

Biographical Sketch

Dr. Benita Brown

Professor of Dance

Virginia State University

Dr. Benita J. Brown is a Full Professor of Dance at Virginia State University. She is the coordinator of the minor in dance within the Department of Health, Physical Education, Recreation, Dance, and Sport Management where she has served since 1999. In 2005, she created the dance curriculum at Virginia State University which includes classes in African-Caribbean Dance, Modern Dance, Jazz Dance, Ballet, Dance Repertory, Dance Composition, and History of Dance. She is the founding director of VSU's Sankofa Dance Theatre (1999), a performing arts group that is composed of students that minor in the dance program at Virginia State University. This performing arts/dance troupe has performed in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, New York, New York, and Washington, D.C. as well as throughout the Richmond, Chester, Petersburg, and Hopewell, Virginia area. At Virginia State University, Dr. Brown has chaired the Curriculum and Academic Issues Committee, the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, the Academic Environment Committee, the University Council, and the Faculty Appeals Committee. She was also honored for her contributions to dance in the Philadelphia Community.

Dr. Benita Brown is a graduate of Temple University's Boyer School of Music and Dance where she received the Future Faculty Fellowship and Dissertation Fellow in Dance. She holds a Bachelor of Arts from the School of Communications and Theatre, the Master of Education as well as the Doctor of Education in Dance all from Temple University. Her dissertation topic is "Boppin' at Miss Mattie's Place: African American Dance Culture in the 1960s in North Philadelphia. She is the recipient of the Choreographer's Fellowship from the Pennsylvania Council of the Arts, the 5-County Arts Fund from Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance, the Presenters Stipend from the Virginia Commission of the Arts, and the Virginia's African-American Heritage grant from the Virginia Foundation for Humanities and Social Change. In 2007, she received the Research Initiation Grant from Virginia State University and the FIPI grant from the University of Puerto Rico in 2010 as well as the Curriculum Integration Travel Grant in 2012.

Dr. Benita Brown's research interests include the study of dance throughout the African Diaspora insofar as the performative studies of spiritual and social dances are concerned. Her recent dance productions include: *Kwanzaa: The First Fruits*, *Syncretism: The Presence of African and African American Dance Culture in the United States*, *Black History Through*

Dance, For the Love of Dance, A Tribute to Duke Ellington: A Dance Drama, Everything's Copasetic: the Bojangles Exhibit, Stormy Weather: a Theatrical Dance and Lecture Demonstration, The King's Horsemen, (Directed by Chirs Olsen), and *Private Dancer: A Choreopoem*, (Chris Olsen, co-producer). She has published with Scarecrow Press, Myth Performance in the African Diasporas: Ritual, Theatre, and Dance, Cambridge Scholars Publishing (United Kingdom) Performative Inter-Actions in African Theatre I: Diaspora Representations and the Interweaving of Cultures, African Performatives, The Women's Folkloric Encyclopedia, The Virginia Journal, and the Philadelphia Folklore Project's Works in Progress as well as with Cengage Publishers. Some of Brown's lecture topics include: "The Orisa Paradigm: African-derived Mythology and Folklore and Kinesthetic Dance Performatives," "Rhythm and Blues: The Line Dances of Philadelphia," "Boppin' at Miss Mattie's Place: Regionalism, Place, and Space in North Philadelphia," "Social Dance as a Function of Ritual Dance," "Earth, Wind, and Fire: African-derived Ritual Dance in America, and Dancing with *Soul*: The Performances of *Yemoja, Oya, and Osun*. She has performed with The African Diaspora Dance Troupe, Kariamou and Company, JAASU Ballet and Kulu Mele African Dance and Drum Company all located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She has studied dance and presented research in dance in Ghana, Gambia, Senegal, Morocco, Bahamas, Jamaica, and Wales. Dr. Brown is also a Sloane-C certified online instructor. Recently, she was approved by a jury of her peers to receive a Fulbright Scholarship to teach, study, and conduct dance history research in Jamaica. Her most recent accomplishments include newly elected as President of Virginia State University's chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). Dr. Brown is also certified as a Quality Matters Course Peer Reviewer.