



7th December, 2008

Dear Chair of LUTSF,

**'Evoking the wisdom of body and imagination' Anna Halprin Summer Programs.
San Francisco, 23rd June – 17th July, 2008**

I have completed the above project in full and I enclose my report. The highlight of this project was the opportunity to study with Anna Halprin, a seminal force in the field of dance and expression.

I have already been able to apply the inspiration I took from the courses to my teaching, choreography and performance and this will continue to be an major ongoing part of my practice. In this, I have been able to communicate her ideas and beliefs to the dancers and students I have worked with.

I am giving a talk at Oxford Dance Festival in Spring 2009, which will be referring specifically to the project.

I cannot thank the Lisa Ullmann Travelling Fund Scholarship Committee enough for supporting this project and making this trip possible.

Yours sincerely

Cecilia Macfarlane

Report on Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Project

'Evoking the wisdom of body and imagination' Anna Halprin Summer Programs.

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Contextualising the work

This program of study with the Tamalpa Institute came in the third and fourth month of my six months' sabbatical this year. I needed time in the six months to refresh and reflect, to renew and to inspire my practice. I had been attending other courses with Helen Poyner during this period and also had the opportunity to have Helen as my mentor on a regular basis to support my thinking and moving. I also had a research grant from Coventry University which enabled me to pay a research assistant to work with me, to begin researching and writing a book inspired by my practice as a dancer in the community over the last 35 years.

I have found as I get older that I have increasingly felt "hemmed in" when studying in a traditional dance studio. The habits and memories of expected dance practice returned relentlessly and distractingly and could seriously restrict my research and development as a dancer. I have always enjoyed and been fed by projects in the landscape but, only in the last four years since studying with Helen Poyner, have I realised that my movement research can be so inspired and informed by the landscape. While the expected flatness and uniformity of a dance studio floor can be relied upon, the body cannot necessarily find compatibility with this; and while this can create wonderful dialogues at times, it is in the landscape that I delight in finding reflections of.

my skin, muscles and bones,
my curves, weight and breath;
my energy, falling and stillness;
my trust, doubt and despair;
my rest, momentum and hope;
my dance, delight and passion.

The landscape reflects back so much more than a dance studio mirror, and offers, if I open to it, all that I need to research my practice and take me into the studio again refreshed and reformed. I have been inspired and fed by the depth and intimacy of dancing within the landscape. I am able to make immediate contact with my body. The landscape contextualises who and how I am and strips away any accumulated affectation, making way for the more authentic me.

Studying with Anna Halprin and her colleagues in Tamalpa gave me an insight into different aspects of the Halprin process and, when taken as a whole, provided a multifaceted view of the Tamalpa work. The course was in three parts, "Dance as Ritual" with Anna Halprin, "Self-portraits and Movement" led by Jaime Nissenbaum and "Expressive Arts in Nature", led by Jamie McHugh.

Descriptions of project and outcomes

Week 1: "Dance as Ritual" with Anna Halprin

I felt very fortunate to have this opportunity to study with Ann Halprin. At 88, she is described as a living legend. I joined 35 other people from all walks of life, and from all over the world, drawn to the dance deck at Tamalpa. Anna's philosophy of dance for everyone very much reflects my beliefs and my practice. It is how I describe my work.

We both have a passionate belief in inclusivity and in celebrating difference. The amazing thing about Anna is that she was developing this belief and practice in the 60's, a time when dance in England, particularly, was still the traditional practice of ballet, tap, modern and jazz. Contemporary dance was only creeping in during the latter part of the 60's to be taught in dance schools, and certainly it was seen as reaction against ballet. Anna Halprin rebelled against the conformity of contemporary dance, reflecting a very similar practice, as ballet. She certainly had no desire to become a "clone". Anna Halprin's life work has been an ongoing rebellion against tradition and a search for authentic practice that, while continuing to research the articulation of the body, she also allowed equal space for the expression of individuality and creativity. .

In the four days studying with Anna, I could confirm and celebrate my practice whilst also recognising where my practice could develop and could be different. Although we were dancing on the deck, I was sad that we only went into the surrounding landscape on the last day, but did appreciate that the group were all at very different levels of experience of movement, and that there was perhaps a need to research in a more traditional space. On this last day, we were led into the redwoods with eyes shut and soft feet, walking in small groups holding a twig to connect us with the next dancer in the line, travelling with open senses into the land. On arriving, we had been told to choose a place that drew us and to ask this place a question. I found myself, when opening my eyes, looking at a redwood that was sawn off and stage-like and was immediately tempted to go and stand on this; but then I saw a redwood stump that had clearly been split by lightning, and found myself drawn to this more private, secret place.

This was the beginning of an amazing and vital journey that evolved over the three weeks. Through dancing, drawing, writing, I went on a journey that I had not planned, and had no clue I needed and had no expectations of where it might go. As usual, I was stunned by the power that this work offers, the questions and answers and through this facilitating and moving to a new place and a new understanding of myself.

Week 2: "Self-portraits and Movement" with Jaime Nissenbaum

This was the very intensive week with Jaime Nissenbaum. There were only eight students and all of us had shared the previous week. We didn't use the landscape to dance in. We remained in the studio most of the time, looking at our internal landscapes and creating self-portraits by the end of the week that were totally stunning. I found Jaime's skills at leading the week excellent and had complete trust that my journey would be a safe one. Every morning we danced together to a selection of lively and exhilarating music. Each day I found more energy and freshness in my movement. There was something about the group and Jaime's leadership and the non-judgemental nature of the work that let me off the hook, and I flew. My journey was at times painful and bluntly honest, but also humorous and wonderfully exploratory. I found a powerful black panther in me that finally gave birth to my self portrait. On the last day we performed our self-portraits to each other and were given gifts by fellow students.

Week 3: "Expressive Arts in Nature", with Jamie McHugh

The third week with Jamie McHugh in the landscape of Point Reyes was, unusually, not immediately after the previous two weeks. There was a week's gap which I used to travel and visit friends, but more importantly to digest some of the work so far. Sadly though, possibly as a result of this gap, there were only three of us who continued from the previous two weeks, and only five people in all on the course. It would have been good to have had more dancers during this week. To have this few was apparently unusual. Jamie announced at the end of the course that this would be the last year of

this particular section. I do feel that to cancel this week would be a real shame as it is this third week, in the landscape, that is such a perfect sequel to the other two weeks, while also being important in its own right. This week was residential and in the beautiful Point Reyes seashore. I was overwhelmed at the start of this week by the isolation and also by the idea of being immersed in such a small group, but I was soon able to embrace this and to be able to use the course to continue my personal journey. There was a momentum to my exploration, both physically and emotionally, that felt inevitable. I was on a roller-coaster that I knew would eventually land me back safely in England. It was the land, finally, that gave me all the answers that I needed. The rock that I could hide deeply under for privacy and space to be still, but also offering the possibility, while on top of the rock to be completely visible and heard. The warm sand embraced my curves and caught my every move. The Pacific Ocean washed over me playfully, pushing and pulling me. The air encouraged my newly found wings to fly me for miles, running along the empty beach. I could rest on the sand dunes and the fire warmed and rested me, charging my batteries for my return.

Returning to England

I came home with new-found energy and inspiration, which I was immediately able to apply to my dancing. I was able to continue my research on the landscape, first with Helen House Hospice in Oxford, then with DugOut Adult Community Dance, Oxford, and this then led to creating 'The Coast is Clear' for 10 students from Coventry University, to be performed in Coventry in December 2008 and in Dorchester Abbey in May 2009. As a dancer, I have created and performed a solo entitled 'Then I walked outside', inspired by one of Rumi's quatrains, which were introduced to me by Jaime Nissenbaum in the second week of the course. This is a piece that I will continue to develop. As part of Oxford Dance Festival in Spring 2009, I have been invited as a guest speaker to talk at a seminar on The Body. I will be presenting particularly on my recent work inspired by my studies in America.

Cecilia Macfarlane, 2008