

Report to the Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Fund (LUTSF)

COVER LETTER ON MY TRAVEL TO PERU, BALLET DE SAN MARCOS, UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL MAYOR DE SAN MARCOS, LIMA, PERU
APRIL 2ND-17TH, 2004

The purpose of my trip was fully achieved as I have learnt a great deal during my time in Peru. I have recently been invited back to Lima by the British Council to help with the training of The Ballet San Marcos Community Outreach Team and local musicians in community work. Further, I will be providing live musical accompaniment for 2 performances (one in July and one gala performance in November 2004) of "Dance of Hope" (Choreographed by Tamara McLorg). I will be working with young people in the community of Los Olivos (an economically disadvantaged area), in conjunction with the Ballet San Marcos Community Outreach team. I have also been invited to do further research in the jungles of Peru with regard to the study of indigenous Peruvian music by The Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos. After my follow up trip to Peru from July to August of 2004, I will see about publishing my reports with The Foundation for Community Dance.

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REPORT ON MY TRAVEL TO PERU

BALLET DE SAN MARCOS, UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL MAYOR DE SAN MARCOS, LIMA, PERU
APRIL 2004

Wow.....Where do I start? What an incredibly rich culture. A mixture of ancient Inca traditions fused with a strong Spanish and overall Latin American influence. Add to this a sprinkling of African, Chinese, Japanese, Central and North American flavours and you find yourself in a delicious melting pot of artistic delight.

The Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship has offered me a wonderful opportunity to explore the culture of Peru and help me to gain an insight into their rich world of music and dance.

The trip started off with an arduous 27-hour journey from Swindon to Lima via New York. I was accompanied by Tamara McLorg, Pete Ayres and Sally Anne Donaldson from Middlesex University who were doing research work concerning Peru as well.

We were all invited by Vera Winternitz, the director of Ballet de San Marcos, located at Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, apparently the oldest University in the Americas, to base our research there. This invitation afforded us the opportunity to meet up with dancers from the company as well as traditional musicians who were also based at the University. While there, we were invited to make a short piece with the dance company and I was able to work with the traditional musicians based at the University, as well as other musicians that the dancers knew.

Through the process of composing a piece for the company working with local musicians, while collaborating with Tamara as she choreographed on the company, I began to gain a bit of an insight into the world of Peruvian music and dance through creative play and collaboration as well as discussion with dancers and musicians.

I composed a piece with piano and voice aiming to be true to my own artistic and stylistic persuasions in a way that would easily accommodate and take advantage of all of the wonderful Peruvian traditional musicians and instruments that I had to work with. I drew a bit from memories of my time at University in New York City where many of my fellow music degree students came from Latin American roots. This fusion of styles brought together a piece that had a Latin flavour, but was very different from a Peruvian point of view.

The musicians that I met played various traditional instruments including charango (a mandolin like stringed instrument), quena (bamboo flute), sampona (pan pipes) and cajon (a wooden box crafted into a drum) as well as other Latin percussion. At first I played and improvised with the musicians as we got to know each other, then began to develop the piece with them. After their parts were established I asked that they improvise with them so that the musical parts could be played and arranged with a stronger Peruvian flavour. This allowed the rich embellishments and the individual character of their instruments to shine through in a more natural way.

The result of this exploration was a piece that explored various different feelings, emotions and use of time. Some sections were in a free time where the music explored a ceremonial feeling, while at other times these free timings led to an intimate and sensitive place. A section in 3's floated and flowed, while a section in 5's became dynamic and passionate.

The richness of this musical collaboration gave fuel for a wonderful choreographic experience as the dancers worked with Tamara McLorg in creating the piece entitled "Respiro".... (a breath). The dance explored a land of many textures and emotions as the choreography changed from softly flowing moments to dynamic physical ones.

Through this piece the dancers were able to show the sensitive and passionate qualities that seemed to flow so easily from them in a contemporary dance style that was new and challenging for them, particularly from a technical point of view.

What helped the dancers, Tamara and myself, to bridge the gap of different styles and cultures, was to all start the day with a contemporary dance class each morning. My accompaniment for class helped me to bond with the dancers as we got to know each other through our art forms. Somehow, even though we all spoke different languages and came from such different backgrounds, after taking class together I felt that a richness of communication had transpired. The process of class helped to build warmth, trust and a feeling of togetherness, all working together in a joyous endeavour.

The dancers, musicians and all the people connected with Ballet de San Marcos gave us such a special experience as they talked to

us proudly of their culture, explaining about aspects of Inca tradition and how these traditions inform their lives and culture today. They took us to traditional dance/music performances, nightclubs, and jazz clubs as well as into their own homes sharing with us their culture and giving me many new ideas and musical food for thought to inform my own musicality and relationship to dance. I've already started to experiment with some of the new rhythms that I have learnt with the cajon (box drum) that I've brought back with me from Peru.

Now that I'm back playing for dance classes, teaching music workshops and preparing new compositions back in England, I can begin to filter back some of the knowledge and flavour that I've picked up on my travels to Peru.

A big thank you to The Lisa Ullman Travelling Scholarship for helping to make all this possible by broadening my horizons and helping me like many others before me, travel to a place that one can only have dreamed of before. I have returned, a refreshed, rejuvenated and inspired artist back to the British dance community, ready to help inspire others as I have just been.

Barry Ganberg