

Dear LUTSF

Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Fund

LUTSF enabled me to take up University of Tasmania's (UTAS) offer to be artist-in residence within the School of Visual and Performing Arts July 14th – September 2nd 2006. The residency enabled me to do everything I had hoped to, and more. It was an extremely positive experience, both personally and professionally, providing me with time in a stimulating new environment to continue my research through practice as a dance artist. I saw it as an important opportunity to reflect further on my practice as solo performer/creator and to develop new work in response to new sites which I would encounter while in Tasmania. It was a period of intense creative activity as artist/teacher in which I also introduced principles of my work to students and facilitated a devised movement and vocal piece developed from their experience of and response to sites in Launceston and the local Gorge, which enjoyed two public performances at the end of the project. Additionally I found many other opportunities to perform and share my work within the institution and to the local community.

Travelling within Tasmania, a new culture for me, enabled me to further my research into 'Site as Source and Resource for Sounding Dance Improvisation' in a fresh and stimulating environment. I gathered resources through mini-disc and video recordings, photographs and artist journal. These along with sense memories of my travels will undoubtedly feed my work for years to come. There were many highlights for me from actually travelling, all of which have in some way already fed into my new solo piece 'Ode to Tasmania'. Many walks in natural landscapes, in bush and along coasts, were a fantastic source of inspiration. Stabbing through the idyll of these wondrous landscapes were the issues of deforestation and road-kill, cultural references which crept into performance. I feel this project was well-defined within the context of the residency offered me, so it did not present me with any undue difficulties to which I would advise future applicants. All I can say is that the rewards of travelling to and spending time in another culture are immense. If there was one small point of advice it would be to truly spend TIME wherever it is you are travelling to. I spent a great deal of time travelling around, rather than BEING. Doing less and spending more time could perhaps provide an even deeper experience than I had.

I have plans to perform 'Ode to Tasmania' again and to develop the work at a later date. As it stands it can be presented with other solo pieces as an evening of performance, and it is an ideal length for seminar presentations, one of the contexts in which I would like to present the work in order to share my experiences. An article is also an aim. I hope to create a website in 2007 and documentation from this residency could form an important element.

Please find enclosed some supporting material. I'm afraid some of the documentation (e.g. photos of performance provided to me by a photographer on disc) cannot be included at this time because it is not compatible with this computer system.

Please could you return 'Diary of a Madwoman in Tasmania' DVD to me, as UTAS only made me one copy. Many thanks,
Yours sincerely,

Pam Woods

Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Report: Pam Woods Artist-in Residence University of Tasmania (UTAS) July – September 2006

Details of the residency

This was at UTAS, the Academy of the Arts at Inveresk, Launceston, Tasmania, which regularly invites international artists from different art forms to contribute to the vitality of the institution by pursuing their own practice and sharing this in some way with the community within the academy. My placement was with the School of Visual and Performing Arts. I was their first dance artist.

The residency requirements on me were few: 1) to introduce aspects of my practice to date at an artist's forum (a regular event) early in the residency; 2) to introduce principles of my practice, through a weekly workshop, to second year undergraduates in a Devised Theatre module; 3) to share my practice in some way during or at the end of the residency. The opportunities afforded me during the residency meant that there were many ways in which I could develop and share my work as an artist and teacher, reaching far beyond the above basic requirements.

Personal Practice

My personal research and practice centres around 'Site as Source and Resource for Sounding Dance Improvisation'. This includes investigating: different relationships between sound (predominantly non-verbal vocalisation) and movement; the skills involved in improvisation; enquiry into the importance and development of the perceptions. Experimentations and performances both draw on and take place in a range of sites, both interior and exterior, which are of structural and acoustic interest to me.

Several practices and the work of practitioners, experienced through intensive courses and workshops, have informed my own work and development as both performer and teacher. ^[1] Prior to the residency in Tasmania I was just completing a cycle of practice leading to the performance of 'Room', choreographed by Deborah Hay. ^[2] The focus of Hay's work is perceptual and I felt it was appropriate for me to offer this as a performance during my residency in addition to any new work that I might develop.

My PhD through Practice (Exeter 2003), culminated in a substantial solo performance entitled 'Falling Among the Nettles', which drew on and was performed in a range of sites within Exeter and its surrounds, and also investigated 'memory as site', an ingredient of both the work I do with students and my solo devised pieces.

The residency in Tasmania was an opportunity to attend to and develop my personal practice by continuing to investigate different relationships between movement and voice in response to a range of sites, this time afforded by a new cultural environment. In addition to responding to various sites in a around Launceston, where I was based, I travelled quite extensively to different regions at weekends and experienced the special qualities of a range of remarkable sites and landscapes. This provided me with a huge resource for the development of a new piece.

Artist's forum

This took place as an *in-conversation-with*, where I was interviewed by Peter Hammond about my work as a dance artist. In order to give the audience an idea of the nature of my performance work I gave a Power Point presentation of 'Falling Among the Nettles' and showed 'Diary of a Madwoman', an edited video of a series of solo explorations and experimentations in a range of sites (in Devon and further a-field), which formed an early part of my PhD research.

At this forum I stated my intention of creating 'Diary of a Madwoman in Tasmania'. By the end of the residency I had hours of video documentation of personal movement and vocal responses to a range of sites around Launceston and on my weekend travels around Tasmania. These were edited to create a DVD, which was available for viewing in the foyer before and after the performance of 'A Sense of Place' (see below).

Devised Theatre project

This was a seven-week project with second year undergraduates on a Devised Theatre Module. There was no pressure to create a public performance outcome but the project developed well and culminated in a 1 hour 20 minute performance, 'A Sense of Place', performed on 1st and 2nd September 2006 at the Annexe Theatre, Inveresk. It was presented in four sections: Launceston Gorge (a stunning natural feature within walking distance of the city) provided the source and resource for individual movement and sound responses, which were then developed by the whole group; Launceston city provided the source and resource for three smaller group pieces; overlapping solos for the whole group, sourced from Tasmania's convict history; new solo piece, based on my experience of Tasmania.

Having only seven time-tabled workshop sessions to introduce principles of my practice to a group of students, who had had no prior movement experience on their course, was certainly a challenge for all concerned. Their development was, however, profound. All substantially improved their performance skills and gained basic compositional skills, perhaps most noticeable in their improved consideration of time and space, and the attention given to qualitative action. They gradually embraced the unfamiliar approach I presented to them and began to take creative risks. Significantly they demonstrated an increased confidence in their physicality, performance presence, self-awareness, and sensitivity and connection to each other.

Audience feedback was extremely positive, with particular appreciation of the nature of the material, even though it was an unfamiliar genre to most. Comments revealed ways in which the performance resonated in different ways for individuals on a personal level. Additionally, the cultural and environmental references contained within the performance were recognisable, possibly adding to the accessibility of the work.

Other projects

'Room' (choreographed by Deborah Hay, adapted and performed by Pam Woods)

'Room', was performed publicly five times in five different sites around Launceston: drama studio (UTAS); the railway yard (outside the Academy of Arts); the Gorge; the pump station, Kings Park; Chalmers (a deconsecrated church). I performed 'Room' in different sites on my travels, and extracts from some of them recorded on video are included in 'Diary of a Madwoman in Tasmania'.

Responses to Exhibitions

I made many visits to Launceston Gorge early in the residency to research the potential for my own practice and for work with students. At this time the Design Centre, Launceston, was exhibiting work by Brigita Ozolins, a video and sound installation entitled 'Gorge', which inspired me to want to perform a personal response. Permission gained from the centre and the artist, I set up a single video camera and proceeded alone in the space. Extracts are included in 'Diary of a Madwoman in Tasmania'.

Discussion with sculptor Marielle van den Bergh, resident artist from Holland at Poimera art gallery, led to an invitation to perform a personal response to her sculptures at the opening of her exhibition on Friday 11th August 2006.

New piece: 'Ode to Tasmania'

A major feature of my experience while in Tasmania was travelling alone at weekends. It was winter, and the days were short, so to maximise them I made early starts, often in the frost, and drove as far as I could go in several different directions. Wrapped and swathed in coats and scarves, I would walk and walk and walk. There were few other people about and I would often have vast expanses of beach to myself, with perhaps the company of an echidna. Or on bush walks wallabies would watch me with interest. When the sun came out the temperature changed radically and I was sometimes able to enjoy a brief walk without a coat. The quality of light, the sounds and the smells were all new. I kept a journal of my travels, experiences, observations, thoughts and this directly fed my creative process, enabling me to begin to create new work.

I edited, with technical help, several hours of mini-disc recordings taken on a series of walks, to create a 19 minute soundtrack for the new solo piece, performed as the final section of 'A Sense of Place' (see devised theatre project above). I selected from a substantial number of photographs taken on my travels to create a 'memory traces' slide show for the closing minutes of the performance. The piece took the form of a structured improvisation, which drew directly on my experiences during my time in Tasmania.

The whole of 'A Sense of Place' was well received, but I got genuinely positive feedback for my solo section too. Several people commented on the fact that I as a stranger had managed to open their eyes to the wonderful place they live in. They had gained a fresh appreciation of their homeland. One audience member commented that it was a very North Eastern Tasmanian piece, finding it quite gentle. It was clear to him that I had not been to the West (and indeed I hadn't managed to get there).

In my application I stated I would be interested to find out how a piece developed in response to the particularities of a range of sites in Tasmania might 'travel', as it were, and be received in the UK. I have since performed the solo at the University of Exeter with the title 'Ode to Tasmania'. Feedback indicates that it could well be extended, but as it stands it appears that it does indeed transfer across cultures. I was able to convey a strong 'sense of place' and certainly a strong sense of my own journey, even though the cultural references may not be so clear to a UK audience.

Concluding Statement

The experience as artist-in residence was challenging and satisfying on many levels, and overwhelmingly a positive one. I travelled to Tasmania with many hopes and intentions but few expectations. I could not have wished for more. I was able to immerse myself in and focus on my own practice throughout a variety of projects, many more than I could have envisaged. I gained many insights into a new culture and felt I offered a strong contribution while I was there. I am delighted there were so many positive outcomes, and believe I shall be able to draw on the experience in the future to feed my work.

The residency was affirming to me as an artist/teacher and certainly was, as stated in my letter of application, 'an important and life-enhancing experience, which I shall treasure for years to come.' I am truly grateful to the Lisa Ullman Travelling Scholarship Fund for the opportunity to attend to and reflect on my practice in a stimulating environment provided by another culture and its rich and varied landscapes.

Pam Woods

^[1] These included: 'Taketina' (Reinhardt Flatischler), a system of polyrhythmic training; 'Active Breath' (Patricia Bardi), an aspect of her 'Vocal Dance' practice; 'Deep Listening' (Pauline Oliveros); Deborah Hay's practice as choreographer/performer.

^[2] Independent Dance's 'Solo Performance Commissioning Project' 2005. Having learned 'Room' from Hay, eighteen international solo artists were to adapt it for solo performance over a minimum period of three months' continuous daily personal practice.