

VICTORIA HAINSBY

Reflections on a year in New York,

I have just returned from a year of artistic and academic development. My project was to attend the Professional Studies Program at the José Limon Institute of Dance in New York City. The most intensive Limon program in the world today. Nine months of technique classes and repertory studies alongside a lecture series detailing the principles and legacy of José Limon.

The demands

From September 2003 to May 2004 I have been immersed in the study of this technique: -

- Daily technique classes with master teachers and current Limon company members each with their own unique understanding and experience of the Limon style.
- Twice weekly evening lectures including historical research, applied theory, the relationship of music and dance, practical exploration and reconstruction of Limon repertory.
- Studio performances

The demands of the program were intensive but students are encouraged to work at their own pace. I additionally worked as an archive assistant, organising and cataloguing important historical documents and film footage. I was able to observe many aspects of the day-to-day organisation of the studio and witness the commitment the organisation has to preserving the life history of José Limon's artistic influence on Modern dance.

The highlights

I successfully completed the program at the end of May and was able to remain in New York for a further two months to study particular areas of interest in my own time. Highlights of my year range from the master teachers I have had the honour of working with Carla Maxwell the artistic director of the Company, Carlos Orta, Alan Danielson, Risa Steinberg and Betty Jones to the guided research I was able to undertake.

My unexpected proposal!

My development as an artist has been great and I was privileged to be asked to dance and tour to Mexico with the company 'Dance by Alan Danielson, a two week tour to five cities in celebration of the José Limon festival. Alan Danielson is the Studio Director at Limon and an independent choreographer based in New York City. The cast included members of the Limon Company and it was truly a pleasure to dance alongside such beautiful and experienced artists. The project was an unexpected addition to the challenges I expected to face over the course of the year and my physical and artistic abilities were pushed to extremes. I learnt an incredible amount during this engagement about self-discipline, professionalism and integrity.

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New Skills

Having completed the program I was invited to teach beginner/ intermediate level classes at the Institute during July, a great opportunity to apply my new knowledge of the Limon technique to my existing skills as a teacher.

What now?

My experience has been greater than I anticipated and I have learnt more about myself and my abilities than I had thought possible, I am now excited to share this knowledge and since my arrival home have notified major schools and colleges of my availability as a teacher of Limon based teacher and am making arrangements to teach classes and workshops.

Some advice

The advice I would offer LUTSF awardees is to be specific about the aims of their project. I had researched the institute and program in depth before applying and considered carefully how the program could enhance my existing career. Have clearly defined goals and be open to opportunity. The completion of a successful and self-motivated project is a great achievement and one that shapes you as an individual and allows your imagination to be free of boundaries and restrictions.

In summary

The Limon Institute offers a fully rounded dance education with its professional studies program, Physically challenging, mentally stimulating and emotionally fulfilling. Anyone interested in the study of this technique should be secure in the knowledge that the institute although small does as much as it can to support and nurture artistic exploration. The Limon studio is a community that believes totally in its founder's artistic expression and language and at the same time develops and evolves with the changing demands of Modern Dance. The staff and associated artists are friendly and generous and with the company resident at the studio it is a great place to build professional relationships. I will continue to recommend the institute to my students and am committed to highlighting the importance of this technique in the dance training schools in this country.

With thanks

I thank the LUTSF immensely for believing in the value of my proposal and offering such generous support.

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Transform' By Alan Danielson

