

20/1/10

## COVERING LETTER

Dear LUTSF,

In 2009, from the 26<sup>th</sup> October to 23<sup>rd</sup> November I spent four weeks in New York City attending Stretch and Placement and Technique class with Susan Klein, Barbara Mahler and four other Klein Technique teachers at Dance New Amsterdam and Movement Research. I also attended a four-hour workshop with Susan Klein at her studio and additional classes Barbara Mahler teaches in Manhattan. Prior to this from October 17<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> I attended the first block of training in the eight month, Walk Of Life Training Programme in non-stylised and environmental movement with Helen Poynor

The purpose of my project was to seek resources for my practice as a dance artist, specifically creating performance in environments and working in health to enable it to continue. To train further in two ways of working that support the ethos that underpins my work. This four-week, challenging intensive in NYC achieved this to a great extent in ways I will describe in the following report.

That I was able to attend class for four-weeks was the highlight of my trip and an experience I greatly value. I spent nearly two years seeking funding for this trip and to also train with Helen Poynor. I made unsuccessful attempts to gain support yet persevered, which should encourage others to, not give up working towards something you feel you need to do.



I have already shared my experience, as an Associate Tutor with students at Edge Hill University in practical sessions exploring anatomy. With the 'small things' dance collective I am creating a booklet about the recent From Where You Are Project, funded by the National Lottery through Awards for All, Edge Hill University and based at and supported by Alder Hey Children's Hospital. In this booklet I will write about how my month of training has had an impact on my work in health. I have also recently provided a Case Study about this work for a new Foundation for Community Dance booklet about dance and health. This project was a fantastic opportunity and I am very grateful for your support.

Many thanks,

Cath Hawkins

## Report

This award from the Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Fund, in addition to support received from The Rebecca Skelton Fund and the 'small things' dance collective, From Where You Are project, funded by the National Lottery through Awards for All made it possible for me to secure funding from the Arts Council, funded by the National Lottery through Grants for the Arts. This made it possible for me to travel to New York City and stay for four weeks to attend class, mostly twice a day with Susan Klein and other teachers of the Klein Technique Faculty, at Dance New Amsterdam and Barbara Mahler at Movement Research in Manhattan. I am also currently attending, until May 2010 Helen Poynor's, Walk of Life training in non-stylised and environmental movement.

I attended over thirty classes over four-weeks and therefore had the opportunity to experience the most intensive period of researching this technique I have ever had. I first experienced this technique over nine years ago and for the last six have attended many short intensive workshops with Susan Klein and Barbara Mahler throughout Europe, when they have visited from the U.S.A. I have, for some time had the desire to deepen and support my exploration of this technique by returning to class in NYC (I took class for two weeks with Barbara Mahler and Susan Klein six years ago) for at least a month.

It was hard, challenging work attending up to two Stretch and Placement classes everyday. I felt engaged physically and mentally in exciting, inspiring and interesting movement work, that encouraged me to directly address habits that do not serve my moving body and lead to re-curing injury. When I first experienced this work, nine years ago, I questioned how it could claim to do this, yet I feel my body is now beginning to understand or as Susan Klein says, become 'conscious' of this happening.

I also had the un-expected opportunity to attend a special Sunday afternoon workshop with Susan Klein, during which she discussed the principles that underlie her research. Klein has been developing her cutting edge approach to re-educating thinking and practice about the moving body to realise its full potential since 1972. Her work has had an impact on many leading practitioners including Trisha Brown and Steven Petronio.

During the four weeks I also took technique class, for the first time with Susan Klein and Barbara Mahler. This aims to put into practice the principles of this technique in a movement class. I found this a huge challenge as my movement practice is focused on improvisation and exploring non-stylised movement. Yet these sessions provided very beneficial learning, about my body and mind response to suddenly being asked to put principles into plies.

I already feel that this four-week intensive has changed my movement practice. I feel a new consciousness in my mind and body. Over four weeks I had the time to experience breakthroughs in the letting-go of old patterns in action and thinking. I also had the opportunity to receive treatment from Susan Klein who is a Movement Therapist, Traditional 5 Element Acupuncturist and Certified Zero Balancer/Teacher in addition to being an important figure in the Dance and Movement profession. On my return to the U.K., I was amazed at how much stiffness and pain from a recent dance injury had eased. I felt as if I had a new moving body and much more comfortable in negotiating moving around a hospital bed to work with patients in my dance work in health settings.

Already, I feel that the shift I desired this project to promote in my dance career is happening. This is continuing as I practice this technique inspired by insights and realisations I experienced during my four week intensive, that provided me with much to work on and a feeling that I have many years of learning ahead of me. I am grateful to the Lisa Ullmann Fund for allowing me a second award. This supports the idea that funder's need to realise that professional development for dance artists is life long.

This experience has re-enforced my commitment to this technique, even though it is a challenge to research work not readily available (I have greatly missed going to regular class in this technique over the past two months). Yet this is also a commitment to process, continual learning and change that I am already feeling in my creative work, moving in environments and in my work with others including dance students at Edge Hill University, as mentioned above, patients at Alder Hey Children's Hospital and learning disabled adults. My body seems more ready, it is continuing a process of listening and responding to challenging situations with what seems a heightened consciousness of itself, myself. This is important as, for example at Alder Hey Children's Hospital I attempt to offer patients a beneficial body and mind experience, through being conscious of my own body and by increasing the ways I can encourage pain or stress relief through returning to the body using touch, visualisations or activity, creative movement and play that listens, accepts and responds to however a child or young person is feeling.

This element of my project and that I now continue to work with Helen Poynor, whose Walk of Life training encourages weekly indoor and outdoor movement practice is combining very well and inspiring me to widen my ideas of what a movement project, for myself and the 'small things' dance collective, within a natural environment could be in the future. Helen Poynor is an international movement teacher, director performer and writer, who has been developing her approach to movement work in natural environments for thirty years. I feel very at home in her work and find it a place to practically explore, with both supportive and challenging guidance how and why I choose to practice and place

my dance work within environments. After just one block of training with Poynor and individual weekly practice, I feel I have begun a new journey that involves questioning my ideas about performance, why have I chosen to perform, to dance and also enjoying drawing, making sound, talking and writing about my experience of moving in a natural environment.

I began to explore solo-improvised performance in early 'small things' projects. Yet decided then that to extend my working process would require support and mentoring from other artists. The 'small things' dance collective was founded in 2002 to enable artists from different forms to explore site-specific performance. Over seven year projects have taken place at The Lowry, Salford, Victoria Baths, Manchester and on the Walk the Plank Ship in Liverpool. This training project is already changing all aspects of my creative work and having me seriously consider how to realise different approaches to this to truly explore new territory.

Many thanks for your support.