

## **Covering letter:**

**7<sup>th</sup> October 2009.**

Dear Chair of the LUTSF,

Thank you so much for supporting my trip to Chicago to develop myself as a Humphrey-Weidman teacher and dancer. It was an invaluable trip, and one that I would highly recommend to others interested in the work of Doris Humphrey, Charles Weidman and Jose Limon.

**Title of project:** Humphrey-Weidman/Sokolow technique and repertory workshop. This workshop was organised by the Director of the Doris Humphrey Society, Stephanie Clemens.

**Dates:** 1-10<sup>th</sup> August 2009

**Venue:** The Doris Humphrey Memorial Theatre, Oak Park, Chicago, USA

### **Timescale of the project:**

This was a six-day technique and repertory workshop (3<sup>rd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> August 2009), led by Deborah Carr and Jim May, of which the last evening was an informal showing of the repertoire learned. Repertoire covered during the workshop included Charles Weidman's 'Brahms Waltzes' (1961), directed by Deborah Carr, and Anna Sokolow's 'Sessions for Six' (1964), directed by Jim May.

### **Purpose of the project:**

The primary aim of attending this workshop was to further enrich my understanding and practice of the Humphrey-Weidman technique to develop my skills as a teacher. However, through attending this workshop, not only was this developed, but also my skills as a dancer and relationships with others from the Humphrey-Weidman dance community.

### **Highlights:**

Oak Park, the area where the workshop took place, is the birthplace of Doris Humphrey. There is something very special about training in the place where it all started – almost a sense of artistically 'coming home', being able to fully emerge in the experience. Everyone that was involved with the workshop was passionate about the work, especially the organiser of the workshop, creating a supportive environment to develop as an artist. To learn from fantastic teachers who have studied with the great modern dance artists themselves was an invaluable experience, learning the technique and repertoire in the purest form available today.

### **Suggestions for future awardees:**

Ensure you have researched the purpose of your trip (e.g. practitioners/repertoire) before going - this will enable you to get the most out of your experience. If you are going for a practical experience, be physically ready, allowing sufficient time for jet lag to pass if needed.

Staying at 'Under the Ginkgo Tree', a local B&B in Oak Park, only a ten-minute walk from the workshop really was a 'home from home'. A beautiful home set within the historic Frank Lloyd-Wright area. Gloria and Dan are wonderful hosts. I cannot recommend this accommodation more highly.

I aim to use what I have learnt from this workshop to enhance my own teaching and practice. As a trustee of the Doris Humphrey Foundation UK, it is also a future aim to bring these master teachers to the UK to run similar workshops. I would like to thank the LUTSF once again for its support.

Best wishes,

Kate McMonagle

**Report: Kate McMonagle**  
**Humphrey-Weidman/Sokolow Technique and Repertory Workshop 2009**

Having been trained by Lesley Main who had trained under Ernestine Stodelle, one of Doris Humphrey's original dancers in the Humphrey-Weidman Dance Company; I attended my first professional workshop in Chicago USA last summer that was run by the Doris Humphrey Society. This workshop had an emphasis on pedagogy and was directed by Gail Corbin who had also been trained by Ernestine Stodelle. My exposure to the Humphrey-Weidman technique had, up to now, been that of the earlier years of Humphrey technique through the direct Doris Humphrey - Ernestine Stodelle - Lesley Main/Gail Corbin chain.

I applied to the Lisa Ullmann travelling scholarship fund for financial assistance to enable me to return to Chicago and further develop myself as a teacher and dancer. My previous trip had proved to be an invaluable experience in developing my teaching, and one that I wished to repeat to further enhance my professional practice and contribute towards continuing the Humphrey legacy for future generations. I was successful in my application, and for that I am very grateful to the Lisa Ullmann travelling scholarship fund.

*Below: Deborah Carr teaching the 'Ponytail' section from Charles Weidman's 'Brahms Waltzes'  
Dancers L-R: Cameron Jarrett and Sandra Kaufmann (Momenta! Dance Company)  
Photo courtesy of Lisa Green*



This was my second trip to Oak Park, Chicago to attend a Humphrey-Weidman workshop. Having previously been in 2008 to a Humphrey technique, repertory and pedagogy workshop directed by Gail Corbin, with one-day guest sessions by Deborah Carr and Jim May, I was excited to return to gain a similar experience with a different emphasis. As a technique teacher of the modern dance pioneer Doris Humphrey at Middlesex University, and as a trustee of the Doris

Humphrey Foundation UK, it is important to develop skills and interesting to see the pathways that the technique has taken through the years, whilst remaining true to its form and philosophies.

This year's workshop was led by Deborah Carr and Jim May; both leading exponents in their techniques. Deborah Carr danced for Charles Weidman in his dance company, and

Jim May danced for Jose Limon and Anna Sokolow in their respective dance companies. Therefore the material taught at this workshop was in its purest form available today.

Charles Weidman was Doris Humphrey's dance partner; they worked together for many years, originally both dancing for Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn's company, Denishawn, and later went on to form their own Humphrey-Weidman company. The principles of the technique (fall and recovery) were created by Humphrey however Weidman also worked with these. Both Humphrey and Weidman were choreographers in their own right. Jose Limon was Doris Humphrey's protégé and danced for the Humphrey-Weidman dance company in his formative years, later forming the Limon dance company of which Humphrey was his mentor and artistic director. Therefore, by attending and taking part in this workshop, it was interesting to study how Humphrey's technique has developed in both a lateral and linear way.

In the lead up to the workshop, the director of the Doris Humphrey Society, Stephanie Clemens, was most helpful, warm and welcoming, helping to arrange the wonderful accommodation at the local B&B 'Under the Ginkgo Tree', to enable the trip to run as smoothly as possible. At the workshop, there were participants from across the globe, ranging from across America, Mexico, Japan, England and Italy, demonstrating the interest in the Humphrey work today and the global range of the Humphrey dance community.



of Lisa Green

The workshop ran for six days from the 3<sup>rd</sup>-August 2009 and consisted of a daily Weidman or Sokolow technique class, followed by two separate repertory sessions, with an informal showing and reception on the evening of the 8<sup>th</sup> of August 2009. The technique classes were challenging both mentally and physically.

Deborah Carr taught Weidman technique, which was strong and powerful, but still remained true to the fall and recovery principles. Jim May taught class that was inspired by both Limon and Sokolow, utilising the importance of the breath rhythms from Limon, and the qualities, intention and truth of dance 'performance' from Sokolow.

The repertoire taught during the workshop included Weidman's 'Brahms Waltzes' (1961) and Sokolow's 'Sessions for Six' (1964). Learning Weidman's 'Brahms Waltzes' was of particular personal interest as this was his dedication to Humphrey after her death in 1958. Previously at the 2008 Doris Humphrey Society's workshop, Jim May had taught the

Left: 'Hands' section from Charles Weidman's 'Brahms Waltzes'  
Dancers L-R: (Cameron Jarrett), Jillian Hopper, Anne Marie Loesch, Merril Doty, and Kate McMonagle.  
Photo courtesy of Lisa Green

Below: 'Hands' section from 'Brahms Waltzes' (informal showing 08/08/09)  
Dancers L-R: Jillian Hopper, Merril Doty, Anne Marie Loesch, and Kate McMonagle



Photo  
courtesy

8<sup>th</sup>

'running' extract from Limon's 'Choreographic Offering' (1964), which was Limon's dedication to Humphrey, so it was an interesting comparison.



*'Sessions for Six' choreographed by Anna Sokolow (informal showing 08/08/09)  
(Dancers from Momenta! Dance Company)  
Photo courtesy of Lisa Green*

The six-day workshop was an intense experience, very different from taking daily class, with a more focussed and deeper approach to the work. To learn the technique from the experts, then directly apply it to the repertoire proved to be a rich learning experience. The level, ability and focus of the workshop

participants also added to this.

Through attending the 2009 workshop, I have now also been exposed to the Weidman and Limon influences of Humphrey's technique, that of her later years. This has given me a fuller practical understanding and experience of the technique that I teach, therefore make me better equipped to pass it on to others in its truest form. I have returned to the UK artistically refreshed, with a deeper appreciation and ability to preserve and pass on the technique, as it should be.

The work of Humphrey, Weidman and Limon is a living and vibrant art form. The awareness of the work (both technique and choreographic) is increasing, however is not always so well known in comparison to some of the other modern dance pioneers such as Martha Graham. The Doris Humphrey Society in the USA and the Doris Humphrey Foundation UK are working to increase this awareness, which hopefully through time will continue to grow.

In America, there are dance companies such as 'Momenta!', directed by Stephanie Clemens and supported by the Doris Humphrey Society, that stage some of Humphrey and Weidman's choreographic works, as well as the Limon dance company based in New York USA. In Italy, 'Arke' dance company also stage some of Humphrey's repertory, that has been directed by leading European Humphrey exponent and director of the Doris Humphrey Foundation UK, Lesley Main. Through attending this workshop, not only have my teaching, dance skills and experience of the technique and repertoire developed, but also I have been inspired into ways that there can be developments in the UK. It is hoped that in the future, the UK will also have a dance company that is able to perform some of the repertory work of Doris Humphrey through the Doris Humphrey Foundation UK. It is also hoped that these leading USA Humphrey/Weidman/Limon exponents (Gail Corbin, Deborah Carr and Jim May) will come to the UK to direct similar workshops in the UK, again through the Doris Humphrey Foundation UK.

There is the risk that these workshops may not continue year after year; these master teachers will not be able to teach forever. Therefore I am grateful that I have had the opportunity to attend these workshops, and hopeful to bring these same opportunities to the UK whilst this is possible. For others reading this report who are interested in this work, it is imperative to take full advantage of these opportunities whilst they are still available to

ensure the continuation of the technique and repertoire, and that they are continued as they should be, giving justice to the work and the choreographers.

I would like to thank the Lisa Ullmann scholarship fund once again; this has been an enriching experience and without their support this would not have been possible. I am eternally grateful to my teachers Lesley Main, Gail Corbin, Deborah Carr and Jim May for sharing their knowledge and experience of these wonderful techniques and their heritage. I would also like to thank Stephanie Clemens for being so welcoming and helpful both years that I have attended this workshop, and Lisa Green for kindly providing the photographs for this report.

For further information on the organisations listed above in the report, or to find out about future workshops, please visit:

[www.dorishumphreyfoundationuk.co.uk](http://www.dorishumphreyfoundationuk.co.uk)

[www.dorishumphrey.org](http://www.dorishumphrey.org)



*Jim May*

*Photo courtesy of Lisa Green.*