

Lost In Translation – Lisa Ullmann Project Report

Lost in Translation is a cultural dance exchange research project between local communities of the North of England and Chile. Through dance and theatre the project aimed to explore each community's sense of identity and togetherness, aiming to unite people through personal stories, theatre and dance. The team worked in the UK with communities from the North East, Cumbria and in Chile - predominantly in Santiago - whilst also researching with a number of people in the South and North of Chile.

The project at different stages united people from different walks of life whilst celebrating culture, differences and a greater understanding of other communities.



ADAM RUSSELL GIULIA COTI ZELATI

LOST IN TRANSLATION

A new exciting movement research project exploring local culture in communities of Santiago, Chile and Newcastle, UK

APRIL 19
3-5PM/6-8PM
ALL AGES

APRIL 21
3.30-5.30PM
PARENTS & KIDS 6+

**Jazz Café (upstairs)
25 - 27 Pink Lane
NE1 5DW
Newcastle upon Tyne**

Participation is free, booking is essential.

For booking and enquiries please contact:
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Newcastle April 2017

The project initially started in Newcastle in April 2017 with research workshops in response to local culture, history, music, folklore, family and community. The project worked with groups of parents and children, students from Newcastle College, adults with learning difficulties from Better Days and a number of professionals including young dance professionals based in the North East.

Through these first workshops we started to establish the project within a number of local community groups based in Newcastle whilst collecting movement research as well as stories thus gaining a greater understanding of the local cultural identity along with the unique attributes and qualities of people from Newcastle. Through working and living in Newcastle myself for a number of years there was an advantage from having a good understanding of local

culture and cultural norms which allowed me to build a strong collection of research to take to Chile for stage 2 of the project.

We recorded our research through film, images and drawings from those who took part in the project

Stage 2 - Chile June/ July 2017

Soon after arriving in Santiago it was clear that the project was going to be a challenge in many different ways than I expected. Following some thorough planning and having arrived, I started to gain an understanding of the city; it's residents and some cultural attitudes. However, it became clear I needed to re-plan and almost start again. One of the ways I did this was to make new connections in order to make the project happen successfully. Reflecting now, this has been one of the most challenging projects that I have experienced, especially in a logical sense. It took true determination, taking into account the restrictions of an unknown language, to communicate and help the project achieve something successful and worthwhile.

The project started with a number of workshops in public schools in Santiago through the help of Gabriella Serani and through contact with Reinaldo Quinchao Hormazabal; the director of municipal education for the borough of Santiago. We worked with primary and secondary ages in a number of different schools. It was humbling for myself and the project's team to be able to have an insight into public education in Chile. Some schools were very poor and we came to understand that it is a very different system to the one we have in the UK; for example, how financial funding is distributed to each school. We are so lucky in the UK (or in my experience of public education) for the resources and advancement in education we have. In many of the schools there were students who are migrants from neighbouring countries including Peru, Columbia and Argentina whose families have moved to Santiago for better work opportunities. This gave a rich and rewarding workshop experience with each student having a different cultural background now finding themselves united. All of the students were very welcoming and open, which made it feel an even more enriching experience to be invited into the school and work with all who took part.



These workshops provided the opportunity for each of the students to take part in dance, theatre and creative games, techniques and tasks. The team received a huge amount of praise and interest from each of the schools' principal directors because of an opportunity that is not very often available for the students. Our focus on the school workshops was how we can communicate using nothing but the language of movement, sharing dances unique to each culture, folk dances and stories. Whilst also sharing our research from Newcastle we were able to learn and share from all the children's stories and experiences taking part.

One of the schools we worked with was a school for deaf children. This was a great learning experience for the team and demanded great patience as at times we needed to translate English to Spanish eventually to sign language. We had over 80 students taking part (normal classes are taught in a maximum number of 8 students per class), which again added to the challenge of delivering the workshop in an outside playground. With students not being able to hear, the only way to gain attention is through sight and working with 80 students outside at the same time is very challenging with only the use of movement.



There was something special in once again being invited into a new community of people and each sharing and receiving new stories and information. On reflection, considering we were expected to deliver to over 10 times a normal class size, I feel we would have been able to work more in depth with the students and deliver a higher quality of the workshop on this occasion if we would have been able to work with smaller groups one at a time.

In Santiago we were invited to watch local folk dance groups rehearse and in exchange deliver workshops sharing our research of Newcastle communities and culture.

An additional challenge I found myself up against once I had arrived in Chile, was the location of the studio. I originally planned to run an intensive workshop process with community performers, however the studio was on the outskirts of the city and too far away to actually expect people to travel to. This meant I had to quickly re-network and make links with more central venues. I started successful conversations with a space called *Espacio Checoeslovaquia*, a 'performance and making space' predominantly for theatre practitioners. We made a new partnership to hold a cultural movement intensive, working with local community members leading to a sharing of a new work.



The intensive ran successfully. A sharing of different cultures, backgrounds, ages and life stories was a richly rewarding experience and all on the other side of the world. Through the success of the intensive at *Espacio Checoeslovaquia*, there is now an open door, possibly to return again with another project in the future.



Throughout the process alongside working with the local community in Santiago the *Lost in Translation* team travelled to the North and South of Chile, gaining an insight to cultures and communities from people who lived in dry desert regions in the north compared to people of the south such as in the city of Valdivia where it seemed to rain endlessly for days non-stop. We were fortunate enough to hear stories, to be invited into family homes and to interview local people, making them a part of our documentary process. We also performed a number of improvised dances and experiments in each of the very different locations we visited.

Stage 3 – Returning to Newcastle

We returned to the UK with a rich collection of stories, music, poetry, folklore and dances belonging to many different cultures. Once returning to Newcastle, we ran a number of workshops leading to an intensive with community members at Dance City. Here we worked with a number of people local to the area and a number of community members who travelled from Cumbria to take part. We worked with a cross generation of individuals from very different walks of life. The participants created a small performance presented in a studio sharing, highlighting the project’s achievements and stages of research so far.



Each stage of the process was documented through photography, film and photos, which will be edited into a documentary to promote each country’s unique culture, people and location in the world. On completion of editing the documentary film, the project will host “A Night to Get Lost in Translation”, sharing local work and premiering the documentary created from the project as well as sharing the performance created from the Newcastle intensive. Following this the video resource will be available online and it is currently in conversation for screening events in Santiago.



My original hope was to create two site specific performances; one in each country. However, as time went on and I was met with different obstacles along the way I had to make several changes to the process. Some of these included a greater need for focus on the workshop and research process. I had originally planned a number of site specific performances in each city but with new obstacles and time pressures I had to change this to more informal open studio presentations. This all meant that we were able to give people a higher quality and more in depth experience. We worked in total with over 500 participants in the many workshops and intensives in both Chile and the UK, all of whom have helped shape the project into a unique portrait of two cultures in exchange. With the next stage of the project to be the release of the documentary *Lost in Translation*, it continues to evolve and reach new audiences around the world.

