



CAMEROON CENTRE



General Report: Short Summary
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Introduction

Since the current ITI office was established in Cameroon, we have undertaken numerous initiatives to elevate the practice of performing arts. This effort involves close collaboration with the Theatre, Storytelling, and Poetry Division as well as the Dance Division. These divisions were created under the guidance of the Ministry of Arts and Culture of Cameroon (MINAC) to foster the development of the arts.

We would like to emphasize that Cameroon has been a member of our organization for two years now, after an eight-year absence caused by internal disagreements. This situation followed nearly thirty years of active participation in the effective functioning of the ITI. During our absence, some connections within the theatre community in our country were notably disrupted.

Thankfully, over the past two years, theatre professionals have come together with renewed enthusiasm and elected a new 12-member board to lead our organization and enhance the visibility of theatre.

Over the past year and the current one, the Cameroonian Centre has concentrated on restructuring the associative movement to ensure that performing arts practitioners are part of a formal organization. We are working to implement ITI activities across all ten regions. We have also seen a rising number of members. Besides awareness meetings, the Cameroonian Centre of the ITI has...

I. The establishment of the National Dance Committee (CND).

The organization dedicated to promoting dance in Cameroon, with support from the corresponding division, is actively working to enhance the visibility of dance. We aimed to ensure that practitioners felt included within the Cameroonian Centre of the ITI, which had previously been primarily staffed by theatre professionals.

The National Dance Committee (CND) is composed of five members, including three men and two women, all of whom are professional dancers. The CND is chaired by Master André TAKOU SAA, a prominent figure among the veterans who have persevered in the field despite challenging conditions.

This year, the CND has established two sub-committees to better promote dance: one in the Littoral region and another in the Centre region. This promising movement signals a bright future for the dance community.

II. The Women Artists' Circle

In many Southern countries, women's involvement in the arts is quite limited. We recognized the urgent need to focus specifically on the activities of women, especially young girls, by creating a forum for reflection and action aimed at boosting morale. The Women Artists' Circle (CFA) is the newest addition to our organization, established last February. It works to amplify women's voices in the performing arts through increased creative output and public speaking. We place great importance on this initiative in a society still rife with taboos and prejudices.

Since its creation, the CFA has supported two theatrical productions. The first, *Se Plier*, is led by actress **Aïcha Diallo ABDOULAYE** and is based on a text by French author **Aïcha Euzet**. The play addresses the challenges of being a woman and a Muslim in today's society. The second production under the CFA's auspices is *Femme Capable*, a collective work by women centred around "a tontine"—a meeting place where women discuss their issues. This piece is inspired by the "Mévungu" ritual, practices in the South of Cameroon and exclusively reserved for women.

III. The organization of World Theatre Day and Dance Month to mark International Dance Day.

A – World Theatre Day (WTD) 2024

Cameroon joined the international community in celebrating World Theatre Day on March 27.

Various activities were organized to ensure that theatre continues to resonate deeply in the hearts and minds of our audiences. Theatre companies are increasingly organizing internal events to give this day a unique touch, including thematic discussions, reading the official message, theatrical readings, readings-performances, stage shows, and film-theatre events. We encourage these diverse initiatives and hope they continue to grow and flourish. The celebrations for World Theatre Day were divided into two segments: local events and international participation, which included a visit to China.

Locally, among the selected activities, we can highlight the following:

- ⇒ Recording of the World Theatre Day message in both French and English, in video and audio formats
- ⇒ Public reading of the World Theatre Day message
- ⇒ Performances in schools
- ⇒ Reading of poems and psychological sharing with the general public by the Cameroonian Poetic Consultants' Association
- ⇒ The discussion with Patriarch **Ambroise Mbia** about the vision of a new theatre in a country like Cameroon and the development of public cultural policies: the case of establishing artistic federations
- ⇒ Performances across the country
- ⇒ Meetings, discussions, and conferences

At the joint invitation of the International Theatre Institute (ITI – UNESCO) and the Chinese Centre of our organization, the Cameroonian Centre of the ITI was honoured to be invited for this year's edition in Langfang, China. This event provided a valuable opportunity to strengthen cultural cooperation with partner countries. For additional information, please visit the ITI social media platforms and website.



B – Cameroonian Dance Month and International Dance Day (IDD) 2024

In Cameroon, the CND and the Dance Division organized a month-long series of events leading up to April 29, International Dance Day. This year, the celebrations were particularly notable, running from April 3 to 29, and included a wide range of activities. In-person events took place at the National Museum, the headquarters of our supervising ministry in Yaoundé, and took place across the country in regional capitals. The focus was on urban dance in its various forms.

Following the launch event, which was led by the Coordinator of Artistic and Cultural Activities at the ministry, a variety of activities were held to enhance the visibility of different dance disciplines. These included:

- ⇒ Restructuring of cultural associations and the dance sector to align with MINAC's policies
- ⇒ Assisting informal groups in structuring themselves into legally constituted cultural associations
- ⇒ Interventions by professionals and meetings with several authorities
- ⇒ Coordinated work on dance therapy with the support of neurologists and psychologists
- ⇒ Discussions, round tables, and a professional dialogue with the presence of the president of ITI Cameroon
- ⇒ A parade with Cameroonian stilt performers
- ⇒ The Evening of Stars to honour the veterans, intended to pay tribute to dance practitioners for their commitment to the development of this discipline
- ⇒ Creation of a forum currently comprising 215 active professional members

IV. Professional meetings and reflection on the charter

Our participation in international meetings offers a valuable opportunity for African centres to convene, establish collaborative foundations, and advance our organization's dynamics across the continent. However, these meetings remain challenging due to custom constraints and especially the lack of financial resources. To address this, we have created a periodic reflection framework known as the Yaoundé Cultural Meetings.

V. Conclusion

Despite the financial constraints, the Cameroonian ITI Centre continues to be proactive, working on activities that not only demonstrate theatre in practice but also promote collaboration. It is evident that our theatre is beginning to recover its vitality. This revival is particularly encouraging with the support of the Cameroonian Centre. Although our theatre may not match the vitality and energy found in Europe, America, or elsewhere, it remains very much alive.

