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Re: LUTSF Schoiarship 2016

Title: bluemouth inc and Edinburgh Festival. Dates: 15 – 17 August 2016

The original plan for the trip had been to study and shadow the production process for a site specific performance of 'It Comes in Waves' by bluemouth inc at Edinburgh Festival. I had previously travelled to Toronto to see the work's first incarnation on Toronto Island in 2015 and was keen to explore potential for siting the work in Bristol.

Key factors in the production had been the elements of transformation of an outdoor site into a contained, other worldly dreamscape and a boat journey made by the audience. I wanted to explore these elements with the company and see how the transformative magic might transfer to a busy city and what could be lost and gained through different site adaptations.

In the event, the company's plans changed at late notice due to complications with their partner company and funding schedule. The company were now sending their producer to meet with Edinburgh presenting partners at Traverse Theatre and plan the production for 2017. I was invited to join these meetings and arranged to return to Bristol with Meriel Marshall, bluemouth inc producer, where we looked at possible sites and met with potential partners.

This freed up time in Edinburgh to attend more performances than I'd first hoped, with a particular interest in the different venues, settings, timings and accessibility. The time to watch different dance performances in a busy festival setting with 'competing' sites and a hectic pace similar to the festival I programme within, was invaluable. Looking with a site and 'curator's' eye rather than as a 'booker' afforded me time to reflect on how I might develop our presenting options to offer a wider range of works.

I am grateful to the fund for affording me this valuable time to reflect on the best physical conditions for presenting dance in the public realm.

The report is online at: <https://restaged.net/testimonials/about/l-u-t-s-f-2016/>

With thanks and best wishes

Katy Noakes

Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Fund

Report – bluemouth inc and Edinburgh Festival, August 2016

LUTSF kindly funded a two-day visit to Edinburgh Festival in August 2016. The purpose of the trip was twofold: to meet with bluemouth inc and Traverse Theatres regarding touring plans in 2017 for bluemouth inc's production of 'It Comes in Waves' and also to gain new ideas for presenting, siting and scheduling work with a view to incorporating new ideas in the Dance Village festival programme.

Having worked with bluemouth inc on their immersive production 'Dance Marathon' in spring of 2016, I was so enamored with their work that I self-funded travel to Toronto to see their new production 'It Comes in Waves'. Since then we have been in contact regarding international tour plans and the original purpose of this visit was to see the adapted work in situ at Edinburgh festival this year. However, the company had to change plans early summer due to partner and funding changes, so the purpose of their visit to Edinburgh became a scouting and planning meeting for 2017.

Arriving in Edinburgh on Monday 15 August, I had a free afternoon and evening before the next day's meetings. I used the time to see two works, Dan Canham's '30 Cecil Street' and Sole Rebel Tap's 'Blushed'. These are both companies I'd seen before and was keen to see in different contexts. Sole Rebel Tap was programmed at a venue mainly showing comedy and drew a small but intimate audience for their afternoon show. They are a company whose work I would like to appreciate more, being based in our region and who regularly apply to perform at Dance Village. A sketch based two- hander, using tap and physical comedy, 'Blushed' featured re-imaginings of Fairytales. Pleasant, humorous and engagingly performed, the work felt under developed. The handling of the theme and choreography felt timid; perhaps a price paid for being over cautious in trying to make a family friendly work. The small audience all clapped in the right places and the performers worked hard to keep us with them; but especially in the context of such a large venue showing so many works, this felt too general and polite to stand out.

Dan Canham's 30 Cecil Street was shown within Forest Fringe's programme as the final show to be presented at their former home in Bristo Place. Telling the story of a now dilapidated theatre in Ireland, the company has always sought to show this work in sympathetic spaces. This drew a full house, as one of the Fringe events that were free and also an event that would appeal to fringe theatre 'insiders' who know the backstory. Dan uses prosaic, everyday movement and a soundtrack of ambient noise, soundscapes recorded voices, that weren't always easy to decipher but still gave the impression of a disappearing and hauntedness. It was evocative, poignant and beautifully presented. It resonated all the more for the backstory of the venue, but nothing would be lost to audience unaware of this.

The next day I met with Meriel Marshall, Producer for bluemouth inc and Linda

Crooks and Ruth McEwan at Traverse Theatre. Traverse is interested in a premiere of 'It Comes in Waves' in August 2017. We discussed the various options for presenting the work; whether as the site adaptive work originally conceived, or as an in theatre production with the new sections the company are currently developing. Ruth and Linda suggested a partnership with 'Hidden Door' programme may work if 'It Comes in Waves' is shown in a non-theatre context, but were uncertain of the capacity of the smaller independent company to support this. Ruth and Linda also suggested other programmers who may be worth bluemouth inc talking to – Southbank, ICIA and Soho Theatre Margate.

The meeting was supportive but realistic. Traverse was clear that there would be challenges they couldn't meet alone in presenting outside of the venue, and that in straitened times it may not be possible to pull together the right combination of partner input and agreements needed. My sense is that with more UK & International touring partners to pull together, a theatre based version is proving more appealing in slightly risk averse times than the site based work.

Meriel and I then went to see Janis Claxton's work in the National Gallery, keeping an eye out for the types of locations ideal for ICIW along the way. Pop Up Duets is a free performance of nine duets moving through the Gallery. In everyday clothes, with suitcase speakers and iPhones, the performers blend in with the promenade audience in a series of vignettes. Presenting different moods and pace that shifted in each new gallery, the work is gracefully athletic despite the restrictions of the marble floors. Unsuspecting gallery visitors enjoyed the surprise of the performances, catching photos on their phones. I enjoyed watching work that didn't try too hard to relate to the individual gallery works but took a mood and atmosphere from each gallery instead, to create short moments that stood alone as performance works.

In the evening I went to see another company from the SW, Joli Vyann in Imbalance. They are a company who we've previously programmed and commissioned for Dance Village and whose work I'm used to seeing outdoors. I'd seen a sharing of Imbalance earlier in the year and was interested to see the finished work and also how they use lighting design. Shown at Underbelly Circus Hub to a full house, 'Imbalance' explores the dark side of our obsession technology. The company's trademark is the relationship between the two artists, Jan and Olivia, one of utmost trust and synergy that allows them to perform combinations of the most daring and the most tenderly intimate acro-balance choreography without a moment that ever feels like a cynical 'trick'.

I enjoyed seeing the company in this different setting, able to perform with more micro expressions and character moments than would convey outdoors, and with lighting cleverly used, with laptops creating lonely silos of light at the table and huge looming silhouettes of phone torches.

The next day I travelled back to Bristol with Mariel, who stayed with me for a couple of days to have meetings with potential partners for 'It Comes in Waves' (ICIW) in Bristol and look at possible sites. We met with Theresa Bergne who is curating the opening programme for Bristol Arena and who'd expressed interest in the work being presented in the grounds. Over conversation and on viewing the site plans as they are evolving, it became apparent that while the production elements match what Theresa is looking for, the scale of the work wouldn't fit with the geography of the building.

We then met with a trustee of Situations, a public art organisation which is increasingly working around the region and which takes a broad and adventurous approach to what constitutes public art. This was a meeting without an agenda, but as an introduction with more of a long-term relationship building view. I have since met again with Situations producer, for general conversation about the possibilities of dance performance as public art.

The following day I took Mariel to see two potential sites for ICIW, both accessible by water so that the boat travel element can be retained. The first, in the centre's Castle Park is a small rarely used outbuilding set in a 'hidden' garden area. While the location was perfect and could easily be discreetly sectioned off, the indoor space wasn't big enough for the floor area needed. The next was upriver in Hanham, approx. 2.5 miles from the city centre. The rowing club, set amongst trees on a beautiful stretch of the river would be accessible by boat or towpath. The outdoors area would be perfectly adaptable for the outside elements and the clubhouse inside would work well for those elements.

The challenge now is securing presenting partners and funding. To keep ICIW true to its original site integrity, I would want to present it somewhere we can make feel truly magical. This costs, both in time and hard cash. Since this trip I have sought an additional meeting with another presenting partner, who is interested but who may well take a year off presenting next year, although this is not public yet. I have a meeting with ACE on 24 November, when I will have an idea of what I can apply for as Dance Village for 2017 but suspect that without the guarantee of a partner, we will not be able to stretch to presenting this alone.

I am grateful to Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Fund for supporting the travel to Edinburgh and the time to reflect on issues around programming dance in different sites, contexts and to different audiences. The support has afforded me invaluable opportunity to consider more closely:

- The role of a work's siting in the level of audience engagement, and in the possibilities of elevating 'seeing another work' to a dance work that becomes

an experience. Factors that tip the balance between the enjoyable and the memorable.

- The commitment and artistic boldness needed to achieve this well in risk-averse times; the long planning timeframes required and a reaffirmed awareness of the need for Dance Village/ReStaged to find more secure long term footing to enable this.
- As a producer/programmer working mainly outdoors, how might I be better able to support ambitions of artists we work with to present in different settings. (I am meeting with local programmers on 25 Nov to explore this). Where do the roles as an independent producer and as DV producer converge and diverge?

I am especially grateful to the Trustees of LUTSF for this support which, as an independent producer, has allowed me to feel supported and that the work is valued. It has helped allow me time and frame of mind to consider things from a bigger picture perspective and to review what types of support I may be able to offer artists as an independent producer and programmer.







Pics: Leith River walk, Ariel Rowing Club, Castle Park Outhouse, Disused studios

Katy Noakes
November 2016