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HISTORY OF THE COMPANY

The Ekome Dance Company was formed in 1977 by a group of young people living in the St. Paul's district of Bristol. This initiative grew from a desire to take charge of their own lives, as well as a deeply felt need to develop some form of self expression. Since then, after a continual and rigorous schedule of rehearsal, workshops and performances all over the British Isles and abroad, the Company has become established as one of the leading ethnic arts groups in the country.

The Company members are predominantly of West Indian origin, with family ties to the Caribbean Islands of Jamaica and Trinidad. However, recognising their intrinsic connections to the continent of Africa, Ekome began to explore the rich musical heritage of their forefathers by incorporating West African rhythms and dances into their programme.

Under the direction of Barrington Anderson, this powerful and exhilarating 'cultural combination' of Africa and the Caribbean evolved into the extensive and highly professional repertoire with which the Ekome Dance Company delights audiences wherever they perform.

With the arrival of a master drummer from Ghana, an intense programme of research began, exploring the authentic African tribal dances, each possessing its own theme; most notably those of love, war, social life and adolescence. Their intricate choreography and rhythms contain in its purest form, all the excitement and feeling that has been influencing popular western music since the blues.

Six dancers and five drummers make up the core of the Company, whose versatility and commitment is shown by their varied schedule of performances in schools, colleges, hospitals and community centres, as well as full-scale theatrical productions in theatres and at major festivals.

Another exciting dimension to Ekome's work is their ability to combine performance with workshops, allowing people of all ages and of every race creed and colour to participate in a carefully designed programme of drumming, dance, dramatic interpretation and costume-making.

Workshops are held regularly in Bristol, Cardiff, Reading and London, as the result of which there are now groups established in both Reading and Cardiff able to present their own performances.

In the Avon area, weekly classes, in association with the Avon Education Authority, are held in ten primary and junior schools, where children from seven to fourteen years of age are able to participate.

There are presently plans afoot for Ekome to establish, in Bristol, a school of African and West Indian dance and music (plus costume and instrument making and maintenance) to encourage more formal study of sources from which to draw new dancers and musicians into the main Ekome company, and to launch new groups; all of this seen as a solid contribution to the cultural life of a multi-ethnic society in Great Britain today.

In 1980, the Company won the Minority Rights Ethnic Arts Award for their outstanding performances and important workshop activities.
