



The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust

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THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA

Report by PHILIP PIGGIN, 2014 CHURCHILL FELLOW

To develop skills and knowledge in the delivery of dance
programs for People with Parkinson's disease.

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Dated



REWARDING AUSTRALIANS STRIVING FOR EXCELLENCE
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2. INDEX

3. INTRODUCTION – SUMMARY AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

4. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- a. CONTACT DETAILS
- b. PROJECT DESCRIPTION
- c. HIGHLIGHTS – PLACES & PEOPLE
 - SAN FRANCISCO
 - NEW YORK
 - LONDON

LEICESTER

- d. MAJOR LESSON AND CONCLUSIONS LEARNT
- e. HOW TO DISSEMINATE AND IMPLEMENT THEM IN AUSTRALIA

5. PROGRAM – PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONS VISITED

6. DESCRIBE THE FELLOWSHIP AND LESSONS LEARNT

- a. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND – DANCE FOR PD, BROOKLYN
- b. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND – DANCE FOR PEOPLE WITH PARKINSON'S, AUSTRALIA & CANBERRA
- c. THE CLASS
- d. THE TOUR
 - SAN FRANCISCO
 - NEW YORK
 - LONDON
 - LEICESTER
- e. MAJOR LEARNINGS AND CONCLUSIONS
- f. HOW TO DISSEMINATE AND IMPLEMENT THEM IN AUSTRALIA

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3. INTRODUCTION – SHORT SUMMARY AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My Fellowship was awarded to enable me to undertake training in the USA and the UK for the development of my skills and knowledge in the delivery of dance programs for People with Parkinson's. Clinicians refer to the condition as a movement disorder. It is a progressive disease of the nervous system marked by tremor, muscular rigidity and slow, imprecise movement, affecting primarily middle-aged and elderly people. It is associated with degeneration of the basal ganglia of the brain and a deficiency of the neurotransmitter dopamine.

Research is increasingly indicating the value of dance and movement programs for ensuring participants retain some movement independence, facility and quality, and also engage in highly valued social exchange. Significantly the program is presented as an aesthetic dance experience, and not as a therapeutic exercise program, although there are significant commonalities.

During the 9 weeks of my Fellowship I attended classes, forums, meetings, performances, film showings and a conference, meeting some 40+ practitioners working in the field, including teachers, program coordinators, researchers, support workers, musicians, etc. This

occurred at some 30 venues in San Francisco, New York, London, Bournemouth and Leicester. Importantly I had the opportunity to meet and talk with many participants in the program, all espousing the very positive experience it provided for them.

I must sincerely acknowledge and thank the following:

- a. The Churchill Trust for enabling me to undertake a truly life changing and affirming study trip
- b. Nancy Tingey, Canberra artist and former Churchill recipient, who established Painting programs for people with Parkinson's, and who encouraged me to apply for the Fellowship
- c. David Leventhal, Program Director and Founding Teacher for Dance for Parkinson's based at the Mark Morris Dance Group in Brooklyn, NY, who totally inspired me from my initial training in Sydney in 2013, and who supported my application, and coordinated and facilitated my month long residency in Brooklyn
- d. My employer Belconnen Arts Centre who have been most encouraging and supportive in establishing the program at the arts centre, and are now keen to further develop relevant dance programs for challenged populations in the future
- e. Parkinson's ACT in Canberra who is a most supportive partner for our ACT Dance for People with Parkinson's programs
- f. My class at Belconnen Arts Centre, who inspire me weekly, and teach me more than they will ever know
- g. Jane Ingall, my valued colleague and fellow teacher for the program here in the ACT, who looked after my class during my travels, and supports the program in every way
- h. Erica Rose Jeffrey who commenced the program here in Australia in 2012 and heads the Australian Dance for PD organisation with enormous generosity and commitment
- i. The wonderful and generous dance tutors in the USA and the UK who so generously shared their practice with me
- j. The very inspiring, courageous and enthusiastic dancers who participated in the classes I attended on my travels, and made me exceptionally welcome always

Heartfelt thanks to you, one and all.

4. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – ONE PAGE MAXIMUM

a. CONTACT DETAILS

Fellowship Recipient - Philip Piggin

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Community Cultural Inclusion Officer at Belconnen Arts Centre, Freelance Dance Artist

b. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

My Fellowship was to provide the opportunity for me to undertake training in the USA and the UK in the development of skills and knowledge for establishing and delivering dance programs to people with Parkinson's. Parkinson's is a condition with very significant impacts on an individual's movement, and its incidence is growing with our aging population.

c. HIGHLIGHTS – PLACES & PEOPLE

SAN FRANCISCO

I was resident here for 2 weeks, and connected with 5 generous and talented practitioners who form the Bay Consortium.

NEW YORK

I was based in New York for 4 weeks at the home of the founding organisation – Dance for PD, based at the Mark Morris Dance Group in Brooklyn. It is led by the inspiring Director and founding teacher David Leventhal who created a tailor made program for the duration of my visit, enabling me to see and experience a range of classes throughout New York.

LONDON & BOURNEMOUTH

I was based in London for 2 weeks, visiting a number of practitioners and dance companies delivering the program. I also visited a regional program at Pavilion Dance in Bournemouth.

LEICESTER

To conclude my trip I attended a 4 day conference run by People Dancing, which included courses on dance for People with Parkinson's, People with Dementia and for Seniors.

d. MAJOR LESSON AND CONCLUSIONS LEARNT

As a result of this intense and amazing opportunity to witness and experience diverse and quality practice of Dance for People with Parkinson's, in both the US and the UK, I am aware of an extensive amount of new knowledge and understandings I have now gained, alongside a greater level of confidence and affirmation of my own practice. Research and my observations both indicated the growing value of dance and movement programs for people with the condition. Both also acknowledged that the program ensures participants retain some movement independence, facility and quality, and engage in highly valued social connection and exchange. The specific details will follow later in this report, and are many and various.

e. HOW TO DISSEMINATE AND IMPLEMENT THEM IN AUSTRALIA

Dissemination and implementation of my developed skills and knowledge and understandings will take place over time, and in partnership with a number of colleagues and allied organisations at both a local, national and international level, and most significantly with Dance for Parkinson's Australia, and Belconnen Arts Centre. This will include network development, meetings, demonstration classes, professional development courses, performances, written articles and papers for dance and medical organisations and the media.

5. PROGRAM – PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONS VISITED

*Unless otherwise specified, the below are all classes that I attended.

a. USA

SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA, WEEKS 1 - 2

I was resident here for 2 weeks and connected up with 5 very different, generous and inspiring practitioners delivering dance programs for People with Parkinson's. These were located in downtown San Francisco and in the surrounding Bay area. Collectively this group is known as the Bay Consortium and they are in regular communication.

WEEK 1 - SAN FRANCISCO, BERKELEY, SAN RAFAEL/MARIN COUNTY, SUNNYVALE

Susan Weber – Teacher, Berkeley Ballet Theatre, Berkeley

Torri Campbell – Teacher, Marin Dance Theatre, San Rafael/Marin County

Marika Brussel – Teacher, City Ballet School, San Francisco City

Damara Ganley - Teacher, Parkinson's Institute, Sunnyvale

WEEK 2 - SAN FRANCISCO, BERKELEY, SAN RAFAEL/MARIN COUNTY

Susan Weber - Teacher, Berkeley Ballet Theatre, Berkeley *Here I worked as a Support Teacher for the class.

Torri Campbell – Teacher, Marin Dance Theatre, San Rafael/Marin County

Claudine Naganuma - Danspace, Oakland

b. NEW YORK, WEEK 3 – 6

During my 4 weeks in New York I was based at the Mark Morris Dance Group in Brooklyn, wherein the Dance for PD program is housed, and directed by the very inspiring and welcoming David Leventhal. He set up my own personalised month long program, which involved visiting classes (and some performances) in Brooklyn, Manhattan, The Bronx, Cedarhurst and New Haven. As one of the founders of the program, David brings an incredible amount of knowledge, experience and thoughtfulness to the program, and is a very gifted teacher, talented artist and generous mentor.

WEEK 3 - BROOKLYN, MANHATTAN, THE BRONX

*Meeting – David Leventhal – Coordinator/Founding Teacher, Dance for PD, Mark Morris Dance Group, Brooklyn

Julie Worden – Teacher, Julliard School of Performing Arts, Manhattan

Lisa Hoffman – Founder, Coordinator and Teacher, PACT (Physical Activity during Cancer Treatment), Mark Morris Dance Group, Brooklyn

David Leventhal - Coordinator/Founding Teacher, Mark Morris Dance Group, Brooklyn

*Rehearsal – for performance of L'Allegro Project, with Brooklyn Dance for PD group

Tara Sherman - Teacher, College of Mount St, Vincent, Riverdale, The Bronx

Pamela Quinn – Teacher, Mark Morris Dance Group, Brooklyn

*Presentation - Narrative Medicine Report, Art Matters at Columbia University – at The Frick Museum, Manhattan

*Performance - L'Allegro Project – Brooklyn Dance for PD group, Mark Morris Dance Group, Brooklyn

WEEK 4 – BROOKLYN, MANHATTAN, THE BRONX

Janelle Barry – Teacher, Bronx House, The Bronx

Lisa Hoffman - Founder, Coordinator and Teacher, PACT, Mark Morris Dance Group, Brooklyn

David Leventhal - Coordinator/Founding Teacher, Mark Morris Dance Group, Brooklyn

*Meeting - David Leventhal, Mark Morris Dance Group, Brooklyn

David Leventhal – Teacher, Cobble Hill Retirement Home, Brooklyn

Pamela Quinn – Teacher, Mark Morris Dance Group, Brooklyn

WEEK 5 – BROOKLYN, MANHATTAN, THE BRONX, CEDARHURST, NEW HAVEN

Heather Waldon – Teacher, Julliard School of Performing Arts, Manhattan

Lisa Hoffman - Founder, Coordinator and Teacher, PACT, Mark Morris Dance Group, Brooklyn

Janelle Barry – Teacher, JCC of the Greater Five Towns, Cedarhurst, NY

Sarah Marcus – Teacher, Mark Morris Dance Group, Brooklyn

Tara Sherman - Teacher, Riverdale, The Bronx

*Festival of Arts and Ideas - Class, Film, Discussion, Yale University, New Haven. This included screening of *Capturing Grace*, a film about the Brooklyn Dance for PD Group

*Meeting - Adam Noah - Research Scientist, Brain Function Lab, Yale School of Medicine, New Haven

*Meeting - Dance for PD Teachers Networking Group, Newhaven

WEEK 6 – BROOKLYN, MANHATTAN, THE BRONX

Lisa Hoffman - Founder, Coordinator and Teacher, PACT, Mark Morris Dance Group, Brooklyn

David Leventhal – Coordinator/Founding Teacher, Mark Morris Dance Group, Brooklyn *Here I worked as a Support Teacher for the class

*Meeting - Dance for PD Teachers Networking Group, Manhattan/Brooklyn

*Presentation Class, Ballet Academy, East Side, Manhattan with Assessor David Leventhal
Pamela Quinn – Teacher, Mark Morris Dance Group, Brooklyn

c. UK, WEEKS 7 - 9

I was based in London for 2 weeks, visiting a number of practitioners and dance companies delivering workshops for People with Parkinson's. Companies visited included English National Ballet and Rambert Dance Company. One additional class I attended was based in Bournemouth, some 3 hours by train from London, and provided a welcome opportunity to see the quality of work taking place regionally with the support of the local dance agency Pavilion Dance.

WEEK 7 - LONDON

Penny Smith – Teacher, Hillingdon Sports and Leisure Centre, Uxbridge – Tai Chi

Fergus Early – Artistic Director/Teacher, Green Candle Dance Co, Bethnall Green

*Meeting – Beatrice Ghezzi - Teacher, Dance for Life, Fulham

Joanne Duff, Daphne Cushnie, Amanda Fogg – Teachers, Musical Moving, Wimbledon

Penny Smith – Teacher, Hillingdon Sports and Leisure Centre, Uxbridge – Exercise Class

*Meeting - Dr Jill Bunce – Lecturer and Researcher, Derby University/Winchester
University/Trinity Laban Centre in London

*Meeting - Rachel Elliott – Education Officer for Folk Dance and Music UK

*Meeting - Alexis and Nick Ephgrave, Twickenham – AWE Teacher and Parkinson's
Information and Support Worker respectively

Danielle Jones – Creative Associate, Education, English National Ballet, Kensington

*Meeting - Erica Rose Jeffrey - Coordinator, Dance for Parkinson's Australia

* Performance – Laban Seniors Group, Horniman Museum, Forest Hill

WEEK 8 - LONDON & BOURNEMOUTH

*Meeting – Katy Mason - Elders Program Coordinator, Rambert Dance Company, Waterloo

Anna Gillespie –Medical Centre, Teacher, Kentish Town

*Visit & Observation – Anne Martin - Parkinson's Nurse, Kings College Hospital, Denmark Hill

Victoria Trotter – Teacher, Trinity Church, Finchley

Fergus Early, Teacher and Artistic Director, Green Candle Dance Co, Bethnall Green

Hannah Ley (Dance Co-ordinator), Aimee Smith, Sophia Hulbert - Teachers, Pavilion Dance,
Bournemouth

Danielle Jones - Creative Associate, Education, English National Ballet, Kensington

WEEK 9 – LEICESTER

The final chapter of my Fellowship was attending a four-day conference in community dance practice at de Montfort University in Leicester, run by People Dancing - the Foundation for Community Dance, UK. Over the 4 days I attended one day courses delivered on:

a. Dance for People with Parkinson's – introductory level and a second day on advanced level - David Leventhal, Aimee Smith, Sophia Hulbert and Danielle Jones

b. Dance for Seniors - Fergus Early

c. Dance for People with Dementia - Daphne Cushnie

These provided a wealth of informative experiences - interesting, extending, provocative, challenging and affirming!

6. MAIN BODY - DESCRIBE THE FELLOWSHIP AND LESSONS LEARNT.

a. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND – DANCE FOR PD, BROOKLYN

Much of the following background information is taken from the website of Dance for PD, at <http://danceforparkinsons.org>

INTRODUCTION

Dance for PD®, celebrating its 15th anniversary next year, offers specialized dance classes to people with Parkinson's, their families, friends and care partners in six locations around New York City and through our network of affiliates in more than 100 communities in 14 countries around the world. Dance for PD classes allow people with Parkinson's to experience the joys and benefits of dance while creatively addressing symptom-specific concerns related to balance, cognition, motor skill, depression and physical confidence.

The program's fundamental working principle is that professionally trained dancers are movement experts whose knowledge about balance, sequencing, rhythm and aesthetic awareness is useful to persons with PD. In class, teaching artists integrate movement from modern, ballet, tap, folk and social dancing, and choreographic repertory to engage participants' minds and bodies and create an enjoyable, social environment for artistic

exploration.

A collaboration between the Mark Morris Dance Group and the Brooklyn Parkinson Group, the Dance for PD program provides teacher training, nurtures relationships among other organizations to foster classes around the world, and offers a variety of quality resources for purchase. An advisory board, made up of world-renowned neuroscientists, neurologists, health care professionals and researchers, provides guidance and stewardship.

THE DANCE FOR PD® APPROACH

The Dance for PD® program is built on one fundamental premise: professionally-trained dancers are movement experts whose knowledge is useful to persons with PD. Dancers know all about stretching and strengthening muscles, and about balance and rhythm. Dancers know about the power of dance to concentrate mind, body and emotion on movement because they use their thoughts, imagination, eyes, ears and touch to control their bodies every day.

Dance for PD® teaching artists integrate movement from modern and theater dance, ballet, folk dance, tap, improvisation, and choreographic repertory. The Dance for PD® class is an aesthetic experience that uses the elements of narrative, imagery, live music and community to develop artistry and grace while addressing such PD-specific concerns as balance, flexibility, coordination, isolation and depression.

The classes engage the participants' minds and bodies, and create an enjoyable, social environment that emphasizes dancing rather than therapy. Active demonstration by professional dancers inspires participants to recapture grace, while guided improvisation fosters creativity, and experimentation with movement.

“The fundamentals of dancing and dance training - things like balance, movement sequencing, rhythm, spatial and aesthetic awareness, and dynamic coordination - seem to address many of the things people with Parkinson’s want to work on to maintain a sense of confidence and grace in their movements. Although participants from all over the world tell us they find elements of the class therapeutic, the primary goal of our program is for people to enjoy dance for dancing’s sake in a group setting - and to explore the range of physical, artistic and creative possibilities that are still very much open to them.” David Leventhal, Dance for PD founding teacher, Brooklyn, NY

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

Dance for PD® started as an idea, was born as an experiment, and has emerged as an innovative global program that has launched in more than 14 countries, impacting upon thousands of people with Parkinson’s, their families and care-partners.

In 2001, Olie Westheimer, the Founder and Executive Director of the Brooklyn Parkinson Group (BPG), approached the Mark Morris Dance Group (MMDG), an internationally acclaimed modern dance company that had just opened a new dance center in Brooklyn. Olie proposed the idea of a rigorous, creative dance class for members of her group. She also knew from her own dance background that professional dancers train their minds and bodies to execute difficult movement with confidence, power and grace. In doing so, they develop cognitive strategies that she thought could be naturally beneficial and enjoyable for people with Parkinson’s.

That year, two dancers from the Mark Morris Dance Group - John Heginbotham and David Leventhal - along with a professional musician, started leading monthly classes for about six people. A third dancer, Misty Owens joined the teaching team shortly after, and composer

and pianist William Wade became the program's lead musician in 2003. From the beginning, the Brooklyn classes were – as they still are today – offered free of charge in a state-of-art building devoted to dance.



The very talented Dance for PD Coordinator and Founding Teacher, David Leventhal. He is wearing a trial/demonstration set of "Google Glasses" which plays a number of visual programs to prompt movement for the wearer, whilst still seeing the world in full vision.

In 2004, MMDG begin leading Dance for PD® classes in cities where the company toured, and developed a training program for dance teachers soon after. Dance for PD®'s founding teachers have offered more than 100 free demonstration classes and more than 30 teacher training workshops around the world. The original Brooklyn program serves as a model and inspiration for a growing network of Parkinson's dance classes in 30 U.S. states, and in Mexico, Canada, Australia, England, Scotland, Italy, Germany, Holland, Israel and India. Meanwhile, enrollment in the Brooklyn and Manhattan flagship classes now averages 45 to 50 participants a week. They are presently planning an "advanced" class!

Throughout its expansion, the Dance for PD® teaching approach has remained true to Olie's vision and fundamental ideas: that professionally-trained dancers are movement experts whose knowledge about balance, sequencing, rhythm and aesthetic awareness is useful to persons with PD; that all classes welcome and include people of all abilities, as well as families, friends and caregivers; and that the class is about the art, technique and fun of dancing, not about Parkinson's and not called therapy. Simply stated, the class allows participants to explore the range of physical and creative possibilities that are still very much open to them.

The program has also been an important catalyst in creating active and engaged Parkinson's communities where there were none previously. In the act of dancing together, people learn together, talk together, and inspire each other to explore their creative and physical potential through group singing, yoga, and fitness classes that complement their dance training.

As the program continues to grow, its teachers and leaders try to chart a course that is ever respectful and aware of local community needs, interests, and diversity. But whether the classes take place in Brooklyn, Edinburgh, Canberra or Pune in India, the fundamentals are the same: dance and music of the highest quality led by teachers and musicians who are sensitive, knowledgeable and passionate. And with its inclusive philosophy that welcomes all, regardless of ability or level of mobility, the program inspires people with Parkinson's - and

those close to them - to experience the grace, fluidity, and joy that dancing brings.

b. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND – DANCE FOR PEOPLE WITH PARKINSON'S, AUSTRALIA & CANBERRA

In Australia 1 in 350 people have Parkinson's and 30 people are diagnosed daily ([Parkinson's Australia Report](#)). Parkinson's affects people in different ways and no two people have exactly the same symptoms or experience. As our population continues to age, this program will have an increasingly vital role to play in ensuring there is a focused effort on addressing the maintenance of physical independence and mobility, and on the nurturing of social connections and networks.

Based at Belconnen Arts Centre (BAC) in Canberra, I work as a Community Cultural Inclusion Officer, focussed on developing connections with our community, and in partnership with them delivering workshops, master classes, events, performances and artist in residence programs. The arts centre is about arts programs for all, and has a deep commitment to arts provision especially for those experiencing disability and disadvantage in the ACT and region.

In 2013, we started a Dance program at BAC for People with Parkinson's, in partnership with Parkinson's ACT. This followed my initial 2 day training in Sydney with David Leventhal, assisted by Erica Rose Jeffrey. I was very impressed with the program, and the delivery of the training over the 2 days by David Leventhal, who is also the Coordinator and Founding Teacher for Dance for PD that commenced in Brooklyn in 2000. These 2 days of training built upon and affirmed my experience of dance with special needs groups that had been a significant and treasured part of my dance life in the UK of the 80's and 90's, and in Australia in the ensuing years.

I was subsequently encouraged to apply for a Fellowship by a friend, Nancy Tingey, who had previously received a Churchill Fellowship to study painting programs for People with Parkinson's, some years ago. She then implemented a class here in the ACT, which continues today with great success at the National Botanic Gardens in Acton.

I have just now returned from a 3 month study tour, visiting and experiencing programs of dance for People with Parkinson's in San Francisco, New York, London, Bournemouth and Leicester. Thanks to the Fellowship, this enabled a very significant and in-depth learning experience, and a real connection to a number of practitioners and their practice, in both the US and the UK. The program of study and travel I undertook was guided and encouraged by David Leventhal, who both recommended classes of quality to visit in San Francisco and the UK, and set up my month long residency whilst I was in New York. He possesses an amazing level of knowledge, awareness, thoughtfulness, professionalism, artistry and good will. I believe it is very much due to his managing of and gifted contribution to the program that it flourishes throughout the world.

c. THE CLASS

CLASS PURPOSE & RELEVANCE

From the Australian Dance for PD website – <http://danceforparkinsonsaustralia.org> - "The program emphasizes dancing for dancing's sake. It is an aesthetic experience that focuses on developing artistry and grace while addressing such PD-specific concerns as balance, flexibility, coordination, gait, social isolation and depression. Participants report that

the classes boost their confidence levels, transform their attitudes about living with a chronic illness, and help them manage some of the symptoms associated with Parkinson's disease. Consistent interaction within the close-knit community of the dance class helps to combat social isolation and depression while empowering participants with a sense of physical possibility and artistic achievement.”

The commitment to the classes was a constant with participants everywhere – and like our class at BAC, the dancers recognised the invaluable benefits of maintaining a regular and suitable exercise program. Indeed research increasingly promotes the equally important roles of medication and exercise for people with Parkinson's in order to maintain their physical well being, movement confidence, independence and quality of life.

Dialogue with designated Parkinson's nurses in Canberra and London strongly recommended a suite of complementary support services, addressing all aspects of life for People with Parkinson's. This included the core medical team plus physiotherapists, nutritionists, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, psychologists, social workers, gym instructors and dance teachers!

Highly significant to the success of the program is the additional deep and important social connections and supportive friendships that develop through the class experience. The dance studio provides a base for the participants to come together on a regular basis to dance, laugh, talk, eat and drink! I have had some delicious afternoon teas in the dance studios of Canberra, London and New York!

The formation of this strong bond between group members was perhaps most in evidence at the flagship home base – at the Mark Morris Dance Group's studios in Brooklyn. I would suggest that this may well be due to the longevity of the program, which commenced in 2001. Additionally, the group has been involved in the presentation of several significant, challenging and adrenalin raising public performances. This is so beautifully and sensitively viewed in the film – CAPTURING GRACE – by the very talented producer/director Dave Iverson. I can see this performance experience has generated a special relationship between the group, and a deep appreciation and understanding of the power of dance.

CLASS STRUCTURE

Most classes I visited in the USA followed closely the recommended format as advocated in my initial training sessions. The classes commence seated at chairs, then progress to standing by chairs and finally travelling independently if participants are confident to do so.

For those classes delivered within a dance company structure, as in Brooklyn with Mark Morris Dance Group, and with English National Ballet in London & regions, there was an added delight. Within these classes, exercises would often be linked to performance repertoire, and often there were subsequent opportunities for the participants to receive discounted tickets to the company's live performances. Thus there was an even stronger connection to the art form and its realisation.

CLASS OUTCOMES

And this was what I was observing – participants at various stages of Parkinson's, united in their attendance, focus, commitment and enjoyment of dance. And for the 60 – 90 minutes of the class there was a transformation as it became clear that “there are no patients, there are only dancers“. This was stated by one of the class members in the Brooklyn group, and so beautifully encapsulated what the program is all about. Live and glorious music, thoughtful

and surprising and challenging dance exercises, gentle encouragement and support from volunteers and inspiring teachers brings to these courageous people a world that many of us so love and respect.

For a while, we are all together sharing a life affirming and celebratory activity, challenging and working the brain and the body, and being a dancer! The increasing issues of the Parkinson's condition are forgotten and dismissed. And the joy and magic lasts beyond the class, and brings everyone back the following week for another round!

d. THE TOUR

SAN FRANCISCO

I was resident here for 2 weeks and connected up with 5 practitioners delivering dance programs for People with Parkinson's. These were located in downtown San Francisco (Marika Brussel), Berkeley (Susan Weber), Oakland (Claudine Naganuma), San Rafael/Marin County (Torri Campbell) and Sunnyvale (Damara Ganley). Collectively they are known as the Bay Consortium.

The similarities and diversities of practice of these 5 generous and welcoming tutors was very inspiring and informing, and made for a very positive start to my 9 weeks of learning. It was an absolute joy and privilege to become a student once again, and just absorb and experience and reflect upon the range of classes offered by the different teachers who comprise the Consortium. Susan Weber invited me to co-teach with her at her weekly class at Berkeley – which was a total honour, joy and privilege, and helped to affirm my own teaching practice as was developing since 2013.



The large dance group based in Marin County, taught by Tori Campbell, front right side, seated. They were a very fun loving and welcoming group who would love to tour to Australia!

NEW YORK

During my 4 weeks in New York I was based at the Mark Morris Dance Company, wherein the Dance for PD program is housed, and directed by the very inspiring and welcoming David Leventhal. He set up my own personalised month long study program, which involved

visiting classes (and some performances) in Brooklyn, Manhattan, The Bronx, Cedarhurst and New Haven. As one of the main founders of the program, David also brings an incredible amount of knowledge, experience and thoughtfulness to the program, and is a very visionary and informed leader, gifted teacher, talented artist and generous mentor.



The Mark Morris Dance Centre in Brooklyn, NY, wherein is based the Dance for PD program, led by David Leventhal. This was my main base whilst resident in New York.

The other classes I visited outside of Brooklyn were led by other very welcoming teachers, whose techniques were very much informed and influenced by the training programs David and staff have evolved and refined over the 15 years of the program. It was very enriching to see the many different styles and techniques used by the various teachers, and the way these all engaged the participants in different ways. With rigorous and regular note writings each evening after my class visits I have accumulated a wealth of new ideas and skills to apply to my own teaching and to share with other practitioners here in Australia.

LONDON & BOURNEMOUTH

I then travelled to the UK and was based in London for 2 weeks, visiting a number of practitioners and dance companies delivering workshops for People with Parkinson's. In London I noted that the dance practitioners were based mostly in the more affluent north and western regions – and reminded me of the importance of ensuring that such programs are spread equally across the country, regardless of socio-economic status and class. I am not sure that Parkinson's is so class conscious!



Erica Rose Jeffrey, Brisbane based Co-ordinator of Dance for Parkinson's Australia, at the studio at English National Ballet, in Makarova House, Kensington.



And the front door of ENB – hidden in a small lane beside the Royal Albert Hall in London.

One additional class I attended was based at Pavilion Dance, in Bournemouth, some 3 hours by train from London, and provided a welcome opportunity to see the quality of work taking place regionally, and the necessary support systems required to deliver these outside of the major capital cities.



Trying a dance move at Pavilion Dance, a dance agency now set up in the old bathing pavilion at Bournemouth Beach. The space runs an enormous dance program, with 4 studios, a performance space, offices, foyer and change room. It hosts a weekly class for people with Parkinson's, which I visited to gauge classes held in the regions.

LEICESTER

The final chapter of my Fellowship was spent at a 4 day conference in community dance practice at de Montfort University in Leicester, run by People Dancing, the Foundation for Community Dance, UK. Over the period I attended one day courses delivered on Dance for People with Parkinson's (at an introductory level and a second day on advanced level practice) and then a day on Dance for Seniors and a day on Dance for People with Dementia. These all provided a wealth of informative experiences and useful information - interesting, extending, provocative, challenging and affirming!



The Dance Department at de Montfort University, Leicester, where the 4 day People Dancing conference was held.

e. MAJOR LEARNINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

As a result of this intense and amazing opportunity to witness and experience diverse and quality practice of Dance for People with Parkinson's, in both the US and the UK, I am aware of an extensive amount of new knowledge and understandings I have now gained, alongside a greater level of confidence and affirmation of my own practice, and professional contacts in the USA and the UK. I am also aware that this knowledge flow will no doubt continue to impact on my work for many years to come, as the many and various less obvious learnings find the opportunity to surface within my working practice.

Perhaps the major learning for me is that I am now very aware of and affirmed in the significance of the program to offer people with Parkinson's a quality aesthetic and structured dance program, which fully works the body and the brain, within a supportive and nurturing social context. This is so much more than a straight exercise class. It challenges the physical and cognitive components, and so importantly the heart and the soul of participants. It becomes a transformative experience, providing an affirming quality of life moment in a world that is increasingly compromised physically with the impact of Parkinson's

I am very affirmed in the belief that a quality aesthetic experience is integral to the successful outcomes of the program. Thoughtful and diverse dance exercises and activities, accompanied by carefully selected music (or ideally a live and experienced accompanist) make for a quality dance experience that is transformative, affirming and significant in maintaining the participant's physical facility and confidence and thus quality of life.

I am assured in setting high standards for the class to aspire towards – and in aiming for the sky we will all find moments of flying. In setting our own goal of personal best, each person

is supported to go for their own inspired dance journey, within the supportive and bonding class environment.

I found that classes offering the best quality experience were those that offered a range of activities and challenges. These included:

- a. Exercises that the group would follow without any prior practice – and so encourage refined concentration and instant duplication of the teachers movements
- b. More complex work which would be taught by the teacher initially, and then the class would repeat
- c. A variety of dance and music dynamics, to provide a range of qualities in the class, from the calm, slow and peaceful to the hot, speedy and pulsing!!
- d. Opportunities for the class to improvise and respond individually to tasks and music
- e. Opportunities for the class to engage in some composition work, often in small groups – providing time for social engagement, dialogue and negotiation

I found the whole experience to be very validating and affirming for me as an experienced practitioner who has worked with other groups experiencing disability and disadvantage. Taking on the challenge of working with a different group always raises large questions of personal inadequacy and inexperience. The Fellowship provided me with an invaluable affirming and growth opportunity, and a battery charge to inspire my dance work for this sector. It is also re-invigorating my related dance practice, and will ultimately inspire development of my work with other groups experiencing disability and disadvantage, such as people with Dementia and people with Multiple Sclerosis.

I now realise the essential role that Volunteers can play in the dance class. They provide an enormous source of support and encouragement to class participants, and establish invaluable relationships with the attendees. Additionally the Volunteers are experiencing a quality apprenticeship and this provides real life context training for those of them wanting to develop their own teaching skills in the field.

The Fellowship has provided me with the confidence and knowledge base to support and work alongside the voluntary Australian co-ordinator for Dance for Parkinson's Australia, Erica Rose Jeffrey. Together we can work to promote the program and to implement on-going PD opportunities for present and future teachers throughout the country.

I understand now that it is essential for people with Parkinson's to receive treatment with the core medical team plus a range of allied health practitioners. This includes physiotherapists, nutritionists, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, psychologists, social workers, gym instructors and dance teachers! I witnessed examples of this integrated approach to treatment when visiting the Parkinson's Nurse Anne Martin, and Kings College Hospital in Denmark Hill, London. It was quite inspiring.

Together it is possible to create world class programs of integrated arts and health practice working towards a whole of life quality experience. Progress in this realm seems to be very variable, and is of course funding and knowledge dependent – and it would appear that the Australia health system has much to learn from the UK health system in this particular aspect.

However, if we can aspire to developing these levels of connected support and communication across the medical system, we can imagine cost effective and highly valuable quality of life experiences will result. This may well be the case too for allied programs for people with Dementia, MS, cognitive and physical disability. We have the potential to create

accessible and effective ways to integrate arts and health programs with very positive outcomes.

f. HOW TO DISSEMINATE AND IMPLEMENT THEM IN AUSTRALIA

I have already started to disseminate the new skills and knowledge I have gained from my Fellowship in a number of ways, and there are of course many more to follow in the coming months and years.

Immediately I have been able to incorporate them into my own class that I teach weekly at Belconnen Arts Centre, and to share them with my colleague who leads the class at Tuggeranong Arts Centre and others.

The two ACT dance groups recently presented short performances at the national Walk in the Park for Parkinson's, held on the shore of Lake Burley Griffin. They will also be performing at Tuggeranong Arts Centre's 25th birthday celebrations in October this year, and at a short presentation at Belconnen Arts Centre in November, alongside the film CAPTURING GRACE. These are all invaluable opportunities to promote the program and its benefits.

We have to confess we are also accomplished Media Tarts, and pursue any opportunity for press coverage of our activities and the cause. There have been a number of articles in the local press about my Fellowship and more recently about the group and its coming performances. We shall continue to put ourselves out there!

I have also presented at the recent Danscience Festival held at Queensland University of Technology in Brisbane, as part of a panel on Dance and Parkinson's. This conference attracted dance and dance related scientists and researchers from around the nation and overseas, strongly presenting the case for supporting the ongoing development of dance in health contexts, and affirming the many positive outcomes that result from this nexus. I anticipate this will be the first of many more conferences I will be attending, which focus on that important connection between dance and health.

I am also submitting an article (outlining the program and its benefits to the community) to the local and national Ausdance organisations, for consideration for their monthly e-newsletters and websites. Ausdance is the peak body for dance in Australia, and promotes and supports all components of the dance sector throughout the nation.

In the next months I will be visiting Parkinson's groups in the ACT and region for a short presentation on my travels, and will emphasize the importance of implementing a balanced drug and exercise regime to ensure a continued quality of life for People with Parkinson's. This will also include connecting up with the local Parkinson's nurse, Sally Ann Wherry, who oversees the Parkinson's population and their respective treatments here in the ACT and region.

I have just recently had meetings with health students at the adjacent University of Canberra, who are studying and devising health programs for People with Parkinson's. We are looking at developing ways of working together to promote best practice and more informed knowledge in treatment options for the Parkinson's community.

Also I am in regular contact with the Australian co-ordinator for Dance for Parkinson's, Erica Rose Jeffrey who is based in Brisbane. Together we are now planning the next national training program for dance practitioners interested to develop their skills in Dance for

Parkinson's. To this program we will add the first ever two day training for experienced practitioners here in Australia, to extend, affirm and share their skills and knowledge.

My work place, Belconnen Arts Centre, has also proved to be very supportive of this development in my work. As an organisation strongly committed to inclusive arts practice, they are encouraging of me to further develop dance programs for people with other conditions such as Multiple Sclerosis, Dementia and cognitive impairment, using the relevant skills and knowledge I have acquired from my Fellowship. We are also in conversation about hosting the future professional development intensive at the Arts Centre with space support.

The local dance groups at Belconnen Arts Centre and Tuggeranong Arts Centre are also working in partnership with Canberra Dance Theatre (CDT) and the National Museum of Australia (NMA), in an artsACT and ACT Health funded performance looking at Sport in the lives of Australians. This will be performed at the NMA in 2016, in a project called GREAT SPORT! This will prove to be an invaluable opportunity to promote the program and the significant health outcomes made possible through the dance focus. Additionally it will be a wonderful chance to integrate the performance work of the Parkinson's group with the Seniors Dance Group at CDT, with many anticipated positive social outcomes.



Spanish dance from my weekly class at Belconnen Arts Centre – to welcome me home!

I am also mindful of the importance of promoting the cause at the highest levels, and plan to send abbreviated reports to and meet with my local and national parliamentary members to inform them of my Fellowship and the value of such arts and health programs.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The word is out, and there are presently some 14 countries across the world holding regular dance classes and programs for People with Parkinson's – all registered on the very informative and comprehensive website managed and maintained by the head organisation Dance for PD, in Brooklyn, New York. All details are at this website:

<http://danceforparkinsons.org>

Australia now hosts 17 regular classes taking place across the continent, and these are all listed on the Australian website. (The NT is the only state/territory still to establish a class.) Visit the following for all details: <http://danceforparkinsonsaustralia.org> I am also aware of further classes taking place and not yet listed. I believe that the number of classes will continue to grow as information spreads, as health practitioners are informed, as further training courses are established across the nation for potential dance practitioners, and the nation and the government increasingly understands the vital nexus between health and the arts, particularly for our ageing population.

Already, since returning, I have been thrilled to meet a number of dance, educational and medical practitioners in the ACT and adjacent regions, and attended a number of conferences and gatherings of people and organisations keen to develop and/or deliver Dance for PD programs. I am most confident of its continued growth in the coming years in both Australia and the world, being especially mindful of the 1 in 350 incidence of the condition for people over 60 years of age.

With the Fellowship behind me, and the certification of my training in progress as I write this report, I believe I can now work closely and more constructively with Erica Rose Jeffrey, Australian Coordinator of the Program, to promote and advocate for the on-going development of the program throughout the nation. I envisage this will continue to take place through presentations at community groups, conferences, delivery of training programs, and constant communication with press and government about the many quality of life outcomes that result from these programs.

My work place, BAC, is very keen that we play a significant role in the continued expansion of the Dance for PD program, and other complementary dance programs. To this end Erica Rose Jeffrey and I have formed a sub-committee who is now researching and planning the next national training program for dance practitioners interested to develop their skills in Dance for Parkinson's. To this program we will add the first ever Australian two day training for experienced practitioners to extend and share their skills and knowledge.

For teachers and would be teachers, access to continued communication and professional development programs is a must, to maintain and grow the dance knowledge, languages and activities that make for a rich and quality program. It was inspiring to read of the recent PD program being run in Brooklyn, that included ballet, modern, jazz, hula, Gaga, tap, tango, repertoire and music. To have these PD programs supported and backed up by our colleagues in the medical and science world is essential. By including sessions with them, this must ensure that the whole practice and progress is strongly evidenced based, and so appropriately shaped and developed. This will form the basis of our planning future professional development sessions for the program.

As an organisation strongly committed to inclusive arts practice, Belconnen Arts Centre is most encouraging of me to further develop dance programs for people with other conditions such as Multiple Sclerosis, Dementia and cognitive impairment, using the relevant skills and knowledge I have acquired from my Fellowship. This may well prove to be an enormously beneficial side benefit of my study, as there are many parallels in delivering dance programs to other challenged populations.

I know that with my extensive background in dance and community and education contexts, I have much background knowledge and experience I can draw upon, that has been validated and extended and challenged by my travels. I believe I can contribute this to the growth of the program here in Australia and overseas, and also draw upon my extensive experience in

teacher training and my many new international contacts in the field. The Fellowship has been invaluable in enabling me to take this next step of program development beyond that of a practitioner working with their own class in relative isolation to the rest of the community. I must also mention that I have returned with a significant amount of references and articles, which will be read and absorbed in the coming months. This I know will further deepen my knowledge base quite significantly and assist in the program promotion nationally.

The arts have a unique and amazing ability to provide transformative experiences. A dance program for people with Parkinson's is one way this can be achieved for people experiencing the growing challenge of living with the condition. It provides a quality of life experience for participants, and for their whole being.



Dance (1), created in 1909 by Henri Matisse, Museum of Modern Art, Manhattan.

May dance continue to be that which sustains and nurtures a quality cycle of life, integrating the body, the mind and the spirit, as is so beautifully articulated in Dance (1) by Henri Matisse, which I viewed at the Museum of Modern Art in Manhattan. Partnerships at all levels will form the foundation for the program and will ensure forward progress on many fronts.

*Philip Piggin
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