

# Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Fund

## The 'GODS' Fly South

(Anna Carlisle MBE reports on an 'inspirational' fund-raising event). Ed.

On Saturday 27th June 2009, the *Company of GODS - Growing Older (Dis)Gracefully* - arrived in Devon to perform an exciting and dynamic dance programme at a fund-raising event for the Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Fund. Lisa would have been delighted!

The Company, formed in 1997 for a Liverpool initiative to promote activities for the over-50's, has been working ever since. With the inspirational leadership of Judy Smith, their range of performances and projects has included site-specific works and the making of a dance film at Speke Hall.

The *GODS* describe themselves as an amateur dance group with an age range between 45 and 75 years. Membership - currently at around 30 dancers - is open to all in the belief that everyone should have access to dance: that for older dancers it plays a significant role in diminishing the effects of ageing: that it enhances personal satisfaction and self-esteem and that it promotes a positive image of the creativity and capability of the older dancer.



This latter claim was certainly highlighted by the end of this wonderful fund-raising evening. Twenty-one dancers - should we call them goddesses - descended on the small, secluded village of Kilmington (near Axminster) to contribute to the creation of a true Community Event. Facilities at the splendid village hall; catering, the bar and flowers were all generously provided by village members and publicity and marketing ensured the support and participation of a packed audience of over a hundred.

Superbly organised by Judith Chapman and BJ Lewis, Officers of the Fund, the audience enjoyed a gourmet supper interwoven with six choreographies ranging from the lively to the lyrical. There was a joyous, energising tap-shoe opener to *'Singing in the Rain'* with startling yellow raincoats, umbrellas and some great rhythmic sequences.

There was *'Class'* - a beautifully danced work, both a celebration and tribute to the choreographer, Irene Dilks, who performed with the Company six weeks before her death in 2000. *'Next'* offered a mimetic, witty comment on our experience of Waiting Rooms and "Shimmer" by the Indian choreographer, Sri Sarker - especially commissioned for the Company by Chaturangan - was a challenging work to Indian music, full of Indian Dance references. The *GODS* of course rose to meet the challenge. Mastery of the material and the enthusiasm, verve and integrity of the performance was impressive. The two final dances built to a resoundingly successful climax. Crosby Beach was inspired by Anthony Gormley's installation of a hundred life-sized statues on Crosby Beach and the finale - *Where Past and Future are Gathered* - incorporated quotations from the comical, iconoclastic poem, 'Warning' ..... 'When I am an old woman I shall wear purple ..' - the inspiration for the name of the Company.

And there was more: a jewel of a performance by the distinguished musician and composer, Christopher Benstead! Defining his space with four unusual musical instruments collected on his travels round the world, Christopher held the audience spellbound with descriptions of their contexts and riveting compositions with voice



## A Fabulous Evening in Kilmington

**G**rowing Older (Dis)Gracefully lived up to its name and provided an evening of sheer delight and inspiration. The dance company consisted of twenty two mature women of all shapes and sizes who provided an entertainment that exuded a vitality and energy that was utterly engaging. The performance flowed with an easy sparkling grace using the limited space very effectively. The costumes and the simple props added a witty and humorous touch that was a perfect compliment to music and choreography. The dancers evidently enjoyed performing and they took the audience with them inspiring many of us with the wish to emulate them.

Also showcased during the evening was a delightful musical entertainment by Christopher Benstead performing on some unusual instruments he had collected during his travels round the world on his scholarship.

The evening of course included a delicious supper expertly cooked and served on beautifully decorated tables in a transformed village hall by the multi-talented Kilmington troupe. A big thank you to the organisers of this inspiring event and please can we have more of the same next year.

*Claudette Miles*

accompaniment as he moved to play one after the other. His generous support for the Fund has its origins in his own successful scholarship application to travel to Indonesia to realise a long-held dream to study the music and dance of the Balinese culture.

Tributes to the professionalism, skill and expertise of the performers were unanimous. Energy was on a high as audience members were leaving. Pam Woods, a LUTSF scholarship winner in 2006 voiced the resolution to consider forming such a Company in Exeter and a number of audience members' comments can be summarised by the numerous questions: 'Will it happen again next year? With a total of around £700. raised for the Fund, it seems that an annual recreation of such a celebration of Dance and Music might be hoped for!

*Anna Carlisle*  
Chair LUTSF

## Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Fund

LUTSF was established in 1986 in memory of Lisa Ullmann, performer and distinguished teacher. Scholarships are awarded annually and, since giving its first awards in 1987, the Fund has awarded 392 scholarships totalling about £178,000. The awards support a wide range of journeys, assisting individuals at different stages in their careers to travel to enrich their practice and pursue a personal passion. Application forms are available from 1<sup>st</sup> September and the closing date for submitting an application is 25<sup>th</sup> January annually. Awards for 2009/10 include:

- Edinburgh to Lisbon to explore the collaborative relationship between choreographer and composer;
- Manchester to Chennai to attend a music and dance festival and the Natya Kala conference;
- London to Hamburg and Antwerp to take part in the European professional development programme 'Dance Beyond borders';
- Plymouth to Perth to attend the International Performance conference 'Boom or Bust' and Bodyweather site-based workshops.

Full details of projects supported this year, reports from previous scholarship winners, guidelines for making an application and information about Lisa and the setting up of the Fund are all available on the LUTSF website [www.lutsf.org.uk](http://www.lutsf.org.uk). LUTSF has this year set up a *Friends of Lisa Ullmann* Scheme - details are available on the website or from the secretary of the Fund. We already have many *Friends* from the Guild and we would, of course, welcome more! *Please join.*

Many Laban Guild members have, over the years, attended fund-raising events organised by LUTSF to help maintain the level of money available to award scholarships each year. This year, the event was an evening of dance and music held in the village hall in Kilmington, East Devon. The 'gods' from Liverpool, and LUTSF scholarship winner and committee member, Chris Benstead, provided an exciting evening which, in the Kilmington tradition, was interspersed with an excellent two-course supper and wine, all provided by members of the village.

Anna's article offers an account of the evening whilst Claudette, a Kilmington resident, shows us an audience member's reaction.

*Judith Chapman*  
Secretary LUTSF