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Dr B J Lewis (Chair)
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Dear Dr B J Lewis

**Research trip to Boston and the Community/ Performance Conference,
Bryant College, Rhode Island, 28 May – 8 June 2004**

Please find enclosed my report on the trip that I undertook thanks to the funding from the Lisa Ullmann Travel Scholarship Fund. As requested I have enclosed two paper copies plus a copy of this letter and the report on a floppy disc. I have also enclosed a copy of a piece that was in the Scottish Arts Council's Information Bulletin about my visit.

I was awarded a Lisa Ullmann Travel Fellowship to enable me to attend the conference, present a DVD of a project I had initiated and to spend time finding out about the working practices of dance organisations and promoters in Boston. This trip enabled me to further my particular interest in the issues around supporting choreographers and the aesthetics of community arts. I am committed to creating choreography with community participants and believe that this working environment produces different issues for the choreographer to engage with. I was interested in finding out more about this area of work in America and the opportunity to discuss and learn with others engaged in this area of work.

Throughout the conference I was challenged about my practice and ensuring that integrity is central to all that I do. I met artists who are committed to the communities that they root themselves and their work in. I was impressed by the dedication of individuals striding out in innovative and individual ways to bring about a democratising of the arts.

This trip gave me the opportunity to take stock of my career to date and reflect on working practice that I have developed. I will use the knowledge and skills I gain through my work and the artists I work with on a regular basis. Since returning from this trip, I have been appointed to the post of Head of Dance at the Scottish Arts Council which I will take up in September. I am grateful to have had this opportunity to have broadened my knowledge and thinking on the support for dance through the research I undertook in Boston and my participation in the conference. I am sure that this experience has deepened my understanding of dance and will be beneficial in all that I go onto do in my new post.

My trip to Boston and Rhode Island and the people I met, re-asserted my fundamental belief in the power of bringing people together to dance. Many thanks for this opportunity.

Yours sincerely,

Anita Clark

REPORT TO THE LISA ULLMANN TRAVELLING SCHOLARSHIP FUND

**Research Trip to Boston
and Community/ Performance Conference
Bryant College, Rhode Island 4-6 June 2004**

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Sometime last year, I received a message in my in-box. A call for papers for an International conference – COMMUNITY/ PERFORMANCE. The email came through one of the networks I am involved with, Foundation of Community Dance or Dance UK – I forget which. As the director of the UK's most northerly dance agency based in Aberdeen, it is easy to feel isolated. Receiving daily emails about events and opportunities throughout the UK, or further a field really helps remind me that what we do at citymoves is part of the wider sector. As well as bringing some fantastic opportunities to my desk. Including this one from Petra Koppers, Conference Director, Bryant College in Rhode Island, USA.

Phrase such as:

'the efficacy of arts interventions in building communities'

'the relations between performance theory and practice'

and

'are there separate aesthetics of community arts?'

... caught my eye. These are values and questions that are central to my working practice and the programme I have developed at citymoves. So I forwarded this intriguing email to my personal account to read and consider in more detail that evening.

Fast forward nine months and I am on a plane to the USA, thanks to a Lisa Ullman Travel Fellowship and with the support of Aberdeen City Council I am here to participate in, and contribute to the college's first international conference, COMMUNITY/ PERFORMANCE.

Prior to the conference, I spent 7 days in Boston, researching the work of dance organisations, choreographers, companies and producer. I was interested to find out more about the dance infrastructure that has developed to support independent dance artists in the states and the similarities and differences from the developing scene in Scotland. My initial contact, prior to my visit, was with the Boston Dance Alliance and their staff associate, Matthew Breton was very generous, putting me in contact with a number of different organisations and individuals. On arriving in Boston I met with Matthew and one of BDA's board members Rachel Yurman, who is also Director of Development for Boston Ballet.

During my time in Boston I also met with and visited

- Rozann Kraus, Director of the Dance Complex and Cambridge's Dance Month Festival
- Jody Weber, Director of Green Street Studios
- Adrienne Hawkins, choreographer and Artistic Director of Impulse Dance Company
- Karen Krolak, Artistic Director of the Monkeyhouse, an incubator for choreographers in Boston
- Perla Joy Furr, Artistic Director of the Choreographers Group

I found it stimulating to hear about the different structures and support networks for dancers and the development of choreography in Boston and Massachusetts.

After my week in Boston, I headed down to Bryant College in Rhode Island for the COMMUNITY/ PERFORMANCE conference. This event was the brain-child of Petra, originally from the UK and now and Assistant Professor of Performance Studies at Bryant College and Artistic Director of The Olimpias Performance Research Projects. (and interestingly a former Lisa Ullmann Travel Scholarship awardee!). Petra's own practice is rooted in the values of participatory and community performance and she is widely published in the field of Disability performance.

Over the three days about a range of innovative projects throughout the world and met the people behind them – the All Stars Talent Show in New York, the hip-hop 'Urban Theatre Projects' in Western Australia and the wonderful, subversive tactics of the feretdhteh toosi artists spreading the urban legend of Pittsburgh's underground river. I empathised with the challenges facing arts educators with the increasing bureaucratisation of the arts with the Bush administration's No Child Left Behind legislation. Closer to home, I shared in the stories collated and presented by artists Ruth Ben-Tovim and Trish O'Shea as part of their on-going project in Sharrow, a neighbourhood in Sheffield. The delegates at the conference represented the full spectrum of art forms and cross arts practice and I particularly enjoyed meeting artists from different disciplines and learning of their approaches to community engagement in the arts.

I was invited to speak about a citymoves' project Generations and screen the DVD documenting the process and final performance of the project. GENERATIONS was a cross-generational, site specific, community performance, created in the Autumn of 2002 for the unique venue of Aberdeen Art Gallery. The project was established to engage the local community in a creative arts project centred around the gallery. The

process undertaken involved the participants choreographically and performative, bringing together community and professional performers. The performance involved over 60 performers aged 5-70+, working with choreographer Mhairi Allan, Jillian Thomson, Sara Schena and myself and composer Karen McIver. For citymoves, this was a valuable opportunity to present the work we are engaged in our locality in an international context.

Throughout the weekend I was challenged about my practice and ensuring that integrity is central to all that I do. I met artists who are committed to the communities, that they root themselves and their work in. I was impressed by the dedication of individuals striding out in innovative and individual ways to bring about a democratising of the arts. For me, the conference re-asserted my fundamental belief in the power of bringing people together to dance.

More information on the Community/ Performance Conference, the full-schedule and biographies for all the presenters can be found at www.olimpias.net

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