

To the Chair of LUTSF

I'm enclosing my report in respect of my Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship. With the help of LUTSF, I attended the International Association of Dance Medicine and Science annual conference in West Palm Beach, Florida between October 16 and 22, 2006.

I attended the Conference to present a study with my co-author on "Dance Specific Fitness in Undergraduate Training". For the first time, as a new member of the IADMS Education Committee, I also participated in the organisation of the Special Interest Day for Teachers, giving a presentation and introducing discussions on "The Multi-tasking Teacher".

The Conference was a great success with all the attendees, as well as the regular IADMS members. This probably had a lot to do with the location (ninety degrees and palm trees in late October), but also the quality and breadth of all of the eighty-six presentations. Personally I was very happy with my part in the proceedings and feel I've taken a step forward into becoming more established myself.

A particular highlight was a session during Teachers Day on "Self-perception and skills for managing self and stress". It was emotional and stimulated real self-reflection.

It made me resolve to take greater care of myself as an active, creative individual instead of usually, as a teacher, focusing mainly on the needs of others.

I also appreciated having a chance to network and discuss our research in the light of how it was received by other dance scientists and practitioners. It was very affirming to know that we're doing something that's seen as valuable and relevant and renewed my enthusiasm to carry on developing and integrating Dance Science into dance practice.

It was also helpful to remind myself that I would be writing a report on the Conference. This made me focus even more on attention to the details, how everything was fitting together and the overall impression and impact.

Feedback has already been given to colleagues back in London and hopefully this has stimulated more interest in IADMS. I'll also be writing another research report to fulfil my funding obligations at Laban, who contributed to my expenses. This report will be posted on the Learning and Teaching bulletin. As a member of the Education Committee, I'm already helping to plan the next Teachers day in Australia, 2007.

Since my return, I have already been, and plan to be, involved in more Dance Science related presentations, conferences and interviews during which I'll be doing my bit to publicise both IADMS and LUTSF.

Sonia Rafferty

Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Fund Award 2006

Attendance at the International Association of Dance Medicine and Science Conference: West Palm Beach, Florida, 16 - 22 October, 2006.

Background

After years of performing, directing, choreographing and teaching, I decided in 2002, to fill in some of the gaps in my knowledge by enrolling in the MSc Dance Science degree at Laban. By the time I graduated in 2004, I was completely enthused to carry on in this new and stimulating area and, alongside my performing and teaching, began to be involved in research. The Mecca for dance scientists of all persuasions is the International Association of Dance Medicine and Science (IADMS) Annual Conference. This annual conference, held in different continents each year, brings together a mixture of dance scientists, dance educators and researchers, kinesiologists, physical therapists, surgeons and dance psychologists. It's an opportunity to hear at first hand the exciting developments in the world of dance science research. Every year there are presentations on the latest findings and applications, as well as a chance to exchange information, compare studies, make new contacts and generally confirm all the fantastic things that are going on all over the world that can make a difference to how we deal with the many different aspects of dance. This year, my successful application to the Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Fund, along with Staff Development funding from Laban, made it possible for me to attend the 2006 Conference in West Palm Beach, Florida.

The Conference is spread over three days, with an extra day dedicated to Special Interest groups – Dance Teachers, Orthopaedic Surgeons and Physical Therapists. Research is presented in different ways – spoken presentations, movement sessions and poster presentations. To give an idea of the scale and depth of the Conference, this year there were seventy-two individual presentations and movement sessions during the three days, as well as fourteen poster presentations.

Although all the presentations are subjected to rigorous reviewing procedures before they're accepted, and the scientific method is a criteria that is adhered to, this doesn't mean that all the research presented is about numbers, testing and measuring. Many dance practitioners think that Dance Science is something that is beyond their own personal expertise and can often feel put off by its approach. In reality, it deals with a variety of aspects that are absolutely relevant to dance education, performance and practice today. The Dance Medicine aspect is mainly addressed with presentations covering injury risk factors, treatment and rehabilitation, but the Science deals with many different strands, including dance psychology, dance training, somatic practices and health/wellness in our profession.

For example, presentations such as "The application of psychological principles to achieve optimal performance", "Communication through touch", "Breathing in movement", "The development of imagery in dance", "Talent identification in young dancers" and "The role of feedback in dance training" are an illustration of the breadth of topics that were up for discussion this year. Practical movement sessions gave people a chance to put the science into practice. Useful ones included "Using Pilates portable apparatus to improve dance technique", "Conditioning and Inertia training for dance" and "Modifying the Graham class to minimize potential stressors".

West Palm Beach 2006





The venue for this year's Conference was West Palm Beach, Florida. The weather was fantastic in late October so it was very welcome to keep nipping outside the venue to get a sunshine fix and have some respite from the ever-present air conditioning.

I had two reasons for applying for funding to help me attend the 2006 IADMS Conference. I've been to three previous Conferences, in London, San Francisco, and Stockholm. My first was as a Dance Science student, and I was overwhelmed by the amount of information, the presence of many key figures in the field, whose books were on my reading lists, and simply in awe of the knowledge and experience on show. The last three years have charted my journey towards becoming a researcher and presenter myself. This year, the

main thrust was to share the outcomes of work I've been involved in: looking at the effects of Dance-specific Supplementary Fitness on dance students in training. Presenting with my colleague, we explained our methods, the results of some qualitative and quantitative testing, and possible overall benefits to students. This year was also different for me, as I'd been accepted as a new member of the IADMS Education Committee. The Committee's job, as well as creating resource papers for distribution to IADMS members worldwide, is to arrange and run one of the Special Interest Group Days – Teachers' Day. This involves choosing an overall theme for the day, recruiting the most appropriate presenters and organising the general run of the day at the venue. The topic this year was "The Dance Teacher's Survival Guide: The Healthy Dance Teacher". Much of the work was done in the pre-conference months, but at the event itself, my role was to introduce Round Table Discussions with a presentation on "The Multi-tasking Teacher".

Teachers Day was a great success. It was agreed that the teacher's personal maintenance and well-being often become overlooked as attention is given to the development of the students, and increasingly, the administrative workload that now comes with the teachers' role. The attendees really appreciated a recognition of and discussion around these factors which, along with others, can cause physical and emotional stress. Sessions provided a real talking point and proved to be very valuable both personally and professionally. Some of them really made us stop and think about ourselves for a change. Examples were "Modalities for preventing teachers' injuries", "Biomechanical challenges for dance teachers" and "Self-perception and skills for managing self and stress" (a very emotional and revealing session!). In fact, it was so beneficial that many of the UK delegates were discussing the possibility of repeating some of the sessions and discussions for dance teachers back at home, who aren't members of IADMS, but would get a great deal out of the experience.

Our main presentation was also very well received and created interest among other researchers and practitioners worldwide. It was great to feel such a part of the wider picture and to contribute to the ongoing debate. The hope is that we can all begin to work together to pool our individual findings to create a blueprint for integrated Dance-Specific Fitness training.

Of course, we couldn't go all the way to Florida without seeing some of the sights. We spent a fantastic day in the Everglades, taking in the crocodiles on an airboat ride, and a spectacular afternoon kayaking on the Intercoastal, a trip arranged for the delegates as a welcome diversion from the intensity of the Conference.



Obviously it was impossible to get to see all the presentations personally, especially as several are often happening simultaneously. The Conference is a very concentrated and saturated environment, but everyone always wants to take in as much as possible. It was fortunate that colleagues from London were also attending, so we were able to split up and make sure we had as many covered as possible and then chew the fat later, usually over dinner or by the pool! We felt very guilty sitting outside in the balmy evenings (in late October) knowing we'd left our usual hectic working and family behind. Joking aside, the opportunity to be able to focus on this enormous amount of information without any of the usual demands and constraints on time, energy and concentration was very welcome. It gave me a chance to

absorb it properly.

Outcomes

Professionally, this trip took me another step forward in the Dance Science field. As well as having the opportunity to discuss the relevance and impact of the latest research with colleagues from Britain, from similar institutions and backgrounds, and with representatives from Dance UK, I met established and well-known researchers whose work inspired me to keep pursuing my own. Personally, it re-affirmed the reasons I started down this road. I'm becoming more confident in combining my 'scientific' knowledge and skills and my 'artistic' practice. It informs and supports my daily teaching, whether with undergraduate students, or in my professional and company classes.

Apart from giving feedback from IADMS to staff at Laban, I've been involved in several exciting initiatives since my return from Florida. The first was sharing work on a Screening Programme at the Dance UK Healthier Dancer conference "Optimising potential and maximising performance" and secondly, co-leading a session on the integration of Dance Fitness into the technique class at the National Association of Teachers of Dancing Annual Conference. I was also part of the team invited to represent Laban at an event hosted by Ken Livingstone at City Hall, showcasing examples of best practice in HE and FE in relation to the lasting legacy of the 2012 Olympic Games.

There are other events already happening and planned for the future that will spread the IADMS message and hopefully attract many more dancers and teachers to the benefits of Dance Science and how it is pushing the art form forward into new territory. The IADMS Education Committee have already been planning the next Teachers Day for 2007, which will take place in Canberra, Australia. Hopefully, I'll be able to be there.

Sonia Rafferty