

Date: Tuesday, 6 August 2019

Report: **Jason Mabana** - London to Montreal – Montreal to London.
Period of project - June 2019

I want to thank the LUTSF for the scholarship. With this scholarship, I was able to go to one of the biggest dance festivals in the world as an emerging choreographer and work with 15 incredible dancers coming from some of the best conservatoires such as Juilliard, Boston Conservatoire, Hubbard Street Chicago, Gloria Kauffman and others.

Overall, it was a great experience, I had 3 weeks to choreograph a 6 minutes work with a creation of 3 hours a day. At the end of the process, the piece that I made during the festival called 'Dedalo' was performed at Usine C, alongside other young emerging choreographers but also professional companies including Crystal Pite, Batsheva, Fernando Melo, Marco Goecke and many others. Having my work in the same program as the professional companies gave me some exposure. Beside our evening rehearsal where I would create my piece, I was also able during the morning and afternoon to observe the companies working, giving feedback, and create with the dancers. Those observations helped me to question my practise, enhance it and see other ways of creating.

We also had the opportunity to have some coaching for our social medias and had a course about producing our own piece which was definitely one of the highlights of the trip. Since this course, I feel more secure in presenting my work, but I also have now some knowledge on how to do it. On top of that, the festival employed a photographer who took new headshots and the performance was professionally filmed. We had our websites checked over for feedback and how to make it better. I definitely feel more ready than I was back in June.

Working with 15 dancers with great technique, great movement quality, and great physicality was absolutely amazing. I feel like where I am based in London, I often meet the same people and work with the same people. In Montreal, I did not know anyone, and I felt out of my comfort zone. This situation pushed me in making something great, and different to what I usually do.

The first week of the project, I was also able to bring one of my works to Montreal. I decided to show my piece (called Kahinaan) in research and development. Unfortunately, I could not take my dancers from London to Canada due to funding issues. We were able to compromise, and the festival found me 3 professional dancers based in Montreal and I had one week of rehearsal with them before the performance which was held at 'Place Des Arts' right in the centre of Montreal, a place dedicated for dance.

All the rehearsals were held in two different buildings. One was called the Wilder building, home to 'Les Grands Ballets Canadiens' and at the UQAM (university for dance in Montreal). Both rehearsal spaces were great and in very good condition.

I have also gained lots of exposure through the festival social medias account 'Springboard Danse Montreal'. Since then, I have had great response from the piece I created and will choreograph next year for professional companies including, Conny Janssen Danst in Rotterdam, and Skopje Dance Theater in Macedonia. I have also secured a three month residency in Burgos, Spain and will create some smaller works for schools including Balettakademien in Stockholm, and The University of The Arts in Amsterdam.

I definitely feel that I have achieved the purpose of my project. Getting more knowledge about choreographic practices and secure jobs for the future through the festival is an achievement. It gave me the extra boost I needed to pursue my career as a choreographer.

The down side of this festival is definitely what they call 'The Gibney/Springboard Montreal Price' which is the opportunity to choreograph for the Gibney Dance Company in New York which has a strong link with Springboard Montreal. The festival has been running for 18 years and the 'choreographic price' for only two years, which is quite new. In Springboard, since the last two years they pick 4 emerging choreographers in the world through an open call. Last year, they received 220 choreographer applications and chose four of us coming from different places (Israel, Canada, Romania and myself from the UK). At the final show, Gibney Company is invited to the performance and based on the piece we created, they pick one of us to make a piece for their company. That's the way it was advertised when we applied online. Unfortunately the last day, they told us that we had visa issues, only people from America can get this price which I wish they told us before. I couldn't help but write an email to them showing my disappointment. It was definitely one of the many reasons I have applied for it and it was such a shame they gave us false information and made us wait until the last minute to let us know.

Apart from that, I have had a great time at Springboard and I am really taking this opportunity to thank you for your trust and to award me the scholarship.

Here is a video of the piece I made 'Dedalo': <https://vimeo.com/352141704>
The password is : Dedalo2019

Warm Wishes,
Jason