

THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA

Report by ROSETTA COOK - 2015 Churchill Fellow

To research teaching innovations in tango and contemporary dance  
for adults of all levels of experience.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Summary and acknowledgements

The fellowship has enabled me to participate in a range of workshops taken by leading dance and movement practitioners in Europe who are working with tango in innovative ways. The fellowship has expanded my knowledge in my teaching and choreographic practise so that I am in a position to begin to further research and develop new improvisation skills for dancers, dance teachers and choreographers.

I would like acknowledge and thank the Churchill Trust, the board and staff for making this amazing experience possible. I would like to thank Cheryl Stock and David McAllister for supporting me in my application and all the inspiring artists that I met with for sharing their knowledge and insights - Adriana Pegorer, Javier Cura, Liesl Burke, Lydia Muller, Ezequiel Sanucci, Brigitta Winkler and Nishta Marie Matares. Finally all my thanks to Michelle White, my business partner of 2ballerinas adult dance school, for keeping everything running while I was away. I could not have achieved this without her generous support.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### **Project Description**

My Churchill Fellowship research took me to Lisbon, Monteriggioni, Berlin, Amsterdam and London to meet with dance practitioners working with tango in new ways with a range of ages and levels of experience. I undertook workshops and private classes with them to observe teaching methods and experience the evolving form of Contact Tango, a hybrid form of tango, contact improvisation and other body awareness and movement techniques.

### **Highlights**

A highlight of my fellowship were the private classes I took with dance practitioners Adriana Pegorer, Javier Cura, Liesl Burke, Lydia Muller and Ezequiel Sanucci. Each had something unique to offer because of their diverse backgrounds of movement experience. Also, participating in group workshops as a student after many years of teaching and giving out was not just informative but liberating. Tango Donna, a week in Monteriggioni learning more about the leaders role in tango with women from around the world, another enriching experience. Alongside my main fellowship activities I took the opportunity to attend dance/tango/theatre events and performances. Most memorable was seeing the serene joy of people of all ages coming to dance tango together outdoors in the balmy summer night at the Quais de Seine Milonga in Paris. Another highlight was at The Lisbon International Tango festival show "Puro Tango" with the Argentinean Orchesta Tipica La de Juan D'Arienzo. The powerful sound of the bandoneon and the highly physicalised movement of players was exhilarating.

### **Major lessons and conclusions**

The fellowship has provided me with new knowledge and as well greater confidence to focus on my chosen direction in my choreographic and teaching practise. To meet other dance people like myself also passionate about the tango form has been inspirational. As well one cannot underestimate the creative enrichment that travel brings and I have returned with much inspiration for future choreographic work.

My experiences have affirmed to me the great potential for Contact Tango as a choreographic tool for professional dancers experienced in contemporary dance and tango who can improvise around these forms. As well it is a partner dance that can be enjoyable for anyone of any age and experience who are willing to experiment and explore a more relaxed and creative dance form that has social and health benefits.

What has been most enlightening to me are the exercises that have been developed through the exploration of Contact Tango that can then be taken back and applied to the teaching methods of tango. They offer better ways of teaching tango to professional dancers so that they can then apply them to choreographic invention. They also have the potential to improve the tango dancing experience as well as open up tango dancers to experimentation early in the learning process. I plan to bring together all the information, new exercises and concepts I have gained in a series of workshops to share with both the professional and non professional dance community in Australia.

Ultimately I hope for the workshops to act as a catalyst to inspire other Australian dancers/choreographers/dance teachers to contribute to the exciting form of Contact Tango.

## **MAIN PROGRAMME**

### ***Lisbon International Tango Festival***

Dana Frigoli and Adrian Ferreyr

Sebastian Archavel and Roxana Suarez

Claudio Villagra and Helena Fernandez

### ***Tango Donna - Monteriggioni, Italy***

Brigitta Winkler

Nishta Marie Matarese

### ***Independent Dance and Movement Practitioners***

Javier Cura - Berlin

Liesl Burke - Berlin

Ezequiel Sanucci and Lydia Muller - Amsterdam

Adriana Pegorer - London

Liz Koch - London

## **OTHER - Events and Performances**

Puro Tango Lisbon

Staatsballett Berlin Duato/Kylian works

Latitudes of Embrace - Tango Installation at Clam - Galas Palace Prague

Quais de Seine Milonga Paris

Tango Garden Milonga London

Komische Oper Berlin The Magic Flute Directed by Barry Kosky

## MAIN BODY

### **My Fellowship background - Why tango?**

Argentinean Tango, its music and its dance, has been a source of inspiration for my dancing, choreography and filmmaking for over 20 years. I began learning to dance tango in 1999, however prior to that I discovered the music of Piazzolla and other tango composers that led to the creation of three choreographic works between 1996 - 98, *Tangled Heart*, *Torque Tango* and *Rapture*. Later, after years of learning, dancing and teaching tango I created a short film in 2010 *The Last Tango in Sunnybank* then a 40 min work *Hall of Flame* for The Queensland Ballet in 2011 and a creative development of a dance theatre piece *Heaven Hell and Tango* in 2013.

Initially I was drawn to the tango because of the inherent drama in the music, the stories of passionate love and loss that it evokes. However as I began to learn to dance the tango I became fascinated about how it is improvised. Over the years I have observed tango evolve with new steps continually been added to its repertoire, called "nuevo tango". I could see that because of its improvisational base tango had great potential as a choreographic tool for dancers and choreographers. I noticed that since I had been dancing tango the way I approached choreography had changed, it was a though tango had become such a part of me that it was informing my work without me being aware of it.

I began to research this area about 4 years ago and discovered that there were other dance people like me in Europe thinking the same, and that a small community of like minded people that also began in isolation were coming together to explore where tango can go, a hybrid form of contact improvisation (CI) from contemporary dance practise and tango. Out of this exploration a new form of dance has evolved called Contact Tango.

It is around this hybrid form that I set out to explore with my Fellowship.

### **My fellowship research**

There were two areas of outcome I was looking at exploring.

Firstly I was looking to explore contact tango as a choreographic tool for professional dancers and choreographers for use in the creation of new work. Secondly, having had a lot of experience teaching ballet and tango to adults of all ages, I could also see the health and well being benefits of a partner dance for like contact tango for people wishing to explore an alternative, more playful and freer social dance form.

I planned my research around people who I believed were exploring the tango form both within the tango world and and as well as with contact tango.

As a starting point for my research I set myself the following questions.

*How has contact tango evolved?*

*What are the similarities and differences between CI and tango? What do they each bring to the form of Contact Tango?*

*What are the benefits of combining the forms?*

*How much previous knowledge of both forms is required to be able to participate in Contact Tango?*

*How have teaching methods of teaching tango changed?*

*How are teaching methods adapted to suit the level of the student?*

## ***Lisbon International Tango Festival***

I began my fellowship at the Lisbon International Tango Festival.

I chose to attend this festival to attend the workshops as the guest teachers were from a younger generation of renowned Argentinean tango dancers/teachers. I wanted to see how tango teaching methods have evolved and by how much.

Over the years social tango has steadily grown in popularity so that it is now danced around the world in most cities and even smaller towns. Every year there are hundreds of Festivals of varying sizes that attract Argentinean guest teachers and tango dance enthusiasts from around the world. The Lisbon International Tango Festival is festival on a grand scale with over 600 people attending over five days of workshops, a new tango show every evening and social dancing until 4am.

I had never experienced such a large tango event. Set in a beautiful unique historic salon with a sprung wooden floor of over 600sqm. In the evening social milonga it was amazing to see so many people all together from around the world and of all ages passionate about dancing tango.

I attended workshops for both beginner and advanced levels taken by Argentinean couples Dana Frigoli and Adrian Ferreyr, Sebastian Achaval and Roxana Suarez, Claudio Villagra and Helena Fernandez. Through these workshops I observed a considerable change to tango teaching methods compared to classes I have attended by other Argentinean “Maestros” years ago when I began learning tango.

Instructor Helena Fernandez Helena explained that the original tango dancers (milongeros) just danced and created the movements, they never had to think about what or how they were dancing, it just evolved as they shared it with others. During the 1990's when tango came back into popularity the teaching method was to teach steps separately, as small individual movements, to be linked together in the moment of the dance. This proved to have limitations when one comes to dance it as a “whole”, without strain and to fully experience what dancing tango has to offer.

There are still varying teaching methods depending on who the teacher is and which style of tango (traditional milonguero, salon or nuevo) is being taught. However now there is a greater understanding of how other forms of dance and body awareness methods can improve tango teaching methods overall. The application of other forms have brought with them a greater understanding of posture, core strength, dynamics, and relaxation. These all provide a more enjoyable and productive dancing experience.

I attended one of the evening shows “Puro Tango” with performances by the guest teachers. There were a range of performance styles all beautifully executed from more authentic to highly choreographed and dramatised with spectacular tango choreography. The most amazing part of this performance was the live orchestra from Argentina - The Orchesta Tipica La de Juan D'Arienzo with singer Caio Rodriguez. The powerful sound of the bandoneon and the highly physicalised movement of players was exhilarating.

## ***Tango Donna - 5 day leaders retreat for women - Monteriggioni Italy***

I attended Tango Donna as I wanted to improve my skills as a leader in tango to bring to my contact tango experience. I also was interested to see how a leaders workshop just for women in tango could work as potentially there could be interest for something like this in Australia.

Tango Donna took place in a beautiful old farmhouse in the hills of Tuscany, a perfect place to be able to focus on learning with no distractions. There were fourteen women who attended from around Europe and America. We were a mix of ages and experience - social tango dancers, tango teachers and contemporary dancers with different reasons for wanting to learn to learn the leaders role. We were in the hands of two very experienced teachers Brigitta Winkler and Nishta Maria Matarese.

*Brigitta Winkler* has been studying and exploring tango for the last 30 years. She was one of the first Europeans to study Tango in Buenos Aires in the early 1980's and following that, in 1986, she contributed to the Berlin tango scene by opening one of the first tango studios in the city. She is also a founding member of Tango Mujer Dance Company (an all-women dance company regularly performing in the US). She spent 4 years in the training of Body-Mind Centering. Since 1995 with her home base in New York City, she has been busy touring and teaching all over North America, and Europe.

*Nishta Maria Matarese* tango dancer/teacher is a social worker, yoga teacher with a background in contemporary dance and a producer of wellness events.

Tango Donna included far more than just working on practising and dancing the leaders role. Each day commenced with a morning session of body awareness exercises drawn from yoga, pilates, contemporary dance, improvisation and visualisation techniques. What was most interesting was that the exercises were specifically focused towards an aspect related to tango. As well they were appropriate for a range of levels of experience.

Each morning class had a theme which was then explored in the afternoon tango technique session. The directions were given through the use of descriptive metaphor rather than directions of how to do the movement. Instead of thinking about how a movement "should" be achieved the use of metaphor provides an alternative way that utilises the imagination. By activating the imagination movement is initiated from the inside, rather than from the outside and how it "should" look.

Metaphorical descriptions used in ballet and contemporary technique, however, are often neglected in the effort to achieve the step and the focus is placed on how one "looks". Use of metaphor was an intrinsic part of my early dance education with Joanna Priest in Adelaide. I have always used this throughout my career especially preparing for a performance when looking to create a new experience each time and go beyond the execution of the steps. This was great reminder of the effective use of metaphor and possibilities of its effectiveness for teaching adults in a more intuitive and creative way.

## ***Independent Dance and Movement Practitioners***

Each of the tango dance artists I visited come from diverse arts/dance backgrounds and are teachers and choreographers. As well as their backgrounds in contemporary dance and/or ballet, tango and contact improvisation each have brought to the exploration of Tango and CI their experiences in other forms arts and body movement practise that have enriched and informed their ideas and teaching.

They all offered a broad range of practical exercises drawn from their individual experiences.

Liesl Bourke - Ballet, contemporary, yoga

Javier Cura - Contemporary dance, martial arts, yoga, drama

Lydia Muller and Ezequiel Sanucci - Ballet, contemporary dance, yoga, drama

Adriana Pegorer - Contemporary dance, release techniques such as Skinner Releasing Technique, Feldenkrais, Alexander Technique, Rolfing, Ideokinesis, BodyMindCentering and Aikido.

### *Liesl Bourke*

Australian born, Liesl has taught and performed tango in Australia, Asia, USA and Europe. She ran a tango school in Berlin for many years with Frederico Farfaro. Liesl now works as a choreographer, often with tango. Together Liesl and Frederico developed new methods of teaching tango to beginners and also exercises specifically for professional dancers who were required to learn tango quickly for choreography.

Liesl has worked as a freelance dancer and with companies including Ballet Schindowsky, Komische Opera, SMK#1, Lea Dance, Australian Opera, and PVC- Freiburg Theater. She has worked as choreographer for TUI Cruises onboard tango show 'Tango Fatal', performing with Cantango in the Berlin Philharmonie, as featured dancers on commercials for Nivea, with director Joachim Schloemer on the show 'Tango La Queen' and as part of Physical Virus Collective, Freiburg Stadttheater. She collaborated with choreographer Elizabeth Lea in '120 Birds' premiered at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and they are currently involved with the Festspielhaus St Pölten, Austria giving workshops and creating shows involving professional and local amateur dancers.

### *Javier Cura*

Javier is an Argentine American multidisciplinary artist. He has a Master in Modern Literature at Buenos Aires University (Argentina). He has a background in visual arts, has trained as an actor and has performed, directed and created dance theatre shows in Argentina, Colombia, USA, Italy, Germany and Indonesia. He presently teaches contact-tango, physical theatre and contact-improv internationally and regularly visits England, Italy, France, Czeck Rep, Germany and Argentina. He has been invited to teach at ZIP Contact Impro festival at Orvieto, Italy, at the Freiburg Contact Festival in Germany, at Alchemie Tango Festival in Prague, at the West Coast Contact Impro Festival, San Francisco (USA) and at Phantastango Tango Festival in Germany. His last piece that merges tango and contact in a physical-theatre context was presented in Prague's Dance Theatre "Farma Festival", in Italy's Terni Festival and in Mar del Plata, Argentina. In 2009, he was invited by Fabrik Potsdam Dance Theatre Festival to create a Physical Theatre and Tango show with participants of his workshops. He is currently living in Berlin where he is conducting a research on Contact Improvisation expression at the Berlin Free University.

### *Lydia Müller and Ezequiel Sanucci*

Lydia and Ezequiel run a tango school in Amsterdam where they teach contact tango as well as tango. Based on the knowledge they have in different dance styles they have done intensive research to develop their own cross-over style between tango, contemporary dance, ballet, contact improvisation and theatre. They are directors of the company *Tango Now* for which they create tango dance theatre productions. Lydia has worked as a professional contemporary dancer in several dance companies as De Dansers / Wies Merckx, Danstheater Adentro / Relinde Moors, Danstheater VOS, Rob List, Stg.Mint among others in the Netherlands and abroad. Ezequiel has had an extensive career as a soloist in ballet and contemporary dance companies in Argentina, Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, France and Spain. He has worked with Internationaal Danstheater, LeineRoebana, Korzo Producties, Lonneke van Leth, Ballet del Teatro Colón, Stadttheater Luzern, among others.

### *Adriana Pegorer*

Adriana is an interdisciplinary dance artist who has presented her work in the UK and abroad varying from dance, dance theatre, site specific, videodance and multimedia/new technologies. Her exploration of the fusion of Tango Argentino and Contact Improvisation started during her BA degree at Chichester University (1998-2001). She presented her research at various conferences including at 'Body, Movement and Dance in Global Perspective' (Hong Kong), 'Touching and to be touched – Kinaesthesia and empathy in dancing' (Berlin), the Colloque International 'Tango: Creation, Identification, Circulation' (Paris), "Physic(s)al entanglements" at ECITE 2015 and "Moving the small dance" at ECITE 2014. She won the Lea Anderson Choreographic Award for the Tango based dancefilm 'Double One' and performed in Marta Savigliano's 'Wallflowers and Femme Fatales' for the International Tango Conference at Harvard University, Boston. She contributes to the World Dance & Culture curriculum in the UK and teaches tango and contact improvisation at various schools, colleges, universities and private and public organizations. From 2012- 2015 she organized 4 yearly research weeks at Ponderosa with several international teachers dedicated entirely to the fusion of tango with other techniques, dance forms and concepts. Adriana continues to share the fusion at various local and international events.

### ***The evolution of Contact Tango***

Over the last 10 years as people with backgrounds in other forms of dance and body movement methods (such as contemporary dance, contact improvisation, ballet, yoga, martial arts, pilates, Feldenkrais and other mind body awareness techniques) have come to tango and they have been applying their skills to methods of teaching and dancing tango. These have all played a part in varying degrees in the evolving nature of tango and the development of Contact Tango.

Every practitioner has followed their own creativity so their classes varied. However, there were crossover of ideas and concepts that would have been shared at various workshops around Europe, if not directly then indirectly through others who then pass it on. Contact Tango is still in an experimental stage but there is a growing interest in the form. In all the classes I attended I observed that contact tango appeals to all ages and levels of experience.

### ***Similarities and differences between forms***

#### *Improvisation*

Both forms share a focus on improvisation and how two people relate to each other in the dance and the energy flow between them. They both require a heightened physical awareness of ones partner and of oneself in the moment.

In many ways Tango and CI are the same, yet in others they are very contrasting, which is why bringing the forms together makes it so interesting.

The main difference is that in Tango there is always one leader and one follower. In CI there is a continual exchange of who is leading/proposing and who is following/interpreting. In Contact Tango roles are also shared.

### *Techniques*

Tango has more structure/technical and aesthetic framework than CI and CI has more release and flow. Tango's technique and aesthetic form incorporates posture, frame, line of legs, placement and extension of feet. This could be described as the outer form or the exterior image that is presented. To achieve this one needs a certain amount of "holding" the line or shape, so more energy is expended to achieve this. Its advantages are greater dynamic possibilities for an improvised form. This holding of the form is also a part of the inherent drama in tango, that comes from the music of the tango where rhythm and melody are integral.

Contact improvisation does not have aesthetic or held form as such - its focus is completely from the inside and how the energy flows from one person to another and the release into another movement. The shape or form that is created is not as important. The focus is more from the inside to the outside. Release techniques foster greater physical awareness and understanding of how to move in the most economical way - of least effort, without strain - but still to experience the fullness of the movement.

### *Connection and Energy*

In tango the connection and subsequent movement between the partners in tango is a centrifugal energy initiated from the core centre of the body and the frame of the arms support this. It starts with the movement of the leader in the torso and then shared with the follower through the embrace. The energy then flows to the extremities of the body in the creation of the movement. In CI the connection can be initiated from any part of the body - hands, feet, legs, hips as well as centrifugal movement. Both require a deep physical listening to each other and if the connection feels broken then there are moments when one can slow down to a very small movement to re connect.

### ***Benefits and challenges of combining the forms***

For a professional dancer improvising in contact tango provides more tools to explore creativity to be utilised in the creation of new movement and new work. For a non professional dancer it also allows for an exploration of their creativity and their movement potential.

Overall CI brings to tango more freedom and creativity and Tango gives CI more structure/form. Tango brings to contact tango improvisational skills to achieve spirals, shared axis - balances and counter balances as well as rhythm and melody. CI brings to contact tango improvisational skills to achieve falls and lifts, ground work and rolling.

When CI joins with tango there is a choice of using the aesthetic or not. I think this is an interesting area to explore i.e. to play with variations of how much release and how much retaining of the tango dynamic and form. Music choice can play an important part in this outcome.

As there are not the traditional male/female roles in Contact Tango the gender issues that can come up with tango are removed. Often in social tango there are concerns about women always having to wait to be asked for a dance by a man, or of being told what to do, or of how to dance, and that it is presumed it is their fault if they are unable to follow a lead. Many women lose interest in tango because of this, even though they love dancing tango. Contact Tango offers another partner dance experience for those who want to still enjoy the form but in an open and inclusive way.

### *Sharing of roles*

The main challenge I can see with Contact Tango is how to facilitate the sharing of roles and knowing when to change between who is leading and who is following. As tango has evolved so has the terminology for this transfer of energy. Leading is also defined as proposing/giving and following as interpreting/receiving. In the workshops I attended were exercises in preparation of gaining a greater sense of awareness of the other and how to read the transfer of energy. This requires a lot of practise and ultimately it depends on the level of abilities of the dancers.

### *Greater physical awareness*

People often talk about the transformational experience of dancing tango. It fosters a sense of connection between oneself and to others and helps develop communication and relationship skills. With Contact Tango this experience is heightened. One learns how to “listen” physically to oneself and another on a deeper more intuitive level. To trust and to let go and be the moment. To not judge, or sensor - just to be. This process of being present and mindful in a state of active meditation brings with it a range of benefits that can enhance health and well being. Benefits such as - sensitivity and body awareness, posture, flexibility, spontaneity, creativity, stress release.

### *Benefits of contact tango as choreographic tool for partnering*

Choreographers often work with improvisation, either on themselves with others or work with dancers who improvise from direction from the choreographer. If the choreographer and dancers have the added skill of tango improvisation it adds another dimension of dynamics to CI. The strong physical framework that tango brings to CI provides core stability and trust to carry out a larger range of movements with greater momentum, resistance, impulse and release.

### ***Previous knowledge required to be able to participate in Contact Tango***

Different levels of experience in either dance form will influence the outcome.

Through my research I was hoping to find ways to fast track the tango learning experience for professional dancers and I believe I have found the foundations of what I am looking for. By applying movement concepts that dancers are familiar with can certainly speed up the process. However it still requires commitment and practise as does any other dance form. As a choreographic tool participants ideally need an intermediate level in tango leading/and or following and experience with contact improvisation.

It can be quite challenging for a tango person coming into contact improvisation and likewise a CI person coming to tango. Experienced contemporary dancers are generally already familiar with release/movement awareness techniques to some degree as it is part of their training so some parts of tango will come easier to them. Some of the exercises facilitated this crossover. However I think there is much scope for further development.

The more experience of both forms to bring into the dance the more effective the outcome. As a choreographic tool this is important as the outcome is to be viewed eventually. However as a social experiential dance this is not so important because the dance can still provide an enjoyable and explorative experience.

### **Teaching methods for different levels**

All the classes I attended were open to a range of ages and experience and there was no adaption made for different levels. This could be because of the inclusive nature of the dance and possibly because numbers would not be enough if there were different levels. Once people have attained the skills required then they often don't attend classes anymore but instead participate in a contact tango 'jam' where they can dance with others with the same level experience. Because of its improvisational base the gaining of skills, improvement and innovation takes place in the action of dancing with others. The same applies to tango dancers where the dancing takes place in the social 'milonga' or a practise meet up, a 'practica'.

### **Movement awareness techniques**

Techniques such as Feldenkrais, Alexander Technique, yoga, pilates among others have played a part in tango's evolution providing knowledge about how to use relaxation and breath for ease of movement. Tango is not an easy dance to learn and there can be a tendency to overwork in the effort to achieve. People turn to movement awareness forms such as Feldenkrais or Alexander technique after experiencing some kind of persistent muscle strain. In 1989 at the peak of my dancing career I discovered Feldenkrais and yoga. They were a revelation to me at the time after many years of intensively performing as a ballet dancer. The results were profound in relieving strain and learning a new way of moving, and I have been utilising them in my warm ups ever since. My fellowship research has brought me back to these forms and thinking about how I can incorporate this knowledge further into my teaching.

One of the workshops I attended in London was jointly taken by tango practitioner Adriana Pegorer and somatic educator Liz Koch that was an effective way to bring somatic knowledge to tango, or in fact any dance form. Adriana Pegorer has been researching and applying the methods of somatic awareness to tango for many years.

*Liz Koch* is an international somatic educator, and creator of Core Awareness™. With 30 years experience working with and specializing in the Psoas, she is recognized in the somatic, bodywork and fitness professions as an authority on the core muscle. Liz is a USA and internationally published writer and the author of *The Psoas Book*, *Unravelling Scoliosis CD*, *The Psoas & Back Pain CD*, and *Core Awareness; Enhancing Yoga, Pilates, Exercise & Dance*.

*'The tango the psoas and latissimus dorsi dance together is a beautiful balance of yin and yang, male and female, personal and communal energies, and interwoven dynamics. The freedom of one depends upon the freedom of the other; flowing in harmony together, they support wholeness and congruent behaviour.'* Liz Koch in *Core Awareness: Enhancing Yoga, Pilates, Exercise and Dance*

Liz and Adriana introduced the class to the psoas and latissimus dorsi muscles through exercises demonstrating *'how the how the psoas interfaces with skeletal integrity, joint rotation, muscular tension and our emotional well being (specifically in regard to the fear response).'* The function of these two muscles can be directly related to many dance movements, where movement is initiated from, and our ability to move freely without strain. Liz guided us through visualisations that Adriana applied later to exercises drawn from contact improvisation and tango.

### ***How teaching methods of teaching tango have changed***

There are many ways to learn 'steps'. Often in the excitement and haste to teach something new one forgets to take time to teach how the body works, where the movement is initiated from and how it feels. Also, tango classes can also become too serious and possibly frustrating to learn to start with. New methods that I gained from all of the practitioners included game like exercises that demystify and simplify the tango (or contact tango) learning process, making it less confusing and more enjoyable. The classes often had a warm up at the beginning where other movement concepts are introduced and applied later when learning a new step. They take steps of tango (such as spirals, sharing weight, rhythmic patterns) and teach them from the perspective of other movement forms, mainly from contemporary dance. Overall there is more of a sense of flow that is being taught, bringing into play opposing dynamics of groundedness and lightness. There is greater focus on use of the floor, and a strong energy downwards through the hips and legs, lifting upwards from the waist with elements of relaxation and release.

### **CONCLUSIONS RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATIONS**

Through the fellowship experience I have gained not only new knowledge but also greater confidence to carry out my vision for tango/contemporary dance in the two areas of my fellowship research - professional and social dance. I am better informed with a clear direction of how to take my ideas forward.

The Churchill Fellowship findings are the catalyst for me to begin further research with others in the Australian dance community. There is great opportunity for myself and other dance artists in Australia to contribute to the evolving form of contact tango. It is the broader learning approach into other movement forms that has kept tango evolving and is also what makes it so unique as a partner dance, for example, in comparison to ballroom styles. As long as people with different movement experiences continue to bring their skills to tango (and contact tango) it will continue to evolve offering exciting possibilities for its future.

My findings lead me to believe that Contact Tango is a fluid and changing form and that its outcome entirely depends on what skills the participants bring to it. The more training one can do in the separate forms then bring them together to play with the better the outcome.

What has been most enlightening to me are the exercises that has been developed through the exploration of contact tango that can then be taken back and applied to the teaching methods of tango. These have the potential to improve the tango dancing experience as well as open up tango dancers to experimentation early in the learning process. They also offers better ways of teaching tango to professional dancers.

### ***Professional dance***

I believe CI and tango combined should become an integral part of a dance student's training. It shows great potential to be an effective tool for dance students and for choreographers. CI is taught at most dance universities and contemporary dance courses and by adding in the tango improvisational framework provides greater possibilities of innovative outcomes in dance. By teaching students these skills they will inevitably be passed on as the students move into careers as either teachers, performers and choreographers.

## ***Social dance***

Contact tango as a social dance to be enjoyed by anyone may take a while to evolve in Australia due to a smaller population, but the potential is definitely there. It requires a certain type of person willing to explore a greater physical experience and sense of experimentation. I would suggest at present most people who dance tango are happy to continue with the traditional form but there is a small and growing group of those that are curious. There are pockets of people in all cities who are exploring the interchange of traditional lead/follow roles and also exploring nuevo tango - which are the precursors for change. There is also a CI scene in Sydney and Melbourne. Inevitably the two will come together, as is the case in Europe.

## ***Crossover benefits of teaching/choreographing areas***

The findings in my research have informed the way I view teaching/choreography overall and are applicable to other dance forms as well as the contact tango form. I can see the great benefit in incorporating other dance form concepts and movement awareness techniques, use of metaphor and visualisation to adult learners in my teaching areas of ballet and tango. As well, in the last two years I have been working as choreographer with Opera Queensland with another offer for 2017 and believe the skills I have gained will be beneficial to my approach to working with the singers on their movement skills.

## ***Further research and workshops***

In order to clearly define the best methods for the two areas of my research I plan to facilitate workshops for different levels of ability and experience. The workshops will allow me to put into practice and explore the information I have gained. I plan to develop different classes for people of the same levels of experience in their dance form and/or background.

I am looking at the following areas as a starting point;

*Professional dance* - I am planning workshops to meet with Brisbane dancers and choreographers to explore tango and contact improvisation. I have begun a collaboration with with Jean Tally, a Brisbane based contact improvisation and movement awareness teacher. Jean is keen to learn tango so we are sharing skills. I see this as a starting point towards the development of a method that I would look towards taking further afield in the professional and pre professional community in Australia at large.

*Tertiary/full time dance students* - Gene Moyle Director of QUT Dance and Linda Gamblin Director of Sydney Dance Pre Professional year have confirmed workshops for students to be held in 2017.

*Adult dance school (2ballerinas) and Tango community* - I plan to bring these two communities together by introducing tango skills classes into our timetable to lead up to the introduction of contact tango classes.

As the form evolves I envisage expanded workshops for both professional and non professional areas, with possibilities for bringing out guest teachers from overseas. These could potentially be introduced into tango or contemporary dance festivals.

I believe the evolution of the form will happen in Australia when professional contemporary dance practitioners become familiar with tango. My primary aim is to act as a catalyst and inspire the dancers/choreographers of today and tomorrow to take up tango and begin the journey.

