

5th February 2009

Dear LUTSF

Enclosed is my report detailing my trip to Bolivia generously enabled by the Lisa Ulmann Travelling Scholarship Fund. I would like to thank the Board for selecting my proposal and for the wonderful, once in a lifetime, opportunity it afforded me. Experiencing life, work and culture in La Paz at this point in my career would have not been possible without the support of the scholarship fund. For this I will always be grateful and I can assure you that the monetary investment has yielded great returns, the experience was richer than I could have imagined.

I am sure that my writing will not do the trip justice; it cannot bring to life the children, my co workers, the lilt of the language or the intensity of the mid afternoon sun. I do hope it will communicate the worth of the artistic work happening in the orphanages and children's homes of La Paz, and highlight the importance of creative practice for the most disadvantaged children.

With many thanks and best wishes

Lucy Anne Evans

LUTSF Report 2008

Trip to La Paz, Bolivia, November 2008



Before I left for Bolivia I had a great sense of calm and inevitability about the experience. Friends and family offered me support, congratulations and good luck, often before enquiring whether it was sensible to travel alone, not speaking a word of Spanish! That was what this time was about, pushing my limits, testing my skills and challenging the transcendent nature of dance.

My project proposal involved travelling to La Paz to work with disadvantaged teenage girls many of whom were young offenders. Initially I had hoped to create a piece with the girls, and film the process. Working with this group of girls was a major part of my work there, but with a different focus. I was only able to begin work with the girls in the second week of my trip, they were also occupied with studies and chores for many hours during the day meaning I could visit them 3 times a week for about 2 hours.

Although initially a home for young offenders, at present only a minority of girls are in this situation,

the remainder are young people at risk. We worked outside in a yard area; a challenging space because of the heat and as there was no shade from the strong sun. I copiously applied factor 55 and the girls needed plenty of water breaks to cool off! This didn't curb their enthusiasm for 'a new step!' or the contact work we explored (carefully due to the concrete!). Although my Spanish was still basic, the girls helped me expand my vocabulary and, with a little help from my friends, I had produced a series of photographs to help me teach contact work clearly and safely. Later, after practice, lots of laughter and much excitement regarding the digital camera, we reproduced these photos together.

In addition to this, each weekday I was there, I visited a children's home for girls and boys aged from 6 to 12. Here there was an established voluntary arts programme run each afternoon for two 1.5 hour sessions by both Bolivian and foreign volunteers. I worked alongside three Dutch volunteers to run the performing arts programme. Each week we held workshops with a different theme. In the time I was there, keen to use my skills as much as possible, we covered dance, voice, rhythm and non-verbal communication. We worked with small groups to ensure individual attention and to support the children's creative thinking and confidence. In the relatively short time I spent there it was humbling to see the leaps the children made in terms of confidence. They performed to one another the exercises we were exploring, they offered more ideas, they raised their voices in performance and group situations and physicalised expression with much more conviction.

In terms of my personal and professional development the project raised my awareness of the multiple outcomes of teaching and learning. It was alarmingly clear that it is not only the obvious outcome of the teaching process, i.e. a dance piece or a new skill, that makes it successful or valuable. It is how a participant begins to open up to their peers creatively, it is creating a sense of belonging and shared purpose within a group and it is letting the individuals lead the process. From my work in Bolivia I realised it is possible to ask for high standards from young people, as they are capable of achieving, but also trusting that they will rise to the occasion and leaving space for personalities, diversions and laughter to affect the outcome too. In future work I will have this in the forefront of my mind. Personally, overcoming the language barrier and seeing the enjoyment dance gave in a city so far removed from where I built my skills base has further confirmed to me the value of dance, movement, expression and creativity making me a more

assured and determined artist and teacher.

Lucy Evans