

6<sup>th</sup> March 2008

Dear LUTSF

Please find enclosed a copy of my completed report following my research trip in Brazil January 3– February 8 2008.

My training involved studying with Capoeira Mestres at 3 large international Capoeira events as well undertaking regular training sessions with Mestres in Salvador and taking dance classes in various styles of Brazilian dance including Samba de Roda, Axe and Maculele. Additionally, I took part in a Capoeira community festival '**Ginga Mundo**' which was part of the Salvador Carnival, 23-31 January as well as performing in the Salvador Carnival.

The three main events I attended were:

**Capoeirance** , Fortaleza 3-7 January

**Caporando** Ilheus 10-13 January

**Festival International Capoeiragem** CTE in Salvador 15-19<sup>th</sup> January.

*Capoeirance* involved 5 days of approximately 8 hours training a day in 34 degrees of heat. Each class was led by a different Mestre of international acclaim and included Angola, Regional and Contemporary styles as well as some Afro-Brazilian dance sessions including Samba de Roda and Maculele. There were numerous opportunities to watch games between talented Capoeiristas as well as legendary Masters, however for copyright reasons, it was not possible to video any of the games at the event as there will be a professional DVD of the event released shortly. In addition to the workshops, there were performances and discussions on contemporary issues of Capoeira.

*Caporando* involved 4 days of intensive classes each led by different internationally acclaimed masters. The location of the event being next to a large flat beach, meant there were also lots of opportunities for trying out acrobatic moves on the soft sand. as well as participating and recording numerous games. There were master classes for the masters that we were able to watch as well as performances and discussions.

Festival International Capoeiragem consisted of a program of workshops again led by internationally reputed masters as well as a performance that I took part in, a capoeira procession for the Salvador Carnival as well as a programme of historical tours and talks on the history of Capoeira. This was particularly interesting to put the history into context as well as visiting a number of Capoeira academies training in a range of styles.

The Ginga Mundo community festival was interesting as all walks of the community took part including the children that live on the streets as they were free to all. This emphasized the inclusive and community aspect of Capoeira.

I undertook regular sessions with Mestre Jogo de Dentro at his academy in Salvador. As Angola style was fairly new to me, this was a real insight into the rules and rituals of the game and helped to develop a greater understanding of the concepts and logic behind the moves.

After the four weeks training, I spent a further week documenting Carnival music and dance. This will be particularly useful reference material for my work as a Cultural Arts Practitioner in delivering percussion workshops such as Samba drumming.

This project has provided me an invaluable opportunity to study with some of the most internationally respected Mestres as well as creating a resource of moves on video to use for choreographic purposes. My skills as a capoeirista have improved dramatically and I have been greatly inspired by what I have seen and learnt. I hope that this will help to enhance my group Cordao de Nottingham with Contra Mestre Papa Leguas in Nottingham as well as helping me to achieve my grading this April.

It was a real insight to see how other academies train as well as being exposed to the different styles and legendary figures in the Capoeira world. In my report I have listed some of the observations I have made.

In addition to this, I am keen to explore all of these ideas and integrate them into a new Salsa choreography which I plan to do over the next few months. This will involve working with a team of mixed professional and community dancers to explore ways of integrating the two styles and putting a piece together to perform at a joint Salsa/ Capoeira event.

The only downside of the project was that the economic situation changed dramatically due to the success of Bio fuel which could not have been forecast as well as the increased costs of travel and accommodation linked to the period of Carnival. As a result, the research into the costs and budgeting of the trip meant that the actual costs were far higher. I was faced with the dilemma of curtailing the trip / missing parts of the project or accepting the debts and making the most of the opportunity whilst I was there which is what I decided to do.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for enabling me to undertake this inspirational development project that will have a long lasting impact on my future work.

Yours sincerely

Nikki Kemp

**Nikki Kemp**  
**Research and Training in Capoeira -Brazilian music and dance**  
**January 3– February 8 2008**

The research and training project that I undertook involved 4 weeks of intensive training, research and documentation with groups and masters of different styles of Capoeira, dance and music in different regions of Brazil. The purpose of the trip was to collate ideas and ways of working that could be integrated into new choreography with Cuban Salsa dance.

I changed my original dates to coincide with 2 large- scale international Capoeira events that I discovered to be taking place in January 2008. This meant that I was able to observe, document and train with a total of 26 of the most respected international Mestres from the world of Capoeira which was

an unmissable opportunity. I also attended regular training with specific Mestres as well as attending an additional Contemporary Capoeira event with Mestre Balao in Salvador.

The three main events I attended were:

**Capoeirance** , Fortaleza 3-7 January

**Caporando** Ilheus 10-13 January

**Festival Internacional Capoeiragem** CTE in Salvador 15-19<sup>th</sup> January.

In addition to these, I undertook regular classes with Mestre Jogo de Dentro in Salvador as well as Afro-Brazilian dance classes and performances as well as taking part in a procession of Capoeira in the Salvador Carnival. After this, I attended another festival of Capoeira workshops and performances called *Ginga Mundo* in Salvador which took place between 23-31 January. This festival involved open community workshops in the plazas which were free to anyone enabling the children that live on the streets and favelas to take part.

The end of my training coincided with the world renowned Carnival, so I was additionally able to document regional styles of music and dance. The theme for the 2008 Salvador Carnival was Capoeira, which meant there were many Capoeira groups performing that I was invited to join in with. The regional variations of the music and dance; Maracatu, Samba Reggae and Batucada, were particularly interesting to me and this provided me with a resource of ideas to use in my future work as a workshop facilitator in Samba and world percussion and dance.

By attending these large scale Capoeira events, it enabled me to learn more about the history and diversity of styles as well as developing an understanding for the inclusive social and community aspects as well as learning and documenting a vast directory of moves.

I have included a list of the Mestres I trained with at the end of this report.

### **What I learnt**

I was struck by the commitment and respect involved between a master and their students and the strength of the Capoeira community in providing a supportive global network. It has only recently been openly celebrated by the Brazilian government after many years of banning the practice of Capoeira. However, now it is recognised and celebrated throughout the country and has become a symbol of Brazilian identity now being practiced throughout the world.

By attending the large scale international events, I became aware of the strong, supportive network that has been established for Capoeiristas globally as well as the deep respect for the Mestres from their students. There were discussions and seminars such as 'the evolution of Capoeira' and 'how to develop Capoeira in the future without losing its identity' as well as presentations on how people are using it to work with people with disabilities, young offenders and disadvantaged groups to create community cohesion.

As part of the process of understanding how people with disabilities have been learning capoeira, we were encouraged to play as if we were missing various limbs. This was particularly insightful as it encouraged a more creative way of playing and adapting to the restrictions imposed such as

putting emphasis on other parts of the body to maintain the expression and fundamental identity of Capoeira.

There are 2 distinctive styles of Capoeira from which all the other styles have derived. These are:

**Regional**; fast, upright with lots of high kicks, and

**Angola**; slow, lower game with mockery.

The group Cordao de Ouro that I train with combines both of these styles along with acrobatics and is called **Contemporary** Capoeira.

I undertook a number of training sessions in each of the above styles. This also included learning the songs and accompanying instruments as well as other related art forms such as Maculele and Samba de Roda .

The most important part of playing Capoeira is to absorb the spirit of the music and songs and interpret it in your game as well as respecting the *Berimbau*- a one stringed instrument with a resonating gourd. The player of the Berimbau and the instrument itself are highly respected and can dictate and control the game. Capoeira was born out of slavery in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century in Brazil and here are many theories as to the origins of how and why the art form developed. The game itself is characterised by a pair of people playing intertwining moves around, above and below each other like a rotating ball of yin and yang in a series of non-contact attack (kick) and retreat (escape) moves. This is accompanied by a group of people playing percussion instruments ;Berimbau, Pandeiro (a type of tambourine), Reco Reco (type of guiro/ scraper), Atabaque (large wooden carcass drum with skin head), Agogo (metal two toned bell) and a **Choro/ Ladainho** which is a call and response style song, often based on historical moments/ memorable games of Capoeira. A Roda (circle)is created by the other players awaiting their turn. They sing the chorus and clap to keep the energy alive for the players in the middle.

Each style is accompanied by a bateria of instruments according to the style of the game:

**Angola**- Reco Reco, Agogo, 2 Pandeiros, 3 Berimbaus, atabaque

**Regional**- 1 Berimbau, 2 Pandeiro, clapping

Capoeira, along with the practice of Candomble (a religious practice involving worship of African gods) and Samba music (using African rhythms), was out-ruled by the Brazilian government for many years and has only recently been accepted and recognised as central to Brazilian culture.

In addition to the Capoeira, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to take part in related Afro-Brazilian dance sessions including Maculele, Samba and Axe.

Music and dance are an integral part of Brazilian culture and I was constantly surrounded by inspirational examples that I documented on video.

The end of my training also coincided with the infamous Brazilian Carnival and I was invited to join a Capoeira procession in Salvador with the group CTE that I trained with. As the theme of the 2008 Salvador carnival was *Capoeira*, there were numerous events, performances and workshops happening spontaneously in the streets. The procession I took part in was accompanied by a group of 60 Samba drummers playing Samba Reggae style, flag bearers, 80 dancers, a giant *trio electrica* (converted lorry to a giant soundsystem) with singer, pandeiro, berimbau and cavaquinho (small guitar),

and a group of approximately 30 Capoeiristas playing spontaneously in the street as the procession moved along. The procession was akin to the Nottinghill Carnival but on a far greater scale. It was surprisingly disorganised considering there had been a year to plan the event and resulted in enormous trucks that filled both sides of the road coming from all different directions at once, trying to cut across a million crowd revellers at a busy road intersection where consequently the procession fell apart!

I managed to document numerous Capoeira games of different styles on video as well as a range of Afro-Brazilian dance and music styles. All of this has been truly inspirational and will certainly provide an excellent resource to develop new ideas for choreography which I plan to explore with my group in the next few months.

### **Compiling the knowledge**

Capoeira has a discipline of its own and the strength, knowledge and skills involved require many years of dedicated training to achieve even simple results, In my opinion, the three dimensional quality of the movement often involving balancing upside down on hands is akin to break dancing and is not something that can be easily learnt overnight. It is improvised, although I did see some fixed choreographed sequences in some of the group performances.

Salsa dance is more accessible and tangible to the unacquainted as a learning process, aided by the fact that most of the time you are vertical and does not require years of physical strength training to achieve even basic moves. To achieve the results that I am interested in combining Capoeira and Salsa as freestyle elements would require working with people that have the skills and knowledge of both distinct art forms. In the region where I am based, this would be particularly difficult. However, I aim to use the community dance group that I am currently working with, to experiment with integrating specific areas of choreography drawn from my research that would be more achievable. At a later date, I would like to try to approach the project working with Capoeiristas or ideally people with a sound knowledge of both styles.

Cuban Salsa uses the Rueda Casino- (the wheel) where specific Salsa choreography can be called upon for the whole group to do in unison and then pass on to other partners. I believe that this is the area where the Capoeira influence will develop more happily. The timing of Salsa is important in relation to the music whereas in Capoeira the music influences the moves but does not dictate the specific placing of steps and is therefore more fluid, so this element would have to be manipulated to make it work. However, I am particularly interested in the interpretation of music in Salsa and the expressiveness of the varying instruments and therefore if the music demands a particular expressive movement then there is flexibility for this to work.

The following is a list of some of the comparisons I made in order to inform ways of combining Capoeira and Salsa styles together. This list was constructed as a result of my own research and observations and should not therefore be considered definitive.

### **The similarities between Capoeira and Salsa (Cuban style)**

Intricate footwork based on a common pattern both of which can fit into a 4 beat pattern

Strong sense of centre, balance and coordination required.

Dancing/ playing in pairs

Improvised movement and response between 2 people is essential

Responding to and interpreting music

The learning process involves learning set sequences which later encourage free improvised movements.

The expressive use of the whole body

Interaction and response between 2 people

Awareness of each others positioning at all times

Cuban style salsa and Capoeira both work in the round

Playful

Origins include elements of African culture in the movement and music

In the UK there are communities of Capoeiristas and communities of Salseros

Purists would consider certain adaptations or integrations of new movements

to be breaking the 'tradition'. However, contemporary Capoeira integrates a

range of styles and encourages a more experimental approach. Salsa, being

a social dance style that has evolved organically rather than being taught in

academies, has absorbed a range of influences, highly energetic and aerobic.

Both styles involve learning set movements that the players then have to

piece together themselves and improvise to play out of their opponent's way.

It's a fun activity played one on one, and to music.

Both styles have a fun, playful element and a mass appeal.

### **The differences between Capoeira and Salsa (Cuban style)**

Capoeira includes all levels from standing to the floor as well as being vertical and upside down using the hands to move around, on a line and circling over and under each other. Although Regional style is generally more vertical it may also involve some 'escapes' to the floor or crouching.

Salsa (Cuban style) works in a round, mainly standing – 1 level, and the dancers are always vertical, never upside down. Cuban Salsa footwork is directly related to a beat or pulse or a division of this in the music. Capoeira responds to the music but the rhythm does not dictate the movement of the feet. In Capoeira, girls can play boys and vice versa. The interaction is literally moving art. Salsa is traditionally considered a sexual and sensual dance between a male and female partner, females would sometimes dance together but only recently in less machismo areas, male couples will dance together.

Capoeira was traditionally played by men (the slaves practicing fighting techniques) before becoming formalised with the introduction of the academies where it became more common for women to take part. Origins of Salsa come from a fusion of dance styles and rhythms. Origins of Capoeira come from disguising a fight as a dance primarily and it has evolved into

being more of a dance (non contact). Capoeiristas usually study under one master and stay within a particular 'school' or discipline. Salsa pupils may study with a particular tutor but this is co-incidental rather than authoritative

### **My Feedback**

As a personal development programme, this project has enabled me to undertake training with a wealth of highly respected masters and therefore my own playing skills have improved tremendously which will hopefully benefit the group Cordao de Ouro that I currently train with in Nottingham as I work towards my next grading this April.

The documentation videos will provide a wealth of resource and inspiration for other capoeiristas and my future work both as a Capoeirista and Salsa dancer, performer and musician. In addition to greatly deepening my knowledge of Capoeira as an art form, it has enabled me to network with other artists and teachers from groups across the world and Mestre Jogo de Dentro whom I studied with in Salvador, has been invited to the UK to lead some training with my Capoeira group in April.

The only negative aspect of the trip was financial. Brazilian currency and the economy had increased dramatically since I made the initial enquiries of costs for travel and accommodation. Prices always fluctuate around the period of carnival and bearing this in mind, I had asked for estimates of price increases in the high season for accommodation and travel. However, the actual costs were far above these and therefore it meant that I accumulated a large debt as a result of undertaking the training. I was left with the option of curtailing the trip and opting out of the various training events which would have defeated the purpose of the trip. I decided to persevere and immerse myself in all the surrounding opportunities and face the consequences on return.

I am extremely inspired by this trip and am looking forward to exploring and working through these ideas in the near future and I am very grateful to LUTSF for enabling me to undertake this inspirational project.

### **List of Mestres I trained with**

#### **Capoeirance - Fortaleza**

Mestre Palao

Mestre Poncaino

Mestre Indio

Mestre Brasileiro

Mestre Deputado

#### **Afro-Brazilian dance**

Mestre Balon

#### **Benguela**

Mestre Irini,

Mestre Suasuna

#### **Caparando- Ilheus**

Mestre Jogo de Dentro

Mestre Balao

Mestre Poncianiel

**Afro-Dance**

Mestre Virgilio

Mestre Medicina

**Maculele , Afro dance, percussion**

Mestre Claudio

Mestre Spirro Mirrim

**List of Mestres I observed**

Mestre Pequeno

Mestre Jao Grande

Mestre Xicoche

Mestre Xangando

Mestre Onca

Mestre Xiu Xiu

Contra Mestre Papa Leguas

Contra Mestre Casquinha

Contra Mestre Parenche

Contra Mestre Papa Legu