

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 development of the **Compleat Courtier** garments.

Funding we have or will seek for *Ladies' Aires and Dances* and for *The Compleat Courtier*

Langara College for funds to assist in building costumes for *The Compleat Courtier* project.
Vancouver Foundation to support research into touring. Made in BC to support a tour of BC and beyond,
BC Gaming Commission to assist in artistic completion, production and admin support.

Start up and Completion Dates

May - June *Compleat Courtier* - building children's garments
August to December Support of touring prep (funds Vancouver Foundation, City of Vancouver).
Tours to follow in 2013 fall and/or 2014 spring supported by Vancouver Foundation

Building Costumes for *The Compleat Courtier*

My most recent historical, educational project is "The Compleat Courtier", an experiential event appropriate to all ages, but especially for grades 8 & 9 for whom the Renaissance is part of their social studies curriculum and for grades 10, 11, 12 for whom the Baroque is part of their social studies curriculum. This is the only "historical arts Ed" programme offered in Canada, to my knowledge, and is designed to instill excitement about history, refined social behaviour and the arts and to develop a community feeling around the celebration of our culture. I've been concerned about bullying for some time. The Compleat Courtier, with its emphasis on civility, can be part of a bigger solution to this problem.

The event is in two parts - daytime workshops and evening soirée. During the day we offer one hour workshops in each of dance, commedia, music, dressing in period garments (we're in the process of building 40 youth outfits) and the etiquette of greetings and formal behaviours of the court. The Soirée is an optional evening event to which the students may invite friends and family.

Teachers are encouraged to engage students in building a variety of accessories to augment the costumes we bring. These include pommanders, fans, hats, medallions, ruffs for neck and sleeves, snoods. Perhaps some children will create underclothing or simple corsets or codpieces. Teachers will also be encouraged to unite age groups to collaborate on building various Renaissance architecture and art of the period. This interclass collaboration was extremely fruitful at the school we visited in Dec 2011.

Some of the school issues we think will naturally be addressed during the children's experience of the workshops and evening events are:

- accepting the many ways that people dress, and the cultures they represent
- learning that all languages have peculiarities in their development and that words and language can be intriguing rather than threatening or distancing people from one another
- learning politeness and being respectful of others, becoming more comfortable with a modicum of formality in life.
- experience dancing as a natural outlet for good health and good humour in both genders and that asking a person to dance doesn't mean you have proposed to them or are dating them!
- learning that dance is not an effeminate activity. Most cultures have strong male dance lineages except North America.

In the evening, workshop participants (now “Compleat Courtiers”) invite friends and family to a short, early evening Soirée where the “Courtiers” will present what they learned. HPE company members teach simple Renaissance dances and sung rounds in which everyone can participate.

The company entertains with more complex dances, songs and instrumental music on period instruments. We encourage families to dress in clothing from their cultural background. If any know a song, dance, poem or story from the 16th C in their culture, we encourage them to present it for the guests, in either their original language or in English.

We have a long history of presenting the components of the Compleat Courtier, though we only recently gave them the catchy title! These included many workshops and demonstrations at schools (eg. annually to St. George’s School for Boys (Classics department) and Norquay Elementary (music department) as well as a wide variety of other schools including Langley School for the Arts.

Since 1990 I have invited 25 classes of my Acting Students from the Studio 58 professional training programme at Langara College to come to the HP studio and wardrobe area to dress in the society’s collection of 45 adult outfits, most of which are now used exclusively for this purpose. I teach these students (usually aged 19 - 24) historical dance, movement, etiquette and gesture from 1570 to 1930 inclusive. This dressing process is not only fun, it informs all future historical acting jobs that these students might hold. The dressing process explains to the students (wordlessly) why movement, behaviour and etiquette were so markedly different than in our modern day.

We have offered 30 evening soirées to the public and one at a school, all received well by participants. The people who have the most fun are those in costumes. In December 2011 we offered workshops at Carnarvon School in Vancouver to test our Courtier programme. We were unable to offer the wardrobe aspect as the 40 children's costumes were not yet complete. We plan to complete these asap.

We did four presentations of The Compleat Renaissance Courtier between Nov 15, 2012 and Feb 15, 2013 in North Vancouver, the West End, The End End and Ladner to a widely various group of students and sometimes their families.

Langara Research funds were spent in completing the sewing of Children’s outer garments during early 2013. The costuming is the central motif for the experience of each child in the Compleat Courtier concept. Before the LRC funds, we had been only able to provide a couple of adult outfits for the larger students, although we had started cutting out most of the desired 44 garments in 2011.

We completed two full boy’s suits and five girls’ outfits with the LRC funds. These were sewn by two masters of the needle! Jack Hsieh (a young up and coming clothing designer who had worked with us first when he was a high school student of 15) and Brenda Webster (our wardrobe mistress) worked feverishly to finish these in time. Jack in particular had a major challenge to deal with the poor cutting done by a former student worker 18 boy’s jackets and a few pairs of pants. Correcting the cutting slowed Jack down considerably.

These are not as accurate as our adult outfits, but are quite good in their presentation and certainly colourful. We were able to use them at Gladstone Secondary for the first time. And the children LOVED them!

We also had a wonderful serendipity opportunity offered to us which we were able to fulfill because of the LRC funds. We were asked to provide a Baroque concert for the Dance Centre Noon Hour series in April. We were also asked to provide a Baroque concert and workshops for John Oliver Secondary school only 2 weeks later.

We were able to execute this second event because of the LRC funding we got for new repertoire for *Ladies’ Aires and Dances* as well as for the costumes for **The Compleat Courtier**.

We performed the concert, then broke into groups of 90 students each to deliver **The Compleat Baroque Courtier** workshops. Each group had 25 minutes with each leader to experience garments, dance, commedia and music. We were able to use the four new girls’ outfits entirely as they were built without sleeves, which is hugely different between the periods. We used extant male outfits of 1660.

Thus we were able to deliver the first workshop series formally titled “Compleat Baroque Courtier”, which was made possible partly because of the LRC funding of the children’s garments!



Students at Gladstone in 5 new children's size outfits and 3 adult outfits (Grades 8 & 9). The new boys' outfits are those worn by the boys on either side of the seated girl



The four girls garments on the Left are new, and built to fit children, though these girls were even small than we expected.
Pat Unruh, musical director at Left, Catherine Lee Artistic Director at Right



Students at City School in the West End Aged 15 – 19
Dressed in adult outfits. Students shown in a
Commedia dell'arte scenario.