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## DRUMMERS BRING BEAT TO ARSHT CENTER

Under the direction of a renowned reggae drummer, 35 at-risk Miami children will give an African drumming performance on Saturday at the Adrienne Arsht Center.



Master drummer and former Third World member William "Willie" Stewart starts a rehearsal of youngsters in Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Miami, for their performance on African drums at the Family Fest at the Adrienne Arsht Center. The free fest -- Rhythms of Africa - Music Around The World -- is Saturday, Jan. 12, 2013. This rehearsal, Nov. 18, 2012, was one of several two-hour sessions at Virrick Park in Coconut Grove. Stewart, president of Solutions in Music Corp., mentors young students and leads drumming workshops for businesses, schools and the community. MARSHA HALPER / Miami Herald Staff

### [Photos](#)

## A helping hand at Family Fest

### MORE INFORMATION

#### IF YOU GO

What: "Music 'Round the World" featuring Rhythms of Africa

Where: Knight Concert Hall of the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts, 1300 Biscayne Blvd.

When: 1:30 p.m., but people are encouraged to arrive early to get seats.

Cost: Free

Parking: \$15 to park in Lot A or Lot C (Omni Garage), \$25 for valet at Ziff Ballet Opera House.

BY ERIN JESTER

[EJESTER@MIAMIHERALD.COM](mailto:EJESTER@MIAMIHERALD.COM)

Mirlanta Petit Homme speaks softly, but her cowbell doesn't. In rehearsal, the bell's tinny tones rise above the drums, just enough to stand out but always on the beat. "If I get an instrument, I'm going to make sure I'm heard," she said.

This weekend, the 18-year-old will be heard when she performs with 34 other students in renowned drummer Willie Stewart's Rhythms in Africa production.

The youth, all members of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Miami, were chosen from some of the lowest-performing schools in the county.

On Saturday, 10 weeks of hard work will culminate in a performance during Family Fest at the Adrienne Arsht Center.

Starting at 1:30 p.m., the young musicians, along with Stewart and a group of professional musicians, will perform a selection of African songs.

The idea of getting some kind of music program going started last year when Big Brothers Big Sisters officials were brainstorming program ideas for a group of older teenagers.

"This is a very difficult group to engage, and to serve," said Marianne Weiss, director of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Miami's Mentoring and Resource Center. "They have to be cool."

After hearing about Stewart's Rhythms of Africa production with Fort Lauderdale children in 2011, she knew a music program would be a perfect fit.

Weiss called every kid in the program who she thought would be interested. In particular, she said, she reached out to those with behavioral problems or those who didn't have anything to do after school. She ended up with 35, mostly high school students.

At the first rehearsal at Elizabeth Virrick Park in Coconut Grove, Stewart set up his drums and invited his new students to come forward.

He picked a few to lead by creating a drum beat. Everyone had to follow and learn the beat. It wasn't long before they were all drumming in unison.

"At the end of the activity, they sound like an orchestra," Weiss said. "It's insane."

The Grove neighborhood became accustomed to the Sunday drumming rehearsals. Passersby often stopped to listen, sometimes forming a crowd of up to 25 people.

Read more here: <http://www.miamiherald.com/2013/01/11/v-fullstory/3178402/drummers-bring-beat-to-arsht-center.html#storylink=cpy>