

Institution: Middlesex University
Unit of Assessment: UoA35
Title of case study: <i>Rosemary Lee: Bringing Change Through Mindful Community Practice</i>
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Through community arts practice based on the principles of mindfulness, choreographer Rosemary Lee works with inclusive, therapeutic and inter-generational groups, as well as artists and dancers, using unique elements: close attention through touch and mindful listening. Her work has evolved over two decades of practice, research and collaborations, and shows impact and reach through bringing transformation to community participants, artists, health professionals and professional arts practice. She moves away from the role of choreographer as director with a set agenda, and empowers participants to embody issues that are important to them, setting a model for community life. The performance works <i>Common Dance</i> (2009) and <i>Square Dances</i> (2011) have led to a DVD and symposium that develop a practice-as-research methodology for dance practitioners and researchers, and to workshops for artists and practitioners around the world.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Lee has choreographed and performed for over 20 years. A Research Associate Artist at Middlesex University since 1999, Lee benefits from collaborations, research seminars and papers, developed at ResCen. Most recently she has produced a DVD <i>On Taking Care</i> with ResCen support. Other research outputs related to this case study include the chapter 'Aiming for Stewardship and Not Ownership,' in Diane Amans's volume, and 'Expectant Waiting' in <i>Navigating the Unknown: The Creative Process in Contemporary Performing Arts</i> (eds. Bannerman, C., Sofaer, J. & Watt, J.), London: Middlesex University Press, 2006.</p> <p>Performance works, workshops and tours that have fed into <i>Common Dance and Square Dances</i> include collaboration with filmmaker Peter Anderson in projects like <i>Boy, Greenman, Infanta & Snow</i>, the documentary <i>Dancing Nation</i>, performance/video projection (<i>Passage & Brink</i>) and installations <i>Apart from The Road</i>, 2003 and <i>Remote Dancing</i>, 2003-07. Further, in 2009, Lee undertook a British Council-funded tour in Japan, where research questions included how to work in diverse cultural locations. This included artistic work, workshops, talks and papers at the International Video Dance Festival in Tokyo, Beppu Festival, and Kyoto Arts Centre, reaching 200 people. These projects, as well as <i>Banquet Dances</i> (2011), <i>A Nightingale Sang</i> (2010), and <i>Passage</i> (2001) deal with intergenerational, inclusive and site-specific concerns.</p> <p>For <i>Common Dance</i>, in 2009, Lee worked with Coventry University BA dance students. Research questions explored how to translate common ground between diverse participants into dance motifs. A two-week lab at Siobhan Davies Studio explored how to enhance awareness of environmental issues. In 2010, Lee presented at a Community Dance Practice conference in Sweden, for 70 people, on how to work with integrated groups, and with Candoco and Greenwich Dance, led an inclusive workshop for 50 dancers. Lee used improvisational tasks, and explored how to increase mobility and utilise available resources for disabled dancers in site-specific work.</p> <p>In 2009, Dance Umbrella /Greenwich Dance commissioned Lee to make <i>Common Dance</i>, in collaboration with composer Terry Mann. In 2011, Dance Umbrella commissioned Lee to make <i>Square Dances</i>, a large-scale outdoor performance for over 200 dancers. <i>Common Dance</i> has generated scholarly articles and a ResCen symposium at Queen Mary University, on 1 December 2012, for international artists, researchers, leaders, social workers, and health and well-being professionals. Dr Martin Welton's article 'Listening-as-Touch: Paying Attention to Rosemary Lee's <i>Common Dance</i>' (<i>Performance Research: A Journal of the Performing Arts</i>, Taylor & Francis, Vol. 15, Issue 3, 2010), describes the corporeal and site-specific qualities of the work. There were 48 participants in the piece, including eight dancers, and 51 choir members from Finchley Children's Music Group, ranging in age from eight to 84. Six performances took place at Greenwich Dance Agency in 2009, with 1085 audience members. A meet-the-artist event attracted 50 people, and led to a half-day seminar and exhibition developed with ResCen.</p>

Square Dances was commissioned by Dance Umbrella, in association with Rosemary Lee Projects and Artsadmin, sponsored by Bloomberg, and supported by the Place and Grants for the Arts ACE. The work premiered in October 2011, and was performed six times a day in four squares. There were 96 women in Gordon, 34 men in Brunswick, 10 children in Woburn, and 21 third year students from London Contemporary Dance School in Queens. To mindful listening and touch, Lee added a site-specificity, where participants paid acute attention to the act of passing through London. In 2012, *Melt Down* emerged out of **Square Dances**, with 32 performers in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil. It was reconstructed for Dance Umbrella, 2012. Lee received £115,325 from Dance Umbrella, and corporate sponsors.

These research projects have given rise to insights by Lee into the ways in which dance and choreographic practice can enable, and be enabled by, mindfulness and touch to activate individual and group creativity while re-envisioning 'community' dance practices.

3. References to the research (all items available from Middlesex University and as listed)

International festivals and conferences invite Lee to make work and lead workshops. She receives positive reviews from newspapers and academics, and produces peer-reviewed articles. Funding agencies linked to **Common Dance** and **Square Dances** are Dance Umbrella, Greenwich Dance, PRS Foundation, RVW Trust, The Drummond Fund, The Marina Kleinwort Charitable Trust, Austin and Hope Pilkington Charitable Trust, Bloomberg, Arts Council England. The written research appearing as chapters in edited books has been assessed through editors and publishers reviewing processes.

[1] Author: Rosemary Lee

Title: Common Dance, Year of publication: 2009

Type of output: Dance performance.

See extracts: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwsl9fIT6eY> and

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GfWEWwrGJqA> (for full documentation see REF2 output for Lee)

[2] Author Rosemary Lee

Title: On Taking Care, Year of publication: 2013

Type of output: DVD documentation of performance and creative approach

See: http://www.rescen.net/publications/on_taking_care_dvd.html#.UIH9ayQapiU (for full documentation see REF2 output for Lee)

[3] Author: Rosemary Lee

Title: Square Dances , Year of publication: 2011

Type of output: Site-specific dance performances.

Can be viewed here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wXamnO0nE6A> (for full documentation see REF2 output for Lee)

[4] Author: Rosemary Lee

Title: 'Expectant Waiting' and other contributions in Bannerman, C. et al (eds) *Navigating the Unknown: The creative process in contemporary performing arts* Middlesex University Press (ISBN: 1 904750 55 9). Year of publication: 2007

Type of output: Creative chapter and discussion

[5] Author: Rosemary Lee

Title: "Aiming for Stewardship and not Ownership" in *An Introduction to Community Dance Practice*, (ed. Diane Amans), London: Palgrave Macmillan (ISBN 9780230551695). Year of Publication: 2008

Type of Output: Chapter

4. Details of the impact

Lee's practice impacts community participants, arts practitioners, audiences and the community dance profession. Lee fosters an environment of mindful attention and group creativity to empower participants to develop work on issues that are important to them. Participants include therapeutic,

inter-generational and inclusive groups, who experience a humane approach to dance practice, and take the qualities of mindful listening and touch into their lives.

Nature and extent of the impact

For participant dancers:

Feedback from participants says that Lee's work significantly impacts their lives and work, because of her use of care and attention with inclusive and intergenerational participants. The influence of her work on individuals is evident in their responses and the communities of interest built through engagement with Lee's work. A few of her participants have gone into dance training, some have danced in other intergenerational dance projects, and an 84-year-old participant has gone on to get a gold medal in ballroom dancing. A Skinner Release Technique practitioner says that as a young mother at the time that she participated in **Common Dance**, she felt listened to by Lee. She says that Lee works with people from diverse races, genders, class and nationalities, and her close attention to people and their childhood memories, helps diverse groups find common ground and is a path-breaking method for community arts practice. A medical General Practitioner finds that Lee's 'incredibly generous' work helps participants move through creative blocks, deal with grief, and in his work, helps him negotiate the use of touch with patients. Participants stay in touch on active Facebook pages and Lee says that for new pieces, she can readily access participants from those lists.

On arts practice:

Inclusive dance practice and site-specific work benefit from Lee's processes through international workshops and mentoring, and wide dissemination of work. As the retired-director of the Foundation for Community Dance, Ken Bartlett, says, the work differs from the tradition of a choreographer/director working with trained dancers who follow instructions for a set piece, and uses mindful group work that empowers community participants. Resulting DVD, papers, symposium, workshops and performances allow other practitioners to learn from her approach and undertake inclusive work. Dr. Martin Whelton, a Senior Lecturer in Theatre and Performance at Queen Mary, says that Lee has developed a new practice-as-research methodology that allows for an accounting of arts work.

Lee is invited to teach workshops and courses internationally. These invites are evidence of her international reputation and show further routes to impact. On 24-27 July, 2012, Lee led an International Summer School for the Foundation for Community Dance, De Montfort University, attended by seven artists and led a choreography session for three other Summer School groups. Feedback reveals that course participants found Lee's sessions inspiring, especially her way of working with trained and non-trained dancers, and her sharing of values for participatory practice. In 2012, Lee gave a talk for British Dance Edition at three venues to international promoters, on site-specific work for a 100 people; a talk for 20 post-graduate students at The Place on engaging the audience; a workshop for choreographers at The Place on working in education; with artsadmin she hosted a Columbian dance company with members from disadvantaged backgrounds; a workshop for community participants at Chisenhale Dance Space; a guest workshop at Norfolk Dance; a workshop at Brighton SEDance on working outdoors; a workshop for young graduates at Independent Dance; and a summer school on community arts in Tampere, Finland for 70 people.

In 2011, Lee led a seminar on creative reflection called 'Collaborate Evaluate Create' for the Foundation for Community Dance at Yorkshire Dance, for 20 participants. In 2010, she presented a talk about her process to the Office of Social Inclusion and Culture, developed works, including one commissioned by Crossover Dance, Oxford, for 12 intergenerational performers, and for parents and children for Bloomsbury Festival. In 2009, she led a workshop for the FCD conference in Glasgow; a seminar at The Place for choreographers working with young people; workshops with Plymouth University dance students on participatory practice, with a master class for local artists; a conference presentation on intergenerational work by Bubble Theatre; a workshop with Suffolk artists, on sensory experience of the natural environment and the somatic experiences of the dancer; a sharing of her process with artists at Crossing Borders, Independent Dance; a talk on the process of making collaborative work to artists from Beijing at Middlesex University; and she worked as choreographer in residence in Limassol, Cyprus, where she developed a site-specific

work.

On audiences:

The Artistic Director of Dance Umbrella, Betsy Gregory, says that Lee's work has a significant impact on people who watch it, leaving audience members incredibly moved and often in tears. She says that the biggest contribution that Lee makes is that even though her work is inclusive and participatory, and includes dancers and non-dancers from the community, Lee never loses sight of artistic goals and makes work of the highest artistic quality. Audiences see work that is participatory and inter-generational, and based on real, everyday and very humane themes. Feedback from audiences in comments books is overwhelmingly positive. Audience members comment on how moving it is to watch Lee's work, how effortlessly she carries out inter-generational work, how connected the participants seem, and how much care goes into the work. Martin Green, Head of Ceremonies at the London 2012 Olympics and Para-Olympics said in a comments book that he has never seen participatory and cross-generational work that is so effortless and powerful. Professor Theresa Buckland found the piece 'genuinely moving,' while a researcher from Wales Louise Ritchie found it uplifting. In an evaluation carried out for **Square Dances**, participants said that the experience was enabling, empowering, moving, memorable and inspirational.

Collectively the commentaries present evidence of impact that is both highly personal – evoking change for individuals' sense of themselves and of others: and highly influential - promoting new forms of best professional arts practice in inclusive, inter-generational dance.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

Individual Statements:

- Artistic Director of Dance Umbrella
- Former Director, Foundation for Community Dance
- Senior Lecturer, Queen Mary University
- Freelance Skinner Release practitioner and participant
- General Practitioner, Chair - NW London Faculty of the Royal College of GP and participant

Comment and evaluation (Available from Middlesex University):

- Comments book for *Common Dance*, with comments from spectators and performers.
- Evaluation of Square Dances, commission from Shakespeare Ltd.
- Confidential Final Evaluation Project reports, Arts Council England, for Square Dances and Common Dance

Newspaper reviews:

The two pieces have been covered extensively in the national press, including the *Telegraph*, *The Times*, *London Dance*, *The Guardian*, and others. Select reviews include:

- Mark Monahan, *Telegraph*:
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/dance/8820743/Rosemary-LeeEmanuel-Gat-Dance-Umbrella-various-venues-review.html>
- Shehani Fernando, *The Guardian*, vodcast which contained rehearsal footage and interviews: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/video/2009/oct/28/common-dance-rosemary-lee>, has received over 4000 hits on their website and youtube combined

Essays:

- Ruth Pethybridge, 'Case Study Common Dance' in *Dance and Age Inclusive Practice: Pathway to Practice for Dance Leaders Bringing Different Age Groups Together in Their Communities*, (2010), London: Foundation for Community Dance (ISBN-13: 978-1-898409-09-0).
- Conference paper, Katja Nyqvist "Urban Encounters and Collective Intimacy in Rosemary Lee's *Square Dances*", Society of Dance History Scholars, Conference Proceedings, 2012. (see: <https://sdhs.org/proceedings-2012>)