

DANCE/NYC STATE OF THE ORGANIZATION ADDRESS SPRING 2023

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By Dance/NYC

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Dear Dance Community,

As we enter a season of increased activity in the cultural sector, Dance/NYC continues to reflect on its current experience navigating organizational change and how that is emblematic of the current state of our field.

While some [well-established venues in NYC have managed to weather the storm of pandemic lockdowns](#) and reopen their doors to dance seasons and classes, and community organizations have begun to flourish again with new and returning programs, the excitement of this resurgence brings challenges that demand our attention.

"As a field, we now have access to a wealth of robust content flooding our digital and physical spaces, which is truly exciting," share Candace Thompson-Zachery, Director of Programming and Justice Initiatives. "However, we must also consider the strain it puts on our collective attention and capacity, the unsustainable pace of productivity—particularly for marginalized communities, including those who are disabled, low-income, or overburdened—and how these dynamics are also playing out within our organizations."

In addition to navigating this new landscape, dance workers are grappling with skyrocketing inflation rates, housing costs that are increasingly out of reach, and the need to [juggle multiple jobs](#) without sufficient protections. Recent data from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) reveals that the performing arts sector is [still lagging in reaching the workforce rates of 2019](#).

Thankfully, there has been a growing movement within the sector to confront these economic challenges, both on a large scale and through individual initiatives. Examples include the nationwide [Writer's Guild strike](#), the formation of the [Choreographer's Guild](#), and the advocacy efforts of arts and culture organizations calling for equity in the NYC Arts and Culture budget, among countless others.

As an organization, we have also made adjustments to find equilibrium in this evolving economic landscape. "Over the past three years we have experienced shifts in our staffing structure and funding sources—emergency supplementary support for service organizations is no longer available, but new costs remain," offers Vicki Capote, Director of Development. "Much like our counterparts in the field, we *continue to strategize and regroup in our values* to prioritize impactful work with the resources we have present."

One key manifestation of our commitment to these values is the exploration of an [interim shared leadership structure, which we announced at the end of 2022](#). "Deconstructing our pre-existing leadership model to build a collaborative vision has required that we confront individual and collective biases rooted in white supremacist, capitalist, and ableist notions of productivity or professionalism that do not align with our values as a service organization," shares Sara Roer, Director of Operations and Finance.

This process necessitates investing time in developing new language and decision-making structures, as well as ensuring equitable salaries for the entire staff, all while maintaining our service delivery.



Externally, challenging the status quo of singular leadership models has resulted in disparities in communication from our stakeholders (who are inclined to communicate only with *the* individual leader), anxiety about resource scarcity, and barriers to efficient work. We acknowledge these temporary and necessary pain points in our process of becoming.

"Our advocacy work consistently teaches us that we cannot change without disruption, and uprooting systems that continue to breed oppression requires radical gestures of disruption—modeling the new in bold ways. Ultimately, these risks are rewards when we are serious about preserving our humanity," offers Milena Luna, Interim Executive Director.

As part of our continued work toward more sustainable ways of operating, both individually and as an organization, we have taken inventory of Dance/NYC's impact to zero in on how we are best positioned to serve the field. This evaluation has allowed us to identify three areas where we drive the most impact:

- Advocacy
- Research
- Power and Resource Distribution

With this focus, Dance/NYC has exciting unfolding developments:

- The release of the fourth State of NYC Dance research report as a continued part of the larger [Dance. Workforce. Resilience. \(DWR\) Initiative](#)

- The development of the 2023 DWR Task Force
- The State of NYC Dance research convening to disseminate action-oriented information about the dance sector
- The announcement of the new biennial Symposium for 2024
- Continued work with the Strategic Leadership Committee, who is leading the research and recommendation process for the organization's restructured leadership model
- [Hiring](#) additional workers to scaffold support for our work

And as we are in the process of becoming while existing in an industry that is so profoundly critical to our shared humanity and yet so deeply under-resourced, we are asking the following questions as a service organization

- How can we address the harm that comes from the systemic issues arising in institutional and community spaces?
- How can we embody and model the abundance that exists in our strong networks and still demand what is required to sustain and grow our work?
- How can we extend accountability and grace?

We are grateful for our many partners in this work and the opportunities for collaboration and improvisation that await us. As this year unfolds, if you have any questions about what we are up to, how we are honoring our commitments to you, or recommendations for how we can do better, please feel free to contact us. Our emails are publicly available on [Dance.NYC](#).

With much appreciation,
[The Dance/NYC Team](#)

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