

Natalia Barua

**INTERNATIONAL VIDEO DANCE FESTIVAL OF BURGUNDY 2016
LISA ULLMANN TRAVELLING SCHOLARSHIP – COVER LETTER
NATALIA BARUA**

Dates: 24 April – 2 May 2016

I was awarded to Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship in order to attend and participate in the International Videodance Festival of Burgundy 2016. The project took place in the town of Le Creusot in Burgundy, France.

The key elements of the festival included a 3-day intensive workshop for artist filmmakers focusing on the history but also the practical elements of screendance making. The 3-day workshop was led by the Directors of the Festival, Marisa C. Hayes and Franck Boulenge and was an integral element of my project, providing me with a thorough but also challenging learning environment, shaping and developing my practice as a screendance artist.

The Workshop was followed by a 3-day conference led by international scholars on screendance and moving image based practices and the conference was held amongst the screening of the Festival's Official Selection for 2016. This was a particular highlight for me on this project, as my recent Screendance "Marzanna" was selected for the Festival and for the first time, I was able to experience my work in a theatre environment with a large audience and most importantly, discuss and gain critical feedback on my work from artists, scholars and the community alike. The Conference introduced me to critical thinking on Screendance and broadened my knowledge and interest on international artists pushing the boundaries of Screendance making, which in turn, gave me a fresh perspective on where the next level of my practice as a dance artist could take me.

Weaved within all elements of the Festival was the opportunity to meet, work with and share ideas with an international community of dancers, filmmakers and choreographers all who had different levels of experience in Screendance practice, but all who shared a passion and interest in this art form.

The Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Fund was a huge motivation to dedicate all of my creative energy to this project alone and I highly recommend that all future Awardees let go of all other responsibilities and projects whilst focusing on your Award as to immerse yourself in the experience and fulfill your objectives.

I have already shared some of the work I created/was part of creating at the Festival online, which the Festival has disseminated and in fact featured on *numeridanse.tv*. I often meet emerging and mid-career screendance makers and would highly recommend this Festival for creative development and the significant opportunity The Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Fund provided me with to be part of this.

INTERNATIONAL VEODANCE FESTIVAL OF BURGUNDY 2016 LISA ULLMANN TRAVELLING SCHOLARSHIP – REPORT

The Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Fund awarded my travel to the 2016 International Screendance Conference & Workshop, hosted by the International Video Dance Festival of Burgundy, to support my ongoing professional development as a screendance artist. The intentions of my project were layered but most significantly the purpose was to provide me with vital training and networking in dance filmmaking and to nurture my practice as a screendance artist. I believe these intentions were completely fulfilled but also, the project provided me with learning and experiences that I was not expecting which were, and still are, hugely beneficial to me and I will go onto describe the impact this project has had.

The 3-day workshop was an integral element of my project and provided me with a thorough but also challenging learning environment, which balanced theory and practical learning, shaping and developing my practice as a screendance artist. The workshop provided me with practical skills and knowledge of the use of the camera in screendance making, but also importantly provided a creative and supportive environment for me to develop my skills in editing techniques. The practical skills were particularly important for my development, as I had the opportunity to gain confidence in the use of the camera capturing moving bodies; the participating group was guided from a classroom based environment through to physical practice in site-specific spaces which was an ideal route for learning. In the creation of my past projects, I have taken the role as choreographer and director, but now I also feel eager to experience acting as the camera operator. Using the camera during the Workshop, I experienced as much fulfillment as performing in front of the camera due to the somatic nature of camera use in Screendance. This confidence gained has led to my intrigue in researching further the idea of a “dancing camera” and since returning I have spent time in the studio and site-specific experimenting with the somatic camera and it’s results. I am also now particularly inquisitive about the use of “long shots” due to the learning, discussion and practice I had of this technique throughout the workshop. This is particularly interesting to me as working in this way would dramatically reduce, or may even eradicate, the need for editing on some projects and I am now excited by the element of risk this presents. *An example of a long-shot short screendance I created whilst on the Workshop is included in this report.*

That said, a large motivation for the project awarded was to gain knowledge practice and therefore confidence in the editing process of Screendance, particularly as this is a huge part of the choreographic process in this art form. Whilst I still have plenty to learn about the complexities of editing suites, the Workshop certainly provided me with an environment to ask questions and physically practice editing with clear goals as to the techniques to be used which gave an interesting discussion point on the complex results artists can achieve in the editing process. An interesting part of the editing that took place in the Workshop was that it was done in collaboration with another participants, which whilst presenting challenges, allowed the group to open ourselves up to the

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diverse preferences differences other artists have when creating work and therefore the sheer scope of results one can have. The Workshop has definitely made the editing process of my work much less daunting and in fact an area I am more excited about. During personal time on my project I independently pushed myself to edit short moving images captured throughout the day and was genuinely impressed at the enjoyment I took out of the process and the result. *An example of my editing experimentation whilst on the Workshop is included in this report.*

One of the highlights of my awarded project was the diverse networking opportunities I could engage with in terms of other artists who were participating, but also academics and experienced, established artists who were presenting as part of the Conference. The sense of community was enjoyable and has provided me with not only international connections and friendships but, most excitingly diverse prospects for future collaborations and support for my work.

The 3-day Conference was challenging and gave me perspectives I have not yet experienced as a Screendance artist, reminding me why I feel this art form is so important as I was presented with artists who are devoting themselves to keeping the history and future of the practice alive. I was impressed by the nature of academic research that has been carried out as well as that which is still taking place. This aspect of the project has allowed to me consider returning to higher education and I am currently investigating the possibilities available to me.

Another experience worthy of reporting during the Conference was the Artists Roundtable I was invited to be part of. The theme of the Festival in 2016 was "Dances Macabres: Death & The Moving Image" and along with four other artists whose work was also part of the official selection for the Festival, I was involved in discussing the topic of 'Haunted Film' with the question posed to the panel - "How have you encountered the relationship between film and 'haunting' in your practice?" When initially presented with the topic, I was concerned about articulating my experiences and ideas in front of an audience in a Conference context; however, I was overwhelmed by how positive this experience was for me and it was truly great practice for me in verbally articulating my opinions in the field of Screendance.

This project gave me great insight into festival politics and a safe environment to question and debate the nature of the screendance festival circuit. I was provided with interesting insights and perspectives on the curation in screendance festivals (or debatably, the lack of it) and I feel I left the week with a clearer idea on where and how I want my work to be presented in the future. Another incredibly useful topic presented by the Directors of the Festival was on funding for screendance makers and the different routes artists can go down to seek support for their work. This knowledge is vital for my practice and I now have more clarity on how to best pitch my ideas to potential supporters. In fact, since returning from my project, I have submitted two commission and residency applications, which if awarded, would support the research and

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creation of new screendance works. Regardless of the result of these applications, as a result of the discussions at the Festival, I certainly feel more able to seek out the most relevant and exciting opportunities for my work and have gained confidence in articulating my ideas.

As demonstrated above, the opportunities the Award gave me were diverse and enriching. I would recommend that anyone considering applying for an award ensure that their proposal contains genuine and relevant intentions in order for the rewards to be most beneficial as they have been in my case. I look forward to the continuing contribution the manifesting of receiving the Award will make to my practice and am truly thankful to have been awarded this year.

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20 June 2016