

10th September 2009

Dear LUTSF

Lisa Ullmann Travel Scholarship Fund - The New York City Tap Festival 2009

Please find enclosed a covering letter and report on the trip to New York to participate in Tap City between July 6th to 11th 2009, undertaken thanks to the funding from the Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Fund. As requested I have enclosed two paper copies of the report. I have also enclosed a photocopy of the review of the performance held at Symphony Space on Broadway.

I participated in classes and workshops in technique/tap choreography, various lectures, films on tap, showcases and performances witnessing throughout a wide and exciting range of choreographic work by today's foremost tap artists. Two of my own students aged 15 and 16 years also took part and performed in the Tap Youth Tap Future performance on Broadway.

The visit was inspirational and now I aim to share my experiences with my own dance students. I made many connections with other tap teachers and dancers from across the globe. I am currently in the process of devising a production for young people aged 8-19 years in my home town with a strong tap element.

I will certainly be recommending LUTSF to other dance professionals. This visit has really assisted my own professional development which is, I feel, vital for any teacher/dancer. I aim to continue providing valuable opportunities in dance for young people in a rural area and to make dance more widely accessible and to a wider cross section of our local community. With a young family myself I am very grateful for the support of the Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Fund. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Nikki Northover

Tap City 2009 The New York City Tap Festival

This year's festival consisted of a wide variety of programmes, films, performances and lectures on tap. The programme was about tap education, presentation and tap preservation. Participants came from across the globe to share their passion for this American dance form. This year, Tap City hosted 279 students from 15 countries and 19 American states. Throughout the festival an eclectic cast of tap veterans, cutting edge dancers, contemporary hoofers and the best in the tap scene today were leading master classes and innovative performances. Each day consisted of master classes and lectures looking at such themes as musicality, tap history, teaching tap across the world and ideas for developing tap choreography. Writers, tap historians, performers and teachers presented a wide and informative selection of tap dance on film including wonderful rare footage from private collections. Tap City is the pre-eminent tap dance festival of the world.

The 2009 NYCTF celebrated this dance genre with performances led by today's great tap artists including Jason Samuels Smith, Michelle Dorrance, Dormeshia Sumbry-Edwards Brenda Buffalino and Broadway choreographer Randy Skinner. Two of my own students aged 15 and 16 years also participated and got the opportunity to perform at the tap youth tap future platform at Symphony space theatre on Broadway. They had a terrific week. Work throughout was largely experimental. Innovation seems to me key to the future of tap dance. However, as ever we are continually reminded of the deep rooted and significant history of tap dance in American culture. We were privileged to meet Harold Cromer, born in the early 1920's, whose tap career spans over seventy years. He started tapping aged 7 years and later was well known as a tap dancer on roller skates. He told us that he used to dance on the street corners of New York using metal bottle tops as taps! Doctor Cromer then performed on Broadway and around the world... A wonderful reminder of the traditional.

So as well as the contemporary edge to the festival there were many reminders of bygone social dances like the Charleston the Lindy hop and the swing era generations. Sadly so many of the original hoofers of past decades have died (Gregory Hines was instrumental in the early years of Tap City) but the popularity of tap in America is indicative of a certain and vibrant future. To see so many young tap dancers together was wonderful. In New York these teenagers all want to be tap dancers and with such passionate, talented and committed mentors I am sure that many of them could. There was a rich and diverse range of teachers and styles (rhythm tap technique, jazz tap, soft shoe, classic and Hollywood tap). Workshops included: exploring tap improvisation, classic swing and tap choreography, developing skills as a tap dancer, examining new tap choreography, The Ellington tap legacy and repertory pieces including the wonderful Pete Nugent piece of 1953 *Breezin'*.

Tap is such a vibrant and exciting American dance form. One left the event with a strong sense of the cutting edge and the sheer inventiveness of the New York tap scene today.

Once again attending the New York City Tap festival has been both wonderful and inspirational. I hope to return to the festival and to take even more of my students. For now I look forward to sharing my experiences with my many young students in London and Dorset.

Thank you

Nikki Northover 2009