

Esther M. Baker-Tarpaga

Biography

Esther M. Baker-Tarpaga, choreographer, dancer and filmmaker, has a B.A. from Bowdoin College in French and Anthropology and an M.A. in Dance and M.F.A. in Choreography from UCLA's World Arts and Cultures Dept. She is co-founder and co-director of Baker & Tarpaga Dance Project, which has performed and taught classes in the USA, Botswana, Australia, Malaysia, Japan, Senegal and South Korea. BT Dance Project is a transnational company that intertwines West African dance and postmodern dance with live music to create physically powerful dance theatre. Recent works in 2008 include Los Angeles premieres of *Dar Es Salaam* at the Alex Theatre, *Sira Kan/On the Road* at the REDCAT NOW Festival, and *Disorder Inside Order* at the John Anson Ford Amphitheatre. In 2007 Esther was invited as a cultural Envoy to teach contemporary dance and to choreograph a new piece for *Djoliba National Ballet* in Conakry, Guinea. Her solo "Abre D'Adaptation" choreographed for Burkinabe dancer Wilfried Souly won best choreography for the Los Angeles Emerging Above Ground Festival in April 2007. In 2006 she was invited as a Cultural Envoy through the U.S. State Department to teach and perform in South Africa (Heart of the Arts), Botswana (Maitisong Festival), and Burkina Faso (Dialogue De Corps). She has worked with Senegal-based artists such as *Compagnie Kakat'Art*, *Compagnie 1 ere Temps*, and hip hop artist *Keyti of Dakar All Stars*. Her dance films have screened at numerous festivals and she co-produced *United Nations of Hip Hop*, which screened at AFI International and NYC Pan African Film Festival. Esther has performed in the work of Deborah Slater Dance Theater, Victoria Marks and is currently dancing in David Rousseve/REALITY new work *Saudade*. She implemented and led UCLA's first summer study abroad program in Senegal at Germaine Acogny's *Ecole de Sables* and is the recipient of a Jacob K. Javits Fellowship, a Durfee, and UCIRA grant. In Los Angeles she has performed at Redcat, Highways, Electric Lodge, The Alex Theater, The Bootleg Theatre, Gloriosa Kaufman Hall UCLA, The Fowler Museum, The Skirball Cultural Center, and The Getty Museum. She currently teaches dance and yoga at Rio Hondo College and West African dance and Multicultural Dance at Cypress College. Esther is also setting new choreographies on students at Marlborough High School, Rio Hondo College, and is a HeArt Project artist in residence for continuation high schools in Los Angeles.

www.btdanceproject.com