



THE day before leaving Dar es Salaam yesterday evening, for a ten-day working tour in India, the eight members of the Mwanza-based Bujora Dance Troupe (BDT), gave the audience a taste of their repertoire, at the Indian High Commission in Dar es Salaam, where they had gone to collect their passports and tickets. (Photo by Iman Mani)

Mwanza ngoma group confident to captivate India

By IMAN MANI

LEAVING Dar es Salaam yesterday (Tuesday) evening, marked the beginning of a new venture for eight members of the Mwanza-based Bujora Dance Troupe (BDT). They were on their way to Delhi-India for a 10-day working tour, courtesy of the Indian High Commission, which is based here in the city.

Such ventures are part of an exchange programme, being run by the commission, towards strengthening cultural ties between the two countries. According to the Indian Cultural Centre (ICC) Director, Inder Jit Sagar, they think it is essential to not only bring cultural groups here from various parts of India but also to take local artists from here to there.

"This way each country's artists gets the chance to showcase their art and culture to another nation, while getting the opportunity to see the home-country art in its own environment. This brings more understanding, which leads to a higher

level of appreciation of each other's art and culture," Sagar told the 'Daily News' on Monday, when asked for the reasoning behind such moves.

The troupe's Secretary, Sylvester Gambula, assured the 'Daily News' that, their aim is to preserve and sustain local culture by providing education, which entertains, through traditional songs and dances, remains the same no matter where they perform. Together with the other seven members, who were travelling to India, he had passed at the HC to collect his passport and ticket for yesterday's (Tuesday) flight.

Actually, according to Gambula, the troupe, which features traditional dance pieces from all over the country, with an emphasis for pieces from the Sukuma ethnic group, actually started in 1973, which was before he was born. He had joined when he was very young, following in his father's footsteps. After-all, eighty per cent of the group, which includes him, are of this ethnic group.

Within their performances, dancing and singing are accompanied with a number of traditional instruments, such as drums, Zeze and Chekeche, in keeping with Sukuma tradition. While in India, they are slated to perform in three cities - Delhi, Chandigarh and Bhopal - before returning to Tanzania early next month.

Seeing this is not the first time for members of this group to travel outside of the country for performances, Gambula says, gives them some backbone of a history to keep them focused on the purpose of the tour. They had been to South Korea, Denmark, Norway and Sweden. For this visit to India they have prepared a repertoire around four pieces which he says, together with their stage costumes, will "attract" the people in India.

"These four pieces are Bugoba Gobo, an agriculture piece related to the time of harvest, Buyeye, which is a dance in which we have live snakes, then a piece used at time of Soghotu celebration and Bunungule when in

competition. All four pieces are from the Sukuma ethnic group," Gambula said.

He explained that, although only eight members will be representing the group on this tour, there are actually 35 active members, out of which 15 are ladies, in the entire troupe. He told the 'Daily News' having such an opportunity to present their art to the Indian people in their country, is a privilege they all respect because they never thought such an opportunity would come their way.

"Also we're happy because we're going to the traditions of the particular places that we'll be, 100 per cent better than just hearing others talk about such places. We'll also get the chance to build on our contacts with people there, which in effect comes as a form of advertising ourselves, country and Art. Not to forget, being a working tour, there's a payment we'll be getting," he explained.

In this respect, Gambula said, all members are appreciative, given that they are all forced to have alternative

means of obtaining a living, seeing that just depending on their art has not proved to be able to provide a stable income. Therefore, everyone has their own thing, such as carpentry, peasant farming, tour guides' and other occasional labouring activities they do, to make ends meet. This however, hasn't stop them from always taking time out to meet, at least twice a week for rehearsals.

The two ladies within the eight troupe members that went to India yesterday (Tuesday) are Leontina Emmanuel and Veronica James. The 'Daily News' had the opportunity of exchanging a few words with them on Monday before leaving them to continue with their final preparations for the journey the following day.

Leontina had left singing in a choir to join the group, as a singer and dancer, ten years before. To date she has no regrets and talked about getting a lot of satisfaction from being part of this traditional group. The opportunity to learn from the artists, she expects to meet, when in India,

she says will help expand her knowledge and experience. This, she adds will improve her overall "professional level".

Veronica, on the other hand joined the group when she was very young, twenty four years ago. She admits that even though it has not provided her with an income that could provide her needs, she has no regrets. For her, the joy comes from knowing she's maintaining aspects of her traditional song and dance culture, which she believes is important.

Like Gambula and Leontina, Veronica had inherited the love for this section of the Performing Arts from her father, who she says retired from performing now due to age. She also mentions that although her mother was not a performer, she was and still is very happy that she has taken-up this traditional dance and singing professionally. Like her other seven colleagues, she has no doubt they will be able to captivate audiences in India with their dance steps, costumes and chants.