Kalabante: Curriculum Connections

Kalabante is a Francophone, Montreal based West-African cirque troupe. Their show incorporates diverse artistic elements of West-African culture. Musical aspects include drumming and kora (a stringed instrument). Movement includes dance, acrobatics, and circus arts.

As audience members, BC students experience immersive, impactful connections to multi-disciplinary arts and culture. There are numerous arts-based learning connections that teachers and students will have the opportunity to experience as they engage with the Kalabante performance.

Here are some examples of BC Arts Education curriculum connections from grades 1, 3 and 7. These connections begin in Kindergarten and develop throughout the elementary school curriculum to Grade 7.

Grade 1

BIG IDEAS

People create art to express who they are as individuals and community.

Dance, drama, music, and visual arts express meaning in unique ways.

People connect to others and share ideas through the arts

CURRICULAR COMPETENCIES

Reasoning and reflecting

Observe and share how artists (dancers, actors, musicians, and visual artists) use processes, materials, movements, technologies, tools, and techniques

Communicating and documenting

Describe and respond to works of art

Experience, document and share creative works in a variety of ways

CONTENT

Students are expected to know the following:

- elements in the arts, including but not limited to:
    - dance: body, space, dynamics, time, relationships, form
    - music: beat/pulse, rhythm, tempo, pitch, dynamics, form
- a variety of local works of art and artistic traditions from diverse cultures and communities
- personal and collective responsibility associated with creating, experiencing, or sharing in a safe learning environment

Grade 3

BIG IDEAS

The mind and body work together when creating works of art.

Dance, drama, music, and visual arts are each unique languages for creating and communicating.

The arts connect our experiences to the experiences of others.

CURRICULAR COMPETENCIES

Exploring and creating

Explore identity, place, culture, and belonging through arts experiences

Explore relationships among cultures, communities, and the arts

Reasoning and reflecting

Observe, listen, describe, inquire, and predict how artists (dancers, actors, musicians, and visual artists) use processes, materials, movements, technologies, tools, and techniques

Communicating and documenting

Express feelings, ideas, and experiences in creative ways

Describe and respond to visual and performing art pieces and provide constructive feedback

Experience, document and share creative works in a variety of ways

CONTENT

Students are expected to know the following:

- elements in the arts, including but not limited to:
    - dance: body, space, dynamics, time, relationships, form
    - music: beat/pulse, duration, rhythm, tempo, pitch, timbre, dynamics, form, texture
- choreographic devices
- a variety of local works of art and artistic traditions from diverse cultures, communities, times, and places
- personal and collective responsibility associated with creating, experiencing, or sharing in a safe learning environment

Grade 7

BIG IDEAS

Experiencing art challenges our point of view and expands our understanding of others.

Dance, drama, music, and visual arts are each unique languages for creating and communicating.

Engaging in the arts develops people's ability to understand and express complex ideas.

CURRICULAR COMPETENCIES

Exploring and creating

Explore relationships between identity, place, culture, society, and belonging through the arts
Demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of personal, social, cultural, historical, and environmental contexts in relation to the arts

Reasoning and reflecting

Reflect on works of art and creative processes to understand artists' intentions Interpret works of art using knowledge and skills from various areas of learning Examine relationships between the arts and the wider world

Communicating and documenting

Describe, interpret and respond to works of art

Experience, document, choreograph, perform, and share creative works in a variety of ways

CONTENT

Students are expected to know the following:

- manipulation of elements and principles to create meaning in the arts, including but not limited to:
    - dance: body, space, dynamics, time, relationships, form, and movement principles
    - music: beat/pulse, metre, duration, rhythm, tempo, pitch, timbre, dynamics, form, texture, notation
- processes, materials, movements, technologies, tools, strategies, and techniques to support creative works
- choreographic devices
- a variety of national and international works of art and artistic traditions from diverse cultures, communities, times, and places
- personal and collective responsibility associated with creating, experiencing, or presenting in a safe learning environment

Teaching material

December 2021

FOLLOW THE ADVENTURES OF YAMOUSSA BANGOURA

Productions Kalabanté



Writing and production: Sarah Leclerc-Gendron Graphic design: Creation NetenKena

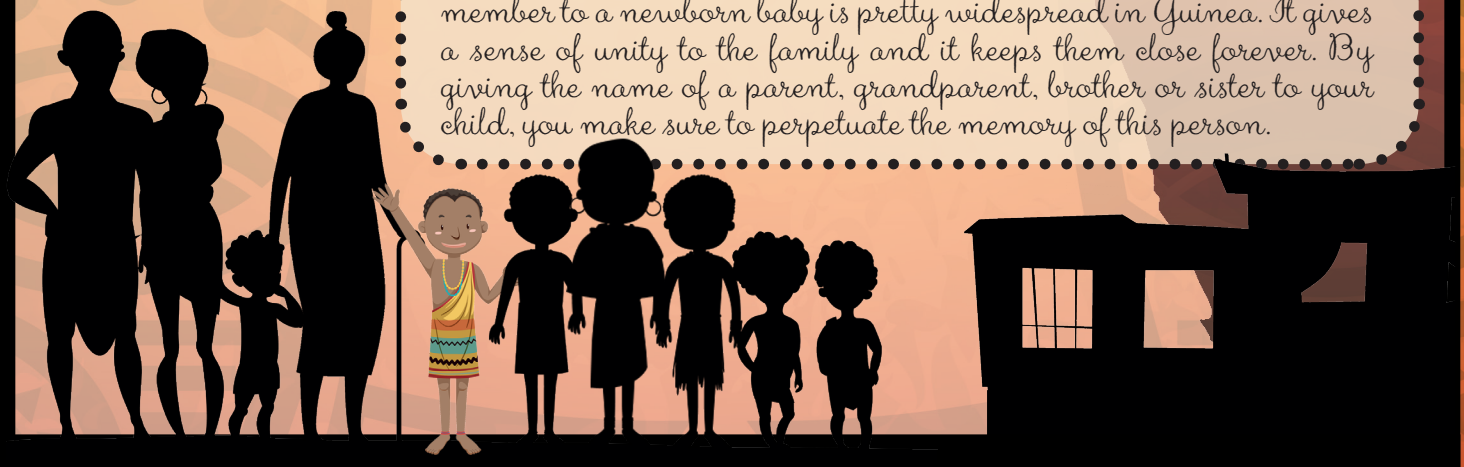
A dream that originated in the other side of the Atlantic Ocean

Yamoussa was born in Guinea, a coastal country in West Africa. His family lives in Gbessia Centre, a small district of the capital, Conakry, located near the airport. From an early age, he finds himself dreaming of adventure.

He has five brothers and one sister. His parents have 7 children. Yamoussa is the fourth child, right in the middle. During his early childhood, Yamoussa's mother brings in a meager income to the household by selling bread. His dad alternates between unemployment and prison, Guinea being under a repressive political system at the time.

His grandma Sirabinty is very present. As in most African countries, the whole extended family lives under the same roof. Elders also have a special place in the family and they usually pass on their wisdom to their descendants. Sirabinty has a special connection with her grandson Yamoussa, since he bears the first name of her late husband. The bond is very strong between them and Grandma keeps the little gifts she receives to offer them to Yamoussa in secret.

It must be said that the tradition of giving the name of a family member to a newborn baby is pretty widespread in Guinea. It gives a sense of unity to the family and it keeps them close forever. By giving the name of a parent, grandparent, brother or sister to your child, you make sure to perpetuate the memory of this person.



While in North America parental authority normally rests almost exclusively with the mother and father, in Guinea and many other parts of Africa there's a common belief that it takes a village to raise a child. Therefore, many adults play a significant role in the life of every child and they interact with each and every one of them with the purest of intentions.

An extraordinary upbringing

Yamoussa is eleven years old. His dad now works as a community worker. He is contributing to solving problems occuring in the district. His father leaves the house very early in the morning. On his way to school, Yamoussa goes to see him to get some money. He buys himself a breakfast in order to arrive at school with a full stomach. For Yamoussa's dad, education is the key to the world. Yamoussa is brilliant and he excels throughout his education in primary school. Even when he is not first in the class, he is never far behind.

The primary school that Yamoussa attends is called Limanyah, which means courage. Instinctively, it is as if he already knew from an early age that his life story would require a lot of courage.

On his way to his father's workplace one morning, he met a dance and percussion troupe called SAAMATO. He befriends Bobzi who later introduces him to his father, Alya Gigla Sylla. Bobzi's dad has several jobs: He is both a dance teacher and a soldier, a perfect mix of creativity and discipline.



Yamoussa is introduced to traditional dance and music. He is gifted and he becomes aware of everything he can feel and transmit through the movements of his body.

On Sundays, the only television station in Gbessia Center broadcasts shows from European circuses. People gather in front of the TV, captivated by the performers' prowess. Once the retransmission is over, several young people, including Yamoussa, find themselves on the seashore to try to replicate the same movements they just witnessed. This is a place known to acrobats that is commonly called the little Dabondy river. Yamoussa met his first acrobatics master there. His name is Lawless. This man is known to be very enthusiastic and to have no limits. He replicates everything he sees on TV and he then asks his students to do the acrobatics on the asphalt after practicing on the beach. He also only takes under his wing the students he considers to be hard working and courageous. It's in this context and with this weekly training that Yamoussa's passion for acrobatics ends up growing more and more.

Yamoussa's second teacher is called Abass. He too works in the army and he's an example of discipline and both physical and psychological strength. Anytime the teacher goes somewhere, Yamoussa carries his belongings. He also washes his clothes and brings them to him the next day.

An extraordinary upbringing (part 2)

Eventually, an opportunity presents itself. He ends up auditioning for the filming of the movie Circus Baobab. He gets the role! The film is a great success. A show called «The Legend of the Drumming Monkey» is put on and Yamoussa is now part of a troupe of people of all ages promoted for a major tour through Guinea, and later in Europe.

He travels through Spain with the mandate to represent Guinea in Spain with the troupe led by Jordi and Adelaida. He spends six months in Barcelona, a Spanish city. Eventually, he was recruited by Cirque Éloize and he ended up in Canada for the show Nomade. He spent five or six years there.

He also collaborated with Cirque du Soleil for special events. In fact, Yamoussa worked during these years with almost all circuses from Quebec: Cavalia, ArtCirq, Les 7 Fingers, Luna Caballera, Circo de Bakuza, etc.

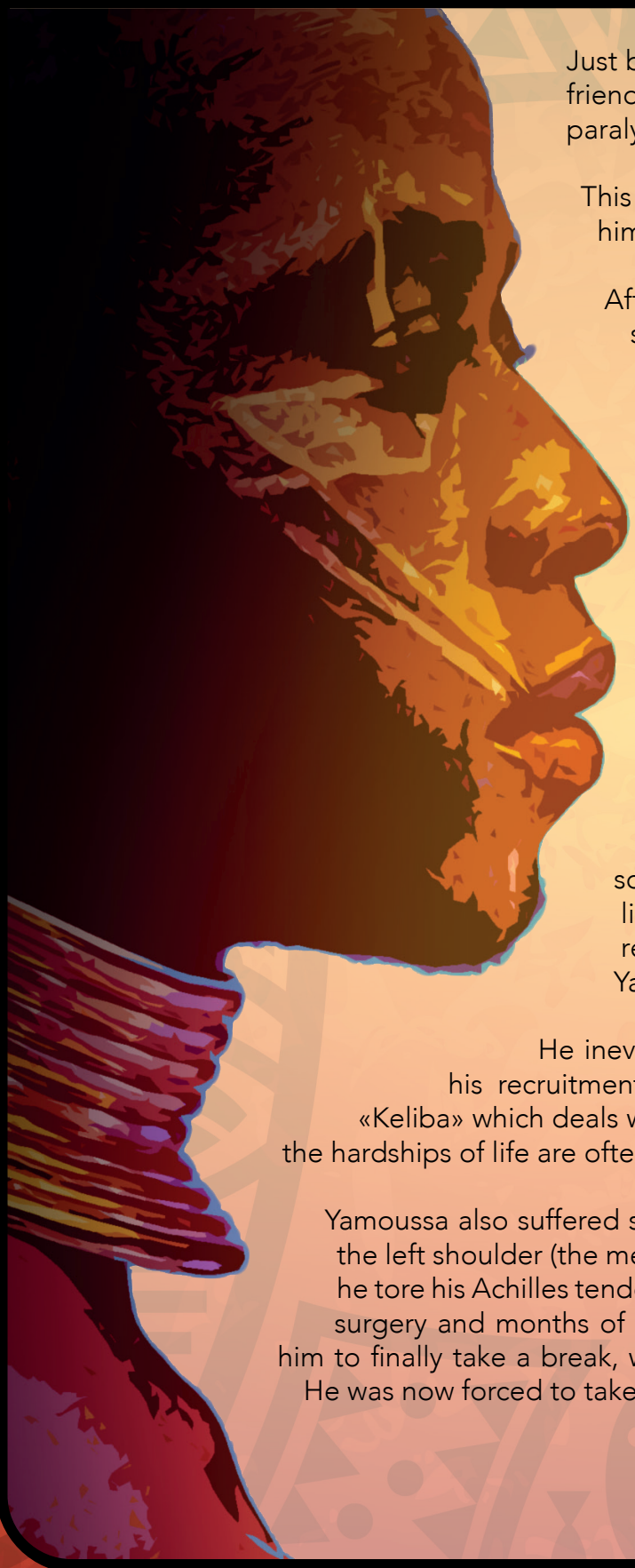
At some point, an idea starts growing in his mind. What if he started his own business? It wasn't long before he created Kalabanté with the support of Guillaume Saladin, a good friend he met at the Éloize circus who is also the founder of ArtCirq. They collaborated together and Yamoussa then gave shows in the north on Innu territory. Ikaluit, Kujuaaq, Yellow Knife, Cambridge Bay, Igloo lik, etc. His shows got him to travel across Canada.

A film crew even decided to follow their cultural collaboration for 7 years, which led to the production of the film Circus Without Border.

He put a stop to Kalabanté for almost three years to work with Cavalia. He eventually decided to stop the tour and to return to Montreal in order to develop Kalabanté. He created his own shows and he decided to hire artists from Guinea and bring them to Canada to train them.



Through hardship, a story of resilience



Just before leaving Guinea, one of Yamoussa's acrobat friends injured himself on the trampoline. His friend is paralyzed, he will never walk again.

This tragedy taught him to be careful and it showed him the importance of respecting his intuition.

After some time, he leaves for a European tour. He is still a child, he is only 12 years old. He sometimes feels far from home as he is away from his family, but he is grateful to have a job and to be with his friends.

Yamoussa has a big curiosity and a great desire to travel the world. He feels a lot of gratitude to be able to learn continuously and to get to know others and their culture.

Years after Kalabanté was created, he felt great disappointment towards Guinean artists who dropped him the day before a show and suddenly disappeared. Yamoussa worked very hard to help them enter Canada and perform on the Canadian and international scene. He has to face the obvious: these people lied to him, since they never had the intention to return to Guinea and to honor their commitment. Yamoussa feels betrayed and manipulated.

He inevitably got up, rolled up his sleeves and changed his recruitment process. He also created a solo show called «Keliba» which deals with abandonment and betrayal. This is proof that the hardships of life are often a great source of inspiration!

Yamoussa also suffered several injuries throughout his career: an injury to the left shoulder (the meniscus) which caused him some difficulties. Then, he tore his Achilles tendon, which meant that he would have to go through surgery and months of rehabilitation. This was a golden opportunity for him to finally take a break, which he otherwise wouldn't allow himself to do. He was now forced to take some time to breathe, slow down and reflect.

Guinea, mystical culture and ancient traditions

Guinea is a coastal country in West Africa divided into 4 regions: Maritime Guinea, the mountainous region of Middle Guinea, the savannah of Upper Guinea and Forest Guinea. The main languages spoken in Guinea are Malinké, Soussou and Peul. The colonization language is French. The capital is called Conakry and is located in Maritime Guinea where the main language is Soussou. The name of the country, Guinea, could be translated to "Woman" in English and Conakry to "The other side of the shore". Guinea is a country rich in mineral and natural resources. It also has a very rich culture.





In Guinea, adults tell a story to children to scare them so that they do not venture into the forest at night. This tale is about a mystical character, the Dö-ki, who has his feet backwards and whose skull is made of iron. It is said that the Dö-ki, a terrifying character, places baits all around the forest. He wisely attracts the children by placing mangoes on the path which leads them towards the center of the forest. There, the children find a large pile of mangoes not far from where the Dö-ki is camouflaged in the bushes, patiently waiting for them. Suddenly, he gets out of his hiding place and tells them : N'könkön firin n'khi könkön keren! Hit my head twice! Then, I will hit you only once! Threatening them to blow their heads off with his hammer fingers.

Guinea, mystical culture and ancient traditions (part 2)



Another character, named Tambaloumbé, lives in the imagination of Guinean children. This snake is both real (it exists in real life) and mystical. It is said that he guides children throughout their lives and invites them to do good around them. He has a crown on his head made of cowries (small white shells). The oral tradition of Tambaloumbé tells with great wisdom that when someone does harm around them, they always have the power to make up for it. This person can do wrong once or twice and still be forgiven. At the third offense, their luck is exhausted and the Tambaloumbé is there to remind them. Because this snake looks like grass and hides in the Guinean forest, no one is safe from accidentally stepping on it. The legend says that if you step on its tail you are still at the beginning of your life, if you step in the center of its body you are in the middle of your life and if you step on its head you are at the end of your life.

The musical and cultural tradition of Guinea is very vast. Each celebration is accompanied by a particular rhythm of percussion, a dance and/or a song. Whether it is Mendiani for girls and young virgins, Soli to accompany circumcision rituals or Konkoba (which means great farmer) to encourage farmers to work well, Guinea beats along the rhythm of the drums. Rhythm is very present in everyday life, it's the energy that propels you forward. For Guineans, it is important to dance at all times to invite joy, awaken the senses and flourish.



Guinea, mystical culture and ancient traditions (part 3)

For example, the Yankadi rhythm was accompanying a dance of seduction at the time Yamoussa's mom and dad met. This dance was taking place outside at the center of the village and around a fire when the moon could be seen in the sky. First there was the call, a particular rhythm that the percussionists produced by hitting the drums. The women would then stand on one side and the men on the other side. Men would spot a young woman they found attractive and they would stand in front of her. They would attempt to do daring dance moves, winking or smiling at her.



Every year, Guinean children also participate in a celebration called Yoliolio. It has its own song and rhythm. During Yoliolio, the children go around the village and they give gifts to the grandmothers. They use large metal cans to play. It's not necessary to be initiated (to have taken lessons), since all the children know the rhythm of Yoliolio.

Guinea, mystical culture and ancient traditions (part 4)

The vast majority of Guineans, including those of Muslim or Christian faith, are also animists. They share the belief that a spirit animates all living things, such as plants, animals, the elements (water, earth, fire, air) and even stones. They heal themselves with herbs, love to play cowries and they practice the art of divination.

Cowries are small shells that were used as money in the past. They are native to the Maldives Islands and they were imported to Africa long before colonization. They are also used in divinatory art by being launched to the ground. Then, someone interprets them by using their position in space. Cowries are also used to make jewelry and they are sometimes sewn onto clothing.



During a celebration (of a wedding or of a death), animal sacrifices are frequent. The animal is killed according to a ritual before it gets eaten. Then, craftsmen create doundoun with the skin of the animal. In Guinea it is believed that souls fly away to animate others. This transmission is at the heart of Productions Kalabanté's mission: to pass on the energy of life and the joy of moving and being together, since:

« If you can walk, you can dance and if you can talk, you can sing.»

The honor code for acrobats



nclude and share:
The circus is a place where everyone belongs, regardless of their origin. It's a way to get in touch with the different cultures of the world, a way to meet people and exchange, even when you don't speak the same language.

Mutual trust:
Le cirque est un art basé sur le travail d'équipe, la synchronicité et la confiance mutuelle. Quand un artiste monte en haut d'une pyramide humaine, il doit avoir une confiance inébranlable envers les autres personnes qui forment la base de la pyramide, parce qu'une simple négligence peut mettre sa vie en danger.





Transparency:
The art of the circus is also a way to be completely vulnerable and exposed. An artist can brag as much as he wants, it's only when on stage and under the spotlight that we can really see what he's capable of. It's in his movements, through his presence and his strength of mind that he really reveals himself.

Courage :
The journey of a circus artist is full of difficulties and disappointments. No one can be liked by everyone. Giving up or being affected by others is not an option. You have to be courageous enough to be yourself, to believe in your own potential and to make many mistakes, since this is the only way to learn and grow. Remember: a movement may have been repeated a million times before being perfectly performed in front of an audience!



QUESTIONS

A bit of introspection

Name a situation in which you had to be courageous.

Give examples of experiences you've had that pushed you to practice discipline in order to overcome something or to achieve your goals.

What's a difficult situation you went through that taught you the most about yourself?

What surprises you, moves you or shocks you the most about Yamoussa's journey? Why?

Reading comprehension

Name two peculiarities of Yamoussa's childhood.

Indicate a Guinean tradition with as many details as possible.

Why do Guinean mystical characters exist? What is their purpose?

To find out more about

Productions

kalabanté

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