

Covering letter from Jennifer Paterson

20th June 2013

Dear LUTSF

It is with much pleasure that I enclose my report about my recent trip to Buenos Aires, made possible due to a scholarship awarded from the *Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Fund*. Please find two copies of the report, a cd and a letter from Simone Jenkinson of Cuerda Producciones.

Purpose

The award was for travel to Buenos Aires, Argentina, to advance my aerial dance harness skills and the technical requirements behind it through training, researching, exchanging and learning with Cuerda Producciones. Whilst there, to keep up to date with developments in this field of dance, observing the work of Cuerda and other aerial dance companies in the city including the Brenda Angiel Ariel Dance Company.

The overall purpose of the travel was met and more. It was such a fantastic opportunity to visit and work in a city with a supportive aerial dance and theatre community, where it was a very much 'can do' attitude. The range of techniques I acquired in harness has grown, it has given me ideas into how to teach it, and more importantly inspired me in my own practice.

Dates and Location

The project lasted for just under three weeks. Flying out on Wednesday 17th April 2013, returning on Tuesday 7th May. Primarily based at Cuerda Producciones, CheLa, Parque Patricios, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

During my time in Buenos Aires I also visited and trained at several other aerial dance and circus organisations all of which are detailed in the report. They were: Circo Social del Sur, El Aire es Libre at La Estacion de los Deseos, Brenda Angiel's Danza Aerea, Centro Kultural Trivenchi, Circo Del Aire and Club de Trapecistas. As well as this I worked with other dancers and aerial artists from Cuerda Producciones' ensemble and aerialists Benjamin Ruiz and Ana van Domselaar.

Highlights

Particular highlights include having the facilities of the Cuerda space, their technical know how, feedback from the directors of the company and the chance to have a group of eight experienced performers to be creative with. Im excited about the growing relationship between the directors of Cuerda and myself and the potential of working together again.

And the creative energy and passion that has travelled back to the UK with me.

Suggestions for Future Awardees

I would recommend to be prepared to completely immerse yourself in wherever you travel to – keeping time within planned activities for what appears once you are there. Talk to the people you meet once there as lots of unknown training, performances and opportunities came up to take advantage of that I would never have known about if I hadn't connected with artists in the city.

Thank you for this opportunity and I look forward to sharing what I have learned, helping to grow the aerial dance community in Scotland through my own creative work and in passing on skills to others.

Yours sincerely

Jennifer Paterson

REPORT

Travel to Buenos Aires to advance aerial dance harness skills through training, researching, exchanging and learning with Cuerda Producciones. To keep up to date with developments in this field, observing work of Cuerda and other aerial dance companies in the city including the Brenda Angiel Ariel Dance Company.

17th April – 7th May 2013

It was with much excitement and anticipation that I stepped on the plane at Edinburgh airport, on KLM flight to Amsterdam and then onto Buenos Aires. The first time travelling to South America let alone Argentina. Tango, Eva Peron, big steaks and the home to some of the most internationally renowned aerial theatre and dance shows with *De La Guarda*, *Fuerzabruta* and *Brenda Angiel's Aerea Danza*.

I was going to train in harness techniques primarily with *Cuerda Producciones* and to observe the aerial dance scene in the city, of which I had heard a lot about over the years. It was a chance to learn, play, exchange and create, to cement old contacts and establish new ones. To be inspired and keep growing as an artist - something that I really was looking forward to as in running All or Nothing, an aerial dance company in Edinburgh, and helping to establish the art form in Scotland, I was looking for inspiration to keep that motivation up and to nourish the artist in me.

Arriving at 7pm in the evening, 20 hours after I had left home, Joseph Traynor from *Cuerda* met me at the airport and from then on my feet barely touched the ground.

Cuerda

The next day I was straight into it - pick up at 9am to go to *Cuerda's* space that is part of *CheLa*, an arts and technology organisation in Parque Patricios in the south of the city. After meeting the team - Joseph, Simone Jenkinson, Tomas James with Maouri and Dario the rigger/technicians, there was a tour around their space.



An amazing place - 800 square feet including a 20m x 20m x 9m creation space, warm up area, technical workshop, production office, green room, dressing rooms and an outdoor courtyard to catch the sun during break times. The space had been an empty warehouse and *Cuerda* had spent many months reinforcing the roof, building rigging systems, putting in toilets, dressing rooms and cleaning the place. It wasn't all sparkly new building, like those we have got used to in the UK, but it offered so many possibilities and was really exciting to step into.

the Cuerda Space

Down to business - the first few days were all about exploring different harness techniques - wall running, bungee, back pick up, counterbalance, side pick up, front static line. It was like being a child in a sweet shop picking and choosing what to try first. Which techniques I had no experience in, those that I did have experience in but in different rigging systems or different kinds of harnesses.

Counterweighted Wall Running





We spent time understanding how the systems were set up and how they worked, differences in how it was rigged and why and the choice of using certain harnesses. We then explored various ways of moving in it, procedures in how to work between riggers, aerialists and director.

Later on in the visit we spent more time refining technique, listening to the equipment and what it was giving you. How your body changed with getting used to it all and working with the riggers. *Cuerda* have a style that I have not had the opportunity to experience much and to have input on the quality of movement and technique from this school of thought was very valueable in my understanding of harness.

Simone and Jen discussing harness techniques

Creative Investigations

The agreement before travelling to Buenos Aires was that time would be spent on creative investigation, thinking that I would be the one in the harness with perhaps Simone and Joseph from *Cuerda* and one or two others who would be training at the same time. However on arrival I found out that we were able to use *Cuerda's* ensemble of 8 professional performers. This was an unexpected and very welcome and exciting surprise. It allowed me to be on the outside, explore more ideas and utilise several systems at the same time. Working and meeting experienced aerial performers also gave me the opportunity of finding out what is going on in the city at many different levels.



*Left and right:
Creative research with the Cuerda Ensemble*

Cuerda were like mentors regarding the creative work. Simone and Joseph looked at narrative, intention and in how to prepare for creative tasks with the ensemble. Tomas tried to realise what you wanted to do technically. They gave much of their time and myself and others that were training there (2 other UK artists) spent many evenings talking and sharing about our experiences, training, work and creative practices.

There was an energy and enthusiasm to just get on and do it, and very supportive of each other. Having time with no pressure for results felt like a luxury and was enhanced by the *Cuerda* ensemble. My research took me down an avenue I would not have predicted and let me decide on systems to use once back home with future developments of work.

Buenos Aires - The Wider Picture

Whilst there I took advantage of having several different organisations and companies on the doorstep.

Harness

An aim was to observe the *Brenda Angiel's Danza Aerea company*, one of the first dance companies to use harness in their work. Whilst Brenda wasn't there at that time, we had

contact and I took classes with her company. This was much more dance compared with the aerial theatre of *Cuerda*, and very informative in how the choreography and floor were used in combination with the flying.

I also took harness class with *El Aire es Libre*, ex *De la Guarda* and *Fuerzabruta* alumni. They taught at an artspace, *La Estacion de los Deseos*, that was filled with aerialists, musicians and visual artists. Again it was great to see how they taught, class set up and their technique.

Circus aspect

There are several circus schools in Buenos Aires and I wanted to take advantage of expanding my aerial silks and rope vocabulary and the difference between the vocabulary developing in Scotland to that of Argentina, meet other aerialists, and to see how different schools were set up.

I visited the following centres: *Circo Social del Sur*, also based at *CheLa*
Centro Kultural Trivenchi
Circo Del Aire
Club de Trapecistas

and took private lessons from two independent aerialists who both perform and run their own schools - Benjamin Ruiz and Ana van Domselaar.



Left to right: *Circo del Aire*, *Centro Kultural Trivenchi*, *Danza Aerea*

The centres were very different from each other, some more focused on social circus, some on the professional and recreational aerialist. There was varying teaching levels, with some much better than the other. Vocabulary was both the same and completely different – good to experience different styles and be inspired in how to use the vocabulary in new and various ways.

The venues were not as high as expected which gave hope for training at home and there really was a sense of energy and lets make this happen rather than wait for huge beautiful centres. It opened my mind to what really is possible with a bit of thinking out the box.

As I was there I kept hearing of more venues that gave classes in either circus or harness and being somewhere and hearing word of mouth is so important to take advantage of every opportunity.

Independent Theatre Scene

There is a large independent theatre scene with people starting up their own spaces all over the city. I went to see two different contemporary dance shows both high quality interesting work. Again this was another exciting result of the commitment of the artistic community here to just get on and do it. The first theatre was an old shop, the second theatre was the back of someone's apartment.

My Professional Practice and Personal Development

The travel to Buenos Aires has relit that creative spark and reinvigorated my practice. The people, skills and spaces were very inspiring. It has grown my knowledge and understanding

of harness techniques, the aerial dance world, and allowed me to play creatively with all this. Having the space for creative investigation has led me to apply for funding for future developments of the work and inspired me to push forward with plans for developing aerial dance in Scotland.

Since being back I have set up harness workshops for professional and non professional dancers, and am taking steps towards creating an aerial dance ensemble here. Images and video have been shared on Facebook and featured in All or Nothing's newsletters and website.

I have made many contacts, establishing links to artists and teachers with potential visits to the UK and Ireland already being planned (Irish Aerial Dance Festival, Edinburgh Aerial and Acrobatic Convention). The relationship with *Cuerda* is growing and the plans are to involve them in the work that has already been started in Argentina as mentors and creative collaborators.



Creative Research with the Cuerda Ensemble

Personally it has taught me not to hold back, we are on the right track in Scotland, have very versatile skills and just need to harness it (no pun intended!). Seek support as having the support of *Cuerda* was fantastic – on technical, skills and creative levels. And how supportive the other performers were with each other.

Note to self (and others for the future) Video and document everything! Utilise social media such as Facebook, learn the language and try to meet and see as many people as possible to wherever you go – it's amazing what you pick up.

Going away to totally immerse yourself in a project is a wonderful and valuable thing. With very little day to day distractions it felt like I could totally enter into the creative process and give time to being there, learn, develop and grow.

Thank you Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Fund.