

Report to Langara Research Committee from Catherine Lee

Respectfully submitted October, 2013

In Feb 2012, I requested funding to support the furtherance of my three artistic projects, which is how I spend all my time outside teaching at the college. These are *Upaya*, *Ladies' Aires and Dances* and *The Compleat Courtier*.

I describe the development of each piece on separate disks. This document describes the *Ladies' Aires and Dances* development.

#### **Funding we have or will seek for *Ladies' Aires and Dances***

Langara College for funds to assist in artistic development – decoding two choreographies for *Ladies' Aires and Dances*.

Vancouver Foundation to support research into touring. BC Gaming Commission to assist in artistic completion, production and admin support.

#### **Start up and Completion Dates**

June 12 – Feb 13 decoding Baroque dance repertoire for *Ladies' Aires and Dances*, using LRC funds

August to December 13 Support of touring prep (funds Vancouver Foundation, City of Vancouver).

Tours to follow 2014 spring supported by Vancouver Foundation.

#### ***Ladies' Aires and Dances***

As Artistic Director of Historical Performance Ensemble I have spearheaded a concert of Baroque theatrical dance and music called "*Ladies' Aires and Dances*" for the last 4 years. I plan this to be toured in late 2014. Produced at PAL theatre to glowing audience response in 2009, aspects of this show were also performed at the Dance Centre, in Duncan, Victoria, Mayne Island and Saltspring Island.

I have assembled six women passionate about the practice and dissemination of historical dance and music. Each contributes her specialization to create the whole. All elements of music, costume, choreography, interpretation, masks and dramatics are carefully considered. *Ladies' Aires and Dances* includes reconstructed dance solos and duets, of Spain, Italy, England and France, an original quartet choreography, three commedia pieces plus instrumental solos and duets on recorder, viola da gamba and virginals. All performers are garbed in 17th C splendour, and many dances have had costumes built especially for them. Repertoire is based on research into practises from the era at the birth of these art forms – the reign of Louis XIV. Music is written by women, the dances are mostly choreographed for women.

Louis in France and his cousin Charles II in England (sustained by Louis during the Commonwealth) allowed women to appear on stage for the first time. Those women took full advantage by reversing the old practice of men playing women, creating many "pants roles". We offer examples of this in *Ladies' Aires & Dances*.

Audience response has been consistently favourable. They find the garments and programming aesthetically pleasing, intellectually stimulating and kinesthetically dynamic.

Everything HPE does has an educational edge. We always invite audiences to ask questions at the end of each show. We have performed in schools, from elementary to Universities. Each of our core performers are highly experienced teachers and coaches, with students from every age group and reason for study, from recreation to professional training.

We address some unique differences even beyond the actual Baroque dance and music, which is seldom seen and heard in Canada.

Few dance companies can boast live accompaniment for their shows. Few audiences hear small chamber ensembles playing historical music, even though a small group was the norm in Louis' day. Usually the only groups available to the arts audience are large symphonies playing modern instruments and modern strings. The clarity and subtlety of the baroque music is lost.

Few people have access to viewing accurate garments of the past, especially of the 17th & 18th C.

Our performers are between ages 40 and 65. We provide an opportunity for audiences to see healthy, active senior adults in performance, which hopefully will inspire some to take up dance or other physical activity to sustain their health.

We provide a unique opportunity for the older performer to perform. This dance style is athletic and demanding of fitness level, without requiring the large leaps, falls and leg extensions in modern dance and ballet, a perfect transition for dancers as they age. We may be the oldest dance company in Canada!

Our programmes provide an upbeat alternative to the sorrows in peoples' lives, most remarkably seen in the change in four groups of patients' mood and clarity at Riverview Hospital. In each case, after a mere 20 minutes of Baroque dance and music, the patients were more communicative, smiling and receptive. We believe this is common to all our audiences - something we deem highly worthwhile in our troubled world.

So we believe we're onto something incredibly worthwhile and our audiences seem to feel the same way.

I felt the programme would benefit if we added at least two more choreographies, to augment the variety of styles and to extend the length of the programme to something more appropriate for a substantial tour.

With funds from LRC, I hired two of our dancers to begin the reconstruction of two choreographies from the theatrical repertoire. (Full reconstruction takes up to 100 hours from deciphering notation to performance level depending on the difficulty and length of the choreographies).

Two of my regular dancers worked on *La Royale*, a lovely duet for 2 men, which we thought made a nice addition to the programme, giving a second dancer the chance to do a "pants" role.

I also hired one of my dancers to work on a portion of a new duet with me. Called *The Turk*, it is an extremely complex dance for a man and a woman. Because she was hired and felt good about working on her own, she actually mastered the dance far better than I who was pressured with all the normal administrative trials that accompanies the role of Artistic Director. I will still have to learn the better part of the male solo which I haven't even started.

A really timely opportunity arose: we were asked to perform a Baroque concert for the Dance Centre's noon hour series in April 2013.

Because we had already presented "Ladies' Aires and Dances" there a couple of years ago, we felt we needed a new title and that this was a terrific opportunity to show the new dances we'd been working on. So we called this new configuration "Go 4 Baroque". We reworked 2 quartets which we had learned earlier, used four of the pieces from "Ladies", added the two new duets from our Langara research grant and introduced the show with an explanation of Baroque dance technique and bingo, we had a hit!

Our wardrobe director created two beautiful Turkish outfits for us and our musical director organised more music to go between the dances, so it will now be possible to tour an extended version of either "Ladies' Aires and Dances" or "Go 4 Baroque", whichever title seems most appropriate at the time.

On top of that we had the chance to use the same material two weeks later at a school which wanted specifically the Baroque period. We performed the concert, then broke into groups to deliver the Complete Baroque Courtier workshops.

We were ecstatic to have the serendipity of all these aspects come together.

Thank you sincerely for this fantastic opportunity to build the content for our concerts.

Catherine Lee



La Royale danced by Angela Brown and Brenda Webster at the Dance Centre Apr 25, 2013-10-20



The Turk danced by Brenda Webster and Catherine Lee at the Dance Centre April 25, 2013