

# Faculty Report Template

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**Faculty/Rank** **Professor**                      **Professor**

**Department** **Dance**

**College**            **Professional Studies and Fine Arts**

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**Proposal title**    **SDSU Students Dancing in Germany and Switzerland**

**Country visited**    **Switzerland, Germany**

**Institution visited** **Stadttheater Konstanz and Czerner Dance Academy, Konstanz, Germany, the University of Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland, Manno, a middle school in Lugano, Switzerland.**

**Dates of travel**    **May 21 to June 2, 2008**

**Number of student participants:** **Four dance students. This included three dance majors, Katherine Burtch, Melissa Sanderson, and Julio Velazquez, and one dance minor Suzanne Choplin.**

**Previous IP proposals submitted and grants awarded**  
**(list titles, countries and dates):** **SDSU Students Dancing in Germany and Switzerland, May 24 to June 1, 2005, SDSU Students Dancing in Germany and Switzerland, May 23 to May 30, 2006, SDSU Students Dancing in Germany and Switzerland, May 22 to May 30, 2007, and SDSU Students Dancing in Germany and Switzerland, May 21 to June 2, 2008.**

**Have all required reports been submitted?** **Yes**

**Other funding for this activity available/applied for:** **Each student traveler will be receiving a \$200 reimbursement from the George Willis Scholarship Fund.**

**Proposal Abstract (75 word maximum):** Two dance faculty seek funding to tour San Diego State's University Dance Company to Konstanz, Germany and Lugano and Zurich, Switzerland in concerts featuring faculty choreography set on students. Twelve dancers would serve as international performance interns. These plans build upon a 28-year history of international exchange with Mexico and western Europe which has served as a stepping stone for many of the long term careers of our graduating seniors in both national and international venues.

## **Travel report:**

### **I. Opening/overview of intentions/activity**

Modern dance, once a mainly American art form, is now an international phenomenon. Global interchange among dance performers, teachers, writers, and choreographers is an exciting and enriching part of the art form. Dance, as a non-verbal means of communication, is an accessible and immediate link to another culture. Exchanges among dance artists through dialogue, classes, and performances serves to inform and inspire the participants.

With this in mind, it was the intention of this project to provide SDSU Dance students with the opportunity to travel to Europe to perform dance from the repertory of the University Dance Company at three venues, share the program with professional dancers from Germany at one venue, take a master class with international students and professional dancers, participate in organized and informal social interchanges with European dancers, see modern dance from another culture in its home, and make contacts for future interchange experiences. As part of a performing arts degree this project importantly served as a professional experience including technical and dress rehearsals, performances, and learning how to maintain the body at performance level as a member of a touring company. For some students this was their first trip to Europe and the value of such exposure cannot be overestimated.

### **II. In preparation for the trip abroad**

This project involved collaboration with persons from three venues, Peter and Andrea Czerner in Konstanz, Germany, Elfi Schaefer in Zurich, Switzerland, and Michela Ghezzi in Lugano, Switzerland. SDSU part-time dance lecturer Faith Jensen-Ismay, with a long history of European dance exchanges, facilitated these contacts. For the first time our project was booked into the State Theater of Konstanz, the oldest continuously operating theater north of the Rhine. DVD samples were shown to the director of the theater and on this basis the project was selected to be booked. The project was featured on the calendar of events for the theater, in two preview notices, one preview article and one very positive review in the Konstanz newspapers. Three days before the concert, seats were already half sold out. Ulrich Motz, who had for five years served as technical director for the

**world renowned and Kyoto prize-winner Pina Bausch, agreed to serve as our technical director in the Stadttheater. This was a big step.**

**Plans also had to be made with our other two contacts in preparation for the trip abroad. Elfi Schaefer is an important Swiss dance artist whose frequent performances in New York and San Diego have received excellent notices. She teaches at the University of Zurich. In fall 2005 she performed in the SDSU Studio Theater with the Mojalet Dance Collective and returned Spring 2008 to teach and perform at the SDSU Studio Theater with Mojalet presenting works by Nunn and Sandback. This was also the third time Michela Ghezzi invited us to perform in Lugano, Switzerland. Faith also taught a master class there.**

**Dance students who went on the trip came from the membership of the University Dance Company, an audition-based company that represents the capstone experience of the dance curriculum. As such they are performers of the highest level. Email contacts were with the above European dance artists.**

### **III. Upon arrival/specific activity**

**Four members of the University Dance Company (three dance majors and one dance minor) performed in Germany and Switzerland the last week of May. The 12-day excursion included two days of air travel, performing three concerts in the other ten days, taking a master class, and spending the other days on sightseeing ventures to get a taste of the culture. Students were accompanied by Professors Nunn and Sandback and lecturer Jensen-Ismay and four Mojalet company members.**

**The group left San Diego on May 21, arriving in Zurich on Thursday, May 22. Details of the tour itinerary follow:**

**6/21 left San Diego am**

**6/22 arrived in Zurich am/ Ismay taught afternoon dance class to Zurich students studying to be primary grade teachers**

**6/23 Ismay taught second master class to University of Zurich students/  
pm traveled to Lugano, Switzerland**

**6/24 sightseeing in Lugano**

**6/25 am Ismay taught a master class to local dance teachers and professional dancers, Mojalet Dance Collective, UDC students/  
pm performance at Manno School**

**6/26 free day to sight see in Como, Italy**

**6/27 am traveled back to Zurich/ pm performance at University of Zurich**

**6/28 traveled to Konstanz, Germany**

**6/29 free day in Konstanz**

**6/30 am free to sightsee/ pm rehearsals at Czerner Dance Academy**

**6/31 am Julio Velazquez taught a hip hop master class at Czerner Dance Academy/  
pm rehearsals at Czerner Dance Academy**

**7/1 all day rehearsals in Konstanz Stattheater/ 8 pm performance**

**7/2 train to Zurich/ return flight to San Diego**

As previously stated the contacts were Peter and Andrea Czerner, Elfie Schaefer, and Michela Ghezzi. The audiences in the different venues were comprised of student and professional dancers, local interested members of each community, and students from the dance academy and the university, and, at the State Theater in Konstanz, the Mayor and members of the Stadttheater board as well as a high-end cultural audience.

#### **IV. Conclusion, recommendation, and next step?**

**Why is this particular institution valuable for SDSU?**

The Czerner Dance Academy is a well-established dance venue in Konstanz under the direction of a German and a San Diegan. These two artists have an established relationship in the US and have been eager in recent years to host American artists, faculty member Faith Jensen-Ismay in particular. This professional academy is important as an institution because it not only trains professional dancers but also houses a professional company and a studio theater which presents outside groups. This is the model for professional studios both here and abroad. Our students benefit by having a clear picture of this model as it presents itself in both countries. The University of Zurich is a major European institution where the dance program is lead by an important dance artist. This year's venue in Zurich brought the attendance of Rhythm Talk, a well-known three member percussion ensemble (from Olten, Switzerland) who composed music for Ismay's company. Rhythm Talk also played live at both the Lugano and Konstanz venues. This group had also performed in an exchange at SDSU in Fall 2007 and taught an SDSU master class in the Dance Improvisation. The Lugano connection involved three important dance teachers from the area who, in the past, have attended San Diego dance workshops.

**Sustainability of project?**

The sustainability is reflected in the on-going number of cross exchanges discussed earlier. Over the course of the four years of this funding SDSU dance artists have performed fifteen concerts in European venues, taught and participated in numerous master classes, and enjoyed much social exchange. Between Fall 2005 and Spring 2008 SDSU hosted the Czerner Company for performances and master classes and choreographic exchanges (S07); major artist Elfi Schaefer performed two times at SDSU and taught technique and choreography (F05, S08); and the music group Rhythm Talk came to San Diego and performed with Mojalet and UDC dancers at several concerts including the SDSU Studio Theater (F07). We continue to provide special studies credit for company members, which has helped sustain the projects by interfacing with the curriculum.

**How will this exchange program increase participation by students in international activities, or enhance international learning environments for students?**

**Elfie Schaefer, a respected Swiss dance artist, performed in San Diego with the Mojalet Dance Collective in our Studio Theater in Fall 05 and Spring 08. During those visits we asked her to teach master classes to present her approach to modern dance in Switzerland for the benefit of our students. Our students, in turn, have been motivated to expand their dance study to western Europe. Just seven years ago the student dance company performed successfully in both London and Paris under the auspices of an Adams Humanities Mini-grant in the amount of \$5000. One of those students, Jessica Calhoun, later became a member of the Eva Dean Company and performed at the New York International Fringe Festival. Another of Faith's students, Erica Buechner, has returned three times to Europe and finished her BFA at SDSU and was selected the 2006 Outstanding Graduate in Dance. On her third trip she taught her own professional workshop. Lara Segura, Outstanding Graduate in Dance 2005, has also returned three times and taught a dance workshop summer 2006. Alicia Arguilla and Desiree Cuizon were inspired to stay in Europe for one and one-half months this last year and Mariah McHale went to Australia in the fall 2007 for study abroad. Former student and UDC member Sara Larsson is teaching in Sweden.**

**SDSU dance major Julio Velazquez has performed on this tour three years in a row and this year was invited to teach a master class in hip hop at the Czerner Academy. Another performer, Melissa Sanderson will study abroad in Italy Spring 2009 and has been invited to visit at the University of Zurich during that time. Other students are requesting study abroad advice. Past international learning environments have been created by exchanges with the universities of Heidelberg and Frieburg. This involved German faculty and students coming to study at SDSU as well as an SDSU faculty member going to set choreography and teach at German institutions. On Sept. 28, 29, 30, 2007 Mojalet Dance Collective presented a concert at SDSU Studio Theater featuring the work of Rhythm Talk, the Swiss percussion group.**

**What students will benefit?**

**Students who will benefit will be future UDC members who have demonstrated their talent through an audition process and local touring. These students are poised for professional careers as they benefit from these types of exchanges.**

**What will be their activities?**

**Their activities might involve performance and teaching internships for credit, special studies field research projects as well as additional UDC credit for company work. Their activities might also include paid jobs (such as the workshops and master classes taught by three of our graduates for the Czerners) related to professional performance and studio teaching. These workshops are examples of the immediate response that the Europeans have demonstrated to the quality of the**

**SDSU company dancers (in addition to the positive 2006 review in the international press, the positive 2008 review in the Konstanz newspaper and other newspaper previews.)**

**What will be your role in promoting and supporting these activities?**

**We will continue to seek funding from as many sources as possible and would like to reapply for OIP funding in the future. We will seek funding for the students' travel, supplemental department support, and initiate fund raisers throughout the year. We are expanding paid performances such as the ones at Palomar College and Mission Hills High School where we used the honoraria to support student travel. In the way of curricular support we would like to further organize our dance internship and special study courses to accommodate international activity. We have allocated part of the George Willis Scholarship Fund to this project this year to help reimburse students for travel expenses.**

#### **V. Additional Information**

**This project exceeded the expectations of all the participants. Thank you for your support. A highlight of 2006 was the invitation of Faith Jensen-Ismay to present one of her dances at “*Bewegtes*” *Tanzinolten*, one of the most prestigious festivals in Switzerland. A highlight of 2007 was the attendance of Rhythm Talk at the Zurich performance and a booking which resulted in their Fall 2007 performance at SDSU and the Poway Center for the Performing Arts. This music/dance exchange, along with newspaper previews and reviews, the expanded international opportunities for students, the rewarding of academic credit, and return exchanges sponsored by us on behalf of Elfi Schaefer, the Swiss artist, and Peter and Andrea Czerner, the German artists, demonstrate the continued year-to-year growth of this international commitment which has become a hallmark of the SDSU dance program. Particular highlights of the 2008 project were the residency of Schaefer at SDSU involving teaching and a professionally reviewed performance with Ismay, Nunn and Sandback; the German booking at the Stadttheater Konstanz attended by the Mayor of the city and previewed and reviewed in the local press; the pedagogical instruction by Ismay to student teachers in Zurich and Lugano as part of a curriculum she created; and the repeat performance of Sandback's solo “Leda” on Peter Czerner. This year was also significant in that three SDSU students rehearsed and performed in the same choreography with Ismay's professional dancers, thereby meeting the touring and performance challenges which will be part of their careers once they graduate.**

**All information should be sent to The Office of International Programs via e mail:**

**[oiip@mail.sdsu.edu](mailto:oiip@mail.sdsu.edu)**

