

# The Crazy Wisdom Calendar



**Ryan Edwards is the artistic director of LikeWater Drum and Dance. He has been drumming, performing and studying for 15 years in the U.S. and West Africa.**

*What are your earliest memories of drumming?*

My earliest memories of drumming are from the band room at the weird Christian school my parents sent me to for a few years. I joined the concert band in 6th grade, and recall thinking, "This is school? No, this is way better than school." I was also quite a trouble-maker in that class, as percussionists often tend to be, I guess. Some pieces I recall playing include the Raiders of the Lost Ark theme song, and the Phantom of the Opera medley for bands.

*You lead many classes and workshops on drumming. What other music and drumming-related work do you do, and is this how you earn your living?*

I do earn my living through teaching and performing music (as we say in Guinea, "A Hammdilly-laye" – God is Great!). Besides teaching workshops in schools and communities, I also direct and perform with my group, Like Water Drum & Dance. We perform with 6 drummers and 4 dancers, rehearse 1 to 3 times per week, and perform throughout the state, as well as a few gigs beyond Michigan as well. In addition, I manage the Like Water Drum Shop – a place where we make and repair many styles of traditional instruments, mainly those from West Africa.

*What is your favorite drumming CD, and why?*

Favorite? Oh c'mon! Ok I'll try... Faso Denu by the group Farafina. They are an ensemble from Burkina Faso – the album is beautiful. I think it is relatable to westerners, that's why I like it. It is at the same time both foreign and familiar. I have to give a shout out to Famadou Konate, though, one of only a few true masters of the djembe. His album Hamana Mandenkönö is absolutely brilliant.

*What is your favorite book about music, percussion or drumming?*

The Music of Life by Hazrat Inyat Khan. A teacher at Berklee College of Music (which I attended for a short time) suggested the book to me. It was then and has been very influential in my life. This book opened me up to Rumi's poetry (the Sufi mystic) – and that has also had a profound effect on my spiritual perspective. (Editor's Note: See the article about the upcoming Rumi Festival taking place in Ann Arbor this fall, on page 15).