

THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA

Report by - Jackie Hallahan - 2003 Churchill Fellow

The Stuart and Norma Leslie Churchill Fellowship to promote and access student teacher reciprocal exchange programs in the styles of classical ballet contemporary and theatrical dance.

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Signed

Dated

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## **Acknowledgments**

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Stuart and Norma Leslie for sponsoring my Churchill Fellowship. I am extremely grateful to you for your support and generosity. My Fellowship was wonderfully challenging, fulfilling, thrilling and a rewarding experience, thank you for making my dream come true.

The Winston Churchill Trust of Australia for their support, advice and guidance throughout my Fellowship, thank you.

Teachers, staff and students at the Canberra Dance Development Centre for their support whilst I was away, thank you it was very much appreciated.

My colleagues in Australian dance who have provided support and encouragement throughout my journey.

Dance professionals worldwide who willingly gave their time to share their knowledge and experience and information throughout my Fellowship.

My family and friends for all their love, support and encouragement whilst I was away, thank you for your messages, emails and phone calls it meant so much to me.

I would like to dedicate my report to my parents Hazel and Joe Westwood, thank you Mum and Dad for all your love, support and encouragement in all my endeavors.

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### **Fellowship Objective**

To promote and access teacher/student reciprocal exchange programs in the styles of classical ballet, contemporary and theatrical dance.

### **Program.**

14 <sup>th</sup> Dec – 18 <sup>th</sup> Dec	<b>Los Angeles</b> stop over on the way to New York
18 <sup>th</sup> Jan – 8 <sup>th</sup> Jan	<b>New York</b> Steps, Peridance, Broadway Dance Centre, Alvin Ailey, American Ballet Theatre.
8 <sup>th</sup> Jan – 25 <sup>th</sup> Jan	<b>London</b> London Contemporary Dance School, Pineapple and Danceworks
25 <sup>th</sup> Jan – 1 <sup>st</sup> Feb	<b>Amsterdam</b> Rotterdam's Dansacademie, Henny Jurriens, Koninklijk Conservatorium, Korzo
1 <sup>st</sup> Feb – 4 <sup>th</sup> Feb	<b>Denmark and Sweden</b> Royal Danish Ballet School, Royal Swedish Ballet School.
4 <sup>th</sup> Feb – 11 <sup>th</sup> Feb	<b>Hamburg</b> Hamburg Ballet School
11 <sup>th</sup> Feb – 13 <sup>th</sup> Feb	<b>Berlin</b> Deutch Opera Ballet
13 <sup>th</sup> Feb – 15 <sup>th</sup> Feb	<b>Dresden</b> Palucca School Dresden
15 <sup>th</sup> Feb – 17 <sup>th</sup> Feb	<b>Frankfurt</b> Frankfurt Ballet
17 <sup>th</sup> Feb – 19 <sup>th</sup> Feb	<b>Stuttgart</b> John Cranko School
19 <sup>th</sup> Feb – 22 <sup>nd</sup> Feb	<b>Munich</b> Bayerisches Staatsballet
22 <sup>nd</sup> Feb – 25 <sup>th</sup> Feb	<b>Lausanne</b> Rudra Bejart
25 <sup>th</sup> Feb – 6 <sup>th</sup> Mar	<b>Monaco</b> Academie de Danse Classique Princess Grace
6 <sup>th</sup> Mar – 14 <sup>th</sup> March	<b>Italy</b> La Scala, Milan
14 <sup>th</sup> Mar – 21 <sup>st</sup> Mar	<b>Madrid</b> Scaena, Compania National de Danza Spain
21 <sup>st</sup> Mar – 31 <sup>st</sup> Mar	<b>Paris</b> Palais Garnier

## **Introduction**

The Adventure and Learning Experience of a Lifetime...

New York, London and Europe are the centre of the international dance world.

Throughout my Fellowship I visited leading international dance schools and studios who have an excellent staff of world renowned choreographers, performers and company directors.

I am grateful to these dance professionals who willingly gave their time to discuss and share with me their knowledge and experience on student teacher training, mentoring, motivation, new developments in curriculum, and ways to create and implement teacher and student reciprocal exchange programs.

My Fellowship was an invaluable experience. I was able to focus on creating networking opportunities between Australia and overseas.

I participated in and observed many dance classes in a variety of styles, and enjoyed watching students from all over the world strive to achieve similar training goals as Australian dance students.

It was welcoming to meet Australian dance students studying abroad and to talk with them about their travel and dance experiences.

I was also able to share my own experience and knowledge of Australian dance and promote our beautiful country to all the people I met.

I experienced and was influenced by a diverse range of cultures. I stepped out of my comfort zone and being awarded the Stuart and Norma Leslie Churchill Fellowship opened many doors for me.

I really challenged myself to learn small amounts of each language, and found the local people helped me with pronunciation, throughout all my experiences my abilities and confidence grew.

I traveled extensively and the great thing about travel is how educational it is.

The rewards to me both personally and professionally are limitless.

## **Fellowship Highlights**

### **United States of America.**

Establishing contact with Igal Perry Director of Perridance, Dianne King Assistant to the Director Human Resources Broadway Dance Centre and Jill Harrison Director of Student Programs and Studio Performances, Steps.

I Participated in and viewed a variety of classical ballet, contemporary, theatrical dance classes by world renowned teachers and discussed my project with students and teachers. Class highlights include David Howard, Jack Hertzog, Finis Jhung, Wilhelm Burmann, Val Suarez, Denise LaPointe, Debbie Roche, Jolea Maffel.

I attended performances by New York City Ballet, Alvin Ailey Dance Theatre, It's A Dance Thing, La MaMa's Winter Dance Fest, the new dance movie featuring the Joffrey Ballet The Company, Musicals Boy George's Taboo, Movin Out choreographed by Twyla Tharp.

I took in all the sites and landmarks, Central Park, Chrysler Building, Empire State Building, Statue of Liberty, Time Square and Broadway. I walked a lot, learnt and shared dance experiences and knowledge, began my Fellowship and welcomed the New Year in at Times Square New York.

### **United Kingdom**

London, establishing contact with Nigel Morgan Head of Undergraduate Studies London Contemporary Dance School, Cadi Fester General Manager Danceworks, Will Taper, Pineapple.

I immersed myself in observing and participating in as many classes as possible in the London dance scene and continued to discuss exchange programs. I enjoyed the classes in a variety of styles from classical ballet, jazz, funk and body conditioning given by Anna du Boissons, Roland Price, Laura Connor, Zandra Escudero, Andrew Stone, Leane King, Denis Wonder and Michelle Gallagher.

Performance wise I was fortunate to be in London for Resolution at the Place this is a whole month of nightly performances of works by emerging choreographers. I went to a performance titled Barebones a contemporary dance exchange involving European and English choreographers, the Royal Ballets production of Giselle, Mathew Bourne's The Nutcracker, musicals Blood Brothers, Queen's We will Rock You.

I loved the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, the Churches, and beautiful Palaces and all the famous sites. I really enjoyed the contrast to New York, the red buses, taxis and mind the gap!

### **Europe**

Netherlands, establishing contact and discussing exchange programs with Joan van der Mast teacher at Rotterdam Dansacademie, Koninklijk Conservatorium the Hague, Netherlands Dance Theatre (education department) and Artistic

Director of Ex Nuc: Ex Nuc, Centre of Modern Dance in the Hague. Wim Broeckx  
Director Koninklijk Conservatorium the Hague. Elly Broeren Director Rotterdam  
Dansacademie. Padma Menon Korzo, Ana Teixido and Arthur Rosenfeld  
Directors of Meekers Uitgesproken youth dance projects.

Rotterdam Dansacademie I observed classes in classical ballet contemporary  
dance, improvisation, and a performance of student compositions, I observed  
and discussed their level systems and exchanges. Joan van der Mast, Anna Van  
Tol, Dylan Newcombe and Ursula Heevebout gave the classes.

Koninklijk Conservatorium, discussed exchanges with director Wim Broeckx and  
I observed classes given by Joan van der Mast, Monique Sand and Lucia  
Madsen. The students were preparing for an open week performance.

I visited Padma Menon and talked about her new works and exchange programs.

There was a contemporary performance at Korzo by Ana Teixido and Arthur  
Rosenfeld and it was good to discuss Meekers their youth dance projects and  
exchange programs.

I loved walking around Amsterdam its very picturesque with its canals and  
cobble streets my favorite tourist events the Van Gough Museum, the flower  
and flea markets, the theatres and opera house, the squares and a little bike ride  
along a canal.

I am traveling through Europe by rail a wonderful scenic experience. It also  
allows me the time to reflect and catch up on correspondence and journal writing.

Denmark and Sweden I visited the Royal Opera House in Copenhagen and then  
traveled on to Sweden and established contact with Kerstin Lidstrom the Director  
of the Royal Swedish Ballet School.

I arrived early and was able to visit the school and observe some classes in  
classical ballet and contemporary dance.

Kirsten and I discussed in depth exchange programs, competition, lack of student  
boarding facilities in Sweden and the training methods employed by the school.

I went to the Royal Swedish Ballets performance of John Neumier's A  
Midsummer Nights Dream a fantastic version of this ballet, it includes both  
classical ballet and contemporary dance and the mix of electronic score and  
classical ballet music really carries his great choreography.

Travel highlights, on the way, whilst crossing the sea between Germany and  
Denmark I was on board a train inside a ship for 45 minutes and able to go on  
deck of the ship for duty free shopping, food and the sites!

Copenhagen, Hans Christian Andersons Little Mermaid, the Opera House, the rows of coloured houses and Churchill Park.

Sweden staying in a boat hotel, the Opera House, little ducks floating on mini ice burgs outside the Royal Palace and the large outdoor shopping malls.

I arrived in Hamburg and established contact with Marianne Kruise Director Hamburg Ballet School, Marianne also taught the older girls, great to observe her wonderful teaching.

I observed all the different levels in male and female classes.

Kevin Haigen was creating a Balanchine inspired work on the students and I was fortunate to observe their rehearsals. Kevin is so inspirational and great to talk with him in depth about dance and dance history.

In addition to classical ballet and contemporary dance classes the students learn folk dancing Britta Adams gave the class and is an extremely enthusiastic teacher, one dance had the students use castanets and on mass this is a marvelous sound and rhythm.

I traveled on to Berlin, Dresden and Frankfurt, I visited the Berlin Deutsch Opera School and they were preparing for a performance. The Frankfurt Ballet had a workshop with a guest teacher from America.

Stuttgart was my next stop where I established contact with Stephanie Wimpff acting Director John Cranko School, we discussed exchange programs and Stephanie was very helpful.

I visited the school library containing an amazing collection of dance books, and I observed final year students in a classical ballet class.

My final destination in Germany was Munich were I visited the Bayerisches Staatsballet the company was rehearsing for a performance.

In Germany I attended performances of Stuttgart Ballets Giselle and Ballet Theater Munchen, totally different from each other, both a wonderful experience.

In Germany I love the blend of old and new in cities, there are many historical buildings in squares tucked away behind incredibly built contemporary structures a great contrast.

The Opera houses were large and commanding and there were many Museums and Galleries with a range of exhibitions.

I travel to Lausanne, Switzerland, the country along the way is beautiful and as the train came round a bend Mount Blanc came into view. This is an awesome sight, it took my breath away like where I would imagine earth meets heaven and the colours are striking.

Woke up to a blizzard, walking in snow makes your eyes tear and then freeze!

Rudra Bejart, I established contact with Micheal Gascard, Director and I really enjoyed our passionate discussion on exchange, dance training and funding.

I observed classes given by Maya a second generation Martha Graham dancer from New York an incredible teacher of the Graham style I was fortunate to see some of company class and rehearsals and students rehearsing some of their own work for an up and coming performance.

The students have drumming classes and it is such a sound force to here so many people drumming at once.

I loved the setting of the school a vibrant blue chalet style building set into the side of the hill, with very high windows so passers by, adults, children and animals stopped to view classes as they walked up the hill.

Lausanne is a beautiful city surrounded by Alps and centered well with Germany up above, France to the right and Italy to the left. a very mixed culture and the language, mainly French.

On to Monaco, as I traveled by train I had thoughts of home as the glorious coastline came into view. I have not seen the sea for a while and I had forgotten how beautiful an expansive coastline is.

Monarco, very striking the scenery is magnificent.

I spent most of my time at Casa Mia built in the 1930's by Paris Singer American heir to the singer fortune. The building Florentine in style was given by Princess Grace to begin a classical ballet school. Marika Besobrasova is Director of the school.

I established contact with Marika Besobrasova a sprightly eighty six year old and so enthusiastic and passionate about dance.

I arrive on the day Marika and the teacher's conference with students and focus them on different aspects of technique, motivation and imagery. Great, the lesson was about reflection and using this to plan and improve your work.

I observed classes and coaching classes given by Marika and two principals from Stuttgart Thierry Sette and Roland Vogel, very inspiring and motivating.

It was great to discuss the development of Marika's levels system and curriculum based on the Vaganova method and talk about exchange programs with all of them.

Marika was in the process of developing a website, it was great fun to show everyone the many wonderful Australian and worldwide dance sites.

I leave for Italy and arrive Milan. I visited La Scala both old and new. The old Opera House is under renovation and the new a metro ride away is a total contrast extremely modern and spacious.

I enjoyed the La Scala museum and Leonardo's The Last Supper superb beyond words.

I then traveled quickly through Italy with brief stops in Venice, Rome and Palermo Sicily, the Opera House in Palermo is the third largest in Europe and just beautiful architecture.

The places, I loved the canals in Venice and the glass works, Rome the Coliseum, Fontana de Trevi, Pantheon and Vatican City.

I am now traveling by plane again. I enjoyed being in Spain and staying in Madrid. I found the Spanish people to be warm and friendly.

I established contact with Sceana a school and company directed by Carmen Roach, Carmen was away and for the first time I had an interpreter, this was very difficult and I hope I communicated well.

I also visited Compania Nacional de Danza Spain, this was a terrific experience there are two levels of experience in the company similar to Netherlands Dance Theatre.

The climate was so much warmer in Spain and reminded me that I had been away the whole of winter and with spring beginning to blossom I knew my Fellowship was drawing to an end.

I attended a few performances of Flamenco dance, I love the passion, how everyone stomps cheers and claps throughout the performances. Oh! Lay! The performers are fantastic and the music driving just so intense a great experience.

I traveled to Valencia for a day for the festival of the Fallas, it burns away winter worries in a tribute to spring. So noisy with people and marching bands, gunpowder and fireworks and the fumes from the gunpowder overpowering, I would highly recommend this experience.

Paris, visited Palais Garnier just stunning, performance highlights Hommage a Claude Bessy and a complete contrast the Moulin Rouge.

I loved Paris and the Eiffel Tower, Louvre, the banks of the Seine, Notre Dame all in all a wonderful grand finale to my Fellowship.

### **Discoveries.**

A teacher/student reciprocal exchange can encompass many variables.

Keeping it simple it involves travel, giving and receiving, time, knowledge, experience, ideas, information, innovation, all working towards a vision that raises the standard and abilities of those participating.

Dance is a thriving art form worldwide. There are so many dancers and so much variety in dance to see and experience overseas.

The standard of Australian dancers and dance training is world class and it is through our worldwide reputation that many teachers and students would welcome the opportunity to work and study in Australia.

The differences I experienced in dance training between Australia and overseas are more to do with historical, social and cultural contexts. It is this diversity that provides the basis for many wonderful future exchanges.

There is a far greater population and concentration of many dance professionals working in cities such as New York, London and Europe than in Australia.

There are many dance professionals teaching who worked directly with and were inspired by the stylistic features and choreography of the greats in dance such as George Balanchine, Frederick Ashton, Maurice Bejart, John Cranko, Martha Graham, Merce Cunningham and Twyla Tharp.

Many communities and cultures encourage all ages to participate in traditional dance styles.

Throughout my travels I found the studios and schools provided similar training programs to those offered in Australia.

Studio's offered day/evening classes and workshops in every dance and fitness style, catering for beginners through to professional levels. Fees are charged by lessen or in discounted memberships and class cards.

There was so much to choose from and the teaching faculty is comprised of the most internationally recognized and established dance and dance related

professionals. Studios regularly have guest teachers, choreographers, directors and performers.

All studios offered international student visa programs where students may study from eight weeks to up to two years and intensive workshops of one to three weeks for teachers and students held throughout the year.

Many professionals who are in musicals or a ballet company are taking class right along side you, an extremely inspiring atmosphere to study and work in.

Most schools I visited were closely connected to a company.

The schools have similar graded training programs as Australia with preparatory, elementary, intermediate and advanced divided over a study period of ten to twelve years.

There were a couple of exceptions the Rudra Bejart in Lausanne students commence training there from early teens and have two levels of training for up to four years. Also the London Contemporary Dance School and the Rotterdam Dansacademie provide tertiary studies in dance.

At the end of the students training they would have reached professional level.

Entry to schools is by annual audition and international students may audition by video.

Most schools provided boarding facilities up to a certain age whilst Hamburg Ballet School and the Academe de Danse Classique Princess Grace, Monaco, have full boarding facilities at the schools. In Sweden and Netherlands students arrange their own accommodation.

The courses of study were similar in each school all had a system based on the Vaganova method of classical ballet and Martha Graham for modern dance.

Other subjects included in the students study program varied in each school. The curriculum included language for international students, folk and character dance, dance composition and improvisation, theatrical styles, drumming, martial arts, choral singing, music programs and theory, dance history, art and cultural history.

All schools provided academic education either through local schools, by correspondence, or full academic education at the dance school.

The training programs and curriculum include a holistic education so therefore the student is prepared and well equipped for the contemporary dance world.

The advantage of having schools closely connected to a company is the link between directors and choreographers, training programs and curriculum and company style.

This creates an inspirational atmosphere where learning and creation go hand in hand.

The schools directors and teachers have either danced professionally in the company or elsewhere.

Most schools had annual fixed fees for training and offered financial assistance and sponsorship.

Through my discussions about exchanges with directors, teachers and students I asked them to describe and create their ideal exchange.

There were many wonderful suggestions and I think I liked Michel Gascard, director, Rudra Bejart. Michel suggested that I was creating a stock exchange for students and teachers. I thought about this and believe it to be true.

Everybody needs quality input into their training, work and life, if we create new learning opportunities that embody the very spirit of exchange the value will go up.

Michel's ideal exchange program was, 'Gold for Gold!'

By concentrating on bringing guest teachers from the three main dance centres of the world New York, London and Europe we are inviting Australia and overseas teachers who are leaders in their fields to share their unique influences and experiences with one another and provide valuable learning and training programs for dance teachers and students worldwide.

## **Benefits**

The benefits of reciprocal exchange programs for students and teachers between Australia and overseas will:

- Raise the profile of Australian dance internationally.
- Create networking opportunities between Australia and overseas dance studios and schools.

- Provide invaluable learning experiences for students and teachers both personally and professionally.
- Optimize every opportunity for students and teachers to raise their standards both technically and artistically.
- Experience the influence of a variety of cultures on dance through viewing and understanding the influence of the historical, social and cultural context on technique, illustrated by particular styles of choreography.
- Place students and teachers in an ideal environment to optimize learning experiences and provide future development to achieve their personal performance goals.
- Enable students and teachers to participate in a wide variety of classes or specialize in their particular field.
- Through consideration of student and teachers career path place them in the best possible advantage to improve and direct their learning towards their future.
- Provide opportunities for future employment.
- Further develop through their studies both educationally artistically and creatively worldwide.
- Through exploration of cultural, social and historical styles and influences develop new content inspired by a variety of cultural heritage.
- Enable them to learn a new language.
- Through actively participating in the dance community gain confidence and enrich their lives personally and professionally.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

To enable the student and teacher to focus and direct their learning towards their future reciprocal exchange programs need to maximize the student and teachers learning experience and provide them with:

- Workshops, master classes and intensive courses given by guest teachers.

- A learning and teaching environment in which students and teachers can improve and develop their skills and achieve their training goals in their particular field of study.
- Support and encouragement to achieve their goals through both informal, formal assessment and benchmarking.
- Networking and mentoring opportunities leading students and teachers towards further development and career paths.
- Accommodation recommendations and billeting arrangements.
- Planned itineraries that provide visiting students and teachers with a cultural, social and historical experience that is unique.
- An experience that enables students and teachers to take part in an exchange of dance and culture.
- The ability to learn a new language to make the students and teachers stay more meaningful.
- A new environment to develop new skills and knowledge that will enhance and surely benefit their career path.
- An adventure of a lifetime.

The aim is to:

- Seek out sponsorship and financial support for exchange programs.
- Expand and increase networking opportunities worldwide.
- Promote and market all teacher/student reciprocal exchange programs.

This will be achieved this by:

- Providing a worldwide website focusing on reciprocal exchanges between studios and schools and course information.
- Promoting exchange opportunities for teachers and students.

Through teacher/student reciprocal exchanges we:

- Develop new partnerships in dance.

- Provide professional development covering a range of issues such as teacher/student development and training, mentoring, development of new work and curriculum.
- Projects in dance development and research in worldwide dance education.
- Advocacy and promotion of excellence in dance training and performance.

With the sponsorship and support of Stuart and Norma Leslie and the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust of Australia I was able to achieve my dream.

I would like to encourage everyone who has a dream to apply for a Winston Churchill Fellowship it is the most fantastic, enriching, rewarding experience giving many wonderful memories to treasure for a lifetime.