drawing exercises implemented for the assessment of the Spring 2007 residency created a larger pool of raw data from which to analyze the core assumptions and aims of the initiative. While it is difficult to prove beyond reasonable doubt the assumptions of the ICRS, this report nevertheless validates the philosophy that music can unite people and bridge cultural divides while accentuating both similarities and differences.

The Amazonas residency shed light on all six philosophical questions that are at the heart of the ICRS. Amazonas demonstrated how music can encourage coexistence and peace initiatives. Throughout the residency, events were produced with passion and integrity, and accompanied by patience, courage, perseverance and mutual support and respect. Additionally, music transcends language barriers because listeners can understand it on a spiritual level, be affected by it emotionally, and recognize it as a mode of expression. The residency emphasized the value of the arts in cultural work, and explored the

intersection of ideals in the artistic process and in peace and coexistence efforts. Increasing interaction between artists and audiences and creating opportunities for experiential and intellectual learning can help bridge cross-cultural divides. Unique and valuable collective experiences surrounding music and reciprocal relationships between artists and audiences can hold and give voice to conflicts.

The Amazonas residency also met all of the goals of the ICRS. Being in the presence of the women drummers and watching them perform helped the members of the audience deconstruct the stereotypes that they had of Guinean women. For many participants, the residency was a unique learning opportunity that helped them gain valuable knowledge about the cultural and historical background of the master drummers and about their feminist practices. Through interactive exercises, culturally diverse people were put in close proximity to one another in an environment that was conducive to intellectual inquiry and strengthening the bonds of friendship. The ICRS was also a success in terms of the leadership skills demonstrated by students in planning and organizing events and in facilitating the assessment process.