# Melissa Lauriello

* Ailey Horton Teacher Training – The Ailey School
* 19th July – 7th August
* New York City

## Did you achieve what you set out to do with your project?

The project continues; the course that I am enrolled on is a full-year programme, starting off with an in-person intensive in New York City. I am considering this shift in my career a 4-step project as follows:

* Participate in intensive at Ailey and take open class in NY
* Finish course online
* Gain experience teaching Horton in Beginner/open classes
* Teach at higher education level once qualified

Going on the intensive has been a springboard for the rest of the plan as it was really the most integral part to fulfilling the rest of it. I feel very proud of getting there myself and going on the trip solo; it was my first time in the USA and my first time leaving Europe, so it felt like the most challenging part of the overall plan and something I have been dreaming about for years.

## Has your LUTSF-supported trip impacted you personally/professionally?

As the intensive was mandatory for the full course, gaining support to be able to go was imperative and extremely helpful. Although I am not teaching Horton yet, there has been a significant shift in respect and eagerness to learn from me. I have reached out to all the major open class dance schools, of which three are interested in running Horton classes, which means I can start to gain experience and start to generate income from my experience.

On a personal level, the whole trip was so profound. As I was there for just under three weeks and the course was only a week, I had so much time to explore, take dance classes, see art, and go on tours. I felt like I was being fuelled, and I was being opened up to new possibilities. There were tough days when I felt tired and the intensity of the city was a lot to take in – but it was a new challenge as opposed to the ones I have all the time at home. I feel like I was brave, and I was independent, and it created huge growth for me on a personal and professional level. I would never have been able to do this five years ago and that feels special.

Please tell us about any particular highlights in your travels**.**

It was really special to spend a week at The Ailey School, meeting teachers who were in the company when Alvin Ailey was the Artistic Director and telling us what he used to nickname certain movements and hear some of his jokes. There were many moments of ‘goosebumps’ and tears when I would look at some of the old posters on the walls, and one day I saw Misty Copeland in the corridor and couldn’t believe my eyes!

Outside of Ailey, going on a tour of Ground Zero was very poignant and an emotional day. I went to The Whitney Museum of Modern Art and saw my first ever Basquiat painting in the flesh, which was a bucket list moment – I saw Hollywood Africans, which is a special work, and I really hope to see more in the future. I also went on a walking Hip-Hop tour of Harlem to see the birthplace of Hip-Hop and some incredible graffiti. I felt like I was going to the root of all the things I love.

## How do you plan to share information about your project with others?

I have made a dedicated post on my Instagram to show everybody that I went to The Ailey School, which has been well received by all. I have updated my CV to send off to all the open dance schools to talk to them about classes, which has been successful. The last thing I need to do is update my website to make Horton more of the main focus. Then sharing the information will be a long-term process of running classes to go into detail about what I have learned, creating a community, and eventually making instructional videos that I will share with regular class attendees so they can keep working on the fortifications at home.

## Do you have any suggestions which could help future Awardees?

Think big! You don’t know until you try. If you believe in yourself, others will back you too.