

Please find enclosed my report, reflecting on my experience funded by the Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Fund.

I travelled firstly to Los Angeles to rehearse with the choreographer of the piece I had been invited to perform at the 'Open Embodiments' conference at the University of Arizona, Tucson. The dates of travel were as follows:

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|-----------------------|----------|
| London – Los Angeles: | 07/04/15 |
| Los Angeles – Tucson: | 12/04/15 |
| Tucson – Los Angeles: | 19/04/15 |
| Los Angeles – London: | 22/04/15 |

It was a truly wonderful and great learning experience, particularly the range of people I encountered and engaged with at the conference, along with performing in such a vastly unfamiliar environment. It has been of huge significance to my research on representation, perception, diversity and embodiment.

The time I spent with Doran George (choreographer of the solo I performed, which we made together last year) was especially valuable as it meant that I was able to build on and continue my development of a physical practice based upon my particular body through rehearsing and performing the piece. Also the panel I attended where a paper was presented about the solo, and about dance and disability, impacted on me greatly, because I gained knowledge about the history and wider diverse cultural field within which I am making performance.

A suggestion I have for future applicants, based on my experience, is to plan ones trip taking into consideration time to recover to the time zones and climate. This is particularly relevant for people who are travelling somewhere to perform. Also to liaise beforehand with the people you are visiting, with as much clarity as possible, especially if you are performing and have technical requirements. I also recommend asking for help with accommodation or any other form of support that the host organization might be able to provide, especially if one does not have funding from another source.

My experience in Arizona will greatly inform the content and direction of my work in a variety of ways. The next projects I plan on doing here in the UK involve participatory performances and workshops with a central aim being to raise questions about power, beauty, functionality, mobility and the stigmatized body in the public space. I have also been asked to write a chapter for a book being put together by the AHRC funded research project 'Invisible Difference' based at Coventry University, which, from both a dance and law perspective, "seeks to extend current thinking that surrounds the making, status, ownership and value of work by contemporary dance choreographers... primarily focusing on dance made and performed by disabled dance artists"

Everything I learnt at the conference will significantly enhance my engagement in these and my future projects, and I am very grateful for the experience.

Yours sincerely

Catherine Long

Catherine Long
Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Fund Report.
25th May 2015

In April 2015 I travelled to the University of Arizona to the 'Open Embodiments' conference, held by the Somatechnics Research Network; an international, transdisciplinary group of more than 500 researchers, investigating embodied difference derived from feminist, queer, transgender, disability, and critical race methodologies. I was invited to the conference to perform the dance solo *Impasse*, which addresses and questions how my body/disabled bodies are configured in society and specifically within contemporary dance. *Impasse* was made in 2014 with choreographer and scholar Doran George. I revisited and rehearsed the piece during March, before going to Arizona via Los Angeles to briefly rehearse with Doran (where they are based)

I arrived in Arizona with four days to rehearse and tech the piece before performing. I planned it this way in negotiation with the organizers of the conference and Dante, the manager of Fluxx (the building where the performances were happening) anticipating there would be limited access to the space, due to a number



of different performances taking place there. I wanted to ensure I had adequate time to map the solo out properly before performing. I also thought it would be a way to get as much rehearsal time and space as possible, as I had no other source of funding to pay for hiring rehearsal space. Making these plans in advance turned out to be beneficial, and it was fortunate that I had four days before performing as it took that time to adjust physically to the extremely dry climate.



I arranged to meet with Dante at Fluxx, the day after I arrived. On the basis of the brief email exchanges that had taken place leading up to leaving for the conference, I was expecting Fluxx to be a new, state of the art performance space on the campus of the University of Arizona. I arrived there to discover it was quite the opposite. It is a non-profit organization in a building that Dante described as being 'Grandfathered' in terms of it's architecture and history (like many buildings in the area, which were the setting for a lot of the western films in

the 1950's) The floor space was much smaller than any of the spaces I had performed (and rehearsed) in, therefore it was necessary to change some of the choreography to fit in the space. I was able to have three, 2-hour rehearsals during the days prior to performing. I had sent a tech spec to Dante before leaving London, along with my video and sound files that are used in the performance. Dante tested these files with me in the space, and the lighting was minimal (one tracking spotlight) so the tech rehearsal was straightforward. The size of the space meant that it was the most 'intimate' performance of *Impasse* that I have done so far as I was in very close proximity to the audience. This turned out to be effective for both the viewers and for me. In the post show conversation people in the audience said they felt a powerful physical response in their own bodies, experiencing a sense of connection with my breath. This was pleasing to hear, as the solo is created on a basis of somatic principles; central to the piece is the employment of the use of breath and fully embodying each movement as it shifts from emotional state to emotional state, living the experience beyond 'performing' it. From my perspective I found the close presence of the audience added a significant 'charge' to the way I engaged in the movements, which was extremely valuable to discover.



The audience comprised of academics, scholars and people engaged in somatic practices. I have previously performed the piece to audiences consisting primarily of people engaged in dance practices. It felt different performing to an audience who were not specifically involved in dance, but for people from a range of backgrounds with the primary shared interest being embodiment. As this was the central theme of the conference, I found it enriching and invigorating to hear presentations on a range of subjects all with this connecting core factor.

The day following the performance I attended a panel entitled *Dancing Right and/or Wrong* by three academics including Doran George and Sara Wolf. Lucille Toth is a visiting professor at Scripps College and presented a paper exploring the aesthetic ramifications of excessive bodies, undermining spectators' capacity to rethink the staged body of contemporary dance outside the boundaries of technical excellence. She focused particularly on Ali Thabet's *Rayahzone* (which I was not familiar with) and DV8's *The Cost of Living* (which I have seen many times) focusing on the associations of legs with masculinity. Doran spoke about dance history; corporeality as being a form of 'cultural prosthesis' rather than an 'essential material'. I found it compelling to learn more about ideologies of positive representation and equal participation in contemporary dance history, against which I am defining my work, specifically the work I've been making with Doran, and hear it

presented in this way. I found it intriguing to hear Sara Wolf's interpretation of *Impasse* in her paper *Beautiful Ruin; the politics of failure in Doran George and Catherine Long's Impasse*. Sara, a teacher of disability studies and LGBT studies at UCLA, saw my performance of the solo there last year, after which I visited her class to speak with the students about it. She and I have discussed some of the process and issues involved in the dance. However it was still most enlightening to hear her reflections on it in an academic context.

Other papers I found particularly interesting were around transability (the need of a person identified by others as able bodied to obtain a physical impairment) A paper about the affects of stress in academia that is not ordinarily spoken about, and a paper about a performance/art work being created about austerity and disability.

It is just over a month since I returned from the conference and upon reflection I feel that the experience was of immense benefit for so many reasons.

After not having worked with Doran (the choreographer of *Impasse*) on the material for over a year, it was incredibly valuable to have two rehearsals together in LA, specifically from the perspective of embodying and executing the movements. This time with Doran was also beneficial as it meant that I recognized how much my dancing has developed since making the work last year, and how I have utilized what I learnt from that process. It also gave me time to recover somewhat from the flight and to adapt to the time zone. The process of adapting *Impasse* to perform it in such a radically different space from which I was familiar, was a brilliant learning experience as it demanded the need to be flexible and creative with the choreography and the performance experience itself. Hearing presentations and spending time with people from such a diverse range of backgrounds and approaches, was incredibly enriching. I believe it has deepened my understanding of the issues contained in my own work from different angles.

I felt privileged to engage in dialogue and be in contact with diverse communities invested in the field of embodiment, encountering new practices and subjects and a variety of disciplines. I have stayed in contact with a number of people who spoke at and attended the conference, from Australia, all over the USA and Canada. I plan to continue developing relationships with these experts and become part of the Somatechnics network. I very much hope that I will get to attend another conference and see people again.

My experience at the conference was enriching, validating and beneficial on a multitude of levels and of utmost importance to my investigations and research in artistic approaches that I have brought back to the UK. I aim to have influence on accessible training and performing methodology, which I believe need to be developed in such a way that represents bodies differently than constructing and reiterating normative ideals, impacting on perceptions of marginalized bodies in dance and in a wider context. I believe it will have a lasting impact on how I share my work in the world. I am extremely thankful for the opportunity.