



All-Male African Dancers from Akron, OH take Top Honors at 2023 World of Dance in Los Angeles

September 1, 2023 Akron, OH – Its booking time for Ohio's rising star all-male teen African dance troupe--The Black Beanz--after recently being awarded “Crowd Favorite” and “Too Hot for the Dance Floor” awards at the popular *World of Dance* competition. Their recognition and demand for appearances at festivals and events has grown since they were specially recognized at this well-known dance competition that features dance crews from 30+ countries. The crowd cheered on their unique dance routine featuring their African tribal heritage with athleticism and a pop spin.

The Black Beanz dance troupe was one of three dance teams in the Ohio region awarded the opportunity to head to Anaheim for the *World of Dance* finals competition. On that same weekend, the Black Beanz performed as one of the top ten pre-professional youth dance teams in Ohio at the OhioDance Festival in Columbus. They have also been licensed as Top Buskers by the Downtown Cleveland Partnership.

The Black Beanz are unrivaled with their unique energy and spirit of the Afro Beat/Bongo Flava music genre raging throughout East Africa...and now rising in the U.S.A.

The Black Beanz burst onto the youth entertainment scene of Northeast Ohio in 2021. The group of all-male East African performers range in age from 15-17 years old, immigrated to the U.S. from Tanzania and Uganda after being displaced from their original country of The Republic of the Congo (formerly known as Zaire). Their dancing features three of the top trending African dance styles in their lively performances, combining traditional East African dance beats with hip hop, reggae, gospel, R&B and rap!

Before this group of school friends was discovered dancing in the hallways and lunchrooms of their school and during work breaks as part of Yard Corps, a summer outdoor youth worker program, the Black Beanz performances were limited to personal videos posted on TikTok, Instagram and Youtube. “Because these guys were able to dance at our clients’ worksites, our business nearly tripled last summer!” says Tom Crain, Director of Shanti Community Farms and its Yard Corps program who also serves as their co-manager. “Clients hired us for landscaping jobs just to see these guys dance!”

Shanti Community Farms, a Northeast Ohio non-profit organization that works with immigrant youth and their families to enhance their agriculture heritage, recognized the unique talent of its Congolese youth workers and stepped up their staging, costuming and dance practices while gaining bookings for them at local summer festivals, events and parties. The youth named themselves “The Black Beanz” to showcase their agricultural heritage as well as dance “style”—most of whom either lived or worked on farms while confined to their camps in Tanzania and Uganda after their families fled the civil war of their home country of The Republic of The Congo. Some learned to dance to garner enough tips to ensure their families had enough food to eat.

“I am so proud of these young men, balancing two cultures, assimilation, teen angst, home country traumas, school academics and extracurricular activities including soccer and Yard Corps, as they polish their ‘show biz’ prowess and celebrity status,” explains Crain. “They are self-taught and also do all their own choreography. But now, with the *World of Dance* competition just around the corner, they may have to knock a few more activities off their plate!”

“These exceptional young men have proven to be not only great artists and performers with their African dance heritage since the age of three or four, but also great immigrant youth ambassadors when making appearances on and off-stage,” says David Brooks, Owner/Founder of Akron-based 36 North Consulting who now serves with Crain as co-manager. “The audience eats up their positive energy, spirited humor and unique

athletic abilities beyond their traditional dancing talents. Every one of their dances tells a story and the joy they share on stage is totally contagious.”

MORE ON THE BLACK BEANZ: For more information and to book the Black Beanz at your next event, contact co-managers David Brooks, 36 North Consulting at 330-328-5624 or Tom Crain, Shanti Community Farms at 330-634-6489.
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