

Report for LUTSF – Jose Agudo

Project: Researching Flamenco dance with choreographer Rafael Amargo in Madrid, for the solo element of a new production “Silk Road”.

Dates: 29th January – 10th February 2017

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the LUTSF for supporting a recent visit to Madrid, Spain. With the travel bursary I was able to research and commence the first chapter of a new production entitled *Silk Road*.



When applying for this bursary, the entire production was in the early fundraising stages, however the success of the LUTSF application contributed to further leverage with subsequent funding applications to Arts Council England and various other partners. I would like to emphasise how important early support for research is as it allows valuable space for artistic development, builds trust in additional funding partners and provides the potential to ensure a stronger artistic product.

The two-week visit to Madrid was a research period to return to my roots in Flamenco dance; reconnect to my cultural heritage and origins of my performance career. I was able to train and work with choreographer Rafael Amargo, who created a 10-minute solo for me, which will be the opening piece of my new, triple bill production *Silk Road*. Once I had the travel scholarship and Rafael’s commitment confirmed, a respected venue in Madrid, called Teatros del Canal, came on board to offer space for the rehearsals in

exchange for a workshop. So, during my visit I was also able to teach a 'Repertoire and Rhythms Workshop' for 16 professional dancers and share my research, extending the benefits of my visit with others.

The first week began with Flamenco training, rediscovering Flamenco shoes after 20 years working bare foot in the contemporary dance field. After day one my lower back and feet were really suffering and Rafael advised me to be measured for new shoes. It is a tradition to have the shoes tailor made so I went on an adventure to the workshop of Senor Gallardo. He was alarmed that I had been wearing shoes that were too narrow for my feet and quickly set to work to remedy the situation.

Rafael brought his assistant Olga Llorent to assist with the choreography and guitar player Basilio Garcia. The rhythm of the music and dialogue between musician and dancer are key to Flamenco dance as each performer challenges the other creating a very 'live' and spontaneous dynamic. Without this direct contact with Rafael and his creative team it would not be possible to find the real character and heart of Flamenco. Similarly, Rafael commented that it was a pleasure to work on a smaller, contemporary production as he is currently developing a huge musical of El Zorro in Spain, so it felt like we found a great balance in our work together.



The second week continued with morning training and the creation. Composer and musical producer for *Silk Road*, Bernhard Schimpelsberger, who is responsible for arranging the final score and collaborating with other musicians, joined me in Madrid.

Bernhard is a sophisticated and accomplished musician but he also found this experience and contact with real Flamenco music to be enriching and fascinating.

As a full production, *Silk Road* will explore the ancient network of trade and exchange routes that were central to cultural interaction through regions of Asia, connecting the West and East by merchants, pilgrims, monks, soldiers, nomads, and urban dwellers from China and India to the Mediterranean Sea. I am fascinated by the concept of the piece and how Flamenco dance transformed from the north of India in Rajasthan gradually arriving to Adalusia, southern Spain to become the dance recognised today. My roots in dance began in Adalusia but across a 20 year career in contemporary dance the language has evolved once again. It felt so essential to return to the traditional form and research new ideas. It has challenged my choreographic practice, for example, how much do I want to stay close to the traditional forms or develop them into a contemporary context? It has been refreshing to work with such a high calibre and experienced Flamenco choreographer as Rafael, and we have discussed many ideas about narrative and how to connect to an audience through the medium of dance. This production is also allowing me to reinvest in my body as a performer. After several years of choreographing commissioned works for various dance companies, and assisting with several productions for Akram Khan Company, I have a strong desire to perform again. This is a very exciting stage of my career and I thank the LUTSF for having faith in the early stages of the idea.

I look forward to sharing the fruits of this research in performance:

28th April 2017: Preview, Dance East Ipswich

4th/5th May 2017: Premiere and second performance at Lilian Baylis Studio, Sadler's Wells London

Touring: Spring 2018 (TBC)