

behind the scenes at pfp



How do people come to be featured in Works in Progress? Certainly, they are in these pages because we think they have something to say— but also, their presence usually means that they are involved with one of PFP's programs. **Elaine Hoffman Watts** was featured in a major PFP concert last spring and is the subject of a documentary in progress. The

late **LaVaughn Robinson** was involved in Folklore Project efforts over decades, including both the major production *Stepping in Time* and the documentary *Plenty of Good Women Dancers*. **Pupi Legarreta** and **Suzanne Povse** have participated in PFP's technical assistance program. **Lois Fernandez** first came to a PFP technical assistance workshop more

than 15 years ago, and ODUNDE and PFP have been friends and allies ever since. We've worked together in many ways, including collaborative efforts from a landmark project on social dance (*From Huckleback to Hip Hop*), to the multi-year *Philly Dance Africa* programs, and a 2007 documentary photo exhibition in honor of ODUNDE's 30th birthday. On that occasion, we showed a



selection of **Tom Morton's** beautiful photos of this important community event, offering copies of the images in exchange for peoples' stories about them. This was a chance for us to hear about (and to document) some of what ODUNDE means to people, and a way to make the exhibition live on in homes around the city, where the photographs are deeply known and treasured— and where they surely continue to stimulate important storytelling. As part of this process, Nia Bey Al-Rasul shared a story about Lois Fernandez— saying that she was beloved in the community for her fight around birth certificates. That prompted us to get the story down on tape. It is now preserved in both our Archive and at ODUNDE. What appears in these pages tends to be part of such larger and ongoing efforts (and part of how we learn what we need to be doing). We are initiating this new "Afterword" column to share some of these behind-the-scenes matters. But all that said: we are happy to entertain your ideas about what might be in these pages. We focus exclusively on community-based cultural heritage in this region, paying close attention to local folk and traditional arts and artists, and to

documenting significant community experiences, especially regarding social change. We prefer work in which people speak for themselves, in their own words. If you have an idea, we would be happy to hear from you.

This summer the wonderful folks at Mill Creek Design built a new back shed at PFP and made some other needed repairs to our building. Thanks to them (and a grant from the City's Capital Fund), we'll be opening a new folk arts resource room for public use this fall— a home within our home for our long-running technical assistance program offering services to people working in folk and traditional arts and cultural heritage. We are proud that over the last 21 years, we have helped local traditional artists and grassroots groups to raise more than \$2.876 million dollars in outside funds to support community-based folk arts activity here, but that is just one mark of impact. The learning and conversation among workshop attendees has always been rich: now we have a permanent space to support this activity. Look for expanded "office hours" in addition to our second Saturday workshops, beginning this fall.

These services are always free.

Our 21st year was filled with activity: two major concerts (sold out, artistic successes), a busy year of technical assistance (resulting in major awards to many local traditional artists— see our website www.folkloreproject.org for details), a full complement of folk arts education programs reaching more than 400 students at the Folk Arts – Cultural Treasures Charter School (FACTS), founded by Asian Americans United and PFP, and more. The photos give some glimpses of activities at our building.

If you are reading this within easy distance from PFP, we hope that we'll see you this fall. Visit our website for current programs, See www.folkloreproject.org for virtual exhibitions, glimpses of our archive, and of course, to purchase our books and documentaries and back issues of our long-running magazine. Or call or email and we'll add you to our mailing list: 215.726.1106 or pfp@folkloreproject.org

—Debora Kodish

Photos: Liberian performers Blamoh Doe, Gbaltuo Comgbaye, Kormassa Bobo and Fatu Gayflor at PFP's farewell party for long-time staffer Toni Shapiro-Pbim. Tai Joselyn and Dr. Joamie May Cordova making birthday bats at PFP's 20th birthday celebration. Board member Mawusi Simmons with PFP materials and glimpses of our Hmong exhibition. PFP board and staff: Germaine Ingram, Ellen Somekawa, Ife Nii-Owoo, Debora Kodish, Mary Yee, Toni Shapiro-Pbim and Dorothy Wilkie. Photos: Ife Nii-Owoo. Above: Linford Martin and Andy Peifer, from Mill Creek Design, hard at work at the new PFP resource room, summer 2008. Photo: Thomas Owens