

JUNIOR COMMITTEE

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Saturday, December 19, 2015

Halfway Through the Year, Thoughts from a First-Time Member

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It was like the first day of school: that disorienting mix of terror and excitement, a looming anticipation of newness, the feeling of starting something new with a group of people you may not know, but already are inclined to love. Without getting too overly sentimental, I truly had not felt that in a while. I was hopeful and intrigued and curious-- definitely curious-- when I showed up for my first DanceNYC Junior Committee meeting this past summer.

I remember hearing about the DanceNYC Junior Committee (or, J Comm, as we affectionately call it) four years ago in my first few months as a dancer in NYC. Like-minded individuals, under the age of 30, who were looking to advance the field and develop skills around advocacy? Sign me up!

I applied but was not accepted that year. When you're 22 years old, I think there's a certain crying out for a way to identify, ride a track or lock down your calling without actually doing the work to get there. Turns out, contrary to any teen rom com or self-help scam out there, there's no fast track to finding yourself. I was newly out of college and just starting to find my feet in the freelance artist world. Though those feet have gained strength over time-- or, perhaps, just stubbornly dug themselves deeper into the ground-- I now realize they also make up the knowing assets I can offer to the committee. My experience with performing, grant writing, research and event planning are not just categories to populate my LinkedIn profile, but important building blocks to be an active contributor to J Comm. We all work together to pool resources, share contacts and inform our peers. Being a part of the group empowers us to expand our own measures of working and thinking. A few years later, with some more advocacy and organizing experience under my belt, the Junior Committee seemed less like a desired line on my resume and more like an authentic next step in my life as a dancer. This time, I applied and was accepted.

If two heads are better than one, all twenty-one heads that make up J Comm create near-unthinkable possibilities of awesome. In our bimonthly sessions, we have found ways to advance and refine how we conduct our meetings, adapting a board structure where all members are voting parties and everyone is held accountable to his/her contribution to the group. We have pooled our resources and contacts in the field to have some informative professional development sessions, ranging from the basics of internal budgeting (with former J Comm-chair, Lianne M-G Bowley) and talking the ins and outs of fundraising (with real-talk extraordinaires Rebecca Cardwell and JJ Lind). And, there's been some serious discussion on how we can make an impact across our various dance communities, ranging from live streaming our meetings and events, to social media, to organizing events, to blog posts like this one.

In the new year, those opportunities for outside engagement will crystallize in other ways, with the assemblage of our "Think Tanks," breakout groups within the committee that allow for deeper engagement with issues and ideas that impact us as budding leaders in the field. Topics like technology and dance and the prevalence of failure are ideas that will begin to materialize in the form of research, writings, events and public conversations. As with any group of people, we may differ on our ideas and opinions, but it is evident we all care to identify as advocates and grapple with the responsibilities that presents (as a personal aside, witnessing disagreements and "learning moments" within the committee have been some of the best parts of our meetings-- it means we are present and willing to interrogate preconceptions, inherent bias, or stale opinions-- and those happen to be cherry-on-top-of-the-sundae times to me).

Operating within the committee is a wonderful mix of self-discernment and collective groupthink. Everyone is essential to the impact we can (and hope to) make. As we move on to the second half of our year, I look forward to finding more ways we can bring our work outside of our meetings and into the dance communities we all call home. After all, we all choose to live here, why not make it our dream house?

