

1st February 2009

Dear Chair of LUTSF

Choreographic research about Krumping and training with artists who created this movement

I would like to thank you and the Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Fund for giving me the amazing opportunity to travel and have such a wonderful experience in the Krumping community in Los Angeles. This dance trip made me grow in many ways as an artist and as a person.

My project covered two aspects: having more training in Krumping and do choreographic research about Krumping. I went to Los Angeles from 25th November 2008 until 12th December 2008. A lot of research was done to clarify my action plan. The Krump movement is still very underground and the information is not always easy to find. Internet Research and extending my existing network were keys to achieve my goals. In Los Angeles, I attended:

- An "academic" Krumping class in Debbie Reynolds Dance Studios (North Hollywood)
- A Krump session near North Hollywood Park (called the "818 session")
- I mainly trained in "Homeland", a dance studio and community centre located in Long Beach, South Los Angeles, near Anaheim subway station
- I also attended "private" Krump sessions

I was looking forward to go to the "Krump Awards 2008", but the event didn't take place this year. Another famous Krump event, "The Realm", was announced for the 29th November 2008. Due to violent incidents a few days before the battle, the organizers ("The KrumpKings"), postponed the event on short notice. They then changed date and location several times at very short notice." The Realm" finally took place in Riverside, which was very far away from Los Angeles. Due to those specific circumstances I couldn't take be part of the audience of "The Realm", however, the social experience I got out of being part of "every-day life" Krump sessions and the Krump sessions in Homeland, were gold! I felt totally immersed in the Krump World. Socially, I grew a lot out of the experience and I really got to understand the social aspects of Krumping. I got present to the positivity of the movement and what Krumping really stands for. I improved my freestyle skills and my technique. The support and the welcome of the other dancers boosted my self confidence.

From this experience, I would like to make a few suggestions to future awardees:

- Make sure there are no local bank holidays in the country you are visiting. If so, check this won't have an impact on your dance trip. I didn't know it was "Thanksgiving". Fortunately, it didn't have a huge impact on my plans as the Krumping sessions were still on, but some dance studios such as Debbie Reynolds (North Hollywood) were closed for two days.
- Travelling alone, especially as a female "tourist dancer", it is important to be aware of the environment and the safety in the areas you are visiting. To study more about Krumping, I knew I had to go in some ruthless areas of Los Angeles, and I was prepared to do so. A fight started at the first Krump Session I went to. I had probably bad luck (Krumping does not promote this type of behavior!) people started running because they were scared one of them could have a gun. "The Realm" was postponed because a Krump artist was shot in the face a few days before the event. It is important to be aware of the risks you are taking, and always know how you can remove yourself from the situation if something happens.

After this magic experience, I planned to share my experience with others in different ways:

- I shared my experience and showed the videos to my adult dance company (Spread Expression). I'm training the dancers in Krumping and share a lot about the Krumping culture and what I discovered in L.A.
 - As a dance teacher, I am essentially sharing my experience with young people. For example, I am Artistic Director for East London Dance Youth Company. I shared my experience with the Youth Company Members so that they can also have a better understanding of where Krumping comes from and what it stands for.
 - I also keep working on choreographic projects and dance theatre pieces where I incorporate Krumping and its technique to explore it further into theatre work.
- My choreographic work with Spread Expression is based on Hip-Hop Theatre (and from a larger point of view Urban Dance Theatre). Hip-Hop, Dancehall and Krumping are the main techniques I use. I put my choreographic research into practice with the dance company and I currently choreograph a piece about Modern Slavery ("Yes, I still exist").
- I will also be working on a Dance and Film project with East London Dance Youth Company in February. I am using Krumping into the film project.
 - I am currently working on a Project in Derby for Jonzi D Productions where I delivered a Professional Development Program for teachers in schools (Creative Partnership). One of the end goals is to use Krumping in a Shakespeare play (The Comedy of Errors) and engage young people with difficult social background from the area.

I am sharing my experience and my passion in the attached report. Please feel free to contact me if you'd wish to have more information.

Cindy Claes

ATTACHMENTS

Please find in attachment:

- evidence of the postponed event, "The Realm"
- a CD-R containing the report and the cover letter
- a CD-R with a video (extracts of a Krump session in Homeland, Long Beach)

REPORT

The experience of going to Los Angeles has been a strong exercise to develop my networking skills. The Krumping movement being a world where word-to-mouth is predominant, I had to take many actions in order to find out where I could find Krumping sessions and meet dancers. It also helped me in getting quickly immersed in that magic world and understand what Krumping socially represents.

Before travelling I made a list of questions to do my choreographic research and I kept a diary during my stay to write down ideas.

- Which emotions can we express through Krumping?
- How to define the fine line between Hip-Hop choreography and Krumping choreography? Some moves are very similar, especially the combo's dancers use during their freestyle. Krumping evolved and the vocabulary extended since its creation in the 90's.
- How can I choreograph Krumping? Each dancer has his own groove, his own style and the dancers use many polyrhythms which make choreography quiet challenging. Many Krump routines tend to look like Hip-Hop routines. How can I choreograph Krumping without losing its essence?
- Observe travel movements in Krumping.

- Observe and understand the family structure in the Krump Community.
- What is the influence of spirituality in Krumping? What's the role of church in the Krumping community?

Krumping

Krumping is an expression of strong emotions. It releases strong feelings, whether it is sadness, happiness, anger, love, stress, frustration or excitement. Krump sessions are positive and joyful events. Part of daily life, sessions are organized in church, at home, during birthday parties, outdoors and in community centers or dance studios. Krump sessions are important social events.

Krumping sessions

I mainly trained at "Homeland", a community centre and dance studio in Long Beach, South Los Angeles. I trained with the "Uncrowned Kings" during their Krump sessions. The members of the crew as well as all the other dancers training in Homeland were extremely welcoming and made this experience one of the most precious of my journey as a dancer. I also got my Krump name: Rage!

Sessions are part of social and daily life. In Homeland, the dancers come together, practice on their own or share skills. The sessions finish with a Krump session or an improvised battle. The dancers and audience play an important role by hyping up the dancers and encouraging the performer in the circle. Hyping people up is a big part of the audience role and people also work on their "hyper". Encouragements, showing presence and passing on energy to the performer is part of the session!

Women are still quite rare on the Krumping scene. There are female Krumping crews, however, they don't seem to expose themselves as much as men do.

Private Krump Sessions – example of a birthday party

People celebrating their birthday will have to battle everyone, one by one. Considered as being a unique person, the Krump session gives each performer their "own moment". Being battled by all the other dancers all night long, the person celebrating his birthday will feel special, despite the fact that it will be a very hard exercise improving stamina!

I really got present to all the happiness Krump sessions create while I was at this Birthday party. It is a moment of sharing, a moment of magic and extreme joy! I was really moved by how much people entering the circle are supported by the crowd. The person dancing gets all the attention during his whole performance and is considered as a unique and special individual. It is a strong moment of acknowledgement.

Krumping Choreography versus Hip-Hop Choreography - how to choreograph Krumping

The Krump movement started in the 90's. Still quiet new, this dance technique evolved a lot during the last decade. It has been influenced by Hip-Hop techniques, however, the quality of movement given is particular to Krump. The basic vocabulary (Stomps, Chest pops and Arm Swings always give a Krumping flavor to any other movements they incorporate from other dance styles.

In choreography, it is sometimes difficult to find the fine line between Hip-Hop and Krumping. For example, Krumping uses a lot of "blocked" and sharp movements. Similar to Popping, they don't actually use the same foundations as in Old School Popping.

I'm currently in the creative process of two projects: "Yes I still exist" (Dance Theatre piece) and "Hope under the dust" (Dance and Film project) where I explore in-depth Krumping along other Urban Dance techniques. It takes a lot of research and exploration to make a Krumping choreography work as an ensemble. The use of polyrhythms makes it tricky to choreograph it with precision. Using a slow and regular pace for Krumping routines makes it often look like Old School Hip-Hop routines and it then loses its essence.

The energy used in Krumping is very particular. The performer builds up his energy and his movements step by step. I'm still exploring how to find the same stimulator in a choreographed ensemble. Giving a similar structure to the routines, building up movement and energy from down to up, might enable dancers to achieve this. When choreographing Krumping, it is important for me to reflect the essence of Krump in the routines.

Travel movements in Krumping are very wide, large and energetic. The crowd and the circle follow the dancer during his freestyle. It creates a very dynamic space and somehow makes it complex to choreograph. Towards the end of the session, the travel movements start to be wild and unexpected.

Krumping and its quality of movement

Krumping is powerful in the way dancers use illusions to create their movement. The technique they use to get to the floor, or the way dancers come up is powerful as they use the illusion of losing balance and catching themselves at the last moment. The idea of losing control, losing balance, falling, and coming back to control while standing up very quickly make the quality of movement very powerful. A lot of movements are totally unexpected and make the crowd react with energy. Using the loss of balance and the loss of control is a real art in Krumping.

When the audience grabs a dancer (by his T-shirt for example), their interaction is also based on visual effects and illusions which makes their interaction very powerful and explosive. Stamina in Krumping is very important. Chest movement are strong and powerful, which highlights how important it is for a dancer to control his breath. It requires a total control of the flow of energy in the body to be able to freestyle for several minutes. Dancers in Long Beach freestyle for the duration of a whole track (about 4 minutes) when they enter the circle. Using combo's, going back to a slow pace, using basic techniques, or focusing on one part of the body at the time (arm swings, stomp, etc.) allows the performer to catch up his breath and "get off" over again.

As the quality of movement in Krumping is very wide, large, energetic and unexpected, the dancers (and the crowd) have an amazing sense of the space, and it limits. A lot of young children are present during the sessions and run around. They hype up the dancers too! Nobody ever gets hurt, and all the people present have a large sense of space awareness. It is impressive!

The imagination and the visualization of movement is a big part of Krump freestyle techniques. Dancers very much relate to imaginary characters (such as cartoons for example) to develop movement. The imaginary characters can also relate to animals. Dancers use movies, cartoons and video game characters as a source for their imagination.

The way Krump dancers use contact work is very impressive. The role of the audience is very distinct as they might touch the dancer or catch the performer's t-shirt giving the illusion of the dancer being stuck and trapped. Krump dancers seem to get their inspiration and energy in constraint spaces, small spaces, against walls or in corners. The movements seem to be a resistance, a willingness of getting out of the small space. Movement is created while resisting something.

Krump families and Krump crews

This dance trip made me also realize how much the idea of belonging was important in those areas. A strong family structure exists in the Krump world, older people (Big Homies) taking care of youngsters and look after them (Lil Homies). The existence of family trees within the Krump world gives a sense of belonging and support in the community. Being part of a Krump crew or Krump family has a major influence in different aspects of life.

Krump Battles

Krump battles are similar to Hip-Hop battles. People come into a circle, freestyle, or "battle" others. It is a situation where the performers put themselves under pressure and are challenged. Respect is an important part of those social events. I was impressed seeing a 6 years old boy battling adults and shaking hands after the battle. Krumping really works as an educational system and the young people understand the rules of respect.

Freestyle is predominant in Krumping. During their freestyle, dancers tell something, they tell a story about them or about their life, they

express ideas or feelings, and every movement is seen as being created from their own story.

Spirituality and the role of church in Krumping

Not all Krump dancers are motivated by their spirituality to dance, but faith had a big influence on the birth and creation of Krumping. Churches organize Krump sessions as fund raising events. People pay an entrance to the Krump session and the money they raise supports the community. Some dancers see their Krump performance as a form of prayer and build the energy to Krump through their spirituality. Not all Krumpers are out of the gang cultures. It is a huge element which helps young people to stay away from violence and the gang culture, but some people practice Krumping by "fashion" and don't Krump for what it really stands for.

Krumping Theatre and Future objectives

I'm already going more in-depth in terms of using Krumping in theatre work. I'm currently choreographing a piece about Modern Slavery ("Yes, I still exist") with my adult dance company Spread Expression (www.spreadexpression.com). I workshop a lot around the subject and explore how Krumping can be used in different ways. I use different tools and resources to create material (improvisation, freestyle, routines, physical theatre, etc.).

Being Artistic Director for East London Dance Youth Company I also have the privilege to explore Krumping in terms of teaching, choreographing and sharing the Krump culture. I definitely have enriched my knowledge about the Krump culture and my understanding of its social environment. I feel empowered in the way I teach Krumping and how I can pass on the real foundations of it.

I am also working for Jonzi D Productions where I delivered a Professional Development Program for teachers in schools (Creative Partnership, Derby). The aim is to work with young people with difficult social backgrounds and give the teachers new tools to engage the students. I support them in how to use Krumping in a play from Shakespeare (The Comedy of Errors). On top of sharing my expertise in this field, it also gives me the opportunity to study further the subject and try out new methods of how to use Krumping into theatre work. I also explored in the studio how to fuse Krumping with other dance styles such as Dancehall or Stepping (USA).

This whole dance experience inspired me to do the same research in Dancehall. As an artist I'm very interested in Urban Dance Techniques. Krumping and Dancehall are both strong foundations to my choreographic work. Doing the same choreographic research and training in Jamaica is a future goal I would like to accomplish by 2010. I would like to explore how I can develop Dancehall in Dance Theatre too, exploring purpose of movement and also have a deeper understanding of where it comes from.

I hope this report will inspire people to know more about Krumping and have a better understanding of what it is.