

# BaoBao Festival celebrates West African music, traditions

## Festival invites Boulder to have fun, speak its mind

By **Lindsay Gulisano** For the Camera  
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:03/05/2010 11:42:37 PM MST

### If you go

**What** "7th Annual BaoBao Festival"

**When** 7 p.m. Sat. March 6

**Where** Boulder Theater

**Tickets** \$19 general; \$15 students & seniors, children under 10 are free

**Info** [baobaofest.org](http://baobaofest.org) or Boulder Theater 303-786-7030

Boulder will be treated to West African culture at the 7th Annual BaoBao Festival this weekend at the Boulder Theater. The celebration, which draws upon the African tradition of gathering around the BaoBao tree to tell stories, will be featuring African drumming, dancing, and original storytelling by Akraham Cofie.

"Festivals are very important in our lives as Africans," said Cofie, "so we wanted to bring over this part of our culture for times when we don't have the funds to go all the way home."

With this year's theme, "The Measuring Stick," the festival hopes to examine the criteria people use for measuring their neighbor's worth. Cofie, who has been creating stories for the BaoBao Festival since 2007, said that for Africans, storytelling is about more than just entertainment. The goal, he said, is to enlighten people and comment on current events and social vices.

He said that festivals are particularly important because in Africa, people were generally allowed little freedom of speech so festivals gave them a chance to speak their minds. Cofie said he hopes that the BaoBao Festival will become a place where people in Boulder can

also feel free to be open with one another.

"For us it was a day to tell it like it is without oppression or fear of victimization," he said. "That is when you can tell the chief that he doesn't know how to dress and that he's not a very handsome guy after all."

Along with the social conversation, storytelling and dancing, he said there will be music so the community can dance and interact with each other. Cofie said that this year, there will be very traditional African music, using only three western instruments.

"We're making music the way it is in our tradition," Cofie said. "I'm really excited about that part."

Habid Iddrisu, who will be dancing and drumming in the festival, said he and the rest of the 15 African performers are all apart of a group that first started back in their home country of Ghana. Iddrisu now lives in upstate New York but he said he was excited to be able to come to Boulder and share the traditions the he grew up with.

"The reason why I like to do it is because Boulder has provided an exceptional opportunity for us to share the African tradition with the Boulder community," Iddrisu said.

For Edi Kwasi Gbordzi, another member of the performing group, this year's festival is particularly special because it marks the seventh anniversary of the BaoBao Festival in Colorado.

"Every seven is a big deal in our people's way of looking at life," Gbordzi said, "so I'm really looking forward to this one and I know it will be a blast."

Along with the traditional African performers, the BaoBao festival will also feature hip-hop dance troupes from Streetside Studio, Grupo Macando led by Carmen Nelson, 1,000 Voices singing group led by Nii Armah Sowah, and Break EFX, a hip-hop group that was recently featured on MTV's "America's Best Dance Crew."

Cofie said he hopes that people will recognize the festival as an event that has a little something special for everyone.

"When it is time for the BaoBao Festival, it is important for people to understand that it is not just an African thing, but something special for the entire community in Boulder to embrace and make their own," he said.

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