Under the Baobab - Unity in a mosaic of Diversity
Led by Lua Shayenne

The world of humanity is a composite body...when one part of the organism suffers all the rest of the body will feel its consequence.

-Baha’i Writings

Under the Baobab is a dance and theatre workshop to explore the meaning of unity in diversity. Participants will explore these ideas through storytelling and dance making.

Under the Baobab will use dance to develop a common language of communication that transcends words.
Under the Baobab will draw on the power of storytelling to share tales of daily life where lessons are learned and values acquired.
Under the Baobab will combine dance and storytelling to explore the complexities of unity in diversity.

Under the Baobab is based on the belief that people of diverse backgrounds need to learn to live together as members of one family.
We live in a place officially called a “multicultural country”. In Toronto alone nearly half of the population is comprised of visible minorities who were born outside of Canada, representing more than 200 distinct ethnic origins residents.

Under the Baobab brings together 9 to 11 year olds in a safe environment of dance and storytelling to:

- Explore and celebrate who they are.
- Create empathy for one another through collaboration and the art of “listening”.
- Increase their expressive range and explore possibilities of movement.
- Discover their creativity.
- Appreciate other cultural traditions which in return helps them understand their own.

Under the Baobab can be a single workshop, a three days workshop or an extended residency.
Under the Baobab Fee: $200 – single workshop. $150 per session – 3 days or residency

The Baobab Tree
The Baobab tree otherwise known as “The mother of the Sahel” or “Big Tree” is steeped in a wealth of mystique, legend and superstition wherever it occurs in Africa. It is one of the trees in Africa with the longest lifespan. Some are over three thousand years old but on average, baobab trees are between three hundred and five hundred years old. Baobabs are actually succulents and consist of 80% moisture, making them among the most useful plants to both animals and humans. With their own distinct ecosystem, baobabs swarm with life as they provide shelter and sustenance for various creatures.
Lua Shayenne is an actor and dancer who graduated from the Randolph Academy for the Performing Arts and apprenticed with the dance company COBA (Collective of Black Artists) where she studied traditional West African, indigenous Caribbean Folk, Modern, Ballet and Afri-Jazz. She has continued honing her dance skills at the Ballet Creole Professional Training Program with Debbie Wilson, Helen Jones and guest choreographer Milton Myers (Ballet, Horton, Graham). She has worked with Guinea Master drummer Mohamed Diaby, dancer and choreographer Kevin Ormsby and acclaimed NYC choreographer and dancer Eleo Pomare. She was a dance instructor and performer in Le Giornate Africane (An African Journey), a series of African dance and culture workshops in her home town Aosta, Italy which culminated in a public show for the city of Aosta and workshops at Matteo Cigna’s School of Drum and Dance. In the summer of 2006 she was honoured to dance for Ghanaian soul singer Ranzie Mensah in Senegallia, Italy. That same year, she was a participant and dance captain of the Ya te da project at Driftwood Community Centre initiated by Dance Immersion and led by choreographer Eleo Pomare. The project’s aim was to create awareness of youth’s history and unique contributions to North American dance. In March 2007, Lua spent a month in her motherland Ghana where she had the privilege to take traditional African and Afro-Modern dance classes at the university of Legon, Accra with veteran teachers and choreographers Miss Kwakwa and Ben Onduro. Upon her return to Toronto, she was selected as one of two local choreographers for Dusk Dances festival at Firgrove Park. She has been awarded one of 12 places reserved for outstanding dancers in the 2008 Choreographers Lab program at The School at Jacob’s Pillow. The workshop focused on Community Arts Practice. As a community arts practitioner Lua has led theatre and dance workshops for Eastdale High school, Recognize the Real (Jane/Finch) and YAG (Youth Advisory Group) at Centennial library sponsored by New Heights Community Health (Action for Neighborhood Change Program - Bathurst-Finch) to name a few. As an actor, her latest projects include 360 Degree Vision (Vision TV documentary), Anowa (African Theatre Ensemble), Judgment Day Café (Hysteria Festival), Building Blocks (Rock Paper Sistahz Festival) & Zigga (Shadow Path Theatre). Proud member of the Toronto Playback Theatre Company for the past four years, she also mentors and conducts the Youth playback Company. Toronto Playback Theatre values community, service and the possibility of personal and social transformation through art. Finally, she is co–founder of Aya Dance Collective, a collective that performs and creates traditional African and contemporary dance works through constant collaboration with the pool of talented artists residing in and outside of Canada.

Lua’s upcoming performances include Dance Ontario Dance weekend ’09, workshops at Eastdale high School and Jane & Finch and various performances with Toronto Playback Theatre.
**LUA SHAYENNE**
Actor/Dancer/Storyteller
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Eyes-dark brown Hair-black Height-5’8

**Selected Theatre & Film Performances**

2008 **Series 8080** (Pia Bouman) ● **Talent defined** (Al Green theatre) AYA Dance Collective ● **Dance Ontario Dance Weekend** (Premier Dance Theatre) AYA Dance Collective ● **Dance Immersion In-Studio Presentation** (National Ballet School) Kashedance ● **Black History Month Celebration Rites of Passage** (Humber and Seneca College) AYA Dance Collective ● **CIBC celebrates Diversity**

2007 **Dance Immersion In-Studio Presentation** (National Ballet School) Aya Dance Collective ● **Hot n Spicy** (Harbourfront Centre) Aya Dance Collective ● **Ones Africaines** (Dundas Square) Aya Dance Collective ● **Bana Y Africa** Aya Dance Collective ● **St Catherines Folk Arts Festival** Aya Dance Collective

2005-2006 **Dance Immersion Showcase Presentation** (Harbourfront Centre Theatre) ● **Bodika/Sessions** (Harbourfront Centre Theatre) COBA Collective of Black Artists ● **Planet Africa Achievement Awards** ijo vudu African Dance Co. ● **She.re.He** (Betty Oliphant Theatre) COBA ● **Giornate Africane** (An African Journey) Italy

**Choreography**

2006-present **AYA Dance Collective** (Premier Dance Theatre, Nathan Philips Square, Harbourfront Toronto Stage etc)

2007 **Dance Immersion In-Studio Presentation** (National Ballet School) ● **Forward** ROAM cd launch (Lula Lounge) ● **Dusk Dances Commission** (Fitgrove Park) ● **Ranzie Mensah in Concert** at FORO DI SENIGALLIA (Ancona, Italy)

**Training**

2008 Debbie Wilson Horton ● **Donna Greenberg** Ballet ● **De Napoli Clarke** (UK) Jazz, Reggae, Contemporary ● **Ballet Creole Professional Training program** (Artistic Director-Patrick Parson) Debbie Wilson, Guest choreographer Milton Myers, Helen Jones- Graham, Ballet, Horton ● **Mohamed Diaby** (US, Guinea) African ● **Bob Theo** Ballet

2006-2007 **Erika Baldorf** Movement ● **Cindy Block** Movement ● **Mohamed Diaby** African ● **Bob Theo** Ballet ● **Miss Kwakwa African & Ben Oceano** Contemporary african (Month intensive training in Ghana)


2004-2005 **Acting on camera** Lewis Baumbander ● **COBA Collective of Black Artists** (performing apprentice) Bakari Lindsay, Charmaine Headley, Guest choreographer Vincent Mantsoe (South Africa) - African, Caribbean, Modern, Ballet ● **b current Theatre** Ahadi Zhina mandiela ● **Ya te dance project** Eleo Pomare (NYC)

2000-2002 **Randolph Academy for the performing arts** Theatre, Film, Singing, Jazz, ballet, Musical theatre

1998-1999 **Nancy Campbell Collegiate Institute** Arts High School

**Teaching / Workshops**

2008 **Eastdale High Shool** ● **Toronto Youth Playback Theatre** (Recognize the Real (Jane/Finch) ● **YAG** (Youth Advisory Group) at Centennial library sponsored by New Heights Community Health (Action for Neighborhood Change Program / Bathurst-Finch)

2006-present **Toronto Playback Theatre** for Peacebuilders International, Connect To Youth, East York Collegiate Institute, Respect in Action (REACT) etc ● **AYA Dance Collective** for Humber, Seneca College, Salsa on St Clair Festival, Harbourfront, Dusk Dances etc

Active member of **Toronto Playback Theatre** (2005 Winner of Da Vinci’s creative Awards) ● Conductor & mentor of **Toronto Youth Playback Theatre**

Founder and member of **AYA Dance Collective**

Artistic director: Christopher von Baeyer www.torontoplayback.com

Artistic director: Roshanak Jaberi, Lua Shayenne www.myspace.com/ayadancecollective

**References**

**Chris Von Baeyer**
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416 473 6448
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**Vivine Scarlett**
Program Curator ● Dance immersion
416 203 0666
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**Sylvie Bouchard**
Artistic Director Dusk Dances
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**Special Skills:** Trilingual (Fluent in French, English, Italian)