



**Amara Tabor-Smith** began performing in the Bay Area almost 20 years ago. She has worked with the San Francisco Mime Troupe, Make-A-Circus, and toured schools performing folktales with The World of Tales. As a dancer, she has worked with local choreographers Ed Mock, Priscilla Regalado, and Pearl Ubungen, and most recently performed with New York City's The Urban Bush Women Dance Company. With her diverse theatrical and movement skills, Amara plays a Trickster in our show, who guides the children through the crossroads of culture in their journey of dance and music.

**Ballet Jali Diabate** - "The Twins," Assane and Ousseynou Kouyate, come from a long line of griots, or jalis; hereditary historians, genealogists, storytellers, and keepers of cultural traditions of the Mandeng people of Mali. Their style of music and dance exhibits cultural elements Mali and Senegal, where they grew up. They performed with the National Ballet of Senegal and other Africa-based companies until moving to the United States in 1997, when they developed their own company, Diabate. In People Like Me 2001, Assane and Ousseynou perform spectacularly athletic dance, with an accompanying musical ensemble which includes percussion, the African harp/lute known as the kora, and a wooden xylophone with resonators known as the balafon.



**De Rompe y Raja** was founded in 1995, as a cultural organization dedicated to preserving and promoting Afro-Peruvian traditions and culture from the coastal region of Peru, where the music and motifs of European, African and indigenous peoples intersect. The troupe has collaborated with Coro Hispano of San Francisco and the World Repertory Ensemble, and performed at numerous universities and festivals, including appearances at the SF Ethnic Dance Festival in 1996, 1999, and

2000. Master dancer "Lalo" Izquierdo and guitarist Julian Jimenez, here directly from Peru for People Like Me, join Artistic Director Gabriela Shiroma, and musicians Pedro Rojas and Javier Nunton, to present "Amador," the story of one of the last master teachers of Afro-Peruvian traditions. They bring humor, fancy footwork, and lively music featuring guitar, singing, and the playing of the Peruvian cajon, or box drum.

**Evie Ladin** began creating original and traditional percussive dances at the age of eight, performing with her sister Abby. Their ensemble, Tongue & Groove, features an old-time stringband, harmony singing, flashy footwork and puppets. Evie learned to play the banjo from some of the finest players on the East Coast, and later studied dance and choreography at Brown University (BA'91: African Studies in Dance), in New York, Chicago, and Nigeria. From 1991-99 she toured nationally with Rhythm In Shoes of Dayton, OH, she currently performs as a guest artist with Keith Terry & Crosspulse, and is creating a new tap dance ensemble, Motor. A soloist in People Like Me, Evie weaves her talents with other performers, illustrating roots and commonalities among the diverse genres presented. Her clogging, tap, body percussion, and banjo playing bring North American styles to life. She also facilitates pre-show activities, in concert with Rami Margrom and narrator Amara Tabor-Smith.



**Group Petit La Croix** is led by noted dancer/choreographer Blanche Brown, who studied with Haitian teachers Jean Leon Destine, Serge St. Juste and Mona Amira in New York. The company celebrates its 12th anniversary as the only professional Haitian dance company in the western U.S. to present a spectrum of Haitian dance, from Vodun rituals to the turbulent legacy of the island's political struggle. Committed to interpreting and presenting the dance culture of Haiti, they present original works in concert, choreographed by Blanche Brown and Assistant Director Michelle Martin, as well as lecture/demonstrations, school education programs, workshops and master classes. In People Like Me 2001, an ensemble of five

performers present a flirtatious and festive partner dance, entitled "Danse Kongo," Often danced as a respite during prolonged and intense religious ceremonies, it exhibits both French and African influences, and provides a visceral experience of Haiti's past, present and future.



### **Olorum (Sun) - Susana Arenas Pedroso**

began studying dance at age 12, at the Casa de la Cultura in Matanzas, Cuba, after which she moved to Havana and joined popular, folkloric, and theater dance troupes, including Tierra Virgen, Alafia Ire, Oche Olorum, and Oriki. She was a soloist for Compania Folklorica Raices Profundas, and with the electrifying Ban Rra Rra of Guantanamo, Cuba. From 1998-99 she

worked with the renowned Carlos Aldama in Owo Ache, including appearing in the 1999 SF Ethnic Dance Festival. With Alafia she created the full length production "Mosaico" at ODC in May, 2000, and she regularly offers classes in popular and folkloric Afro-Cuban dance in Richmond, San Francisco, and Berkeley, CA. In People Like Me 2001 her ensemble, Olorum, presents "Wemilere," interpreting spiritual and mythic entities from Afro-Cuban cosmology, known as Orishas. Personification of such natural elements as the nurturing ocean mother, the turbulent wind, and the sweet water of the river are powerfully danced to intricate batá drum rhythms and song.

**Rami Margrom** is a dancer, actor and director from Oakland. She has studied many dance forms, and has been a member of Group Petit la Croix (Haitian dance) and Mae Ziglin Meidav Dancers (Bellydance). She is currently a member of Reconnect, a collective performance group which educates the community about the African Diaspora. She learned Swing and Lindy Hop in clubs and Studios, and watching dance footage of old movies. She spends much of her time teaching, directing, performing for and playing with kids, including at Camp Winnarainbow, a circus skills and performing arts camp, where she teaches dance and tightrope. In People Like Me 2001, Rami performs acrobatic and jazzy Swing and Lindy Hop, and appears throughout the show as a versatile cast member. Rami also facilitates the pre-show activities, in cooperation with Evie Ladin and narrator Amara Tabor-Smith, presenting call and response songs, movement, and percussion games.

