

Dear LUTSF

Please find enclosed my LUTSF awardees report. I had the pleasure of travelling around Australia, visiting countless dance companies and independent artists. My trip was from July 16<sup>th</sup> until August 21<sup>st</sup> 2011. I spent roughly a week in each city visited. These cities were: Canberra, Perth, Melbourne, Adelaide, Sydney.

As the report will outline the projected outcomes I had for the trip were certainly achieved, along with a huge amount more. I was able to gather the most thorough and exiting insight into the Australian dance industry, meeting and working with some of the most respected and inspirational artists working across the country at the moment. There truly are too many highlights to list, and the report will outline the detail further. But visiting each of the main companies (Chunky Move, Sydney Dance Company and Australian Dance Theatre) were the most memorable impressions I have of my time there.

Most of the leading companies in Australia offer dancers the opportunities to join the company for a week as part of a secondment. This is a fantastic way for dancers to join the company for class and rehearsal to get a better idea of how they work etc. AusDance, who have regional offices in most of the larger cities, is a fantastic mechanism for dancers who are looking for knowledge or contacts concerning local companies, they would be perfect to direct any dancers who are interested in learning more.

I have created, along with this report, a more accessible magazine publication which colourfully depicts and describes the detail of my trip. This will be sent to all of the organisations and private sponsors who supported me on this trip. It will also be sent to London Contemporary Dance School and many of my friends and family.

I hope you enjoy,

Many thanks,

Chris

## REPORT

### Christopher Scott – Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Award Report

Dates of travel – Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> July 2011 until Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> August 2011

Destinations:

- Canberra
- Perth
- Melbourne
- Adelaide
- Sydney, Australia

I have had a curiosity and interest in Australian contemporary dance for many years. Through my training as a contemporary dancer I was constantly coming into contact with dance and dancers from across the world in Australia and became increasingly intrigued and inspired by the associations I had made. This led to a fierce desire to satisfy my curiosity, and the result turned out to be a five-week journey of personal artistic discovery around Australia.

The trip was to have almost a dual purpose for me. As a twenty-year-old dancer currently training, it was certainly about progressing my personal understanding of the professional dance world: an opportunity to travel as an independent dance artist, gaining practical and theoretical first-hand experience from the demanding and competitive arts industry. The

second, as a National young ambassador for Youth Dance England (NYDA), it was an ideal opportunity for me to further my appreciation and perspective of youth-dance within another country: to gain insight into the youth-dance 'infrastructure' within Australia and, through my experience as a young ambassador, to provide an English perspective of youth dance to the organisations I was visiting, whilst taking home with me an understanding of the Australian opportunities for young people, and being able to utilise this within my role as an ambassador in England.

The nature of my trip was a very flexible journey, with several pre-planned goals but endless possible outcomes. All of the main company visits I was making during my stay were pre-arranged, but there were several aspects to the trip that I kept flexible to allow myself to be fully immersed in the situation and have the freedom to follow any valuable opportunity, should it arise. I was conscious that, as I was not visiting a 'pre-arranged' opportunity such as a festival etc., I had a rare opportunity to make decisions that benefitted the nature of my travels, and gain the most experiences that I could from my time.

## Canberra

**Quantum Leap 2** - I started my trip head on, flying into Sydney and driving up to Canberra the very same morning, and spending the entire day in the studio. My first stop was the Quantum Leap 2 (QL2) studios in Canberra. Quantum Leap 2 is a centre for youth training, directed by Ruth Osbourne, who this year won an Australian Dance Award for her outstanding services to dance. I first met Ruth last September when I was presenting at the Youth Dance England Festival in London. Over this past 10 months she has been a key contact in helping me put my Australian exchange together, putting me in touch with many of the professional Companies I was visiting, and she had invited me to visit her and the young people at QL2. As a key figure in Australia for youth-dance, Ruth and QL2 was an ideal opportunity for me gather an insight into the workings of one of the only successful youth dance opportunities Australia has to offer.

I was only in Canberra for three days, whilst there I was taking class with the other young people during their annual choreographic intensive and observing their process as they worked with some very talented Australian choreographers. They were in preparation for a run of shows happening the following week in a large theatre in Canberra. The classes I participated in with QL2 were fairly basic generic contemporary dance classes. The age-range of the young people involved in the project ranged from around 15 up to people in tertiary training institutes, like me. After 23 hours on a plane a gentle slower paced class was certainly what my body needed. Over the three days I observed two choreographers, Anton (Ex Australian Dance Theatre) and Adam Wheeler (Chunky Move), in rehearsal as they made final adjustments to the works they had created. Both choreographers were insightful to talk to and created very professional and interesting works on the young people around a common theme of 'identity'. Whilst there Adam Wheeler invited me to also visit his work in Melbourne he was creating a site-specific work on dancers from Chunky Move Dance Co.

What struck me most about my time with QL2 were the professional opportunities these young people are exposed to. QL2 provides a very professional environment giving young people the opportunity to work with nationally recognised choreographers, within a structure that



echoes that of a professional Company. It is certainly a more extensive opportunity than the ones that were available to me during my youth experiences. Whilst there I had some very insightful discussions with Ruth and also Adam, who has a background in youth dance. They, like me, are great believers in the advantages of the 'youth dance route' for dancers pursuing a professional career. We discussed the psychological impact of the youth-dance route over that of classical training 'schools' and how an exposure to choreographic process and practise at an early age can significantly differ your approach to movement, physically, socially and morally. We concluded that, training through an awareness of movement with a critical and constructive viewpoint can prove invaluable to the nourishment of a healthy artistic career within the contemporary sector. Ruth works tirelessly all year to provide these young people with some of the best opportunities I have seen, her work and passion for what she does was inspiring to see, and absolutely encapsulates why I advocate it in England. Sadly QL2 is the exception not the rule in Australia, despite QL2 being very well established and progressive in terms of youth dance, there are only a small handful of similar named organisations working across the vast Country and therefore very limited networking possibilities between them. Ruth was actually inspired by the work of Youth Dance England when she visited last year and is in plans to start meeting with fellow youth organisations to network and collaborate with the opportunities that they offer.

**AusDance National Headquarters.** Another reason for my visit to Canberra was to go and see the National Director of Ausdance Julie Dyson at their HQ. Julie is also a well-respected, key figure within the Australian dance world. Similarly to Ruth, I also met her at the YDE London conference last September. AusDance is Australia's largest dance networking organisation, they are responsible for providing opportunities, services and resources for youth, community and professional dance. With regional offices in every major city they are an integral part of the dance industry there and now also co-ordinate the Australian Dance Awards, along with everything else. Julie is another inspiring woman, having built the AusDance network up for years. I could not ask for a more valuable source of Australian dance knowledge to satisfy my curiosity. So I was invited to the AusDance HQ for a meeting with Julie and her team. The meeting was immensely informative, the discussion was simply an opportunity for me to learn more about the dance industry in Australia, and we covered various topics from the history of professional work to the progression of youth dance opportunities and everything in-between. One thing that was prominent for me within the discussion was the opportunities AusDance provide for graduating tertiary students at festivals that take place over a long-weekend where graduating students can go to take class with some of the best professionals, network with other dancers and other collaborating artists and gain practical and tangible professional help and advice. I have heard of similar opportunities within the UK but not at the magnitude of this Australian counter-part. This was an idea that I valued very highly as an effective method to bridge that difficult gap from training into the profession. Julie was very excited to hear of the journey I had ahead of me, and proceeded to supply me with contacts that she had in all of the cities that I was visiting. She made some phone calls and organised a few more contacts and visits for me, after providing me with some more of the AusDance literature that focused on various topics we had touched upon, she wished me a very fruitful trip and I went on my way.



**The National Library of Australia** – One of the AusDance opportunities appeared in the form of a phone call the next morning (my final day in Canberra). Julie had been in touch with Lee Christopherson who was the dance curator at the National Library of Australia, Lee had a research student visiting him from the University of Colorado and, given the nature of my visit to Australia, Julie and Lee thought it would be a perfect opportunity if we all met to discuss, well, dance. I met with Lee and Stephanie, the research student, at the National Library. With no predetermined agenda we had the luxury of an open discussion, and with Lee's inexhaustible knowledge of not only the Australian but the international dance scene, I was in for a real treat. During the discussion I was certainly pushed to my intellectual limits as I debated the differences in identity between the dance cultures in the UK, US and Australia. Lee was interested in what had attracted me to Australian dance and inspired me to come on this trip; I learnt a huge amount from him about Australian dance history, something which I had very little prior knowledge about, and learnt about the threads through their history that have led to the dance culture in Australia today that inspires me so much.

Despite my time in Canberra being less physical (only one light class a day at QI2), it was unquestionably insightful. It framed an ideal introduction to my trip, and was an opportunity to educate and inform me about the great country and dance industry I was about to embark on. As a dancer, I fully believe that your practise extends far beyond just the physical or artistic elements. As a surviving dance artist I believe you need a comprehensive and professional understanding of the industry in which you are working - where it has been and certainly where it is headed. Canberra provided an intellectual hotbed of personal questions I had about the nature of my work and where I see my place in it. Many of them answered by the motivating individuals I had the pleasure of meeting; some of them unanswered. I then flew onto Perth, Western Australia.

## **Perth**

**The West Australian Ballet** - Whilst in Perth I was visiting my good friend Reed Luplau, a very accomplished dancer working in New York, but originally from Australia and a very prominent figure within the Australian Dance world. Reed was back in Perth as he had been commissioned to create a new short work on the West Australian Ballet (WA Ballet). I arrived in Perth right at the end of Reed's process, a few days before their opening night. I have never had the experience of visiting a ballet company so this was hugely interesting for me, to gather an insight into the mechanics and routine of a classical Company. I had the opportunity to watch the Company do class on stage, and viewed several of their on stage rehearsals. Reed's work (*The Sixth Borough*) was being presented in an evening of short works, alongside three other pieces. The entire programme was named '*Neon Lights*' and was being shown at the beautiful Heath Ledger Theatre in Perth. The other works in the programme were a re-work of an old Jiri Kilian (NDT) piece, a short work by a WA Ballet Company member, and a re-working of a piece by Gary Stewart (AD of Australian Dance Theatre). The programme was very diverse and very exiting for me to watch. I had the opportunity to watch the show several times, and also attend the opening night function, where I got to meet the Company properly, and also meet Gary Stewart. This was a perfect opportunity for me to meet and chat with Gary; I am hugely interested in his work and was visiting his Company Australian Dance Theatre later on in my trip. It was inspirational for me to see behind the scenes at the WA Ballet, the dancers are quite remarkable, the technicality and physicality with which they move is very appealing and hugely versatile. It really allowed me to add another perspective to my understanding of movement.

**Kings Street Arts Centre** – Every morning I spent in Perth I travelled into the city to take the professional class at The Kings Street Arts Centre, an artistic hub in the centre of the city, which houses studios, galleries, AusDance WA, Steps Youth Dance, and lots of artist development offices. The professional class was run through Buzz Dance Collective, a great opportunity that networks independent dance artists.

The class was taken by various teachers through the week; all of them were hugely enjoyable as well as challenging. One difference that I did pick up is that most dancers who train at the tertiary dance schools in Australia don't usually train very intensively in a specific contemporary technique, such as Cunningham and Graham. It appears the result is a much broader inclusive technique class that draws upon cross-technical elements. This provides classes that arguably are less technically and anatomically specific but focused more on dynamic and special ideas. As I was doing a different class every two days this provided a very welcome and exiting change from the repetitious nature of training in one technique for a considerable time.



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**Sydney Dance Co.** – Just through pure coincidence of timing, Sydney Dance Company (SDC), another Australian company that I am hugely interested in, were on tour in Perth during my visit. I met with the rehearsal director Amy Hollingsworth one evening. She was there watching the WA Ballet programme, she was more than happy for me to come and take class with the Company whilst they were in Perth. So I had the pleasure of taking some contemporary and ballet classes with the Company on stage at His Majesty's Theatre in the heart of the City. I have followed the work of SDC for a number of years and thoroughly enjoyed the diverse programmes they offer,



also as a fan of Rafael Bonachela's work, I was intrigued to see how Bonachela's new appointment as artistic director of the Company would fair. It was a hugely valuable experience for me to take class with such a world-renowned Company, and I enjoyed it thoroughly especially as the setting was on the beautiful stage at His Majesty's. What really appeals to me about the dancers in SDC is their integrity for technical clarity whilst having a natural instinctive energy to just, move. Bonachela's work really requires it all, and these versatile dancers can certainly offer that. As a younger dancer it was invigorating watching these dancers with very similar backgrounds really master the technicalities of the movement they were investing in. Another bonus about the SDC visiting Perth was that I had the pleasure of watching their performance of Bonachela's '*We Unfold*', a captivatingly stunning work.

My time in Perth was certainly full on. I also had the opportunity to go and visit a local dance school, where I took my very first Jazz dance class, and 'stretch' class, lots of fun and also very useful! Perth gave me an insight into two major dance companies, countless dance classes and the opportunity to run by the sea everyday, certainly a fulfilling experience.

## Melbourne

**Chunky Move Dance Co.** – During my time in Melbourne I was visiting Chunky Move in their beautiful studios on South Bank. Chunky are a project based company, and I was lucky enough to be there whilst Adam Wheeler was creating a site-specific



work. Chunky run a professional/company class each morning which I participated in. Again I got a real diverse mix of styles and teachers: Monday was a release based class: Tuesday/Wednesday floor work; Thursday ballet and Friday Yoga. In the afternoons I would stay and watch Adam work with the dancers from Chunky. After the WA Ballet it was certainly a very different experience. The Chunky dancers are fearless and full of life. There was an exiting and playful atmosphere in rehearsal. The piece Adam was creating was for a site along the river that consisted of just an open concrete space. The Chunky dancers were extremely friendly and welcoming to me and I got to know them all well. It was interesting finding out where they had come from, the training they had been through and what led them to working with Chunky Move. All of these interactions gave me insights about the workings of dancers in Australia and very useful perspective, as I learnt a lot about reflecting on my position and making informed decisions that will allow me to gain the fulfilling and fruitful career I am looking for.

Whilst in Melbourne I was lucky enough to be staying with Dana Stephensen, a dancer with the Australian Ballet, which is also based in Melbourne. Dana has such a beautifully giving spirit and it was a real pleasure to get to know her. It was intriguing talking to her about her training through the Australian Ballet School and straight into the AB Company. Dana was very interested in companies within the UK and Europe and I was happy to return the favour by updating her with all the news. Whilst in Melbourne I was also lucky enough to receive a free ticket to the Melbourne Theatre Companies production of *Hamlet*, a refreshing alternative cultural theatre experience to end my time in this wonderfully diverse and cultural city.

## **Adelaide**

**Australian Dance Theatre** – After an interesting eleven-hour coach journey from Melbourne, I arrived in Adelaide. I was spending my time with Australian Dance Theatre (ADT), one of my all time favourite dance Companies. During my visit ADT were actually in production. They were presenting a new work entitled '*Worldhood*' at Her Majesty's Theatre in Adelaide; it ran for the whole week. The work created by Gary Stewart was in collaboration with an artist Thom Buchannan, and graduating dancers from the Adelaide College of the Arts. Each morning I would join the company for class on stage. Classes were taught sometimes by members of the company but usually by local dance artists, some of whom have a history with the company. I have had a burning desire to visit ADT for a long time as Gary's work really appealed to me and being there with them was certainly no let down. I enjoyed the classes immensely and felt such strength and possibility being in class with the inspirational ADT dancers; it was very technically challenging and really stretched me, but I was certainly up for the test. After class, whilst the company were going through notes, I would get the opportunity to learn extracts of the work from the dancers, an ideal opportunity for me to gain firsthand experience and immerse myself in the material. There is a physical integrity that Gary requires from his dancers, along with a real emotional investment into what they are doing. I thrived on the full dedication the movement requires. I got the opportunity to watch '*Worldhood*' several times over my visit, it was interesting to see the show over the period of the run, and see how the notes during their rehearsals altered the dancers' performances and, ultimately, the whole work. Again, it was an invaluable insight into the mechanics of a professional company, gaining experience, physicality and practically, in the routine of a company dancer, which, in turn, influences my understanding of my own practise and artistic interests. Part way through the week the rehearsal director of ADT, Elizabeth Old, approached me to express how the company were very impressed with the way I had been working. She invited me to stay a few extra days in Adelaide so I could spend some additional time working together with the company, and Gary would be able to get a better



insight into my process in the studio. With such respect for the work of ADT I could not have received a greater compliment and I was so excited about the prospect of spending longer with this inspirational company. It did mean, however, that I had a difficult decision to make, as staying in Adelaide would mean it would cut down my time in Sydney considerably. Eventually I made the decision to stay, having luckily already had the opportunity to spend time with Sydney Dance Company in Perth. I wanted to utilise the opportunity I had in front of me and really make the most out of being with ADT. Having fallen in love with their work I really wanted to build the best relationship with the company that I could. So this gave me the chance to visit ADT at their studio's in Adelaide, participate in some more classes and learn material from their old work 'G' that they will be bringing back into their repertoire next year. I had the opportunity to share what I had learnt with Gary and Elizabeth privately. Elizabeth worked with me for a long time on some of the material, and gave me amazing personal feedback and corrections, before I showed it to Gary. It was a real privilege to be given such personal time with both of these people and I was immensely grateful for the opportunity they gave me. I really felt the pressure working with the ADT dancers but grew so much from the experience. I pushed myself to levels that I have rarely reached and, being in such an intensely physical place, allows you to really appreciate new possibilities. ADT were extremely impressed with the time I spend with them and very keen for me to stay in touch, I left Adelaide completely inspired, informed and excited.

**Leigh Warren & AC College for the Arts** – As ADT would usually start class just after lunch, this freed up my mornings, and I was certainly going to make use of that. Another major Company based in Adelaide is Leigh Warren & Dancers, a smaller scale company than ADT, but certainly one that I was very interested in visiting. I was able to visit the company four times during my stay, and joined them for two contemporary classes and two ballet classes, all taught by Leigh himself. Through my experiences in Adelaide I had come to learn that Leigh had a very distinctive style. With vague influence from Cunningham and Graham, his classes have a very directional and anatomical focus. Many of the classes taught at the local tertiary dance school and at ADT are based on the 'Leigh Warren class'. It appears to have become something of a micro-technique within that area and undoubtedly across Australia. I thoroughly enjoyed his classes, which were simple in structure but brought great focus and clarity to your technique. Again, it was so valuable for me to be in class with such experienced and talented dancers. I was constantly feeding off the people around me, getting such a rich appreciation of movement from so many different perspectives. I also found a small amount of time to watch the Leigh Warren dancers in rehearsal as they too were re-working an old Kilian piece. Similarly, I was invited to the AC College of the arts, the local tertiary dance school, to participate in any of their classes I had time to get to, a very generous gesture from the head of ballet. So, I just about found time to join the students for a contemporary class (based on Leigh Warren technique) and Pilates and yoga classes. The yoga practise was led by Simi Roche, an ex Graham company dancer, and a true legend in Adelaide. Her class was unquestionably remarkable. As I had heard from people before I had taken it, she has the most giving and open spirit, and at 64 is quite a movement miracle. I learnt so much from her just from one small class, and her dedication to her practise made me really rethink the value I place on yoga, as I found the class so physically and spiritually positive.

### **Reflection**

It is difficult for me to get a true appreciation of how much this trip has allowed me to grow as a dancer and a person. Every single day was so fruitful and rich with experience and growth. I was allowed the space, distance and time to make discoveries about my practice and art form that I have not had the opportunity to explore yet. I was able to refine my own

personal practice which gave me a better understanding of the choices I personally want to make through my dance career. I have built a network of contacts all across Australia of the most inspiring and dedicated artists, a network that will be fundamental to the advancement of my practice and search for a style and technique that is right for me. This opportunity to travel to Australia fulfilled all of my expectations and so much more. I have found a level of personal maturity and appreciation way beyond what I could have hoped for.

I am so privileged to have been given the opportunity through the Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Fund, and would like to thank them so very much for the support they have shown me and all of the other artists they have supported.

Chris Scott