

FINAL REPORT

PROJECT: MOVING RESILIENCE – Exploring Community Dance Amidst Disaster YU TAMURA

Project Overview

This was a six month community dance project conducted during the period March 1st -August 31st 2018 in Dumaguete City, Negros Oriental and Palo, Leyte, the Philippines. The project focused on working with partner organization and groups with non-verbal language and a process of discovery, to embody resilience capacities and qualities through a dance and body movement approach. This involved exploring how dance and body movement can contribute to physical awareness, sustaining hope, purpose and the social process of resilience, generating mutual, physical space to regain energy towards peaceful and healthy community dynamics and atmosphere that will allow space for social healing to occur and the social fabric to be restored.

My objectives and starting point for the project and exploration were:

- To mutually learn from and document practices of using dance and related arts to address the experience of disaster.
- To offer opportunities in partner groups and communities with non-verbal language and the process of discovery to free themselves, being in touch with the self and others through a dance and body movement approach.
- To embody resilience capacities and qualities through dance and body movement.
- To release tension in body and mind.
- To generate peaceful and healthy community dynamics and atmosphere.
- To strengthen creativity by exploring our own unique 'movement voice'.
- To contribute to create mutual, physical space to regain energy through dance and body movement.

Implementation Record

April-May,2018: Dumaguete City, Negros Oriental, the Philippines: Youth Advocacy Through Theater Arts (YATTA) - Somatic exploration, movement training, feedback and sharing towards creating the module "Moving Resilience." YATTA, who were my collaborators are a non-profit cultural and development organization composed of young professionals, students and community youth in Dumaguete City, Negros Oriental

April-July,2018: Dumaguete City, Negros Oriental, the Philippines: Gender Watch Against Violence and Exploitation (GWAVE) – Regular monthly sessions on Community Dance and yoga with survivor groups; GWAVE's Teen Advocates (GTA's) and Empowered Women Advocates of GWAVE (EWAG's). GWAVE is an NGO that accompanies and advocates for women and children survivors of physical, emotional and sexual abuse and exploitation.

June,2018: Dumaguete City, Negros Oriental, the Philippines: Three day workshop on "Moving Resilience: Somatic Exploration of Breath, Body, Emotions and Our Three Brains" for the Department of Psychology, Silliman University. Established in 1901, Silliman University is a private research university and is one of only five universities in the Philippines with "Institutional Accreditation" by the Federation of Accrediting Agencies of the Philippines (FAAP).

July,2018: Dumaguete City, Negros Oriental, the Philippines: Attended the 12th Psychology Regional Forum workshop on "Music and Dance as Tools For Healing" at Silliman University.

July,2018: Palo,Leyte, the Philippines: “Moving Resilience” Workshop with Shadow Arts Theater Organization (SATO) and Palo Printing Arts Producer Association (PPAPA). SATO is a visual arts organization composed of young visual artists and students where they offer training and performance to children and youth in the community in Palo, Leyte.

July,2018: Tacloban,Leyte, the Philippines: Discussion on resilience with Jerx Aliposa, head and coordinator of SINErangan, a local film group in Tacloban, Leyte, the Philippines

August,2018: Palo,Leyte, the Philippines: Discussion on resilience with Giles Edgar Daya and the St.Scholastica Chapel Choir.

Activity Overview

Phase One: Experiment and Exploration

I began experimenting with concepts and exercises with the members of YATTA, my collaborators in Dumaguete City, which explored embodying ‘Resilience’. Based on these explorations, feedback and discussions, the potential and the effect of the developing “Moving Resilience” exercise were realized.

Simultaneously, the monthly sessions with EWAG’s and GTA’s of GWAVE’s began which gave me the opportunity to work with a group on a long-term basis. One of the objectives was to share the ‘moving resilience’ exercise with the group at some point during the project.

Phase Two: Application and Discussions

I conducted three workshops between June and July, 2018. First, “Moving Resilience: Somatic Exploration of Breath, Body, Emotions and Our Three Brains”- three day workshop at Silliman University; the second was the “Moving Resilience” workshop in Palo, Leyte with SATO; and the third was the final session with the EWAG’s and the GTA’s. The workshop at Silliman was the first time to carry out the exercises outside of the experimental setting with YATTA. With SATO and EWAG’s and GTA’s it was the moment to apply the exercise with groups who had experienced disaster, natural or human made. This gave me an opportunity to plan workshops of different length, short and long, as well as applying different exercises and activities that supported “Moving Resilience”. These workshops proved that the “Moving Resilience” exercise was effective and could be applied to groups of different types. These three sessions brought to light the exercise’s ability to tap into awakening awareness, senses and emotions connected to resilience.

Phase Three: Evaluation and Reflection

Together with YATTA’s executive director, Dessa Quesada-Palm, we reflected and evaluated about different reactions that were witnessed through the “Moving Resilience” exercise and workshops. For YATTA, the exercises had a very releasing effect: releasing of emotions through physical exploration. At Silliman in which the participants consisted of professors and graduate school students, awareness towards collective effort and self-care, and the work of rising and healing was enhanced. GWAVE’s EWAG’s and GTA’s expressed feelings of peace and happiness after the exercise. Members of SATO and PPAPA felt joy and pain, in the challenges that they felt motivated to tackle.

It was interesting to see the various outcomes which differed by group exercises, with striking and awakened emotions, sensations and realizations. This all varied by group.

Overall Observations, Comments and Analysis

In this community dance project my choice was to work with non-dancers, people with little or no prior dance training. Therefore, having time and patience were a very important factor and key to this project. The introduction and layering of activities, exploration and experiences needed time to allow the participants to begin to discover and sense their own unique physical abilities and possibilities, creating a pathway that would connect and lead them to discovering their authentic movement. Somatic bodywork of this kind requires time because it is about listening. Listening to our body and our inner voice. When we have time it allows us to be patient and we are able to listen and sense what we are feeling, and or, how we are feeling. I witnessed many participants at peace

and in joy as well as the releasing of emotions simply because we allowed ourselves to feel and sense ourselves.

Each time I had the opportunity to facilitate the developing module exercise, “Moving Resilience”, I was overwhelmed with the power of “touch”. How the sense of “touch” and through touch, vast emotions, feelings and sensations were awakened. What was realized and shared varied depending on the groups. I believe different backgrounds and experiences, as well as group dynamics are one factor for these different outcomes but also the length of the workshop and the structure were also elements that affected the different outcomes and reactions. At the very beginning of this project my intention was to create a movement piece as the final output. However, once I began conducting the developing module, I observed that the participants were going through a silent experience that I did not want to break and I did not want to force a transformation before or unless they were ready to do so. I wanted to give space and time to the participants so that they could feel and reflect without disturbing their silence and interrupting the conversation they were having with their physical selves. Thus I shifted the output and began to assign the participants to do a reflective drawing at the end of each “Moving Resilience” exercise. This output proved to be more suitable for participants at this stage.

The discussions and sharing I had with Jerx Aliposa and Giles Edgar Daya and the St. Scholastica Chapel Choir in Palo and Tacloban, Leyte, were insightful and informative. It brought to light the power of creative art and community and how we can support and empower each other amidst disaster and post-disaster through creative art. The sharing also shed light on the human strength of community, or when we gather together to become a community.

I believe and have a sense that I have created a module that is adaptable, accessible and inclusive. Adaptable because one can design a workshop around this exercise according to the themes, objectives, age group, physical abilities and disabilities. It is accessible and inclusive as the exercise itself does not require high technical skills or previous dance training. I will continue exploring this exercise and approach but hope to take it further so that we will get to create a movement piece from this exercise and the theme of resilience. I hope to continue this work with the EWAG’s especially, as well as YATTA and SATO.

For transport between Dumaguete to, and from Leyte ferry’s and buses were used.

There is an ongoing discussion on doing a community dance and art therapy project with Silliman University’s psychology department and college of performing and visual arts, Dumaguete city, Negros Oriental, the Philippines. I am also an organizing member of a community healing project in Trinidad and Tobago with Paula Moreau-Smith and Dirk Herman who are both body psychotherapists, and Magella Moreau, PR and Marketing for social justice, environment and arts organization, where I hope to take and share this exercise.



Left and right: Moving Resilience exploration workshop with YATTA



Left: YATTA's General Assembly 2018. Right: YATTA's home base at Dumaguete City Negros Oriental, the Philippines



With GWAVE - Top left: workshop with the GTA's and EWAG's. Top right: Monthly movement session with the EWAG's. Bottom left: Yoga session with the GTA's. Bottom right: with the GTA's and EWAG's at our last session, Dumaguete City, Negros Oriental, the Philippines



At Silliman University – Left and Middle: Exploring Moving Resilience. Right: participants drawing their reflective drawing. Dumaguete City, Negros Oriental, the Philippines



Left and Right: Movig Resilience workshop with SATO, Palo Leyte, the Philippines



Left: Palo Livelihood & Training / Evacuation Center. Right: with the Mayor of Palo, Ms. Remedios L. Petilla (second left) and Benedict Pilmaco, founder of SATO and President of PPAPA at PPAPA's office. Palo, Leyte, the Philippines



Left: with the St. Scholastica Chapel Choir and Edgar Daya (bottom right) Right: St. Scholastic Chapel, Palo Leyte, the Philippines