

## Tony Vacca

Tony Vacca is an American-born percussionist, composer, and educator who plays West African balafon, djembe, talking drum, an orchestra of gongs, drum set, and a one-of-a kind percussion unit. His music combines elements from a wide range of traditions. The result is an innovative hybrid of ancient and contemporary sounds; it's a hard-hitting fusion of jazz and world music that confirms the powerful common ground that music provides. This global approach combines a jazz sensibility with the dance-inspired drive of Senegalese mbaalax. He uses rhythm poetry to link the tradition of rap and hip-hop with its origins among the soothsayers and griots of West Africa. In concert performances and in hands-on workshops, Tony demonstrates how these disparate elements are each part of a total mix of influences on music and culture in America, and how music is an ideal medium for transcending our differences by providing a context for communication.

Tony founded **World Rhythms**, a production company that reflects the global nature of music featuring local, regional and internationally known performers.

World Rhythms is a consortium of musicians whose collective skills and insights create a wide range of programs from concert performances at Jazz and World Music festivals, to recordings, videos, and "hands-on" educational workshops, master classes, and concerts.

Tony created the Senegal-America Project, an exchange program bringing musicians from Dakar, Senegal together with the World Rhythms performers. These tours include concerts and workshops in middle schools and high schools, giving Senegalese and American students a chance to learn more about each other's worlds.

### EXPERIENCE

Tony has over thirty years performance experience as a percussionist/drummer, with twelve plus study trips to West Africa, presenting programs ranging from educational concerts and workshop presentations in schools, to collaborative recordings, jazz and world music festivals, and special tours.

Tony has recorded and performed with a wide range of musicians, including pop icon Sting, Senegalese Afro-pop superstar Baaba Maal, jazz and world music innovator Don Cherry, genre-defiant Yusef Lateef, Senegalese master drummer Massamba Diop, Gambian twentieth-century griot Foday Musa Suso, Abiodun Oyewole of The Last Poets, and Italian folk drummer Alessandra Belloni. Tony's music reflects all of these influences and more.

### **PHILOSOPHY**

Lyrics excerpt from “Culture Collision” by Tony Vacca, “The world is a big place and there’s room enough for everybody.” Music is the common language and link to communicating and getting along with everyone in the world. Music is a teaching tool that helps some students “see”, understand and learn in a new way.

### **REFERENCES:**

- Rachel Porter & Derek Fenner, Hampshire Educational Collaborative, Northampton, MA 413-320-2434 Have worked with Rachel and Derek for a couple of years now on the DYS Unlocking the Light Program in several facilities.
- Russ Tortorella, DYS Goss I & II Facilities in Taunton 508-828-3861 Have worked several times with Russ setting up residencies with Tony Vacca.
- Rich Haxhi, Faculty, Roger Ludlowe MS, Fairfield, CT 203-255-8345 Ongoing Day events in the School and 3 year collaboration taking RLMS students to Senegal, West Africa with Tony Vacca for our 10 day Senegal-America Project cultural educational exchange.
- Troy Czukoski, Principal Phoenixville Area Middle School, Phoenixville, PA 484-927-5200 November 2009 Tony Vacca 4 day residency with the 7<sup>th</sup> grade Communications Curriculum.
- Brenda Lilly, Art Teacher, Deerfield Elementary, (413) 665-1131. Have worked on several multiple day residencies and performances with Tony Vacca and Abdou Sarr.
- Brian O'Grady, Teacher, BART Charter Arts School, Adams, MA 413-743-7311 2008 and 2009 Have worked on several residencies with Brian.
- Jane Hyman, Principal, Jefferson Ele. School, Franklin, MA 508-541-2140 December '03 - March '04 Helped support and prepare for a 12 day residency with Tony Vacca in Visual Art, Music-making instruments and culminating in community performance by students.

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## EDUCATION AND TRAINING:

- Bachelor of Arts, 1972, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA
- Studies with Godwin Agbeli at the Dagbe Cultural Center, Accra, Ghana, West Africa. Mr Agbelli is a learned specialist in the percussion ensemble traditions of many of the Ghanaian peoples,
- Studies with Sekou Diollo at the Centre des Arts Malien, located in Bamako, Mali, West Africa. Mr Diollo is a Djoula balafon player and Instructor at the National Arts Center.
- Studies In Dakar, Senegal, West Africa with Massamba Diop, master tama drummer with Baaba Maal's ensemble, Dande Lenol.

## RECOGNITION:

- Mass Cultural Council's Creative Teaching Artist Roster
- New England Foundation for the Arts: Massachusetts and NEST Touring Rosters
- Fanueil Hall's Performing Artists Roster, Boston, Massachusetts.
- Named to the Advisory Board of the American Association of Music Therapists,
- Interworld Music: instructional music video, "Melodic Percussion."

## RECORDINGS:

- 2008 "RHYTHM & FLOW" Tony Vacca and guest musicians  
2006 "SENEGAL-AMERICA PROJECT" Tony Vacca and guest musicians  
2002 "ZEN RANT" Tony Vacca and guests  
1999 "RHYTHM GRIOTS" with Massamba Diop, Gokh-Bi System, Sekou Sylla, Omar, Tim Moran, Steve Leicach, and Joe Sallins  
1998 "RHYTHM MISSION"  
with Massamba Diop, Tim Moran, Steve Leicach and Joe Sallins  
1997 "WORLD RHYTHMS TRIO"  
with Massamba Diop and Steve Leicach  
1992 "DANCE BENEATH THE DIAMOND SKY"  
with Tim Moran and guest artist, Foday Musa Suso Columbia  
1986 "CITY SPIRITS"  
with Tim Moran and guest artists Don Cherry and Tim Wolf, Philo  
Records, 9007  
1983 "FAR EAST SUBWAY BLUES"  
with Winds of Change Muse/Art Record, M337  
'WIZARDS DANCE" with Tim Moran, Philo/Fretless Records FR669  
re-issued by Nippon Phonogram, 32PD-20/200