

March 1<sup>st</sup> 2011

**To: Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Fund**

I attended the Israeli Contact Festival in Israel from the 7<sup>th</sup> of December until the 25<sup>th</sup> of December 2010. The festival was divided into three weeks, each taking place at a different location. The main focus of the festival was Contact Improvisation, with workshops lead by Israeli and international practitioners.

I have been able to develop my skills in Contact Improvisation over the 3 week period and improve my abilities considerably. I was able to focus on technique, different approaches, methods, as well as engage and dance with a diversity of dancers of all ages and experiences. I have become more confident as a dancer and feel I have already been able to apply my new approach to projects I became involved in on my return. One of the main realizations was that the importance of such festivals does not solely lie in the workshops they offer, but also in the encounters and meetings that take place, creating bonds that last long after the festival has dissolved. It is a place to discuss, question and develop the practice; redefine it's meaning in today's society.

One of the highlights of the trip for me was spending two nights in the Negev desert. Sleeping in a Bedouin tent, I remember the bitter cold of the desert at night, only to be woken up by the scorching sun in the morning; experiencing an immense silence and darkness, very rare in our overly lit dense cities. This incredible sensation enabled my mind to fully switch off and focus inwards. I was able to approach my movement exploration with more honesty, letting deeper connections take place.

My main advice to future awardees wanting to visit the festival in Israel, is to be prepared for the questioning at the Israeli border when entering and when exiting the country; to have all relevant documents and contact details at hand for the security controls, as they require proof of legitimacy for your trip. With the risk of contradicting myself, I would also advise future awardees to not plan your trip too meticulously as there will no doubt be many opportunities to be surprised by new directions and encounters that might radically challenge your perspective.

I will be able to research CI further in an upcoming residency at Yorkshire Dance in Leeds, and look forward to sharing my methods and discoveries with fellow dancers. I am also currently involved in a multi-disciplinary improvisation project and find that my approach to questioning and evaluating my practice and collaboration has matured due to having been surrounded by very experienced and articulate practitioners at the festival.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to travel to Israel and support my ongoing research in Contact Improvisation. The fund has given me the chance to take a big leap towards becoming a more accomplished and experienced dancer, which will feed into my practice for many years to come.

Many thanks,  
Daliah Toure

## Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Fund Travel Report

Daliah Toure

In December 2010, I attended the 9<sup>th</sup> Israeli Contact Festival. The festival was taking place over 3 weeks, each at a different location. As well as spending time in Tel Aviv, I was also able to visit the Lower Galilee, the Negev desert and Jerusalem. In the first two weeks I enrolled in 3-4 day intensives, working with Adrian Russi (CH), Or Fruchter (IL) and Itay Yatov (IL). The third week, which was the tour, took place 'on the road' with daily intensives on a site specific basis, working at various different outside locations with Danya Elraz(IL), Isabelle Kirouac (CAN) and Sasha Besrodnova (RUS).

The 'Sabbath Jams' were always the highlight of each week, ending an intense five days of workshops and classes. Those jams, often lasting many hours and ending late at night, brought together all participating dancers, teachers and people from the local CI community (up to 200 people on two occasions!). They were a wonderful playground to explore, practice and engage with an incredible diverse range of people of all ages, experience and backgrounds.

I was also awarded the Rebecca Skelton Fund which helped pay for some of the workshops. Together with the Lisa Ullmann Scholarship this research trip was made a realistic ambition for which I am wholly grateful.



Before leaving to Israel, I was often asked what I looked forward to most, and my immediate answer was simply being able to focus on one thing only for 3 weeks. I was

looking forward to the great distance I could place between me and the dozens of other issues, correspondences, applications, and various other compartments in my ever cluttered freelance life. I was looking forward to being able delve a little deeper in the practice of Contact Improvisation and let this adventure take me on a short journey of exploration. This was, until I actually placed foot on Israeli ground, all wishful thinking as I did somehow have doubts about being able to detach myself completely from all my other commitments. However once I had arrived and felt a little more settled, surrounded by the lush green hills of the Lower Galilee, I did manage to feel completely cut off from my daily life in Leeds and was happy to let this wonderful world of dance and fascinating culture inspire me. I could ease into the process, not force anything that did not want to happen and let things find their natural progression. It took a few days for the unnecessary urgency of my normal approach to be left behind, only to be reluctantly slipped back on on arrival back in the UK. But for, what seemed, too short a time, I was enjoying sitting comfortably in the generous lap of time, letting myself disappear in dances lasting many hours and happily losing track of time.



This was probably my biggest discovery: experiencing the luxury of time and realising how rare this sensation was felt in my day to day life. I came out of this wonderfully sun kissed bubble feeling refreshed, inspired and somehow reassured that things happen naturally and with integrity if you give it time and honest attention.

Writing this report, I am back in the chilly frost covered streets of Leeds. Even though I am yearning for that sensation I left behind in Israel, I am also filled with a sense of enthusiasm. I am eager not to let the momentum of the trip fade away, but instead let it feed into my work and future projects. I am looking forward to engaging in more Improvisation and CI and take it out into the community. I feel even more passionate about its relevance in our current society and global climate of stripping down, going back to the roots and approaching life more holistically.

Daliah Toure, March 2011

During my entire stay I kept a diary recording my observations and impressions. Here are some extracts from week 1 in Misgav, The Greenhouse, Lower Galilee:

Sunday, December 5<sup>th</sup> 2010  
(634mph, 3700ft, -72deg)

*White cotton wool clouds carpet the space between the sky and earth and in between is me. Glances across two seats and out of the window reveal the approaching channel, the sea, the sky. Israel is still far, still an ambition. [...] It feels right, being here, this adventure, these smells, the tight nervous ball in my core, the clattering coming from the airplane kitchen, this charcoal stain on my ring finger from gripping this pure graphite 2B. I'll be fine. I'll flow.*

Tel- Aviv, Monday, December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2010

*I finally left the hostel after an unusual but tasty savoury breakfast and decided to wander around the streets of Tel-Aviv for the day. See where my legs and intuition and curiosity would take me. I walked up the busy Dizengoff street, past the clothes shops and fresh fruit juice stands, pressing pomegranate juice by the bucket loads. Many of the buildings are in slight disrepair and seem to suffer from years of humidity and the sea salt that saturates the air. They remind me slightly of buildings in Dakar, [...] the balconies, courtyards, bulky air cons protruding from the side of the outside walls, often leaking and browning the facade [...] The smell faintly reminds me of Senegal too: tarmac, sea air, fermenting fruit, citrus, exhaust fumes, spices, cooking, overflowing drains, fresh clothes drying on washing lines, soap, the sweet whiff of flowers,.. [...] I observe the people's body language, the personal space, the normal speaking volume, etiquette towards strangers, politeness and the fine mannerisms that make them Israelis, and me not.*

Misgav, Tuesday, December 7<sup>th</sup> 2010,

*We arrive after an approximate 2 coach hour drive, through rain, hills, silence and anticipation. A school greets us with its iron gates, a car park, and a winding path to the makeshift reception. We queue, we register, we meet, we greet, we take the tour of the building and facilities, all the do's and don'ts, we nod, we agree and ask questions. Once released, we each grab a narrow foam mattress and look for a classroom allocated to us, not already occupied by fellow travellers. [...] This is how I will live for the next 5 days. Resting on narrow single mattress, next to Omit, an Israeli woman I've already made friends with. [...] In the large gym hall, I estimate around 200 people sitting, lying and crouching side by side, listening and dozing off. It's a warm welcome of mentions, reminders, safety regulations and children of all ages painting the room with their giggles, sighs and squeals. I feel welcome. Nita Little leads the warm up, a standing meditation into an open jam. I have my "small talk" dances, my "this is all too much and I'll just fill the space with my noise" kind of dance. Tomorrow will be more connected.*

Misgav, Wednesday, 8<sup>th</sup> December, 2010

*After dinner and some time to digest, I joined the focus jam in a smaller studio. The facilitators were quite rigid and lacked sense of humour, but the Jam itself was surprisingly light and contained many funny moments, noises and laughter. I stood, lay and squatted for a very long time and found two very beautiful dances. One rather engaging one with a young Israeli woman, with whom I found myself pushing the ridicule and obscure qualities of movement; the other encounter seemed like a conversation of surreal statements with a man of mischievous nature. I stayed until the end, then joined the bigger jam in the large gym.[...] I stayed with this next dance for a very long time, gave it time to grow and develop and become playful and light. My partner's energy was surpassing mine and in the beginning quite unmanageable as I tried to match it. An impossible task, not sustainable in the long run. I then changed my approach and began to counter with calm and responses that would neither suppress nor elevate this high energy, yet frame and commit to this challenging yet highly satisfying dance.*

Misgav, Friday 10<sup>th</sup> December, 2010

*Observations on the performance evening:*

*Effortless, no preciousness, natural gazes, good sense of timing, looking into the audience, laughter/teasing, risk, short length/bite sized performances, non patronising, all abilities, live music/recorded music, using elements of CI but not entirely CI, responding to audience, no bowing, one performance overlapping the previous one, simple ideas- not overcomplicated but beautifully performed as a result.*

*The performance went smoothly into the final Jam of this Greenhouse week. The curtain dividing the two large gym halls opened and people were invited to enter the space. It was very effortless and I felt at home by now. By the time the performance had finished it was already past 11pm and that drowsiness had set in. However, I wanted to stay, feel the last hour of this Jam float past me and haze my senses. I danced, watched, chatted into the early hours of the morning. The arena slowly transformed itself into a thick soup of arms, legs, high flies and low surfs, surrendered bodies and low weight. I moved in between those drifting bodies, felt the music, the space so expansive yet womb like.*

Misgav, Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> December 2010

*I woke up after far too little sleep, with only 15mins to dress, eat a breakfast of stodgy porridge and get to the morning intensive on time. It was raining all throughout the class. Thunder boomed inside the gym and was quite intimidating at times as occasionally the lights dimmed and lit up again as the heavy static in the air made itself visible. Heavy raindrops kept falling as we sank into the floor and mobilised our pelvises. We practiced spiral rolls across the floor with a partner in preparation for lifts that we were going to attempt and practice.[...] After the clear up at the end of the day we came together in a big circle once again, lining the entire gym hall. Speeches, thank-you's, sing-song and more*

*thank-you's. [...] finally we all turned around with our backs to the circle, stood in silence, took a step outwards and the 'Greenhouse' part of the festival was officially over.*

Daliah Toure, March 2011