

The healing power of dance



Pictured above: Uzoamaka (Uzo) Nwankpa, the 2015 Caroline Plummer Community Dance Fellow

Caroline Plummer's parents are honouring their daughter's memory by donating to the University, where their daughter loved to study. For ten years, the University, dance, dancers and communities have all benefited greatly from Caroline's parents' generous support, which has established the Caroline Plummer Fellowship in Dance.

Uzo Nwankpa - the healing power of dance

This year's Caroline Plummer Community Dance Fellow is Uzoamaka (Uzo) Nwankpa, a public health nurse and practitioner of community dance.

Uzo is an advocate of multidisciplinary approaches to health and healing. Originally from Nigeria and brought up in the United States, her research focuses on the value of music and dance for physical and mental health, with particular emphasis on its benefits for mothers and babies.

Through focus groups, community dance sessions and performance/art installations, she is raising awareness about the connection between movement and good mental and physical health, and recently began weekly mother and baby music and dance sessions at a Dunedin parent centre.

“Music and dance bring value to our well-being, which starts in utero,” says Uzo. “I hope to raise awareness of the dangers of antenatal and postnatal mood disorders, which can affect anyone.”

Uzo sees music, movement and dance as complementary to medical science, and hopes that a time will come when healthcare systems around the world embrace the role that the arts can play in preventing health problems and supporting families at critical times in their lives.

Says Uzo, “The arts are powerful mediums for change.”

[Read more about Uzo’s work](#)

The Caroline Plummer Fellowship

Caroline Plummer, an Otago alumna, believed that dance could help people to heal. As a student, she was diagnosed and treated for cancer – throughout much of this time, she continued to dance. Holistic community dance, Caroline believed, could heal the body, mind and spirit. The scholarship that bears her name – the Caroline Plummer Fellowship in Community Dance – was established by her parents, Bibby and Anthony Plummer, after Caroline passed away in 2003.

One of only five arts fellowships at Otago, the award is given annually to an individual involved in aspects of community dance whose work supports Caroline’s vision – that dance should bring people together, be accessible and inclusive, and promote healing and peace.

“Our goal has always been to honour Caroline, to support her vision of the power of dance,” says Bibby, who along with Anthony and six other committee members, reviews applications and helps to select the Fellowship recipient each year. “We are amazed at the quality and the number of applications we’ve seen over the years. The ideas people present are so creative, just amazing. We know that Caroline would be utterly thrilled.”

[About Caroline Plummer](#)

Moving Communities

To celebrate 10 years of the Caroline Plummer Fellowship in Community Dance, the University is planning an upcoming international conference.

Moving Communities is a three-day event bringing together practitioners, academics and students to celebrate the diverse fields of community dance from November 26 to 28, 2015. All ten Caroline Plummer dance fellows have been invited to present keynote addresses and master classes, and to participate in panels and plenary sessions to discuss the current practice and future trends in community dance.

The conference is co-hosted by the Dance Studies programme at the School of Physical Education, Sport and Exercise Sciences, and the Caroline Plummer Fellowship in Community Dance Committee organisers hope the event will stimulate debate and generate new ideas and practices in the field of community dance.

[Read more about Moving Communities](#)



Pictured: Caroline Plummer dancing