



Zab Maboungou

Zab Maboungou is an artist and a philosopher who is a leader in the field of both dance creation and dance teaching. She is the founder of Zab Maboungou/Compagnie Danse Nyata Nyata (1986). A contemporary dance pioneer, Zab was awarded the Prix Charles Biddle in September 2013 for her exceptional personal and artistic contribution as an immigrant to Quebec's cultural and artistic development on the national or international scene. In January 2014, she will earn the prestigious Martin Luther King Junior Achievement Award bestowed by the Black Theatre Workshop in Montreal in recognition of her body of work, which attests to her brilliant choreographic art. In addition, she has received "Great Homage" from the Minister of Culture of Cameroon for her "talent, creativity and all her efforts to develop and promote theatrical art" (1999) and the "AfriCan Conference" in Toronto named her a pioneer of African dance in Canada (2003). Zab Maboungou is the first African choreographer and dancer to receive grants from the Canada Arts Council and le Conseil des Arts et Lettres du Québec.

Born in Paris to a French mother and a Congolese father, Zab grew up in Brazzaville in post-independence Republic of Congo. At a young age, she took her first steps in Central African rhythms and dance. Later on, while studying philosophy in France, she went on to study the dances, rhythms and musical forms of Mali, Ivory Coast, the Senegal-Gambia region, Guinea, Nigeria and Zimbabwe. She worked with different traditional dance and ballet ensembles in Europe and America (Fua Dia Kongo in San Francisco, Malaki Ma Kongo in New York and Ballet Lokolé in Paris) while she was conducting research alongside great drum masters (Babatunde Olatundgi - Nigeria) and dance masters (Lucky Zebila - Congo). During this very active period, Ms Maboungou gained awareness of the extraordinary wealth of African traditions in this sphere, in particular the art of rhythm. Since then, she has never stopped exploring every aspect of the rhythmic art. Critics took note of the power and refinement of the body movements and rhythms underlying her works.

Her artistic theory and practice express her comprehensive understanding of the art of dance, on stage and off. In Zab Maboungou's choreography or "poetics", texts become rhythm and dance converses and creates. Body language combines with trajectories in a space expanding and contracting, yet resonating from within. After these solo works, the group works (Mozongi in 1997, Lwáza in 2005, Montréal by Night in 2010) attest for her mastery of physical and musical structures and are further proof of her distinctive voice and outlook.

The choreographer is also a writer and lecturer. Her book, *Heya...Danse! Historique, poétique et didactique de la danse africaine* expresses her commitment to allying art and knowledge and vice-versa. As a philosophy professor, Zab Maboungou also received an honour in this field for the quality of her work and her commitment, in January 2007, at Montmorency College in Laval, Quebec. It has been said of her dance art that is enriched by the strength of her thinking and vision in the philosophical and cultural spheres in which she has become a recognised authority. With this international reputation in arts, research and teaching, her work as a performer, writer and lecturer has made a significant contribution to theory and debates about art and cultural diversity.