

Cover Letter:

15th December 2014

Dear LUTSF Secretary,

I am writing to thank you for the opportunity to be one of the awardees of the LUTSF in 2014, and I would like to share with you the details of my experience in New York during the month of October 2014.

Location of visit: New York, USA

Main aim of the trip: 'Street Style Lab' event – Observation and research on the teaching methodologies of pioneers in hip-hop

Dates of trip: 3-22nd October 2014

Dates of event: 12-19th October 2014

Highlights of the trip: Being able to learn from all the teachers of 'Street Style Lab' and the fact that I talked to them about 'Project Breakalign' and got support from most of these people, which offers even more accreditation to my project: Also the fact that I got to socialise and jam with all these people in a different setting than just the studios.

Another highlight was the fact that I competed in the 'Silverback Open Championship' in Philadelphia, with over 300 bboys and bgirls from around the world. Also, my experience with the Alvin Ailey staff and the time I spent within the establishment was very fruitful for my project, and helped me create new connections in the academic network of researchers.

Suggestions for future awardees: Plan ahead of your trip and make a flexible schedule beforehand. Things tend to change when you get to your destination, but the more organised you are the more you will be able to gain from it. Also, always seek out to do more than what you stated in the scholarship application, because there is always room for more development and growth.

Yours Sincerely,

Nefeli Tsiouti

Founder & Director of Project Breakalign

Researcher / Lecturer in Dance



Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Fund
Report by Nefeli Tsiouti
Title: New York's 'Street Style Lab'

In October 2014 I had the opportunity to travel to New York as part of the LUTSF that I was awarded earlier in the year, to attend the event 'Street Style Lab'. The importance of 'informal' education, as well as continuous growth and development for us artists is essential to keep educating audiences and communities; what LUTSF does for dancers is absolutely integral for our art form, and I feel very privileged to have been one of the winners of this scholarship.

At the moment, I am a Lecturer in Dance in Universities in London and I am also the Founder and Director of Project Breakalign, a prevention of injuries project for Breakers. As a dancer and bgirl, I have experienced a lot of physical injuries throughout my dance career and I saw the excessive need in having a methodology which will protect the Breakers worldwide from injuries, in order to support them and offer them longevity in their dance. I have been conducting independent research on this field since 2011 and Project Breakalign is now officially conducting academic research within university establishments. Teaching workshops of a dance style is one of the ways that information gets passed on from teachers to students; therefore I considered it a very important field of research to investigate how pioneers and experienced teachers pass on the information to the younger generations.

My reason for this trip was to attend the event 'Street Style Lab', organised by Nicole NoEasyProps. The event took place between the 12-19th of October 2014. The schedule consisted of 7 full days of dance workshops and 1 day of a tour of New York in relation to its history of hip-hop. The dance workshops that took place were:

- New Style Hustle by Jeff Selby)
- Breaking by Storm, Ken Swift
- Toprock by Kapela
- Tops & Drops by Ynot
- Hip-hop by Link, Buddha Stretch
- Locking by Hurrikane, Storm
- Popping by Storm, Mr.Wiggles, Popin pete
- House by Marjory Smarth, Kapela, Caleaf
- Rock the House by Ynot&Caleaf
- House Dance Moving Meditation Class by Sekou
- Lindy Hop by Moncell Durden
- Hand Style by Mr.Wiggles
- Vogue by Javier Ninja
- Waacking by Waackeisha
- Hair out Heels on by Tyrone Proctor
- Lofing by Storenzo
- Rocking by Ringo, Willie Estrada&Papo
- Stretching by Nefeli sMash

Most days had 4 dance workshops in the schedule and at the evening of each day I was teaching a 45-minute Stretching session to the participants of the classes to ensure their bodies get the conditioning they require to be able to dance throughout the whole event. On the last 2 days of the event there were 9 workshops on each day.



Photography: WilliamK

My aims for attending this event were to observe and research the methodologies that the teachers used in regards to safe dance practise, while teaching these workshops. The educators out there set the example for the younger generations on how the different styles are being taught; therefore their contribution on the longevity of these art forms, as well as the way they are being taught, is absolutely essential, as these people mentioned above are some of the most influential people educating worldwide and some of them are considered Pioneers in their dance style. The trailer of the event can be found here, credit goes to WilliamK <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-egdjlMWWo>

I mostly focused on observing and participating in the workshops related to Breaking primarily, as well as House, Popping, Locking and Lindy Hop. Because of the large number of teachers and workshops, I decided to focus on the ones that are directly related to my research field which is Breaking, and look at a few others as well. I chose as my main research artists Storm, Marjory Smarth, Moncell Durden and Ynot. I found that their methodologies of teaching in regards to safe dance practise were very useful to investigate, as well as very safe for the participants in their workshops. I will give a short analysis below for each individual teacher. It is important to mention that the workshops lasted 1.5 hours each, therefore there wasn't sufficient time for the teachers to provide a thorough warm-up and cool-down, but that should have been the responsibility of the participants.

To begin with, I participated in Storm's 'Breaking' class and observed his 'Popping' and 'Locking' class. Storm has created a 'template' warm-up that he used for each of the styles he teaches, which is specified on the type of movement which will occur during the workshop. Although the teachers don't necessarily have to provide a deep warm-up for the participants due to time constraints, a breaking-specific warm-up for the Breaking class not only prepares the body for the movements which will take place, but it also puts the mind in the frame that it needs to focus in order to prepare it for the patterns of

movement which will take place shortly. Generally speaking, he provided a break-down of which body parts initiate the movements that his teaching included; he also explained the mechanics of the movement, putting it in context for each of the styles he was teaching – Breaking, Popping, Locking – and always having reference to the mentality and aesthetics of the dance. This was very useful for the participants, as it gives intention to the movement rather than just executing from what they believe they see. His methods of teaching are very analytical and he explains very well visually, as well as acoustically, which reaches out to most types of learners/students.

Moreover, I observed Marjory Smarth's 'House' class. That was one of the most positive and supportive experiences in my dance career. Marjory creates an inclusive environment for her students and encourages everyone to find their self in the music and the movement; she is a believer that there is no dance without emotional content, and her teaching methods focus around that. In regards to safe dance practise, Marjory's positive vibe has set the mind frame, but also the physical body for what is coming up in the class. Her house-specific warm-up was a perfect preparation for the body, mentally and physically as she combined directions, speed, levels of impact, cardiovascular progression and also mental patterns. She uses music to guide her teaching, and this creates a direct connection with it because inevitably all the participants find a way to relate to it with their individuality. She drilled basic rhythmic exercises, which were then manipulated in more complex ways to progress brain function and technique. It is essential to mention that the cool-down was indeed a cool-down of what preceded in the class, which gave the opportunity to the body to gradually reduce the cardiovascular rhythms, as well as to decrease the hype and the complex functions of the mind to bring it back to its initial state.

Furthermore, I participated in Moncell Durden's 'Lindy Hop' workshop. Moncell taught a thorough and organic warm-up to his students; he used mobilisation and isolations, breathing exercises, as well as audiovisual explanation for the exercises. The warm-up was a physical and mental preparation for the movement that came later on in the class. Moncell, being an academic, always teaches in the context of the origins of the dance style. This helps the students understand where the movement they are doing comes from, both in historical context, as well as physically relating it to its origins, which makes them have a deeper understanding of the mechanics of the movement, and also helps them understand their body in a more organic way. His teaching consisted of drilling, demonstrations, slower tempo explanations, individual and partner work and more.

Last but not least, I participated in Ynot's 'Tops & Drops' workshop, as well as his combined workshop with Caleaf entitled 'Rock the House'. Ynot's workshop had a very natural progression, the reason being that he uses groove and the rock to initiate his movement, but also to explain the context of his unique toprock style. There was a very smooth cardiovascular increase for the body, which eventually led to 'Tops & Drops', just like the workshop is entitled. He also demonstrated a few times in detail the technique of some movements, offering the reasons behind their functionality in regards to preventing injuries on certain joints, such as the knees when getting into drops. As a whole, Ynot has a smooth way of teaching which is also apparent during his dancing.

As part of 'Street Style Lab', I was also teaching 'Stretching Sessions' every evening as the last session of the day for the participants of the course, as previously stated. The days were full of dance classes and at the end of each day it was very fruitful for the participants to have a deep stretching session to bring their bodies back in recovery

mode, in order to avoid injuries and to be ready for the next few days of dance. The duration of my sessions was 45 minutes long and consisted of Fascial and Spinal Stretches from the Ming Method, as well as general stretches which I put together as a 'programme' of Stretching to teach in this intense 7 days of classes. The participants were roughly the same every day which proved to be very useful for them but also for me, as I managed to see improvement in most dancers' flexibility by Day 7.



Every day of dance workshops concluded with a party in a club such as Toca Tuesdays, Deja Vu with Talib kweli & Dj Fleg, The Art Of Dance with artwork installations by artists such as Ynot, Jam Finale with Dj Skeme Richards on the turntables and last but not least Funkbox. The parties are a very important element of the hip-hop culture as they are the places where the people socialise and dance together; it is essential to vibe socially, or else you can never understand the history of the party dances and how these styles evolved back in the day. The clubs are the places where you get to apply what you have learnt beforehand, but also experience more and exchange and share with your surroundings. The vibe in New York is very different to UK parties, and everyone involved with hip-hop should experience this.

Furthermore, as part of 'Street Style Lab', in the middle of the week of workshops, we had a day in which we had a Tour of New York in regards to its hip-hop history. A day could never be enough for such a rich history, but we got to see the perspectives and hear about the experiences of some of the pioneers from back in the day. We visited areas from Central park, to Rock Steady Park, the Bronx, Harlem and more. After a full day of touring, we watched Moncell Durden's work in progress film screening, followed by Q & A hosted by Robin Dunn, and a panel of most of the teachers involved in the event such as: Buddha Stretch, Link, Moncell, Caleaf, Marjory Smarth, Storm, Popin Pete, Kapela, Hurricane, Waackeisha and Willie Estrada.

My aim was to make the most of my trip in New York, therefore I also attended a 'Prevention of Injuries' lecture, which was held at the Martha Graham school of Contemporary Dance, taught by Shaw Bronner, the Director of Physical Therapy Services at Alvin Ailey School. The lecture was aimed towards students of dance schools such as Peridance, Alvin Ailey and more. I had the amazing opportunity to get a tour of the Alvin Ailey school afterwards, and also visit the Physical Therapy Department of the school, while students were being treated.

In addition, I visited the 'Harkness Center for Dance Injuries' in Manhattan, where I had a free dance injury assessment by one of the project assistants at the Center. It was a very interesting experience to see how they assess the dancers and to get advice with corrective exercises in regards to previous injuries or body instabilities.

I would also like to mention that I managed to attend The Bronx Boys (TBB) Anniversary on the 4th of October in the Bronx, New York and the 'Silverback Open Championship' in Philadelphia on the 11th of October, where I also competed on the 1vs1 battles.

I am very thankful for this opportunity I got awarded by LUTSF and I would suggest to all the dancers out there to keep applying until their project is strong enough to be ready for an award like this. It has definitely helped me develop and progress my independent research, as part of 'Project Breakalign's' research work. I aim to write another more detailed article regarding the teaching methodologies of the 4 pioneers I was observing, which will be published in the Dance UK magazine in spring 2015 and potentially in the Dance & Somatic Practices special issue in 2015.