

DANCE/USA IN TIMEOUT CHICAGO

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Dance/USA in Chicago: All you need to know

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As you may have heard, Dance/USA's annual conference is in Chicago this year, July 13–17. Its themes for 2011 are audience development, artistry, management and technology. Essayist and novelist Pico Iyer, contributor to the likes of Harper's, Time and National Geographic, will deliver the conference keynote on July 14.

The famed globetrotter and Dalai Lama expert is just one of more than 40 speakers and panelists to present during the conference. (Full disclosure: I'm moderating one of these panels on July 16, Next Generation Video Production: Myths, Challenges and Opportunities.) The Chicago host committee says it could be the best-attended conference in the org's 29-year history.

Despite all manner of sacrificial offerings and séances by Unscripted staff, it isn't summertime yet. But the ball is already rolling on run-up events: On March 8, I was one of about 80 who attended Dance/USA's community breakfast at the Chicago Cultural Center. Among the speakers were Dance/USA's president and executive director from 1990 to 1998, Bonnie Brooks of the Dance Center of Columbia College, and its executive director since January, Amy Fitterer.

In addition, a series of more than 100 performances called Spotlight on Dance in Chicago kicked off March 3. Beginning at shows last weekend by MaryAnn McGovern & Dancers with Peter Carpenter, between one and four of these per month will include a Dance/USA reception. (You can see the full schedule of Spotlight performances and receptions here, or keep up with them by liking Spotlight on Dance in Chicago on Facebook. The next event is a preshow "fireside chat" with Lucia Mauro on April 16, at River North Dance Chicago's one-night engagement at the Auditorium Theatre.)

At the breakfast, Gail Kalver, executive director of RNDC and a host committee cochair, noted that, over the past decade, Dance/USA has made a concerted effort to broaden its membership to include "not only managers and artists but also funders, presenters, critics and health experts." Kalver closed with the observation that July's events "can be a vehicle to raise the national profile of Chicago dance." No one who reads me will be surprised to hear that I couldn't agree with her more.

As with any national industry conference, attendance isn't cheap (\$500, members \$400), but I'm stumped on a circumstance where you'd have to pay full price:

- * Extended early bird registration, which saves you 35 bucks, ends today, but you save the same amount if you're a first-time attendee (the two discounts can't be used together).
- * You can peep the conference schedule, special events and speaker bios and choose a single-day registration, which includes admission to the two performance showcases.
- * There was "an outpouring of support," said host committee marketing co-lead Heather Hartley, to help people attend the conference for 50–100% off through funds "raised specifically to make sure that as many members of the Chicago dance community who want to attend, can." Deadline for application for those scholarships has been extended through April 15; click here for details, or contact Cameron Heinze at 773-281-1825 or cameron@chicagotap.org.
- * Tickets to the July 15 honors celebration for 2011 awardees Pamela Crutchfield, Lar Lubovitch and Verdery Roosevelt can be had à la carte.
- * Groups of 15 or more members or non-members can register for \$350 per person.
- * Groups of 15 or more dancers or students can register for \$175 per person.
- * Two or more people from the same member or non-member org registering together save \$75 each, which can be combined with the early bird discount.
- * Folks interested in volunteering can e-mail Cara Sabin at csabin@colum.edu.

Called upon to share thoughts at the breakfast, DanceWorks Chicago artistic director Julie Nakagawa asked, "Can we afford not to be there, to not be a part of this conversation?" Muntu Dance Theatre of Chicago president Joan Gray echoed Nakagawa's sentiment, saying, "It's important to be at the table, that your voice is heard, on cultural diversity, ethnic diversity and diversity of form. And if you're not there, don't complain when the decisions get made. It's a group thing, y'all—let's participate."

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