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By Lauren Wingenroth

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In theory, [NYCharities](#) was a small dance company's dream. Free to use, the nonprofit acted as a clearinghouse for companies to accept credit and debit card donations online. It also allowed companies to sell tickets to galas and events, set up recurring donations and even give donors the option to pay processing fees themselves—an important feature for dance companies with small budgets.

But in mid-June, NYCharities did not transfer the past month's contributions to its users' bank accounts. Shortly afterwards, [the website went down](#). While some companies were able to get in touch with NYCharities after many phone calls—they were told someone was working on it—most were never able to break through via phone or email. (NYCharities did not respond when *Dance Magazine* reached out to request a comment, either.)

Now, over a month later, the Attorney General of New York State has [announced an investigation](#) into NYCharities, as thousands of dollars from hundreds of nonprofits remain missing—including many arts organizations, as well as schools, churches and Parent Teacher Associations.



Stephen Petronio Company is owed around \$6,000 from NYCharities. Photo by Yi-Chun Wu, Courtesy Stephen Petronio Company.

Yvan Greenberg, executive director of Stephen Petronio Company, says they are owed about \$6,000 from NYCharities, and that, in retrospect, there were signs that something strange was going on. He says it was always challenging to get in touch with someone from the nonprofit, and since last fall the deposits Petronio received from NYCharities did not match up with donation reports.

As it turns out, according to [Fox5NY](#), NYCharities had not filed a 990 tax form in three years, and its 501c3 nonprofit status was revoked earlier this year. None of the five dance companies we spoke to were informed of this.

Mysteriously, the NYCharities website briefly went back up a few weeks ago, giving organizations an opportunity to download reports, get a sense of just how much money they are owed, cancel monthly recurring donations and put up information on their pages warning patrons not to make donations there. (None of the companies working with NYCharities have been able to remove themselves from the site, and still have concerns that donations will find their way to NYCharities.)



The NYCharities website is down, but their Facebook page is still currently live. Screenshot via Facebook

A representative from another dance company, who chose to remain anonymous, was not even able to find out how many donations had come in during the past few months. Not knowing what exactly they are owed will make next steps—including potentially filing a insurance claim—extremely difficult.

Representatives from two other dance companies we spoke to wished to remain anonymous as well, so they could have a chance to explain their position to their donors. It is indeed a delicate situation, and could have broader implications for donors' trust in online giving.

The timing is unfortunate, if not suspicious. The nonprofit fiscal year ends June 30, and many companies do end-of-year fundraising campaigns leading up to it. Galas are often planned for May or June for the same reason. No one received their donations from NYCharities from those two months.

One anonymous source pointed out that late summer is already a slow time for revenue for dance companies, who likely aren't getting touring fees and who won't receive most of their grant funds until the fall.

The whereabouts of [Cristine Chronin](#), founder and president of NYCharities, are currently unknown. Ironically, Jirina Ribbens, executive director of Ice Theatre of New York, who is owed around \$10,000 from NYCharities, invited Chronin—whom she had never met—to her company's performances several months back. Chronin bought tickets through NYCharities, choosing the more expensive of the tiered ticket prices.

Ribbens doesn't know if Chronin actually came to the show, but Ice Theatre never received the money from the ticket sales. Without wiggle room in their budget, they ended the fiscal year with a \$10,000 deficit.

Several of the representatives we spoke to believe that there are many other dance organizations affected—some who may not even realize it yet. (Several [non-dance organizations](#) still seem to be trying to collect donations via NYCharities on their websites.)[New York Daily News](#) reports that some companies are owed over \$100,000. Though the dance companies we spoke to are due between \$3,000 and \$10,000, these amounts could be a payroll of salaries for a small company, or rent for a summer intensive, one representative said.

Anyone who is owed money from NYCharities is encouraged to [file a complaint](#) with the New York Attorney General's Charities Bureau. [Dance/NYC](#) is currently organizing a meeting for all dance companies and artists affected; check back [here](#) for more details soon.

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