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**Queens-based Percussia Celebrates Ugandan Composer
with Concert at St. John's University**

Percussia and the TransWorld Performance Arts Ensembles present
an evening of contemporary and traditional music and dance.

(JACKSON HEIGHTS, NY – October 21, 2010) Percussia, a Queens-based contemporary chamber music ensemble, and the Trans World Performance Arts Ensembles (TWOPA), a Ugandan music and dance group based in the Bronx, will unite to present a ground-breaking program, "Roots of Rhythm: Justinian Tamusuza and the Traditional Inspirations of a Contemporary African Composer." This pioneering concert will feature Western classical music by a renowned contemporary Ugandan composer, side-by-side with the traditional music and dance that inspired his work. This free performance will take place in the Dr. M. T. Geoffrey Yeh Art Gallery on the St. John's University Campus (8000 Utopia Parkway, Jamaica, Queens, NY 11439; phone: 888-9ST-JOHN) on Tuesday, November 9, 2010 at 7 PM.

Percussia will present the works of acclaimed Ugandan composer Justinian Tamusuza. Recognized as one of Africa's leading contemporary composers, Tamusuza has composed a number of works for classically trained musicians that combine Western techniques with traditional African folk elements and drum rhythms. "Combining his music with a performance by the TWOPA is a perfect concert pairing," says Percussia's Artistic Director, Ingrid Gordon.

In addition to featuring its core roster of talented musicians—including Frank Cassara and Artistic Director Ingrid Gordon, Susan Jolles on harp, Margaret Lancaster on flute, and Lev 'Ljova' Zhurbin on viola, as well as guest artists Dana Scofidio on guitar, Pascal Archer on clarinet and Eliot Gattegno on saxophone—Percussia will partner with the TransWorld Performance Arts Ensembles, a Ugandan music and dance group based in the Bronx, to present this concert.

TWOPA will perform a selection of traditional Ugandan drumming and dancing. The group performs in traditional Ugandan costumes, and audience members are invited to get up and join in the dancing. In addition to traditional Ugandan performing arts, the group collaborates with other African immigrant groups to celebrate additional world styles for a cross-cultural experience. The group's mission is to educate the public about the positive aspects of different cultures through the common language of music and dance.

"Justinian Tamusuza is one of my favorite contemporary composers," says Gordon. "I love the way he incorporates traditional Ugandan musical elements into Western chamber ensembles, creating such a dynamic and exciting package. I am thrilled to present this work to a New York audience."

Tamusuza's music came to world attention when his first string quartet, "Mu Kkubo Ery'Omusaalaba," was featured on Kronos Quartet's CD *Pieces of Africa*, which reached No. 1 on the Billboard Classical and World Music Charts in 1992. Throughout his career, Tamusuza has composed a number of works for classically trained musicians that combine Western minimalist techniques with traditional African folk elements and polyrhythms.

Percussia will perform three of Tamusuza's works on this program. First is "Abaana Bange Na-Ka-Lwa," an unusual one-movement piece of African chamber music written in a traditional Kiganda style, but for instruments

borrowed from jazz and rock music. Arranged for and played on soprano saxophone, electric guitar and marimba, the piece includes specific performance instructions in order to duplicate the sounds of traditional African folk music.

In addition, Percussia will perform "Ekivvulu Ky' Endere," which the group first debuted at a Queens Library concert in 2007. The piece's title means "The African Festivity of the Flute" and includes three movements—"Okwanjula Kw' Endere" (Introduction of the Flute), "Okujaganya" (Rejoicing) and "Akayisanyo" (Finale). The work depicts an African celebratory procession, led by the flute, which is the focal point of the festival, the host and main celebrant. The first movement is a dramatic seven-minute solo flute soliloquy. In the second movement, the flute is joined by other instruments—secondary participants in the festival—that each come out in turn to display their skills. In the finale, all of the characters have drunk themselves silly and go crazy, as portrayed through the music's fast tempo. With instrumentation designed to simulate a troupe of African musicians, the piece features Gordon on marimba; Cassara on maracas; Jolles on harp; Lancaster on flute; and Zhurbin on viola.

Percussia will also perform an early work of Tamasuza's called "Baakisimba Muwogola" Written by Tamasuza in 1988, the piece is minimalistic in the sense that it is repetitive, like most Baganda folk music and dances; but the instrumentation is Western. The piece was inspired by a folk dance of the Baganda people for which the composition is named. In the Baakisimba portion of the dance, performed for royalty, dancers do not lift their feet from the ground so as not to create dust. However, when the royalty leaves, the dancers are free to dance at a high tempo and may lift their feet off the ground. This last part of the dance is referred to as Muwogola. This work is scored for drums, maracas, flute and clarinet and will be performed by Gordon, Cassara, Archer and Lancaster.

TWOPA will present a selection of traditional Ugandan drumming and dance, including a traditional dance, Baakisimba Muwogola, on which the above work by Tamusuza is based.

Percussia: Beating a path to modern world music.

With percussion as its driving force, Percussia is known for delivering dynamic and engaging performances. In addition to becoming a regular at Queens Public Library concerts, Percussia has performed at such innovative New York City as Merkin Concert Hall and Symphony Space, and at the New Directions in Percussion Festival at Cornell University. Playing both world and Western percussion instruments, this Queens-based chamber music ensemble melds the music of different lands into its own contemporary soundscape. The resulting international music crosses genres, styles, and cultural boundaries, connecting people through music's common thread of percussion. Percussia's varied repertoire is a mixture of contemporary chamber music, world and folk music styles, and original arrangements. While percussion takes center stage, the group blends its rhythm with melodic instruments for added dimension.

This concert is made possible by the Queens Council on the Arts, a regrant program of the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs Decentralization Program.



High-resolution photos available upon request and are downloadable at www.percussia.org