

TAPS 0330: Mande Dance, Music and Culture

Art and Aesthetics in Mande Dance, Music and Culture

Semester II of 2017-18

The Rhythm of Change Festival 2018: Beauty, Power and Grace in African and Afro-Diasporic Performance. February 23-25th

www.rhythmofchange festival.com

Primary Instructor:

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Required Meeting Times:

Core Class: M-W-F 1-2:50pm

Movement Labs:

#1. M @ 5-5:50pm

#2. TU @ 12-12:50pm

#3. W @ 5-5:50pm

#4. TH @ 12-12:50pm

#5 FR @ 12-12:50pm

This course is mandatory S/NC:

70% Attendance, Participation, Application
20% Three-dance tests/ Final Mande Performance
10% Research Projects, Blog

CLASS STRUCTURE:

Mondays: Meditation and Yoga with MBC

Dances and rhythms taught with Cultural Consultants. Family Projects presented.

Wednesdays: Lectures-discussions. Community announcements.

Group work, Quizzes on readings, films, and listening.

Dance practice. Guest Artists.

Fridays: Meditation and Yoga. Work Dance and Music with Malian folklorists Seydou Coulibaly and Moussa Traore.

REQUIREMENTS

PARTICIPATION, RESPECT, COMPASSION and COMMUNICATION are PRIMARY VALUES.

1. ATTENDANCE!!! NO more than three unexcused absences will be allowed. After two, you will automatically receive a warning.

COMMUNICATION IS REQUIRED FOR ALL MISSED CLASSES.

2. THREE DANCE TESTS:

2/23: **Didadi.** all danced steps, rhythm, song. 5 formation changes

3/23: **Dununba.** Dance with song, rhythm, proverbs and narrative. 8 formation changes.

5/4: **Sandia.** Dance, Rhythm, Song. Formations change for each step. Praise song for bantering family.

5/12: Dress Rehearsal. 5-8pm. Ruth Simmons Quad

5/13: FINAL EXAM PERFORMANCE. 5-8pm Ashamu Dance Studio/Ruth Simmons Quad. 3:30 call for 5pm performance.

You will be learning three dances with accompanying songs, proverbs and choreographic concepts. These dances represent different cultural groups with their own movement vocabularies, musical traditions, dialects, folkloric histories and embodied expressions. This semester we are studying the life cycle and celebratory dances from the **Wasalu, Malinke – Bamana, and**

Khassonke peoples from the Mande diaspora from Mali, Burkina Faso, and Guinea.

You will be critiqued on your ability to adhere to the rhythmic structures and ability to play the music with your body and by doing so, engage in a dialogue of call and response with the three parts of the djembe ensemble and the three centers in the body: Head, Heart and Pelvis, center of gravity- foot to pelvis: centers of levity- torso, arms and head, and then the total expression out in space and time.

After we complete learning the series of steps, you will be tested on the complete dances, rhythm and songs with your *families* during class times. You will be assessed on your ability to:

1. Properly execute the steps and step order,
2. Dance through breaks, know the transitions between steps, Keep the integrity of the rhythmic pulse, and relationship between djoun djoun rhythm and completed weight shifts as down beats, lifted up beats, and listening to and connecting with the musicians, weight-shifts, motif -structures, doubling and tripling the beat,
3. Know the form, style and stance of each step and how it responds to the overall dance with clear communication amongst the family as a whole and ability to stay together as one unit, supporting each other,
4. Express “Coolness” and balance at all times, “cool on the outside, hot on the inside” as a cultural value, with youthful vitality, energy, and ENDURANCE.
5. Originality and execution of family step. Improvisation is a valued aspect of each dance towards the creation of original steps or a “breakout step” invented from movement motifs already explored in the dances vocabulary. You must collaborate on choreography and context for each dance test, staging diverse geometric patterns that change with each break in the music. Each family will invent a final family step.
6. These tests will require that you meet outside of class times to organize concepts and spatial patterns for the dance. This helps you remember the order of steps, builds spatial awareness, kinesphere, and the power of being in a movement choir.
7. Assessment and video replay of the tests will facilitate our understanding of the material.

3. BLOG:

You are required, as a family, to keep an ongoing record of your work together throughout the semester in the form of a blog. Each student will post reflective and detailed accounts of the work we are doing in class, at The Rhythm of Change Festival with our guest artists, community partners and speakers. The blog should include video clips, photographs, musical selections from each dance and cultural group, with questions and responses to the readings, discussions and interviews you will be asked to do with our master teachers. Have a fun and creative time with this. Your blog should be the cornerstone of your family presentation.

BLOG DUE DATES:

February 28th. Didadi-Mande Aesthetics, Feminist aspects of Wasalu Music, Agrarian Festivals-Hunters Societies.

Musical artists: Nahawa Doumbia, Sali Sidibe, Abdoulaye Diabate

March 14th Dununba : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sL64ju3ZKLE>

Musical Artists: Mamadi Keita

April 25th Sandia. Reflections, family responses to projects.

Musical Artists: Kandia Kouyate and Kasse Mady, Sidiki Diabate, Djelimady Sissoko

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yOS78ul1_rA&t=202s

Class Schedule of Events

WEEK ONE: 1/24-26

Introductions.

Syllabus discussion. Family and section organization.

Dance: Didadi

Film clips from Dielikoroba, Yeredon Center, Troupe Yeredon.

WEEK TWO: 1/29-2/2

1/31: DUE: Readings and discussion:

African Art in Motion, Intro and CH.1, Robert Farris Thompson

An Aesthetic of the Cool. Robert Farris Thompson.

Birds of the Wasalu. Lucy Duran

Talk on the meaning of Mande, Mande Aesthetics.

Didadi Dance and Song taught.

WEEK THREE: 2/5-9

2/5: Turn in questions for quiz to TA's/MBC

2/7: Quiz on syllabus, readings, films
2/9: Go over song, Didadi steps.

WEEK FOUR: 2/12-16

2/12: Didadi dance, song
2/14: KEITA FAMILY presentation
2/16: Didadi dance and song

WEEK FIVE: 2/21-23. 23-25th RoC Festival

2/21: Work w/families in class for choreography-test prep.
2/23: DIDADI TEST
2/23-25th: RoC Festival

WEEK SIX: 2/26-3/2

2/26: Dununba begins. Show films
2/28: MBC talk on Dununba. Teach song.

WEEK SEVEN: 3/5-9

3/5: Sangare Family Presentation
3/7: Readings Due:
The Mande. CH.1 Eric Charry
The Mande Hero. Charles Bird
MBC talk on readings.
3/9: Dununba song and dance

WEEK EIGHT: 3/12-16

3/12: Sangare Family Project. Questions due for quiz.
3/14: Quiz on readings.
3/16: Dununba song and dance

WEEK NINE: 3/19-23

3/19: Traore Family Presentations
3/21: Work in class. Test preparation.
3/23: Dununba TEST

WEEK TEN: 4/2-6

4/2: Sandia dance
4/4: Readings DUE:

Outcast to Ambassador. Cheriff Keita. MBC talk about casted notions in Mande. Movie of Salif Keita
4/6. Sandia song and dance

WEEK ELEVEN: 4/9-13

4/9: Coulibaly Family Presentation. Questions due to TAs/MBC
4/11: Quiz on *Outcast to Ambassador*
4/13: Sandia song and dance

WEEK TWELVE: 4/16-20

4/16: Diabate Family Presentation
4/18: Sandia Dance and Song
4/20: Sandia Song and Dance

WEEK THIRTEEN: 4/23-27

4/23: Kouyate Family Presentation
4/25: Sandia
4/27: Sandia

WEEK FOURTEEN: 4/30-5/4.

4/30: Sandia
5/2: Work in class on Choreography
5/3: Sandia TEST
5/4-11. Rehearsals for final performance TBA.

WEEK FIFTEEN: 5/7-11

5/7: Run All Dances with Musicians
5/9: Work Family Pieces
5/11: Work dances and family pieces

FINAL PREPARATION:

5/12 5-8pm Dress Rehearsal
5/13 3:30pm call for 5pm Performance

COURSE MISSION AND DESCRIPTION

Jiridon so don yeredon de nyogon te. N'i filil' I yerema I laban ko b'i kono'nogan

While it is excellent to know how to ride a horse, wonderful to know how to swim, nothing is better than to know thyself.

The mission of this class is to inspire a more expansive world-view through the lens of Mande Dance, Music and Culture. As an Engaged Scholarship course, we will engage with masterful Malian artists and folklorist Seydou Coulibaly and Moussa Traore plus many artists at the RoC Festival. Through this exchange we will deepen our understanding of the social values being ‘played out’ by our traditional teachers through cross examination, research, and by embodying the strict codes and important social values such as:

1. cultural cohesion over personal gain,
2. generosity over attachment,
3. respect for self and elders,
4. humility and flexibility in body and mind,
5. responsibility for your part of the whole,
6. and the outward manifestations of being a good citizen

By building a mindful, respectful relationship with a culture not our own, we seek to create an egalitarian exchange of art and ideas between the members of our on-campus class, local community members, and with students learning the same material at another institution.

EDUCATIONAL GOALS

By the end of the semester you should be able to clearly identify, understand, or perform:

1. Three specific Mande dance traditions with their accompanying musical and oral performance traditions.

These dances and rhythms will be taught as highly codified languages, with specific phrasing structures, spatial focus, qualitative affinities and alternating centers. Each movement and rhythm can be studied in respect to its slight variations of intonation, syncopation, and qualitative choice. By learning selected songs, folktales and proverbs alongside Mande physical traditions, we hope to engage each student in an “embodied” approach to history, to assist you in understanding the high functionality of Mande Performance, and how these traditions resonate in our own cultural expressions.

2. Mande culture aesthetics as they apply to your overall awareness, kinesthetic intelligence, and respect for Mande pedagogy.

Notions of improvisation, spontaneity, “ephebisim”, and “getting down” will be taught in light of their relevance to preserving and maintaining cultural

values. Form, Style and Stance are studied as symbols for social interaction and spiritual growth, as are the conventions of call-and-response, repetition, competition, improvisation, syncopation, multiple meter, "coolness", and balance. Dances will be studied as they correlate to concepts such as:

1. The transmission and maintenance of sentiments and traditions,
2. Theory of dance as a social safety valve,
3. The cathartic element or dances of derision,
4. Group exaltation and search for "the sacred",
5. Cultural and moral education,
6. Agents of healing,
7. Elements of competition: theories of boundary display, negotiation,
8. Dance as ritual drama and builder of "communitas",
9. Motivator in the work place,
10. The creative "other" (transplanted idea from the West)

3. Concepts of movement that will be explored to assist you in decoding the complexities of Mande movement:

Biomechanical functions or bone actions: flexion, extension, rotation, circumduction, inversion, eversion, pronation, and supination.

Spatial equations: the planes, transverse, points in space, spatial directions, spiraling, the dimensions (one. two. three), carving/shaping, weight shifts: under-curving/chase, over-curving/glissade, near, medium and far reaching kinesphere.

Movement considerations: Adduction, abduction, sequential, simultaneous, swing, fall and recovery, arched, spoke-like, peripheral, gestural, postural, gathering and scattering, central initiation, multi-unit or single -unit torso, bi-lateral, uni-lateral, symbolism dance, work motifs, Contemporary Dance terms. REBOUND, DOUBLE and TRIPLE BEATS in the body, Up-beat dancing/the lift, leaps: preparation, thrust and recovery. The idea of **heating up** the step will be taught as we go to the drum. Notions of marking the beat, maintaining one's balance, displaying one's coolness: "hot on the inside and cool on the outside", are taught as linkages to cultural tenets. We will consider how the energetic flow, weight centers, spatial focus, temporal considerations, and the relationship between form and function.

In order to fully understand the place of these dances in Mande society, I have given a brief summary about the regions and peoples these dances come from. **This type of information should be in the blog.**

A. Didadi (Wasalu Region)

Didadi was at one time a ritual fertility dance. The dance involves women and young girls gathered in a semi circular shape bent forwards from the waist and pelvis, releasing the power of pelvic motion through a strong thrusting of the feet into the ground. Musically, in its secularized version, has an onomatopoeic drum sound called *jakawara*. It does not involve the *kamelongoni* and therefore differentiates itself from the other Wasalou sounds. Danced and sung at women's agrarian festivals, "didadi foli kera jinna foli ye" meaning *Didadi is the music of the djinns*, and thus reinforcing Didadi's association with the occult. Famous Didadi artists are Nahawa Doumbia, Sali Sidibe, and Abdoulaye Diabate

The Wasalu is a geolinguistic region in southern Mali and eastern Guinea that can trace its roots to the settling of Fulani warrior Yoro in the times of Sunjata Keita. It is known for its remote location, where the musical styles are a blending of dialects from Malinke peoples and Peul peoples who settled in the Sikasso cercles (administration regions) of **Yanfolila, Kolondieba, and Bougoni**. The musical styles are based in hunter musical rhythms and explore ideas of freedom and family.

B. Dununba. (Malinke-Bamana)

The Malinke are the descendants of the **Mali Empire**, which rose to power in the 13th century under the rule of the **Malinké/Maninka** king **Sundiata Keita**. Originally from Mali, the Malinke gained their independence from previous empires in the 13th century and founded an empire which stretched across Africa. They migrated west from the **Niger River** in search of better agricultural lands and more opportunities for conquest.

The Bamana are the largest cultural group in central Mali, and at one time great military strategists and warlords who built the Bamana Empire. The Bamana appeared in this milieu with the rise of the **Bamana Empire** in the 1740s around the Segou region of Western Mali. The religion of the Bamana is directly related to the initiation societies (dyow). As an initiate moves through the six societies, he or she is taught vital issues concerning societal concepts of the moral conduct of life, which contribute to the overall well being of the individual and the community. Through the six levels of education the initiate learns the importance of knowledge and secrecy, is taught to challenge sorcery, and learns about the dual nature of mankind, the necessity for hard labor in the production of crops, and the realities of surviving from day to day. The Bamana follow a syncretic

form of Islam mixed with traditional rituals associated with the power associations of komo, n'tomo, kono, and kore. These are dynamic institutions that respond to local concerns and **historical change** and thus exhibit great variability, especially in honoring ancestors. The Dununba is originally considered a *strong mans dance* of negotiation between competing villages or age set groups (tons)

C. Sandia (Khassonke)

The **Khassonké** (CAH-KES-SON-QUE) are an ethnic group of Mali's Kayes Region. Descendants of the Fula and Malinké Khasso kingdoms, they speak the Khassonke/Xaasongaxango language, a Manding language similar to Bambara.

Their traditional musical instruments are the dundunba (a big cylindrical drum with two skins), the jingò (a small cylindrical drum with two skins), the tantanwò (a small drum), the tamandinwo (an *aisselle* drum), as well as lutes and harps and hunters' whistles.

Sandia is the dance of the jeliw or oral historians (griots) as expressed in life cycle ceremonies: marriages, baptisms, and circumcisions.

Yeredon Center in Mali.

<http://www.theafricareport.com/Society-and-Culture/mali-dancers-continue-to-take-brave-steps-after-islamists-depart.html>

Articles and Chapters:

Charry, Eric. *Mande Music: Traditional and Modern Music of the Maninka and Mandinka of Western Africa*. University Of Chicago Press: 2000. (Introduction, pgs 1-27). *ereserve*

Hanna, Judith Lynne. "African Dance: The Continuity of Change" in *Yearbook of the International Folk Music Council*, Vol. 5 (1973), pp. 165-174. (JSTOR)

MacRae, Suzanne H. "Yeelen": A Political Fable of the "Komo" Blacksmith/Sorcerers' in *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 26, No. 3, African Cinema (Autumn, 1995), pgs. 57-66. (*on reserve*)

Nketia, J. H. Kwabena. "The Musical Traditions of Africa" and "Interrelations of Music and Dance" in *The Music of Africa*. New York: Norton & Company, 1974. (Chapters 1, pgs 3-20 and Ch 18,

pgs. 206-217.) *ereserve*

Reed, Daniel. "Dancing Around Discourses: Ivorian Immigrant Performance in Transnational Perspective" Paper delivered to the SEM National Conference, November 2010. (*posted to onCourse*)

Thompson, Robert Farris. *African Art in Motion; Icon and Act*. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Frederick S. Wight Art Gallery, University of California, Los Angeles. 1974. Pgs 1-46. *Ereserve*

Tomaselli, Keyan. "Decolonizing Film and TV: Ways of Reading African Films." *Culture, Communication and Media Studies*. Durban, South Africa 1998. (*link will be posted to onCourse*)

Required Films, Radio broadcasts:

- > *Bamako*. Director: A. Sissako. Starring Tiecoura Traore, Maimouna Helene Diarra Aissa Maiga (2006)
- > *Guimba the Tyrant* (VHS) 1995 (93 min.) (on reserve)
- > *The Last Song Before the War*, Essakane Film and Thinking Forward Media, 2013. 74'
- > "The Mandé Diaspora In New York City", Part 1, (57')
<http://www.afropop.org/wp/6320/the-mande-diaspora-in-new-york-city-part-1/>
- > *Yeelen* [videorecording] / Filimu SISE = Brightness / Cissé Films. San Francisco, CA: California Newsreel [distributor], c1987 (105')