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Amandou Thiam brings chance to learn culture and workout with tribal dance workshop at Student Rec Center

BY STEPHEN WELLS

tter bug, two step, lambada, tango and the waltz have made their mark on the American dance

Tomorrow, from 3 to 4:30 p.m., Amadou Thiam lbring his West African dance and drum workshop ne Student Recreation Center, teaching students ignificance of his art while they sweat to the beat

an African drum. Amadou Thiam is a dancer, originally from Sene-

He toured the United States with the Second Naal Ballet of Senegal, and has performed and taught tional West African dance for more than 10 years. after his tour with the Second National Ballet of gal, Thiam formed the Lam Toro traditional West can dance and drum company in Sacramento, f, which has performed throughout Northern Cal-

Between practices with Lam Toro, Thiam taught cing and drumming classes at the Sierra 2 Com-

hiam later moved to Texas to stay close to his fie and has continued his teaching, traveling the country to do workshops. He stays so busy that the workshop at Texas A&M took almost a

year to put together.
"I wanted to be near my fiancee,' Thiam said. "So I'm trying to continue my teaching in Texas. She

came to medical school here and we decided we couldn't do a long-distance ship. I've

been working a lot, sometimes more than one workshop a week. One year ago they tried to bring me here but I was too busy and my schedule would not allow it. This year it worked so that I could come.

Students can expect to learn a variety of dance styles at the workshop.

"I'm teaching West African rhythm and dancing from Senegal, Mali, Guinea and Gambia," Thiam said. 'They will all be traditional dances. Usually they are used for celebrations like weddings. All the dancing I we will practice on the drums and on the different other things I want to do.' dance steps as individuals. Finally, we will combine it all and do everything together.'

Dr. Kathy Dettwyler, an associate professor of anthropology, said people dance for many reasons.

"There's all different kinds of reasons why people will dance," Dettwyler said. "They dance at religious ceremonies and weddings, just like we do. They dance at child naming ceremonies and at the beginning of the harvest season. They do dance for fun, but it's not

like you will see where men and women dance together companionship or to start dating." Dettwyler

said the tradi-tional West African dance is a group activity. "African

dance is not like dancing here, where you usually dance with a partner," Dettwyler said. "There are usually a lot of peo-

ple standing in a circle, and a few drummers beating out a rhythm. Every now and then, somebody will go to the middle and strut their

The class is not limited to

An integral part of traditional dancing is the drumming accompanying it.

All drummers are welcome to come," Thiam said. If I've got some drummers to come to my workshop then it will be easy to teach them the part they need. Africa, where dancing and drumming have a great to know. That way, I can concentrate on teaching the deal of meaning, they should come," Thiam said.

Drumming and dancing share an intimate relationship in West Africa.

There is usually more than one drummer pre-sent," Dettwyler said. "The rhythms they use are very complex, with each drummer performing a completely different part. It's very catchy and you can dance to it. The indi-

vidual parts fit together into a whole, and the pattern for

each drum-

mer can be

complicated, but it sounds wonderful." Traditional African dance is not as distant as the name "traditional" im-

Several of the most popular club dances today have their roots in African dance. 'There are all kinds of move-

ments, such as flapping arms to represent wings and making eating motions," Dettwyler said. "There is one dance females do to attract males. She will bend forward at the waist with her

hands on her knees and twitch her bottom around." Students who are planning on attending the work-shop should come prepared to dance.

"I think it will be a fairly participatory event," Dettwyler said. "My husband was thinking about taking our seven-year-old to the course and he was told if they were shy it might not be a great idea. If you go you will be dancing in front of others and with oth-

Students should not expect the average fitness workshop. West African traditional dancing is as much about the culture as it is the dancing itself.

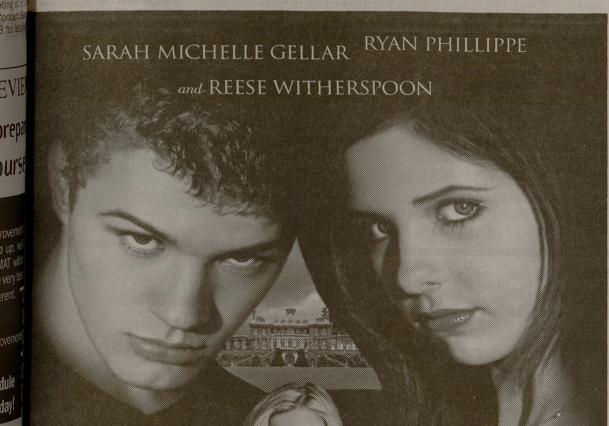
"If a student wants to learn something about West



will teach is religious or cultural and has a deeper those who want to learn to dance.

Thiam said the workshop will not be just another seminar. Those participating will have the opportuni-

"It will be a dance practice," Thiam said. "We will start by warming up just like a dance practice. Then



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