

Kirstie Richardson

3 November 2002

Re: 2002 Introductory Skinner Releasing Intensive

Dear LUTSF Secretary,

Please find enclosed my report for the 2002 Introductory Skinner Releasing Intensive which took place this summer from the 12th August - 30th August. Having returned to Seattle for a second year I finally attended what has turned out to be a life changing experience. The course exceeded all expectations and a particular highlight was Stephanie Skura's 'finding forms' module which took place every other afternoon. As I was travelling with my family we decided to rent a house on Mercer Island which, although beautiful, had the huge drawback of transport and travelling time. If I return (which I hope to do) I would definitely stay near the Green Lake area as it is very child friendly and has a lot more direct buses to and from the University and yet is far enough away to switch off when needed.

Since returning I have started back at work with Circus Space and the biggest shift that I have been aware of so far is the pace and detail of my delivery. Allowing students to spend time to fully embrace a task as opposed to getting through it. A deeper understanding of what I am trying to do has filtered through and so I feel more able and confident to explore the details of any given task. I feel I have found the language in which to articulate my aims to the students and therefore I can already see a difference in their approach to the work that I am setting. Whilst I would never teach a SRT class (as I am not certified) I do feel that I have experience kinaesthetically an alternative way of working and I am currently trying to develop this within my own technique class. I also have plans to certify in the future but presently this is not a viable option financially or physically (children).

Another highlight for me was the fact that we all had to choreograph a short piece and were given very little time to do so and I was amazed at the quality and level of the work created. This has given me the confidence to start making work again, something I haven't done since having a baby. I am working with two other people who were on the course this year and we are trying to use the information gained from the intensive to be a source for creating our own Skinner-based work here in London.

Once again I would like to thank you for making this experience possible.

Best Wishes,

Kirstie Richardson

REPORT

2002 INTRODUCTORY SKINNER RELEASING INTENSIVE

The Skinner Releasing Technique (SRT) summer intensive took place at the University of Washington, Seattle. The course ran from Monday - Friday for three weeks from 9am to 5pm with an evening seminar and gathering called 'pot luck'. Below is the timetable (approximate as classes did tend to run over). Each day was scheduled as follows:

9.00 - 11.00 Skinner Releasing Technique class. Taught by either Joan Skinner, Robert Davidson or Theresa Moriarty

11.15 - 12.45 Improvisation. Taught by Stephanie Skura

1.00 - 2.30 Lunch;

2.30 - 5.00 Finding Forms with Stephanie Skura; or Trapeze with Robert Davidson (Monday to Thursday the group was randomly split in half and would alternate between Finding Forms and Trapeze).

2.30 - 5.00 Fridays only. Finding Forms and Trapeze would come together and the group would work as a whole.

The overall intensity of the course allowed one to really let go of the world outside and to concentrate on a purely creative level. Whilst the days were full there was never a sense of being rushed or pushed into doing something you didn't feel ready to do. I felt energized throughout.

The morning sessions SRT and improvisation really complemented each other. The depth and focus reached through taking part in the SRT class meant the whole group was fully open to explore what seemed sometimes the smallest task and develop it beyond belief. I think the group as a whole was very experienced in improvisation and so from the moment we started until the end there was a very high level of concentration and the work was rich and clear throughout. All of our senses were so heightened that sometimes I wanted to pinch myself because I could not believe the beautiful, powerful and sensitive work that I was experiencing. I would definitely like to work with Stephanie Skura again as she was a constant inspiration and I feel that I have only scratched the surface in terms of her knowledge and ability to deliver a concept and task effortlessly without ever being overpowering or too dominant.

The afternoon sessions which were alternated allowed the focus to shift and therefore the intensity of Improvisation and Moving Forms was lessened because of the refreshing element of Trapeze. Having said that, Trapeze was definitely not my forte and, whilst thoroughly enjoyable, I do not think I gained as much as others did in the group. The most surprising thing to me was that I loved swinging and that in itself was very exhilarating. However, the more complex moves (hanging by your ankles!) were very painful and so I felt less inclined to be adventurous as I had no intention of taking up Trapeze on my return back to London. Nevertheless I did love the ground-based work such as running and flying into the air, moving in a circular fashion and the integration of trapeze with improvisation, whereby the group would think of the five trapezes hanging in the space as potential partners. What was interesting was that you used the space completely differently during these improvisations because of the introduction of arial work and the possibilities were endless for the more adventurous.

Finding Forms used improvisation and the drawing of scores as a source for creating material. The drawing of scores has been a revelation to me. Scores can be based on any stimuli and are produced after a brief improvisation. Then the group would sit with their notebook and draw/write the first thing that entered their head. Obviously, Stephanie would set up an improvisation that had specific outcomes in terms of the way we worked and I always felt that she had such a wealth of knowledge (her life's work) that she could set up an improvisation based on the smallest detail. We worked a lot with the idea of free association and from that we were encouraged to work on parts of our scores or others. One of the most helpful things that Stephanie Skura would say during this time was to 'stick with an idea for longer than it feels comfortable'. The discipline of staying with it was a powerful tool for creating work.

Overall the Intensive Course was an extremely enriching experience and I feel that I have grown in so many directions. The joy of having an SRT class every day expanded my understanding of the technique. I grew in confidence in terms of improvisation and learnt so much from other group members. I feel really keen to explore my own creativity which has been on the back-burners since having a baby. I feel alert and open to start creating. I have also enrolled on a poetry course since returning as this felt such a huge part of the course. And finally I really feel that I have begun to approach my teaching work with a different agenda and my interaction with the students feels much more honest and open and they are responding really well.