

To: LUTSF
From: Lucy Howell
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Dear LUTSF

I am writing with my report following my successful study trip to the Limon Summer Intensive, New York, 10-26 July, 2004. I had a wonderful time and learned a great deal. The workshop was excellent; it renewed my love and passion for dance and has given me so many ideas for the continuation of my work in this field. The other classes I attended were also great. I did not manage as many as I had originally thought possible, and this was for a number of reasons. Firstly, the workshop was very demanding and I was very tired; secondly, the nature of the workshop was to focus intensively on specific aspects of the technique. I found doing other classes quite difficult, especially Cunningham technique. I did however attend three classes outside of the workshop and I really enjoyed them, just being out and about in the New York dance scene was exciting and a wonderful experience.

I am going to New Zealand shortly to spend a year exploring dance there. I am really looking forward to pursuing some teaching work there and hope to use some of the things I learned in New York to help me do so.

I would like to thank the LUTSF for allowing me to travel to the US; it has been a wonderful experience and I am really grateful.

Yours sincerely

Lucy Howell

LUTSF Report

New York 10-26 July 2004

I arrived in New York on Saturday 10th August, 2 days before the start of the Limon Summer Intensive that I was due to start on Monday 12th July. I was glad to arrive with some time to spare, as I was able to get my bearings and sort out an accommodation disaster (the place I had booked into was horrendous!).

I arrived at the studio on Broadway an hour before the start of class, I was feeling quite nervous as I had no idea what to expect. I found many people in the same situation and quickly made friends. This made the whole experience even more enjoyable as I was able to explore the city with like-minded company.

The workshop was split into three sessions; I was booked onto two of the three, Technique and Repertory. Technique class was first in the day from 10-12. We learned a series of technical phases that built through the week and focused closely on specific aspects of Limon technique. This was excellent as although I studied some Limon during my training it was a great opportunity to really digest the basics and finer points of the technique. The workshop leader was Risa Steinberg, who danced for many different dance companies in her early performance career including Martha Graham Company and Jose Limon Dance Company, and she now teaches internationally and tours a series of solo performances. She was absolutely amazing, her energy was phenomenal and she was so enthusiastic and passionate about the technique. It was impossible not to be inspired by her and she continued to amaze us as the days went on. Her teaching methods were varied and inventive; she often had the whole group in stitches as she tried a variety of ways to get the information across.

Repertory was between 12-2pm; I was really excited about doing this part of the workshop, as it has been some time since I learned anything in this way. Although I really enjoy choreographing and being creative, I was very much looking forward to learning something already in existence, especially something from such an extensive repertoire as the Limon Company. I was certainly not disappointed. The piece we learnt was a section of a section of 'A Choreographic Offering' set to Bach's 'A Musical Offering'. Limon choreographed it in the 1960's for a cast of around sixty. There were around thirty at the workshop, which was hugely complicated for Risa to work with. I can only imagine what the piece would have looked like with sixty! We started by learning the very basics of the material which was really helpful as the final version of the movements was fairly complicated and contained many layers. The first few sessions were spent building up the layers and setting a loose structure. We learnt snippets of movements that were slotted together and performed by different groups. As the days went on the piece took greater shape, towards the end of the second week we started to learn a short section of 'A Time to Hate' also by Limon, which was a completely different piece and utilised a whole new set of performance techniques.

The last 30 minutes of Repertory session was set aside for a discussion and teachings from Risa on performance techniques; we spent time studying the following aspects:

- Focus
- Space
- Music
- Narrative
- Gesture

- Transitions
- Dynamics
- Phrasing

This time was invaluable because as the days went on it became a discussion forum for all of our experiences in applying these factors in the practical work. We also tried out different exercises to find new ways of working and played with a variety of methods to challenge and renew the way we viewed technique and performance. Risa was a fountain of knowledge in these sessions with an example from her life and career for every possible scenario.

Every day technique class became more complicated as new layers were added to existing movements. There was often a crossover between technique and repertory, which gave a sense of flow and continuity between the sessions. The time seemed to fly by and we could hardly believe it when the final day rolled around. The group had bonded really well and I felt quite sad to be saying goodbye to people I had shared such an amazing experience with. On the last day we gave a performance of what we had learned. My parents had arrived the previous day and came along to watch. They took some photographs that I have enclosed (I am in turquoise trousers)

During my free time I tried to make the most of being in the wonderful and vibrant New York City. I made some good friends and we had a great deal of fun exploring and visiting different places. One of the highlights was our visit to the Lincoln Centre. We decided to take the guided tour on Saturday 17th. Our guide was a delightful lady who was extremely knowledgeable and gave us an insight into the history of all aspects of the building and some of the amazing performances and visitors it had seen. We were able to sneak into the back of the Avery Fisher Hall to see popular musician Elvis Costello rehearsing with the Brooklyn Symphony Orchestra. We also went across to see the home of the New York City Ballet. Amazingly the guide gave us complimentary tickets to see the matinee performance of the Royal Ballet's Cinderella at The Metropolitan Opera House; we were astounded and had a wonderful afternoon there. On the evening of Saturday 17th we met with some others from the workshop to go over to Brooklyn for a special outdoor performance of Mark Morris Dance Company in Prospect Park as part of 'Celebrate Brooklyn'. It was a lovely evening with a great family atmosphere and a wonderful performance. On the following Monday the New York Philharmonic Orchestra gave a free concert in Central Park and we decided to take our picnics and go along. 90,000 others had decided to do the same. It was astounding! The performance was followed by a firework display and made for a truly enchanted evening.

The first class I took outside the workshop was at 'Steps on Broadway' a centre offering many different dance styles. I went along to Ballet and had a really great time, there was such a mix of people there and I was made to feel very welcome. I also took two Cunningham-based classes there. I wanted to go to the Cunningham Studio but there were no classes running when I was there. I would have liked to take more classes but realistically, with the demands of the workshop, it was very difficult. I found making the transition between Limon technique and Cunningham technique quite hard, it was very helpful though to apply the performance techniques we had been exploring and I found this helped a great deal.

Since returning home I have found that I feel re-inspired and that my love of dance had been refreshed. I have been teaching and choreographing for quite some time and, although I engage regularly in professional development, the opportunity to go to New York and study in this way has been fantastic. I would have loved to be able to spend longer there but it was extraordinarily expensive. I am considering going back in a year to potentially spend a longer period doing some more in-depth study and perhaps start working there as well. I am extremely grateful to the LUTSF

for allowing me to amend the timescale of my project and experience the vibrant dance culture of New York City.

Lucy Howell



