

## **TRIP TO BUENOS AIRES TO WORK WITH CUERDA PRODUCCIONES**

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please find enclosed a copy of my report as requested as part of the LUTSF Award I received. I appreciate it is a bit late and for that I am very apologetic. I am also sending a CD containing a few photographs and a couple of videos. One video is edited highlights of the (some) of the work I did in Buenos Aires and the other is edited highlights of the residency I did in Edinburgh on my return, which was directly influenced by what I achieved in Argentina.

The people I was working with were Cuerda Producciones, 467 Igazu, Parque Patricios, Buenos Aires, and I also had the support of an organisation called cheLa through Cuerda. cheLA is an independent cultural and physical space dedicated to research processes, experimentation and creativity combining production, community and technology. It styles itself as a collaborative environment and emphasizes interaction and exchange between artists. The primary resource is its large property in Parque de los Patricios, where Cuerda Producciones are based. They also maintain a couple of flats, one of which I was able to stay in practically rent-free.

My trip was an opportunity for me to do research for a dance/art/music collaboration called *Sleeper*.

Yours sincerely,

Brigid McCarthy

**REPORT - BRIGID MCCARTHY**  
**17th April - 3rd May 2013**

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I am a creative artist based in Edinburgh, Scotland. I met Simone Jenkinson and Joseph Traynor of Cuerda Producciones whilst working on an outdoor show in Belfast, N. Ireland (directed by Mark Murphy). Both Simone and Joseph have a theatrical training but have really honed their skills in physical theatre and harness work in particular. Both have worked on the Argentinian show, *De La Guarda* and Simone was instrumental in the making of *Fuertza Bruta*. Although they are both English in origin, they now live in Buenos Aires where they make work and run training courses in aerial skills. These courses include aerial skills for stunt purposes and aerial skills in a purely theatrical setting. Part of the reason for wanting to go to work with them was their obvious skill but, mostly, it

was because I realised how we saw eye-to-eye on what makes interesting work and I could see how their rationale had similar values to my own.



The purpose of this trip was to research movement ideas for a piece of work I would like to develop called *Sleeper*. The basis of the piece is low resonance noise/sound with especial

reference to foghorns, which were an integral soundtrack to my childhood, growing up as I did beside the sea. Specifically, I wanted to look at the mapping of shipping lanes and the concept of discovering a “safe place” in an unsafe environment (i.e. foghorns are an “alert” for danger but, in themselves, become the “safe” place - the place where the accident or crash cannot happen). I also wanted to look at the emotional connection between the low resonance sound and falling asleep. I had the privilege of having a week's residency at Dance Base in Edinburgh researching these ideas before flying out to Buenos Aires. This enabled me to really establish what I was keen to explore further.

Before my arrival in B.A., I had an expectation of the resources at hand to enable me to realise my ideas, but the reality of what was available far outweighed any expectation. Simone and Joseph were enthusiastic from the outset. Not only were they totally on the ball but I had not appreciated the technical team which would be available - Tomas James (production manager for *De La Guarda* and Technical Design for *Fuerza Bruta*) was a whizz at setting up aerial systems and there were also two technicians available all the time. As well as this, Cuerda had ‘volunteered’ their team of 8 volunteer performers/creative aerialists to perform/be part of my creative process. This was an amazing opportunity for me to have up to 10 performers (including Simone and Joseph), all of whom had technical skills that aren't available in Edinburgh to try out ideas in a no-pressure environment. As an artist/choreographer, that kind of opportunity is not an every day one! I can't express how much I thrived on it!

The Cuerda company had very real technical skill and experience but the joy was the enthusiasm and dedication in delivering it. I have never come across such joie de vivre and enthusiasm for art in general - it was so wholehearted. I had an opportunity to try out different kinds of flying techniques to get a handle on what I was asking people to do.....and then worked with the ensemble intensively

for a period. I have compiled a video of the “best bits” which I have attached a link to.....but we did SO much more! I have hours of video and it will be a great resource for the future.

On my return home, I had a second week's residency at Dance Base in which I had the chance to build on ideas that I'd worked on. It was a challenge for me (no resources and no ensemble) but it was great and I received a lot of very helpful feedback.....I am sending a link to that film clip also....

My current situation is that I am using this research as the basis of an application to Creative Scotland to make a piece of work. I have recently heard that the first part of this application has been successful and I am now the recipient of a Research & Development Award. This will enable me to recruit a team of Scottish dancers and pay them properly to research further what has already been set in motion with the BA trip. I appreciate that the resources are not quite here yet but with the Commonwealth Games coming up next year and all the changes taking place at the top in the fabric of the organisation of Creative Scotland, I feel that opportunities are arising.

Whatever transpires, I am absolutely determined to return to Buenos Aires. I feel like a very real connection was made in Argentina and I am going to try and return within the next 12 months. It was a very inspiring city and the experience has made me review and reflect on the theatre culture back here in Scotland. Theatre is not a middle class business in Argentina....it really belongs to the people and there is an artistic hunger/need which is born through passion. It is fabulous. We get so used to the treadmill that is making and funding work - filling in the application forms etc - that sometimes it is possible that you lose sight of what it is which drives us in the first place. Nobody in their right mind gets into theatre to make money (do they??) but we feel held back/controlled/damped down by the pressures of not having it (“If only I had ‘x’ I could make a really good piece of work...”) The people I met in Argentina don't seem to see it like that - they have an idea and they do what they can to realise it. It was very refreshing.





I was also delighted to discover that Argentina was very positive about Scotland (I travelled out on the day of Margaret Thatcher's funeral so it could have ended in tears!) and I am wondering how I can encourage/fund some of the ensemble to come over here - a cultural exchange of some sort maybe .....I appreciate that this may well be a pipe dream but I think it would be a fantastic thing. I'm sure where there's a will there's a way.

Thank you to the Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Fund for making this possible. Without the grant I couldn't have gone. As it was, it was done on a wing and a prayer.....I had no funding to pay Cuerda, so I managed to scabble the money to pay them myself.

Without LUTSF I couldn't have done it. Ironically, I found myself in an environment where everyone was struggling with making it work financially.....but everyone was very clear that the art came first. I continue to be inspired.

Brigid McCarthy