

## LUTSF Project Report

To the Secretary of LUTSF

Enclosed is a report of the various experiences I was able to gain with the gracious help of the Lisa Ullmann Traveling Scholarship Fund.

The sole aim of my project was to explore and experience different dance styles to help broaden my technical abilities and choreographic skill.

I set off to Bangalore in the South of India from 24/07/12 till 23/08/12. Although I had originally planned to work with Abhinava Dance Company and Nritarutya, I was only able to work with Nritarutya due to the unavailability of Abhinava Dance Company. Thankfully I cannot say that this hindered my project and over all experience what so ever as Nritarutya was kind enough to involve me in a large project that they were undergoing at that time. The amount of experience I gained from preparing and performing at the show will be something that I will cherish forever and I cannot thank Nritarutya enough for their help and encouragement all the way through.

Since coming back from India, I have performed in various projects such as Sampads Mandala in Birmingham. This project used various different dancers and styles ranging from Classical Indian dance styles such as Bharatanatyam and Kathak to urban dance forms such as Break Dancing. If I had been part of this performance before going to India I would have found the Manadala project quite intimidating. However through the experiences I gained I was able to tackle the various challenges given to me head on without fear of trying new things and pushing my body to new limits.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the LUTSF for such a great opportunity. Not only has this experience helped to develop my dance vocabulary and choreographic skills as a performer but it has also built my confidence as a person to go out and try new things.

Yours Sincerely

Jyoti L Parwana

## **REPORT**

### **Introduction**

At the tender age of 6 I had my first Bharatanatyam lesson from my Guru (teacher) Smt Chitrleka Bolar at the Midlands Art Centre in Birmingham, and I can honestly say that since that day I have never looked back on doing anything other than dance as my full time career.

Throughout my current dance career I have only concentrated on the Bharatanatyam style of dance, however living in a modern and multicultural society it is easy to see that people are constantly looking for new ways of collaborating different things in order to create a sense of unity and new and innovating ideas.

Thus I concluded to move with the modern times and build my portfolio as a performer by branch out and trying new dance styles, in the hope to experience new types of movements and to increase my ability in choreographing things that people may not have seen or experienced before here in England.



So in order to do this I was kindly given a Scholarship from LUSTF to go to Bangalore in South India to work with some of the leading contemporary companies currently out there.

### **Arrival**

I arrived to Bangalore on the 24/07/12 with every intention to make the most out of my trip. However my arrival was welcomed with a minor setback as I found out that one of the companies I wanted to work with (Abhinava Dance Company) was unable to offer me any lessons due to their busy schedule both nationally and internationally.

Nevertheless all was not lost as I was given an offer from Nritarutya, one of the leading contemporary Indian dance companies in India. They offered me the chance to work with them for a large performance they would be putting on in Mumbai on the 18/08/12. The performance was for the acclaimed designer Abu Sandeeps book launch and the performance was to take place in Mukesh Ambhani's (the Reliance brothers) famous house known as the Antila.

The company had organized rehearsals from 9am-7/9pm every day of the week. However this did not faze me as I knew that this was an experience not to be missed, therefore I happily embraced the opportunity with both hands.

### **Rehearsals**

The company were planning on taking 30+ dancers over to Mumbai and present 6 different dance pieces of which I was part of 4. In order to make each dance unique from one another the choreographer, Mayuri Upadya, decided to use a different type of dance style and theme to bring across a new combination of movement vocabulary. This allowed me to touch on many different dance forms from lift work in contemporary dance to Yakshagana which is an old folk dance style from South India.



*Mayuri Upadhyaya is the Artistic Director and one of the founder members of the Indian contemporary dance company Nritarutya. The company was put together in 2000 and has now begun to reach out internationally. Earlier this year they were invited to England to be part of the Queens Diamond Jubilee Celebrations at Windsor Castle.*

The first dance I encountered consisted of a lot of body contact and lift work. The theme of this dance style was sensuality and coming from a strict Bharatanatyam back ground where no two bodies were ever in contact with one another and our way of expressing ourselves is quite stylized I found opening up to these movements and ideas very challenging.

This helped to build my understanding of body contact and how a balance of weight needs to be found between two bodies in order to enable us to manipulate them and create new shapes without causing harm or strain to one other. This dance also allowed me to open up and learn how to express emotions by using a more natural approach rather than the typical stylized approach of classical dance styles.



The second dance brought in aspects of the Yakshagana dance style. This is a traditional folk dance and drama style from the South of India dating back to the 11<sup>th</sup> century. This dance piece also incorporated the use of masks.

The skills I gained and developed from this dance piece was the ability to sense my fellow dancers positions without my peripheral vision. We had to be very specific with our spacing throughout the performance to decrease the chance of clashes. Also without the help of facial expressions to bring across the emotions and feelings of the dance our movements had to be a lot more extravagant and large to keep hold of the audience's attention.



The third dance brought in the style of garbha into the dance piece and was used to represent raas leela between the Gopi's (cow maids) and Lord Krishna. Garbha is a traditional folk dance style from Gujrat in India. Garbha is not a very complex dance style so the choreographer used various different formations and variations to help make the dance moves look more extravagant and eye catching for the audience.

This dance taught me the most about the concept of choreography as it helped me realize that the formations within the dance and how the vocabulary was put together was equally important to the quality of vocabulary used in the dance.



Finally the fourth dance was based on Lord Vishnu and his partner Mata Laxmi and the main dance style used in this piece was Bharatanatyam.

Although the whole point of my project was to try new dance styles and expand my dance vocabulary and experience, I was glad that I was part of a bharatanatyam based dance as it helped me to appreciate what a strong basis I have. It reminded me that although there are so many different ideas that can be developed from using other styles there are also countless ways of using your own dance style if you are willing to give it time and consideration.



*The Performance!*

The performance took place at the infamous house of Mukesh Ambhani known as the Antila in Mumbai. With such a high profile show with Bollywood stars and big business men as guests, no type of photography was allowed and we all had to make sure that we were very organized as there were only a couple of minutes between each dance piece and each dance required completely different outfits and hairstyles.

We were very fortunate as each outfit for the dance pieces were provided to us by the designers of the event. However as the designers had never created costumes for dancers before we found that some of the outfits would either restrict our movements or they would mask our movements causing them to lose their impact. This became very stressful for not only the choreographer to find ways of overcoming these problems without changing the style and feel of the dance but was very off putting for all of the dancers as it felt as if a lot of our hard work to perfect the dances beforehand had been lost in vain.

At first all the problems caused a lot of pressure and panic amongst the dancers. However with all credit to the group leaders, we were able to keep our spirits high. This helped us all to support one another and get through our problems in order to enjoy our experience and provide the best possible performance. This experience helped me to realize how fragile the atmosphere of a performance can be and taught me that unity amongst a group can either make or break a performance.



*Photo of the performance taken by the media*

What did I Gain?

There are many different things that I have learnt and will take away from this amazing experience such as an expanded knowledge of different dance style vocabulary, different ideas and techniques on how to choreograph dance pieces and many new friends. However I feel that the most important lesson I gained from this experience was the appreciation for the art form that I currently am learning.

I realized that developing a form of dance is just as important as learning other dance styles to develop your movement vocabulary, and that having a strong basis to build upon can be much more reliable than learning and attempting to build on a whole new style.

I would like to thank LUTSF once again for this great experience and I would recommend it to anyone as it has not only developed me as a dancer but also as a person and has given me the confidence to continue to try new dance styles whilst trying to develop my base dance style of Bharatantaym.

