
Thursday 10th August 2017

RE: Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Fund Trip Report

Please find enclosed the report for my supported trip, which included the following:

- Wisconsin State Alzheimer's Association Conference – Wisconsin Dells, 7th – 9th May 2017
- Training and Shadowing with TimeSlips - Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 10th – 17th May 2017
- Create/ Change Conference - Phoenix, AZ, 21st – 24th May 2017

I would like to take this opportunity to express how valuable this trip was. I felt it really allowed me the time and space to enable my imagination to soar in terms of the approaches, collaborations and scale of projects I could include in the development of my practice with older dance participants. This space away from day to day work, time to really reflect on practice and dream of future projects by thoroughly soaking up any element of inspiration, was something I had not anticipated being such a benefit of taking the trip, and is something I would prepare future awardees for.

My learning and experiences on the trip have immediately influenced my practice in this area, and my wider practice, as outlined in detail in my report.

There were many highlights of my trip, but to summarise, these included undertaking TimeSlips training surrounded by those that created the approach, being inspired by stories of successful ambitious projects that have been delivered with TimeSlips at their heart, and attending the Create/ Change conference with delegates from such a wide range of backgrounds relating to the care sector. Many more highlights are noted in detail in my report.

Since returning from my trip, I have shared key points of inspiration and learning with my colleagues on the We Danced project, and this is heavily influencing our plans for future sessions. I have also delivered a day-long professional development session at Yorkshire Dance, for other artists of various art forms, working with those with dementia. The approaches I trained in have already impacted the practice of my company, Spiltmilk Dance. In June, we worked on a project in a mental health hospital where we used TimeSlips approaches as the key focal point of our process. This was greatly received and is something we are planning to build on at the same venue in the future. At the end of August, we at Spiltmilk Dance will hold a training session with the artists we employ, to disseminate the learning further and determine how we may implement some exciting new project ideas that formed during my time away.

All in all, the trip has impacted my practice in a very real way. This development has been immediate, and I am excited about how it will continue and evolve.

Many thanks for the opportunity to develop my understanding of this area and enrich my practice in this way.

Yours Sincerely,

Adele Wragg

Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Fund Trip Report - Adele Wragg

LOCATION: Milwaukee WI and Phoenix AZ, USA
TRAINING: Wisconsin State Alzheimer's Association Conference 2017
Training and Shadowing with TimeSlips in Milwaukee, WI
Create/ Change Conference in Phoenix, AZ
DATES: Saturday 6th – Saturday 27th May 2017

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

My host organisation for this trip was TimeSlips.

TimeSlips is an elegantly simple approach for creative story writing, created primarily for use with those with memory loss. Created by Anne Basting; a theatre professor and artist, the approach is now infused into elder care internationally, encouraging creative engagement in care relationships and systems. Stories written through TimeSlips have been used to inspire dance and theatre performances, musicals, pop up books, puppet shows, exhibitions, the possibilities are endless!

Over the last couple of years, I have been delivering dance, movement and creative sessions in care homes as part of my work for Spiltmilk Dance, and through *We Danced*, an intergenerational project I deliver for Yorkshire Dance. I have felt myself returning to the same ideas to deliver in these settings however, and realised that the challenges these settings presented were sometimes limiting my creativity. I felt compelled to learn more and experience other practice taking place, particularly with those living with dementia, so that my practice could become more colourful, intriguing and enjoyable for everyone involved.

I came across TimeSlips whilst planning one of my sessions for a care home in Autumn 2016, and was inspired by the potential it presented; it gave me many ideas around creating choreography from text and sharing stories between groups, so I was delighted to receive this award, to allow me to see the approach in action, and learn about the applications it has had across the world to date.

My trip was 3 weeks in total. The first part of the trip was spent in Wisconsin, the home of TimeSlips. I stayed with the wonderful Joan Williamson, who is the Training Co-ordinator for the organisation.

Wisconsin Alzheimer's Association Conference

The day after I arrived, we headed to the 3 day Wisconsin state Alzheimer's Association conference, which had an emphasis on creativity this year. Anne Basting gave the keynote speech on the first day, to launch a new book produced to mark the end of a year-long project in which TimeSlips had been infused into 50 new care homes across the state, so it was a great way for me to hear some inspirational stories of how the approach has been transforming lives.

During her speech, Anne outlined longer term projects she has created in care settings, such as The Penelope Project which was a 3 year intervention in Luther Manor residential home in Milwaukee. The project focused on the story of Penelope and Odysseus, and after the 3 years culminated in a public performance. This was a multifaceted project, merging dance, theatre, storytelling and visual art and hearing about it immediately made me reflect on projects I have worked on or imagined developing at home. It inflated my ambition and made me think much broader about the possibilities of combining art forms and really allowing projects time to develop and blossom. The really inspiring moment though was when Anne shared a quote from one of the participants of that project:

"You know, this is the last important thing I'll do with my life"

So how do I, with the wonderful artists I work with back home, create opportunities for those living with dementia to do important things, and to have the satisfying feeling of accomplishment that comes with that? I felt driven to find the answer.

Anne's keynote also featured performances by professional dancers who had created choreography inspired by some TimeSlips stories recently written in care settings, and they then got all 800 conference delegates dancing too! A great way to start my trip indeed! The following link has images from the event:

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=1371535882905940&id=167205470005660

During the conference I attended several workshops; some sparked new ideas for projects I could develop or specific activities I could incorporate into my practice. There were music, dance visual art, drumming and storytelling sessions that all provided new ways of looking at how and what I deliver. In addition, sessions on person-centred care and the importance of social connectedness, as well as keynote speeches from those caring for spouses with dementia, or living with early onset dementia themselves improved my knowledge around the specifics and logistics of care roles and day to day life of those living with memory loss.

Visiting, Meeting, Shadowing

Following the conference, I had many jam-packed days that Joan had carefully programmed where we visited projects taking place across the state that included creative engagement for those with dementia at their heart, meeting key individuals and joining in with TimeSlips sessions around the area. Some key highlights of this time were:

- Attending a Spark! Session at St. John's on the Lake, a residential home in central Milwaukee. Spark! Is a programme run by a consortium of organisations such as museums, galleries, leisure venues across Wisconsin state, to offer dementia-friendly meaningful activities. This session was a Friday afternoon cheese and wine tasting. After sampling various wine and cheese pairings, learning about where they were from and discussing our favourites, we were each given a wine glass to decorate with special pens. This session stood out for me because I valued how sociable and 'adult' it was. Regardless of ability, everyone could access the creative activity and it was really fun to do. I came away reflecting on how I might re-create sociable activities and infuse them with dance and creative activities to make them entirely accessible for people with dementia, and how I can make sure the quality of the activity makes it appealing and exciting for family members to attend. Could we use structures of dinner and dances events, casino or race nights, bingo sessions, or festivals but re-imagine the content with our practice to make more accessible, creative projects?
- Joining in a TimeSlips session at another care home in Milwaukee, led by nursing students who had been delivering each week for the academic year. I was intrigued and excited at the thought of nursing students experiencing creative engagement skills through their training, as it will surely make them better carers of patients, finding a range of ways to converse and relate to different types of people, with different ways of communicating. And of course, meeting the residents and creating stories with them was great fun. I really recall one of the participants speaking to Joan afterwards and saying, 'We should do this every day, because it brings everyone together and we get to be a community'. This and the high praises the staff were making of the approach and how beneficial it has been in their setting was really exciting to hear.
- Meeting with Rebecca Ebson, who was a TimeSlips student artist in residence (SAIR) and now manages the scheme. The SAIR programme has students living in care homes for a full year, and they deliver creative activities for residents in exchange for room and board. It was fascinating to hear about how the programme works, and to hear about the project Rebecca delivered when she was in residence. She focused on the theme of hands, and used beautiful open questions (which are the basis of TimeSlips sessions - more information given below) to initiate creative explorations. Questions included *'What is the most beautiful thing your hands have ever held?'* *'Tell me about people your hands have touched'* and *'What things have your hands created/ built in your lifetime?'*

Create/ Change 2017, Phoenix

For the last week of my trip, I travelled to Phoenix, Arizona for Create/ Change, the annual TimeSlips conference. In advance of the conference, I had to do the Timeslips online training course; an in depth introduction about how to deliver the approach. I found this training incredibly valuable, as the steps and thinking behind each session were clearly outlined, and I was able to digest it at my own pace.

Create/ Change was a 3 day conference led by Anne Basting and some excellent guest practitioners. The content didn't focus on TimeSlips specifically, as it was expected all attendees had that knowledge from the online training. Instead, we explored creative engagement with those with memory loss in a wider sense, and how we may infuse creativity across all interactions. There were sessions focussing on examples of specific activities using music, dance and visual art, as well as time dedicated to planning exciting creative projects in care settings effectively. This project planning session, and presenting ideas to peers for feedback was an extremely valuable and insightful process that has stayed with me since returning home. I really noticed, and benefited from, the vast range of backgrounds that delegates came from. There were some artists, but also care home and day centre staff, meals on wheels staff, local authority staff, and people from museums, libraries and galleries. The diversity of viewpoints represented in the room meant the conference was full of rich, informative discussion.

Reflections and Impact

I learnt a huge amount during this trip, and returned home buzzing with ideas, extremely motivated to put my learning into practice, and looking to set up some new projects. Below, I have outlined some of the key things I learnt, and wisdom I was inspired by that I hope to translate into my dance practice in the coming months and years.

- At the heart of TimeSlips is the idea of replacing the pressure to remember for people with memory loss, with the encouragement to imagine. This sounds somewhat straightforward, but when I reflect on usual interactions with people I meet or work with, often the questions I ask or phrases I use aren't inclusive for someone with memory loss. Thinking about this approach has made me reflect on how 'how are you today?', a question we typically ask almost everyone we meet in day to day interactions, actually might not be a useful question to use when I first walk in a care home or day centre for those with dementia. Similarly, if I'm using a prop as stimulus for movement in a session, the go to question of 'What does this remind you of?' may not at all be appropriate for someone with memory loss.

Instead, I am inspired to use beautiful, open questions such as those used in a Timeslips story writing session. For example

When I arrive I might ask *'What colour do you want to say your day is today?'*

If they say their arm is hurting *'If your arm could speak, what would it say/ what sound would it make?'*

When looking at a prop *'What do you want to tell me about this?'*

If they can't remember my name *'What do you want to call me today?'*

These questions can infuse creativity and moments of fun into everyday interactions, and create a shared language that becomes part of the participant's reality in that moment. The responses to the questions are also likely to be richer, and be more likely to spark ideas for creative movement. However, using these questions is a practice, and something I'm still having to concentrate very carefully on. It's an ongoing practice I am continuing to implement slowly, and have been using it across all my work, with all ages, to extract more creative responses from participants.

- Another key value of TimeSlips that has stuck with me and will affect my practice back home is the absolute insistence that the creativity of those we work with much be shared back to the wider

community. Sharing can help to break down the stigma surrounding people with dementia, builds relationships and tolerance within communities, raises awareness of dementia, reduces feelings of isolation, and increases feelings of belonging and purpose.

However, sharing work must be done with love and attention to quality, in a way that honours the unique context in which it emerged. It needs to be valued, not cute.

Although it can often be seen as too complicated, or isn't considered at all in the creative projects I currently deliver in care homes, I'm keen to explore what possibilities there might be to share some of the work with the wider community, when appropriate. This is also something I'll consider at the planning stages of all future projects in these settings. It occurs to me this element of sharing is an established part of youth arts participation, so why should work with elders and those with memory loss stay behind closed doors?

- I have also come away from my trip questioning if activities in my sessions always genuinely allow participants to be creative, not just a passive onlooker. This is something I ensure to question throughout because I believe it's in the creative moments that those with memory loss are empowered to feel they are making a valuable contribution and this feeling is important to ensure our work has as much impact as possible.

- Generally, this trip has allowed me the time and space to open my mind to the possibility of dance projects in this setting. I have come away with increased ambition for my practice in this area. Firstly, I am keen to collaborate with artists from other art forms to develop multi-faceted projects as I believe this allows sessions to be more inclusive and exciting, giving participants a range of routes into the action. I will also strive to plan and/or work on longer term projects, allowing the time and space needed for them to flourish. I will also think creatively about partnerships that might help projects reach their full potential.

- On a similar vein, I was struck by the following ways to help make projects flourish with creativity and delight. Firstly, I plan to find out any hidden creative talents amongst staff in the care settings I work in – can anyone play an instrument? Is someone a ballroom dancer or a painter in their spare time? These can be extra resources when delivering a project, and also might empower the staff member to explore some of their creative interests with residents at other times.

Secondly, I am going to spend time in the care settings outside of my session times, to learn about the inner workings and logistics of how the organisations and the day to day activities run. By learning this, I will then hopefully be able to layer wonder and art over each aspect, without disrupting things too much! What if one day breakfast was served by choreographed performers? Or what if the stimuli for a session arrived in everyone's cups one morning instead of tea? I am excited about the possibilities of the joy and engagement we might create when we enchant the everyday.

- I have been led to consider in a new way what my role as an artist is when working with older adults, particularly those in the later stages of life. I am there to create joy and moments of wonder, to provide happiness, love, freedom and opportunities for participants to be stars. We as artists are dealers in awe!

Outcomes and Conclusions

After returning from my trip, I have been lucky enough to be able to put my learning into practice immediately. I have used TimeSlips in various settings, including in care homes, a mental health hospital, and with groups of children.

The practice of asking beautiful questions has opened up my practice, allowing new, creative conversations with a range of session participants. This is not just something affecting my work with people with memory loss, but something I am finding ways to incorporate into all areas of my practice. This has refreshed my approach to planning sessions, and is allowing me to look at working with themes in a new way and draws more creative responses from dance participants. I am currently completing my TimeSlips certification (this is a process done once you are delivering the approach), and hope to find opportunities to use it in many more ways over the coming months. Since returning, I have also led a day long workshop for artists working with older adults in Yorkshire, supported by Yorkshire Dance, which focused on me sharing learning from my trip. The process of planning this session allowed me to thoroughly process my learning and discuss with

peers about how some of this learning may be implemented.

Overall, I returned from my trip extremely motivated and inspired to think broader about projects I plan and deliver in this area of work. I am particularly interested in how, as a dance artist I can combine my practice with those from other art forms to create creative, intriguing and exciting projects that I cannot achieve alone, or with the artists I usually work with. I am in discussions with a range of new partners about how to put some of these ideas into action, and am excited about what the future holds for this side of my practice.