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### [JOURNAL] Sydney Skybetter

By dancenycjcomm

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Sydney Skybetter

Several words come to mind when thinking of Sydney Skybetter – movement maker, multi-tasker, forward-thinker and emerging leader. His involvement in the dance community is quite multi-faceted, being a dancer, choreographer, consultant, teacher and a [Dance/USA](#) Board of Trustee member among many other positions. Skybetter is also a Founding Partner at [Design Brooklyn](#), a company that helps performing arts organizations improve their marketing, infrastructure, and online presence. Along with his two co-founders, Will Arnold & Justin Ternullo, Skybetter devised Design Brooklyn “as a means of providing infrastructural and online services to the performing arts.” Their list of clients is an impressive one and includes some well-known organizations like Battleworks Dance Company, Dance Wave, Lar Lubovitch and The Princess Grace Foundation.

Sydney recently sat in on a panel discussion for Dance/NYC’s Mid-Winter Symposium titled the “Latest Technologies Impacting the Dance Field”. Skybetter was impressed with the scale of work being done by multiple organizations on this front.

“I was particularly fascinated with Justin Karr’s (Fractured Atlas’) open source software development for the arts,” says Skybetter. “Their ATHENA platform promises to totally, irrevocably and radically shift the terrain of performing arts infrastructure in the coming five years.”

“The bottom line is that there are a lot of people working on different technologies that have/will have a pretty dramatic effect on the dance community and I am thrilled that again and again, Dance/NYC is able to tap into that brain trust to inform it’s policies and decisions. These issues are not easy to contend with relative to nearly five centuries of legacy infrastructure and associated expectations, but I find the internet mantra to be increasingly relevant for the performing arts: “*Innovate or die.*”

Skybetter’s understanding of arts organizations’ need for technological assistance came early in his career and helped promote his involvement on multiple levels of the field.

“I got into an iterative habit pretty early on- where an initial interest in how companies store their data turned into consulting on MS Excel turned into database consulting turned into cluster management services turned into a graduate degree in choreography turned into a dance company and associated technology firm and so on. The intervention is the thing, and at every stage in my career the point has been to do something with a point. Not to simply accept that dancers traditionally work in a particularly way, and so on.”

Yet despite Skybetter’s extensive work in technology, he considers his own work to be “Good old fashioned modern dance,” with a focus on craft and technique over multimedia. Still, [skybetter and associates](#) are part of a growing number of dance organizations that house their ongoing administration entirely online. “skybetter and associates has no office,” Sydney states, “We are as infrastructurally lightweight as one could imagine. We operate completely from the cloud.”

As a seasoned artist in the NYC Dance Community, Skybetter’s involvement reaches to a national level as a Board of Trustee for Dance/USA. When asked about his initial interest in Dance/USA, Sydney discusses his early involvement with Dance/NYC.

"One of the reasons I got involved with Dance/USA was because of Dance/NYC," he says. "They were doing such great work in NYC – I was impressed with them and wanted to see the work on the national level. I was curious as to how do we as a national/international community deal with issues of audience development, and what does a national community mean when individual artists are struggling at the grassroots level?"

In regard of the current cultural climate and bridging the generation gap within the dance community, Skybetter seems optimistic that the next generation can step up to the challenge but that it won't come easy. Some wise words of advice from Sydney:

"We will have to do it ourselves."

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For more information on skybetter and associates, and their upcoming season at the Joyce SoHo, please visit <http://www.skybetter.org/>

For more information on Design Brooklyn, please visit <http://www.designbrooklyn.com/>

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