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THE LONG-AWAITED RETURN OF STEP AFRIKA! TO BOSTON IS HERE

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ARTSEMERSON PROUDLY PRESENTS

## DRUMFOLK

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EXCLUSIVE TWO-WEEK ENGAGEMENT DUE TO POPULAR DEMAND  
EMERSON CUTLER MAJESTIC THEATRE  
OCTOBER 05 – 16, 2022

**[Boston, MA – Thursday, August 25, 2022]** – ArtsEmerson, Boston’s leading presenter of contemporary world theater and film and the professional presenting and producing organization of Emerson College, is honored to bring Step Afrika! back to Boston. The company’s newest work, **Drumfolk**, will open ArtsEmerson’s 2022/2023 season with two weeks of performances from October 05 – 16, 2022 at the Emerson Cutler Majestic Theatre. This follows the cancellation of the show’s original Summer 2020 Special engagement in Boston. **Drumfolk** will mark the third time the Boston arts organization has hosted Step Afrika! (**Step Afrika!** in November 2013, and **The Migration: Reflections on Jacob Lawrence** in May 2018).

**Drumfolk** is inspired by The Stono Rebellion of 1739, an uprising initiated by 20 enslaved Africans who used their drums to start a revolt in South Carolina. The rebellion was suppressed, and the Negro Act of 1740 took away the rights to assemble, read and use drums from the African people. The production takes audiences on a journey from the then-colony of South Carolina in the 17th century to the present-day, where the instrument has shaped new art forms like hip hop and African American social dance. **Drumfolk** is a percussive celebration of American history, placing a spotlight on the rhythmic cycle of life that bonds all of us together.

Through music, stepping, and ring shouts, the remarkable performers of Step Afrika! recreate histories too often left in the margins, and achieve a musical and movement-filled celebration of the human spirit that is perfect for entire families to share together.



Step Afrika! performers, **Drumfolk**  
*Photo: Rachel Papo*



Step Afrika! performers, **Drumfolk**  
*Photo: Rachel Papo*

In June 2022, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) announced Step Afrika! Founder and Executive Producer C. Brian Williams as a 2022 NEA National Heritage Fellowship recipient. The occasion marks the first time that the tradition of stepping has been fully recognized as a part of America's artistic heritage and culture. The National Heritage Fellowships are the nation's highest honor in the folk and traditional arts. Including the 2022 class, the Arts Endowment has awarded 467 National Heritage Fellowships since 1982.

"I am extremely excited to bring **Drumfolk** to the people of Boston," says C. Brian Williams. "**Drumfolk** is the result of over 29 years of intensive research and investigation into the history of stepping, an art form first created by African American fraternities and sororities. And the critically-acclaimed dancers of Step Afrika! are truly the best in the world at stepping."

"We are thrilled to welcome back Step Afrika! to ArtsEmerson for a third time with their invigorating new show, **Drumfolk**," says ArtsEmerson Executive Director David C. Howse. "I continue to be amazed at the brilliance of the company's ability to tell the important story of the Stono Rebellion with such verve and power. **Drumfolk** is definitely a show that you feel in your heart, mind and body. Both this show and their return to Boston, long delayed by the pandemic, is a testament to the power of art and persistence."

Tickets for **Drumfolk** performances may be purchased 24/7 at [ArtsEmerson.org](https://www.ArtsEmerson.org), or by calling 617-824-8400 (Tue-Sat from 12:00PM ET - 6:00PM ET). The Paramount Center Box Office (559 Washington Street, Boston) is open for walk-up service Thu-Sat from Noon - 6:00 PM ET. Tickets start at \$25. Groups of 10+ attending a performance save up to 30%.

Thanks to generous support from Rockland Trust, a limited number of \$10 Mobile Rush tickets will be available at 10:00 AM ET each performance day on a first-come, first-served basis, exclusively through the TodayTix mobile app. For more information, please click on "General Public" when you visit [ArtsEmerson's Offers web page](#).

**Drumfolk** was made possible by the New England Foundation for the Arts' National Dance Project with lead funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Lead Commissioning Support provided by ArtsEmerson, Hancher Auditorium, Eugene Lang Foundation and the Strathmore Performing Arts Center. Additional support provided by Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, The New Victory Theater, Delaware Art Museum, Meany Center for the Performing Arts, The Soraya and the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities.

At the core of ArtsEmerson's mission is bringing people together from communities throughout Boston to be enriched through art. Overcoming the exclusionary tendencies of art requires building institutions where civic engagement isn't a program but is the DNA of the organizational infrastructure.

From hosting Play Reading Book Clubs, neighborhood performances, and public dialogues to making tickets affordable and holding Welcome to Boston Cast Parties around the city, ArtsEmerson provides opportunities for people to connect with artists, ideas, and each other. ArtsEmerson is proud to be offering many engagement opportunities throughout the 2022/23 season, including a **Public Dialogue** event taking place in connection with **Drumfolk**.

ArtsEmerson will present one **Public Dialogue** conversation surrounding the **Drumfolk** engagement which will be an in-person conversation on Tuesday, September 20, 2022 at 7:00PM ET at the Emerson Paramount Center on the Robert J. Orchard Stage; the event will also be livestreamed and available to watch online. Throughout history, denying access to objects and areas of cultural significance is a hallmark tactic of control and oppression. **Drumfolk** tells the story of the resilience of enslaved Africans in the wake of the Stono rebellion and subsequent Negro Act, banning Africans in America from using the drum. In this first installation of the Public Dialogue Series, ArtsEmerson Executive Director David C. Howse will be joined by specialists from a wide array of arts and culture practices to explore how communities have rebelled and reclaimed what is theirs in the face of subjugation.

For production stills and other media kit assets, click [here](#).

## LISTINGS INFORMATION FOR DRUMFOLK

### Dates:

October 05 – 16, 2022

### Venue:

Emerson Cutler Majestic Theatre  
219 Tremont Street  
Boston, MA 02116

### Performance Schedule:

Wednesday, October 05, 2022	7:30PM ET	Press Performance
Thursday, October 06, 2022	7:30PM ET	
Friday, October 07, 2022	8:00PM ET	
Saturday, October 08, 2022	2:00PM ET	
Saturday, October 08, 2022	8:00PM ET	
Sunday, October 09, 2022	2:00PM ET	
Wednesday, October 12, 2022	7:30PM ET	
Thursday, October 13, 2022	7:30PM ET	
Friday, October 14, 2022	8:00PM ET	
Saturday, October 15, 2022	2:00PM ET	
Saturday, October 15, 2022	8:00PM ET	
Sunday, October 16, 2022	2:00PM ET	

### Ticket Information:

Tickets for **Drumfolk** performances may be purchased 24/7 at [ArtsEmerson.org](https://ArtsEmerson.org), or by calling 617-824-8400 (Tue-Sat from 12:00PM ET - 6:00PM ET). The Paramount Center Box Office (559 Washington Street, Boston) is open for walk-up service Thu-Sat from Noon - 6:00 PM ET. Tickets start at \$25. Groups of 10+ attending a performance save up to 30%.

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### Content:

Recommended for All Ages

### Running Time:

105 minutes, with a 15-minute intermission

### Public Health Information:

The Theatres of Emerson College firmly believes in the importance of a fully vaccinated community, and the utmost priority is the safety of patrons, program participants, artists, and team members. Efforts will continue to re-evaluate and establish new guidelines to ensure that protocols fulfill the promise of supporting the well-being of all.

Proof of full COVID-19 vaccination is required for entry to all events. According to the CDC, "full COVID-19 vaccination" is defined as two weeks after one dose of a single-shot regimen, such as the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, or two weeks after the second dose of an mRNA vaccine, such as Pfizer or Moderna. Currently, booster shots are not required under the new policy. Masks covering mouth and nose are mandatory inside all venues at all times (except for speakers, performers, and musicians while actively participating in a

performance or presentation. Based on most recent scientific findings, we are recommending N95, KN95, or well-fitting 3-ply surgical masks; however, any mask with at least 3-ply construction is permissible. No gaiters, bandanas, or masks with vents are allowed. [Click here to review full info on Covid-19 Health and Wellness protocols.](#)

## LISTINGS INFORMATION FOR PUBLIC DIALOGUE

### Public Dialogue

ArtsEmerson's mission is not only to present extraordinary artists and performances from around the world, but to engage diverse multi-generational Boston audiences in thinking and talking about issues that address the concerns and challenges of our contemporary moment. ArtsEmerson periodically hosts free public dialogues and "Citywide Read" events aimed at connecting the work on our stages, our artists, our neighborhood partners, and our audiences through meaningful interactions.

### When:

Tuesday, September 20, 2022 at 7:00PM ET

### Where:

Emerson Paramount Center  
Robert J. Orchard Stage  
559 Washington St.  
Boston, MA 02111

*Conversation will also be livestreamed and available to watch online on [ArtsEmerson.org](#)*

### Ticket Information:

Free with RSVP; Tickets and additional information will be available soon via [ArtsEmerson.org](#)

### Content:

Recommended for Ages 12+

### Running Time:

90 minutes

### Public Health Information:

The Theatres of Emerson College firmly believes in the importance of a fully vaccinated community, and the utmost priority is the safety of patrons, program participants, artists, and team members. Efforts will continue to re-evaluate and establish new guidelines to ensure that protocols fulfill the promise of supporting the well-being of all.

Proof of full COVID-19 vaccination is required for entry to all events. According to the CDC, "full COVID-19 vaccination" is defined as two weeks after one dose of a single-shot regimen, such as the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, or two weeks after the second dose of an mRNA vaccine, such as Pfizer or Moderna. Currently, booster shots are not required under the new policy. Masks covering mouth and nose are mandatory inside all venues at all times (except for speakers, performers, and musicians while actively participating in a performance or presentation. Based on most recent scientific findings, we are recommending N95, KN95, or well-fitting 3-ply surgical masks; however, any mask with at least 3-ply construction is permissible. No gaiters, bandanas, or masks with vents are allowed. [Click here to review full info on Covid-19 Health and Wellness protocols.](#)

## CREDITS

### Step Afrika!

Founded in 1994 by C. Brian Williams, Step Afrika! is the first professional company dedicated to the tradition of stepping. Under Mr. Williams' leadership, stepping has evolved into one of America's cultural exports, touring more than 50 countries across the globe. Step Afrika! now ranks as one of the top ten African-American dance companies in the United States.

Step Afrika! blends percussive dance styles practiced by historically African American fraternities and sororities; traditional West and Southern African dances; and an array of contemporary dance and art forms into a cohesive, compelling artistic experience. Performances are much more than dance shows; they integrate songs, storytelling, humor and audience participation. The blend of technique, agility, and pure energy makes each performance unique and leaves the audience with their hearts pounding.

Step Afrika! promotes stepping as an educational tool for young people, focusing on teamwork, academic achievement and cross-cultural understanding. The Company reaches tens of thousands of Americans each year through a 50-city tour of colleges and theatres and performs globally as Washington, DC's one and only Cultural Ambassador.

Step Afrika! has earned Mayor's Arts Awards for *Outstanding Contribution to Arts Education* (2005); *Innovation in the Arts* (2008); and *Excellence in an Artistic Discipline* (2012); and performed at the White House for President Barack Obama and the First Lady. Step Afrika! is featured prominently at the Smithsonian's new National Museum of African-American History & Culture with the world's first *stepping* interactive exhibit. In 2017, Step Afrika! made its Off-Broadway debut with the critically-acclaimed production, *The Migration: Reflections on Jacob Lawrence*.

To learn more, visit [www.stepafrika.org](http://www.stepafrika.org).

## PRESENTER INFORMATION

### ArtsEmerson

ArtsEmerson is the professional presenting and producing organization at Emerson College, and its mission is to bring people together to experience powerful performances that delight, provoke, and inspire, celebrating both our differences and common humanity. Founded in 2010 by Robert J. Orchard — the year the U.S. Census confirmed there was no single cultural majority in Boston — ArtsEmerson is committed to building a cultural institution that reflects the diversity of our city. Our imaginative and globe-spanning live and virtual performances, films, and conversations invites each of us to be part of a Boston that is more creative, equitable, and connected. ArtsEmerson is led by Executive Director, David Howse. For more information visit [ArtsEmerson.org](http://ArtsEmerson.org).

### Emerson College

ArtsEmerson and HowlRound Theatre Commons both operate from within the Emerson College Office of the Arts. Based in Boston, Massachusetts, opposite the historic Boston Common and in the heart of the city's Theater District, Emerson College educates individuals who will solve problems and change the world through engaged leadership in communication and the arts, a mission informed by liberal learning. The College has 3,700 undergraduates and 1,400 graduate students from across the United States and 50 countries. Supported by state-of-the-art facilities and a renowned faculty, students participate in more than 90 student organizations and performance groups. Emerson is known for its experiential learning programs in Los Angeles, Washington, DC, the Netherlands, London, China, and the Czech Republic as well as its new Global Portals. The College has an active network of 51,000 alumni who hold leadership positions in communication and the arts. For more information, visit [Emerson.edu](http://Emerson.edu). For media inquiries specific to Emerson College, please contact Michelle Gaseau (E: [Michelle\\_Gaseau@emerson.edu](mailto:Michelle_Gaseau@emerson.edu), O: 617-824-3547, C: 617-429-2624).