

JUNIOR COMMITTEE

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Blueprint Call To Action

By holbart

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"Dance is a field with more guerrillas than institutions" –John Munger, Director of research and information at Dance/USA

Dance/NYC's mission is to strengthen the professional dance field in New York City. They help to foster a society that appreciates the art of dance and supports the creative process. In 2007, former Dance/NYC Executive Director Michelle Burkhart created the Junior Committee (JComm) to advocate specifically for young professionals in dance and to serve as a liaison between the organization and its younger constituents. JComm is a diverse sample of the field's guerrillas and our partnership with Dance/NYC brings us in from the fringes and allows us to effect an institution. Our relationship is mutually beneficial and we work together to serve the dance community.

We believe support for the arts is worth fighting for. Last year the Junior Committee, with support from Dance/NYC, conducted a financial survey of our peers, the Dance Workforce Census: Earnings Among Individuals Ages 21-35, and the results were enlightening. 1,231 individuals volunteered to participate in our survey. On average our peers make \$28,000 a year. Roughly 70% have jobs outside of the field to supplement their income and more than 40% of participants earned less than \$5,000 from dance related jobs. As Beverly D'Anne eloquently said after our report was published:

"If the passion, discipline and creativity of these individuals is not to be wasted, it must be allowed to flourish in a way that confirms that dance is, indeed, a respected profession –a place where achievement is recognized by the ability to earn a living wage, with appropriate health insurance benefits and a modicum of financial stability."

The Junior Committee and Dance/NYC will use these findings, along with Dance/NYC's other research, to continue advocating for professionals working in the field. As stated in JComm's mission we strive to "strengthen and unite a community of professional artists and administrators; provide a forum for dialogue among diverse perspectives; and re-energize our peer group in a challenging field." We are 20 individuals between the ages of 21-35 who work in a variety of capacities throughout the field –artists, administrators, educators, and advocates. Our strength lies in our member's various points of view, a shared passion for the development of the profession, and 20 individuals willing to work.

When Occupy Wall Street set up camp in the middle of September 2011, Americans were reminded of the collective power of citizens. American history is rich with movements of the people that created change; the Boston Tea Party, the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Occupy camps across the country, all involved citizens coming together with a common desire to participate in shaping the future of this country. The Tea Party sparked the American Revolution, the Bus Boycott lead to the fight for civil rights, and the Occupy movement has focused the national discourse on economic and social inequalities. Throughout history, change in our democracy has been achieved through community organizing and direct action.

John Dewey, American philosopher and educational reformer, believed that "democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience." We are not autonomous individuals, we live within a society. As a society we must evaluate what we collectively value. Are highways and schools important? Yes, then the people should build highways and schools. If we value the humanities, sciences, and arts, then our society should have programs in place that foster their development. America doesn't have a strong tradition of supporting the arts and changing this won't happen over night. That is why organizations like the Junior Committee are so important. We engage our demographic, give voice to those who often feel marginalized, and take action. When we work together we can build a brighter future.

JComm's most recent project, the Blueprint, is meant as a tool for communities to develop similar committees in their region. We are working hard in New York City but there are dance communities around the country that would benefit from the collective power of a group like this. The Junior Committee hopes you will find a way to get involved and strengthen support for dance and the arts in America.

Hollis Bartlett

Junior Committee Member

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