

20<sup>th</sup> November 2008

Dear Dr Lewis and LUTSF committee,

I would like to thank you for the financial support that I received from LUTSF, which enabled me to travel to the USA in June 2008. Here at last is my report of my trip to the US to participate and co-curate CI36. The event took place at Juniata College, Huntingdon, Pennsylvania over 10 days from 8<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> June. Following this event I travelled to Earthdance, a residential centre for dance improvisation in Massachusetts to take part in an international CI exchange programme from 18<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> June.

The trip was richly rewarding on many levels. I gained valuable experience by being part of the organisational team with artists, teachers and professionals from around the world. Bringing this event to life brought up interesting challenges in how to provide diversity, scope and balance to an event for 300 people. Attending daily meetings of over 40 organisers, all with ideas and wishes, was a lesson in communication and group decision-making.

As a teacher I gained some fantastic experience by both receiving and delivering classes. There was a remarkable breadth of teaching talent to draw on. If only I could have been in seven places at the same time (!) to have observed and participated in so many different approaches to CI that were on offer simultaneously.

As a dancer I was able to sink into my practice and have some enriching and enlightening dances with skilled practitioners. This was perhaps especially true whilst at Earthdance when I was free of my organisational duties and could devote myself more fully to dancing and learning. In some ways the follow-on event was as rewarding as the larger main event. With a smaller group of 60 experienced dancers from around the world one could really delve into the dancing and the exchange of skills, ideas, and inspiration on a deeper level.

There were plenty of opportunities for networking and as a result I have had invitations to teach abroad and some other future projects are in the pipeline. Discussions and evaluations regarding the event continue to ripple on amongst the organisers, participants and the wider dance community via websites and through email forums. I have posted discussions and photographs on the CI36 community website <http://ci36community.ning.com/>. Equipped with the experience I gained from this project, I am now part of the organising committee for the next ECITE (European Contact Improvisation Teacher Exchange) to be held in Ormskirk near Liverpool in July 2009.

Yours sincerely,

Robert Anderson

## **REPORT**

CI36 was a series of international events to mark and celebrate 36 years of contact improvisation (CI). This dance form has changed and developed in many diverse directions since the early experiments of Steve Paxton and his collaborators in 1972. CI36 was designed to provide time to appreciate

Contact Improvisation's history, to share in current research and practice, and to consider the trajectory of the form into the future. CI36's aim was to make room for the diverse populations that practice and appreciate CI: the grass-roots communities, the performing artists, the academics, the anarchists, those new to the form and the veterans.

The main event that I attended was held during June 2008 at Juniata College in Huntingdon, a small town in Pennsylvania, USA. Nearly 300 dancers (from 29 countries and 6 continents) came to participate in a ten-day programme of intensives, classes, lectures, laboratories, performances and jams. CI36 had two main components; a smaller Training Intensive June 8-12 followed by the larger main event, CI36 Celebration June 12-18. More information about the event can be found online at:

<http://www.ci36.com/home/>

Alongside this central event, more than one hundred satellite events (including jams, workshops and festivals) took place around the world. In the UK satellite jams were held in London and Brighton. With Naomi Claire and Gale Burns, I organised a weekend jam at Chisenhale Dance Space that took place on the weekend of 13, 14 & 15 June. A full world map of the satellite events that have taken place over 2008 can be seen at

<http://myriadcity.net/ci36/satellite-events/ci36-global-events-maps?maplink=ci36-individual-satellite-event-sites#region-content>.

I first learnt of CI36 in May 2007 when I was invited by the US-based organising 'hub' to become part of an international team of curators who would help to shape the main event to be held in Pennsylvania. Thirty-six people took responsibility for the different aspects of the event (see photo). My primary responsibility was to prepare the schedule of classes to take place during the celebration. This involved lots of emailing to teachers from around the world who were interested in presenting a class at the celebration. I had to liaise via conference calls with colleagues from the curator team and the hub. I also took a supporting role in the curator teams for the jams and satellite events.

On arriving at Juniata College there was still lots of work for the curators in creating a master schedule for the event. So during the three-day training intensive the curators were hard at work devising a schedule, to accommodate the ever-growing number of classes, labs, talks, lecture-demos, performances, jams and special events. We created a communication centre where participants could find the latest information on the schedule. Alongside the activities located in 13 different studios at Juniata, the organisers created a library/reference room, an art/photo gallery, a bodywork centre and a merchandise store. The Training Intensive limited to 150 people was designed as a time to focus attention on the refinement and development of practice and understanding of Contact Improvisation. The intensives were taught by Andrew Harwood (Canada), Martin Hughes (Australia), Nita Little (California), Nina Martin (Texas), Nancy Stark Smith (Massachusetts), Ray Chung (California), Mary Prestidge (England) and Benno Voorham (Sweden/Netherlands).

The highlights of the six-day celebration for me were held over the special weekend when events were coordinated to happen around the world simultaneously. On Saturday 14th a "Global Underscore" (focused

improvisation score) led by Nancy Stark Smith was practiced by the 300 participants at Juniata and simultaneously around the world. On Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> Steve Paxton led a 36-minute "small dance" to the participants at Juniata whilst again around the world dancers stood together to notice the force of gravity and small shifting transfers of weight. These two events seemed to effectively focus the energy of the multi-layered event into two practices that have been very influential in the development of CI practice over the years.

In retrospect nearly all the organizers agreed that the schedule for the six-day celebration was too full. There were commonly eight or nine separate events happening simultaneously. It was great that there was such breadth and diversity of happenings to choose from but as a result the focus was lost and the schedule became confusing. However, I attended some very inspiring classes given by Martin Keogh, Ray Chung, Cyrus Khambata, Joerg Hassman, KJ Holmes, Mirva Makinen and Alito Alessi. I also participated in a couple of very useful laboratory sessions exploring trio work. This is a particular area of interest for me in performance presently. Steve Paxton gave a lecture that was engaging and humorous and brought us back to the experimental nature of the work.

I can point to a number of outcomes resulting from my involvement in CI36 as a performer, organiser and teacher. My profile as an international teacher of CI has been enhanced. This Autumn I have taught weekend workshops in Prague and Gothenburg. I'm in the beginning stages of organising a teaching tour of the US for next year. The experience I gained as a curator of the event has supported me in taking on another organisational role in the team preparing ECITE (European Contact Improvisation Teachers Exchange) 2009 to be held near Liverpool. This will be an event for approximately 80 CI teachers from within the UK and Europe to exchange and learn from one another. I will also be hosting a workshop for Ray Chung (US) in London during spring 2009. As a performer for Touchdown Dance and the improvisation collective (formerly known as) SoFt I feel my technical and improvisational skills were supported and improved during my time in the States.

