

Anna Williams: Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Report

Dates of Travel: Thursday 28th June – Wednesday 4th July 2018

Locations visited: Orange County, California, USA.

Event attended: Performing Arts Medicine Association (PAMA) Annual Symposium

Scholarship amount: £575

In June 2018, I had the pleasure of travelling to California, USA (with thanks to the Lisa Ullmann Scholarship) to attend the Performing Arts Medicine Association (PAMA) annual symposium in Orange, where I was lucky enough to be a speaker; presenting my Master's degree research. I graduated with a Master's degree (MSc.) in Dance Science in 2016 from Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, and have since been working at the institution as graduate intern for the Dance Science department. Last year, I submitted an abstract of my research project and was delighted to be invited to deliver an oral presentation at the event. This event allowed me to share my research at an International Conference, to delegates from all over the world and to establish connections with others from the small, yet fast growing field of dance science.

The aim of the PAMA symposium (titled 'Glamour and Grit: Building an Entourage for Health') was to promote the health of performing artists and facilitate improvements in health support in the arts; in addition to ensuring the needs of performing artists are understood and met. The symposium was 4 days long, and included various plenary lecture presentations, practical workshops, panel discussions and research posters; all focusing on performing artists including dancers, musicians, singers, actors and more. There were 229 delegates at the event, including medical professionals (such as doctors and physiotherapists), university lecturers, teachers, psychologists, researchers, as well as dancers and musicians themselves. I was in the company of a few familiar faces, including several Trinity Laban Dance Science alumni, fellow course mates and guest lecturers.

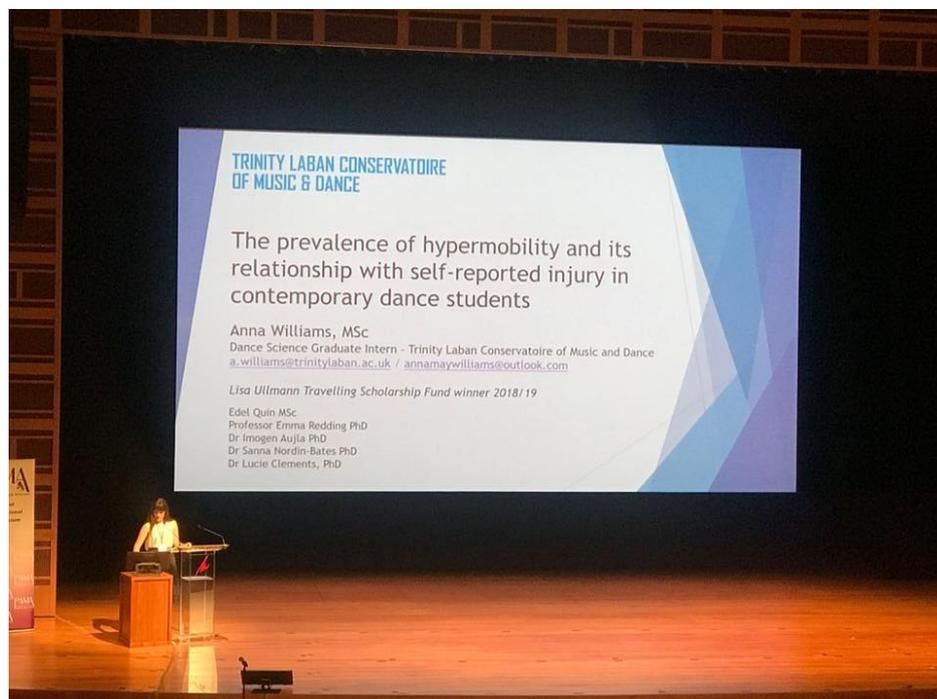
My research examined the prevalence of hypermobility in two large groups of contemporary dancers in training; one group of pre-vocational students and one group of pre-professional students. Despite joint hypermobility coming with aesthetic advantages in dance, previous research studies have found various negative implications associated with hypermobility, such as decreased coordination, proprioception and motor control, as well as an increased likelihood of attaining injuries.



Myself (top) left, along with some fellow Trinity Laban alumni and staff

Studies on ballet dancers have shown significant correlations between hypermobility and injury, as well as drastic decreases in the prevalence between young dancers in training, up to dancers in a professional ballet company. This had led to the speculation that hypermobility may limit a dancer's likelihood to progress into dancing at professional level. Compared with Ballet, Contemporary dancers are under-researched in comparison. The aim of my project was to see if this trend was also evident in different training stages in contemporary dance. In line with Ballet research, there was a significant difference in the prevalence of hypermobility between my two groups, with it being far more common in the younger, pre-vocational group. Interestingly, there was no relationship between hypermobility and injury in either cohort, suggesting that contemporary dancers may not be at as high of an injury risk as their Ballet dance counterparts. I also discussed the limitations of the current testing methodologies for hypermobility, and how these could be made more dance-specific for future research.

The conference took place at Chapman University, which is home to several performing arts degree programmes. My presentation was scheduled on the first day of the event, in the beautiful Musco Center for the Arts, Chapman's 1044 seat theatre. Despite being a dancer and quite accustomed to being on stage, it was still a surprisingly nerve-wracking experience; waiting in the wings preparing to stand completely alone on a stage of that size, hearing your voice echoing through the auditorium. After being introduced by the moderator, I talked delegates through the background and rationale of the study, my methodologies and results. I then concluded my 15-minute presentation discussing the limitations of the project, what the results could mean and proposed ideas for future research. Once my talk was over, there was a small amount of time for questions from the audience. Despite initially feeling extremely apprehensive, I thoroughly enjoyed the experience and was told that I spoke clearly and with confidence.



The start of my presentation in the Musco Center for the Arts

I was very pleased to see from the programme that there were some other presentations on hypermobility (both in dancers and musicians) which I was keen to attend and learn more about other research being carried out at other institutions worldwide. After my presentation, I met two professors from the University of Sydney who were also researching hypermobility in dancers and musicians, creating new measurement tools for the upper and lower limbs. I went along to their workshop the next day and was asked to be model/body for their demonstration of the new measurements. On the



third day, I attended another practical workshop focusing on considerations for hypermobility syndrome in Performing Artists. At the end of the conference, I had made a few new connections with researchers that were investigating the same topics, sparking lots of conversation and networking. Since leaving California, I have kept in touch with one of the delegates from University of Sydney, and there may be an avenue for a future hypermobility research collaboration with myself and the team at Trinity Laban.

There were many other presentations of interest, exploring many physiological, biomechanical and psychological aspects, focusing on both recreational, pre-professional and working professional dancers. Some of the noted dance topics included injury occurrence in different dance styles, perceptions of pain, safe and effective warm-up strategies, jump landing mechanics, exercises for strength in upper body weight-bearing in dance, perceived effect of clothing on performance, fitness in dancers in training – just to name a few!

I was also interested to attend this event due to the inclusion of other performing artists, such as musicians and singers. As I work for Trinity Laban, which is a music conservatoire as well as dance, I felt compelled to attend some of the lectures to learn more about the musical side of performing arts medicine research. There was an array of interesting topics covered, a few examples being muscular activity and fatigue in musicians, musical performance anxiety, physical stress of repetitive music playing and assessment and treatment of vocal injuries. As well as dance and music specific research, there were several other fascinating topics, such as neck pain in performing artists with head pieces, health concerns and injury in drag queen artists, and identity and addiction in performing artists. An additional highlight was a very interesting hour-long panel discussion on managing suicide in the arts. As well as opening my eyes to more research on music, I feel that I came away from the event with a heightened understanding of medical complaints, issues and prevalent topics of discussion in other performing art forms.

In terms of my own personal development, the experience of presenting such event has contributed towards my improved confidence as a public speaker and lecturer. To date, I have not delivered a presentation in a venue as large and formal the Musco Center for the

Arts. Going forwards to the future, I now feel more comfortable in myself as a presenter and will actively continue to submit future research papers for presentations at conferences. Later in the year, I will be attending another international conference to deliver another oral presentation with some colleagues on a team research project, and therefore feel that this experience attending the PAMA symposium has positively prepared me for future endeavours such as this. I also feel that I can positively apply the skills to my position at Trinity Laban, when delivering lectures and workshops. When networking with other delegates, I received a lot of helpful feedback on my presentation and the research project itself and am planning on writing up a submission to an academic journal for publication.

Overall, being able to attend and participate in the PAMA Annual Symposium was a highly insightful experience, in which I have developed my skills as a lecturer and researcher, as well as disseminating my name and research out further afield in dance science internationally. I have come away from the event with a greater depth of understanding of dance medicine and science research, as well as a new knowledge of the most up-to-date research happening in other performing arts populations. I hope that my new-found connections will form future collaborations, and that my career and professional development in dance education and academia will continue to grow.

In the free time that I had, I took the chance to explore some of the beautiful coastal towns of Orange County, including Newport, Laguna and Balboa beaches to enjoy the weather and the views. On my final day before flying home, I took a fantastic bike ride down the coast. Unfortunately, the sea was a little too cold for me, but the beaches were fabulous! (See images!)



It is with great thanks and gratitude to the Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Fund for this opportunity, as without the award, I would not financially have been able to attend this event. The experience has been highly rewarding and beneficial to me, as an early career lecturer and researcher. I hope that by sharing this report I can encourage others in similar fields to myself, or from any dance discipline to apply for this funding opportunity.

Links:

Performing Arts Medicine Association: <http://www.artsmed.org/>

Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance

<https://www.trinitylaban.ac.uk/study/dance/dance-science>