

THE YULANDA M. FARIS CHOREOGRAPHERS PROGRAM

July 2017-September 2018

Participating artists: Daina Ashbee | Justine A. Chambers | Vanessa Goodman
Artistic Liaison/Mentor: Jo Leslie

The Yulanda M. Faris Choreographers Program was designed to mentor and support choreographers who are ready to make a significant leap forward in their work, empowering artists and providing them with the tools to position their careers in a national and international context, through exchanges, networking opportunities, mentoring and professional skills development.

The program combined visits to partner organizations in Canada, Italy and the Netherlands, with mentorship, workshops and consultations in practical aspects such as rehearsal direction and working with technical staff, and studio space for the development of creative projects. The choreographers were selected by a panel of project partners including The Dance Centre, National Arts Centre (Ottawa), Dance Victoria (Victoria), Apropic (Netherlands) and Circuit-Est (Montreal) following an open call for submissions. In addition to these organizations, partners contributing to the program were B-Motion Festival (Italy), Canada Dance Festival (Ottawa), and Dansbrabant (Netherlands). The artists documented the program on our blog: thedancecentre.ca/blog

The Dance Centre's Executive Director Mirna Zagar said: "Becoming a successful choreographer today is not just about creating high quality works. Artists also have to be able to map out career strategies and be more competitive overall within a volatile global context. The goal of this program is to empower choreographers to be more confident and informed in terms of their business planning, coaching them through a context that they can use to their advantage to increase their networks and thus expand their reach into new markets, as well as providing them opportunities for artistic growth and expanded knowledge and skills."

The program was supported through a generous donation by Moh Faris, in memory of his wife Yulanda M. Faris.

About the Artists



Daina Ashbee is an artist, performer and choreographer based in Montreal, known for her radical works at the edge of dance and performance, which intelligently approach such complex subjects and taboos as female sexuality, Métis identity, and climate change. For the choreographer, creation is an instinctive and quasi-spiritual quest, which embraces her relationship with her ancestors, the universe and the entire cosmos. At the young age of 26, she has already won two awards for her choreographies. Her work has been presented at La Chapelle Scènes Contemporaines in Montreal (2015, 2016) and at Montréal, arts interculturels (2014), as well as at the Global Alliance Against Female Genital Mutilation and the Musée d'ethnographie de Geneva in Switzerland (2015). In the fall of 2016, she took part in the Oktoberdans Festival in Bergen, Norway, as well as the SACRED: Homelands Festival in London.

Daina is the artist-in-residence at Agora de la danse in Montreal until 2020. Over the next year, she will present her work at the Rencontres chorégraphiques internationales de Seine-Saint-Denis, The Dance Biennale in Munich and Tanzdage an International Dance Festival in Potsdam (Germany), at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa, at The FTA (Festival TransAmériques) in Montreal and at The Venice Biennale, among other events. Daina has undertaken residencies and mentorships at Circuit-Est centre chorégraphique, at Montreal, arts interculturels, and at Studio 303 for the creation of *Unrelated*. In September 2016, she presented a new piece, *Pour*, in its world premiere at La Chapelle Scènes Contemporaines. In November 2016, she was a double prizewinner at the Prix de la danse de Montréal, winning both the Prix du CALQ for Best Choreography of 2015-2016 for her choreographic installation *When the Ice Melts, Will We Drink the Water?*, and the Prix Découverte de la danse, presented by Agora de la danse and Tangente, for *Unrelated*.

Born in Nanaimo, British Columbia, Daina Ashbee is a member of the Mid-Island Métis Nation. Introduced to poetry at a young age by her Dutch-born mother, she was also influenced by the superb masks created by her father, a Métis-Cree multidisciplinary artist and sculptor who made her aware of her Indigenous family heritage and issues relating to the colonialization of Canada's First Nations. She began dancing professionally with Raven Spirit Dance Society and several independent artists who played a key role in her early development as a choreographer.

At the age of 16 she moved to Vancouver with the aim of becoming a dancer. She briefly studied ballet before acting in commercials, film, and television in Vancouver, and even for a while in Los Angeles. Two years later, she gradually returned to dance and to form. She enrolled in the Modus Operandi Training Program in Vancouver, where she studied for three years, while continuing to practise yoga on a daily basis. She then decided to become a choreographer. At the age of 23 she moved to Montreal, where she continues to live and work. www.dainaashbee.com



Justine A. Chambers' interests lie in collaborative creation and re-imagining dance performance. She is drawn to the movement of all bodies, and is focused on the dances that are already there: the social choreographies present in the everyday. Her recent choreographic projects include: *Family Dinner*, *Family Dinner: The Lexicon*, *Semi-precious: the faceting of a gemstone only appears complete and critical*, *Enters and Exits*, *COPY*. Justine's work has been presented by: Agora de la danse, Canada Dance Festival, Dance in Vancouver, Dance Saskatchewan, Dancing on the Edge Festival, New Dance Horizons, The Roundhouse Community Arts Centre, Vancouver Art Gallery: FUSE and the Western Front. She is a founding member of project bk and is currently artist in residence and associate artist to The Dance Centre.

Justine has collaborated on projects with: digital video artist Josh Hite: *COPY*: a movement based installation, *Incoming*, *Green Boot Print* (The Roundhouse Community Arts Centre, Code Lab and 350.org); visual artist Evann Siebens on *Homemade Again*; dance artist Claudia Fancello on *Light Was The Night: Night Shifting*; musician Ben Brown on *We're Making a Band*; visual Artist Brendan Fernandes: *The Working Move* (The Western Front, The Stedelijk Museum); contemporary Gamelan Composer Michael Tenzer: *Sphinx* (Tour of Bali 2013); visual artist Jen Weih: *Stack of Moves* (Wrong Waves Festival 2013); visual artists Marilou Lemmens and Richard Ibgby: *Is there anything at all left to do be done at all* (Trinity Square Video); dance artist Deanna Peters: *One + the Other* (The Cultch and New Dance Horizons).

Justine and battery opera's Su Feh Lee co-facilitate the monthly forum The Talking Thinking Dancing Body; a conversation about aesthetics, context and artistic processes. As a dancer, she has worked with a number of choreographers both nationally and abroad. Including: battery opera, adelheid dance projects, Company 605, Tara Cheyenne Performance, Oded Graf and Yossi Berg, Wen Wei Dance, Mascall Dance. She teaches contemporary dance technique at Arts Umbrella, Working Class, Toronto Community Love-In, Modus Operandi Training Program, Kidd Pivot and Ballet BC. Justine works actively as a rehearsal director with Out Innerspace Dance Theatre, Tara Cheyenne Performance and Ballet BC. www.justineachambers.com



Vanessa Goodman holds a BFA from Simon Fraser University and is the artistic director and choreographer of Vancouver-based dance company Action at a Distance. Vanessa is attracted to art that has a weight and meaning beyond the purely aesthetic and uses her choreography as an opportunity to explore the human condition. She was the recipient of the 2013 Iris Garland Emerging Choreographer Award from the Scotiabank Dance Centre.

For ten years Vanessa was a company member of dancers dancing, under the artistic direction of Judith Garay. She also co-founded The Contingency Plan collective, where she interpreted new work from Justine A. Chambers, Rob Kitsos, James Gnam and Serge Bennathan. Independently she has danced with plastic orchid factory, Julia Sasso, Wild Excursions Performance, Jennifer Clarke Projects, dumb instrument dance, Mascal Dance, Holly Small and Judith Marcuse.

Vanessa has been commissioned to create works for the Dancing on the Edge Festival, The Gwaii Trust, Vancouver Biennale, Lamon Dance, Modus Operandi and the SFU Dance Program. Her work has been presented by The Canada Dance Festival, The Magnetic North Festival, The Dance Centre, Dance in Vancouver, EDAM's Choreographic Series, Kinetic Studio, Connection Dance Works, Small Stage, Northwest New Works, The Risk/Reward Festival, The Firehall Arts Centre, The Modulus Festival, The Chutzpah Festival, The Shadbolt Centre for the Arts and Push Off.

Vanessa continues her training locally and abroad, including intensives with the Batsheva Dance Company in Tel Aviv and the Hofesh Schechter Company in London. As a teacher, Vanessa has facilitated workshops and master classes in Toronto, Halifax, and throughout BC.

Action at a Distance's latest work, *Wells Hill*, is based on the sweeping philosophies of Canadian luminaries Marshall McLuhan and Glenn Gould. The premiere will be presented by DanceHouse and SFU Woodward's in November 2017. www.actionatadistance.ca

Artist photos top to bottom: Patrice Mathieu, Annie Briand, David Cooper.

