

# **Professional and artistic training program\* in dance\*\* (PEFAPDA)**

## **General Protocol: description, principles, Regulations and courses**

### **FOREWORD**

\* Our program responds to the need and the urgency to adequately train performing artists - in particular dancers and dance instructors- in the different languages of contemporary creative arts.

At Zab Maboungou/Compagnie Danse Nyata Nyata, the languages inherited from African musical and dance traditions are a fundamental basis for an approach to artistic actuality and its demands in creative terms. Our artistic and professional training and education program in dance was designed to meet these requirements.

\*\*By the generic term “African dance”, must be understood the knowledge of a rhythmicultural repertory able to transmit, on a rigorous technical basis, the elements of dance and performance (the rhythms - and not the rhythm) - forming cultural entities of their own, that are deployed in time and beyond territories).

### **I- DESCRIPTION**

The courses in this program provide an intensive training in the art of movement. This training includes concentration courses (code C) and practical courses (code P). These courses are either exclusively created for PEFEPDA (PPC or PPP) or taken from the regular program and provided on a 13-hour to 15-hour weekly basis.

The subjects taught are as follows:

**1- Pema /PPP\* (1 credit) (without drums)**

A warm-up class that prepares the body by dynamic breathing (projection, retention and placement).

- Floor exercises and principle of dropping.
- Relaxation technique.
- Body and movement: receptivity, energy exchange and flexibility.

1hr

**2- Rhythm and voice/PPC\*(2 credits) (no drums)**

Certainly, this course aims to develop dancers' vocal abilities in relation to movement, but above all, it aims to reintroduce them to the original sources of dance: song as a call, resonance and the body's predisposition to exchange (receptivity).

- Projection (voice) and sequence (rhythm)
- Song preparatory (to dance): call and response / engagement.

- 1hr30

**3- Rypada/PPC\*-PR (2 credits) (no drums)**

Rhythms, Posture and Alignment for Dance.

- Postural principle and rhythmic resilience.
- Study of "forms - rhythms".
- Technique and body consciousness.
- Space and engagement

- 1hr30

**4- Fundamental Class/PPP\*- PR (1 credit) (with drums)**

Basic vocabulary (rhythm and steps) with an emphasis on progression (movement/dynamics):

- Weight (weight transfer)
- Breath (pathways of breath)
- Falls (weight and steps)
- Projection
- Isolation of body parts
- Stomping feet
- Leaps and running

- 1hr30

**5- Repertory Class (rhythmiculture)/PPC (3 credits) (with drums)**

Repertory classes concentrate on aspects of rhythm and movement of a specific rhythmiculture. The emphasis is on diversity and the specificity of African and Neo-African traditions. Basic elements; rhythms, steps, gestures, songs

- 1hr30

**6- Advanced class/PPP\*-PR (2 credits) (with drums)**

- Traditional space and contemporary approach.
- Mastering rhythmic codes: Breath and fluidity, physical strength and rhythmic endurance within the loketo structure and within a rhythmiculture. Progression and improvisation

- 2hrs

**7- Rhythms and movement/PPC\* (3 credits) (with drums)**

A class on several levels (1<sup>st</sup> year and 2<sup>nd</sup> year) in which all elements of dance are addressed in terms of different aspects:

- Body/space - movement/energy - individual/collectivity
- Relation between music and dance: rhythmic context/improvisation
- Exploration of principles of movement and of choreographic art (space, time and gesture).

- 2hrs

**8- Drums, voices and percussions/PPC\* (2 credits)**

A class on several levels:

- Voice (song)
- Rhythm (rhythmic lexicology)
- Drum (playing):
  - The drumstrike and the sound - the tone and the phrase
  - Relation between song (voice) and drummed music
  - Rhythmic endurance and progression
- Principles of orchestration and improvisation
- Different percussion instruments
- Specificity of rhythmicultural languages

- 1hr30

**9- Theory/PPC\* (3 credits)**

Theoretical workshops (1<sup>st</sup> year and 2<sup>nd</sup> year):

- African dance: sources and contexts
- Creole identity and cultural emancipation: Haiti, the African island in America
- Black Dance
- Rhythms and gestures

- Choreographic process
- 2hrs

**10- Creator's repertory (3 credits)**

Practical workshop: repertory of Zab Maboungou/Compagnie Danse Nyata Nyata.  
- 3hrs

**11- Artistic management and production (1 credit)**

Practical workshop: program coordination assistance, special workshops and performance preparations.

- 1hr30

These subjects will be taught over a two-year period (in level I for the 1<sup>st</sup> year and II for the 2<sup>nd</sup>). All sessions (there are 4 per year) run 10 weeks except the last, which is a 10-day intensive course (Drum and dance Workshop).

**Special Comment:**

Students in the Program may have access to all courses in the regular program if they so desire, provided that they inform the coordinator (Karla Etienne) and the titular professor and that they respect their commitment (as it is expected of them at all times).

## II- PRINCIPLES

### A) General Principles

PEFAPDA has been developed in a spirit of openness and initiative based on the knowledge and years of experience accumulated by the program's visionary, Ms Zab Maboungou, artistic director, choreographer and performer with Zab Maboungou/Compagnie Danse Nyata Nyata.

In essence, our program aims to provide a rigorous and continuous training in contemporary dance, while being open and attentive to the different manifestations of contemporary creativity. From this standpoint, African and Neo-African traditions to which is refers are a launching pad from which everything is "revisited": the most ancient forms, just like those that are defined as contemporary. This is the origin of our teaching's marked interest in interconnections and rhythmic transmutations through the eras and the dances. International Drums and Dance workshop course is in this respect an ideal opportunity to experience of this entire dynamic aspect of the development of African dances, but also of the rhythmic cultures of the world). Research and creativity remain at the heart of our approach in so far as our program is centred on our company's creative activities. Moreover, since 2008, it has offered an opportunity for continuing training and education.

Far more than a simple study program, this program sets out to be a unique opportunity to contribute to the development of a unique venue for encounters and training in Montreal and in Canada.

Thus, via this educational approach, the program hopes to enrich the field of the competence and professionalization of the profession of performing arts teacher and artist.

### B) Principles related to learning process

- 1- **Body and spirit.** Everything that relates to the body comes down to the movement of body and spirit. The attention paid to the body is a spiritual attention. All dance-learning processes consist of exploring and developing this principle.
- 2- **Training:** Participants in the program must be prepared to train regularly, on their own, once they have assimilated the *basic techniques necessary for good training* (PEMA-RYPADA-Fondamental). Such training is necessary to properly progress in the program, and on the condition that you don't lose sight of the principles, in no way does it exclude any other form of training the participants might take part in.

- 3- **Principle of progression.** The principle of progression as we understand it is indissociable from an in-depth rhythmic knowledge and lies at the heart of personal and artistic development. On this subject, please consult Ms Zab Maboungou's article on improvisation (enclosed).
- 4- **Relation dance and music.** One of the characteristics of dances of African origin, this relation/conversation, is explored in terms of its different facets. Beyond the direct relation between the drum-master and the dancer, it must also make it possible to explore and shape - in choreographic terms - the relation between time and space (the "rhythmic context").
- 5- **Movement and expression.** Artistic expression requires constant interaction involving refinement of form, the personal and the universal. The participants must constantly keep in mind this distinction and this essential reconciliation between movement and expression. All this aspect will be particularly studied and put into practice in dance (especially in dances of traditional inspiration due to the sophisticated relationship between musicians and dancers) but also in choreographic work (the individual and the group/the space and the centre).
- 6- **Diversity and specificity of rhythmic cultures.** The diversity of African rhythmic cultures is such that any attempt to establish some general principles from these must not lead to reducing the richness of the elements composing them. This leads to the importance of the principle consisting of combining diversity with specificity in order to effectively address the dances and musical forms of these rhythmic cultures (Note: by this term, Zab Maboungou refers to the cultural entities, here of traditional African sources, within which rhythms form and codify the aesthetic and sacred expressions of human culture). It goes without saying that this diversity and specificity of rhythmic cultures must be able to contribute to nourish and strengthen our capacity to identify within these the *consistent elements*, though these are also fluid - liable to enrich *research* and constitute the elements of a *method*.
- 7- **Concentration and physical endurance.** This defines *par excellence* the "*focus*" in African dance. The body's inclination to effort and ability to concentrate are

indissociable from the capacity to also master the *rhythmic context* and make it progress (see point 3).

- 8- **Discipline and autonomy.** These are the principles that guide and represent the very spirit of the pilot program, while highlighting its flexibility. In so far as the participants demonstrate discipline and autonomy, it can be possible to (a) adjust their schedules, (b) encourage, if necessary, a system of equivalence in terms of requirements (when those foreseen cannot be met as such), (c) in so far as possible, to respond to the participants' individual needs, as a *consultation process* is foreseen for this purpose. In such cases, none of the principles related to the learning process, nor the course matter as set forth above, may be questioned or changed in any way.
- 9- **Terminology.** A set of terms, literally constituting a vocabulary of dance, must be properly learned in order to allow understanding and clear and effective communication.
- 10- **Integration of principles and transfer of knowledge and skills.** It is important to learn and to assimilate the techniques, in order to build on them for personal research, but also, more generally, in order to ensure adequate transfer of knowledge and skills through teaching and creative work (these two facets - teaching and creation - are considered "natural" prospects for this program which can apply to different disciplines).

**General comment:**

It is important to note that most of these principles apply equally to dance study and study in drums and percussions, as these two learning processes are fundamentally inter-linked.

### III- REGULATIONS

#### 1- Attendance and punctuality

- In light of the nature of the courses, at once physical and intellectual, attendance at these is all the more necessary and must be immediately compensated if it cannot be respected.
- A student who is ill, unprepared or late (case to be discussed) may observe the class. In this case, the class observed will count for ½ absence.
- All absences will be counted.
- All students are responsible for follow-up to be ensured if they miss a class and must consult another student for this purpose.

#### 2- Preparedness and physical fitness:

Students are expected to be prepared to benefit from the subject matter that they are taught and thus to be in good physical shape and able to concentrate (see point 2 for principles related to the learning process). Nyata Nyata studios are at their disposal (in so far as possible especially before classes); students must ensure that they can fulfil this requirement themselves.

#### 3- Clothing

- All participants must be simply dressed (cotton clothing if possible due to perspiration) so that the lines of the body can be identified.
- No jewellery or hairstyles that can impede movement.
- No perfume that might indispose the other participants.
- Bring a change of clothing if needed.

#### 4- Ethics and general behaviour

- Students in the program are considered advanced, semi-professional or professional students.
- The instructors expect full and sustained attention from the students. Any information or recommendation must be remembered - whether it is addressed to an individual or the group - and will not be repeated unnecessarily
- Chatter is considered a distraction harmful to the collective effort required in learning.

- Comments are welcome if they are of interest to all and in direct relation to what is being taught, at the time the comment is made. In other cases, it is recommended to book an appointment for a consultation (point 8 of principles related to learning process).

### **Information and coordination**

Karla Etienne is in charge of coordination of the program. Please refer to her for any information, request for consultation or any other request.