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Four Resolutions for Healthy Dance Advocacy in the New Year

By Katherine Bergstrom

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Happy New Year, readers! As we all know, these first few weeks of January are high time for New Year's Resolutions and goal-setting, and I've been thinking a lot about the dance advocate I'd like to become in 2016. What does my community need, and how can I best contribute to the betterment of our field? Are there problems that I can help solve? Reflecting on these questions, I've come up with four resolutions for myself as a dancer and Dance/NYC Junior Committee member that I'm hoping will help me continue to learn and grow as a dance advocate in 2016. Though many parts of our city and our world are going through tumultuous times, I hope our field can provide an example of understanding and innovation in practice in the year ahead.

1. Equity over Equality

"Equity" and "Equality" are both very popular buzzwords in the non-profit sector, and I often see them used interchangeably. However, in the past few months I've come to realize that they are distinct concepts, and that sometimes, focusing only on equality (similarity in offering) can impede the goal of equity (similarity in outcome).

I'm an avid reader of the blog "NonProfit With Balls," and in [a recent post](#), author Vu Le helped me grasp the difference between these two terms, using the typical arts foundation grant application process as an example. "Our [field's] grant application process," he writes, "is entirely framed around Equality: The same equal process, equally accessible to all, where the best written applications score

the most points and win. This disregards, for example, the fact that grassroots organizations, especially those led by communities of color, may not have the staff support or resources to write the best applications, even for funding designed to support these communities."

With this in mind, I resolve to promote equity over equality, and consider how I can encourage the organizations that I work with to do the same. As a member of JComm's Equity and Inclusion Think Tank, I'll be looking at examples of equity (or lack thereof) in practice throughout NYC's dance community, and thinking of ways that we can work towards a healthier, more equitable field. By recognizing and understanding where people are starting from, I hope I will be better able to understand their goals, needs, and potential, especially if I find myself in a decision-making position.

2. Make time for Self-Care

Between my full-time job, rehearsals, and freelance work, my days are pretty jam-packed. Most of the time I'm doing things I want to be doing, but when projects end up taking longer than expected, my time for sleep, sit-down meals, and relaxation is the first thing to be sacrificed. I know I'm not the only one who cuts down on self-care when deadlines are closing in - I hear about burnout all too often from my dancer friends who work 4 jobs and rehearse with 3 different companies on top of making their own dance work.

So, for 2016, I'm resolving to approach my schedule from a different perspective, one that I learned from a fellow dancer who is also a full-time grad student. Rather than trying to squeeze sleep, meals, and personal time between her classes, rehearsals, and homework sessions, she's decided to put those necessities first and then plan her extra activities around those constraints. She's hoping that this approach will give her more energy, fewer "hangry" moments (hungry-angry, we've all been there), and a sense of control over her schedule. When we're pushed to do a million things in a day, we have to make sure we're preparing ourselves adequately and prioritizing our self-care so that we're ready and able to take on each of those tasks. It might seem silly to block out "Sleeping: 11pm-7am" in your Google calendar, but that little alert on your phone might be just the thing to remind you that it's late and that video you're editing will still be there in the morning.

3. Work from a Place of Abundance

In November, I danced with Sydnie L. Mosley Dances in "[BodyBusiness](#)," a new work by former Junior Committee Vice Chair Sydnie Mosley that asked "How can dancers be paid a living wage for meaningful work? How can we transform places of lack in our lives into places of abundance?" Many young dancers in New York operate on shoestring budgets, holding multiple part time jobs to make up for their underpaid (or unpaid) dance work. However, our community is flush with resources (both in the form of individuals and organizations) to help make our lives and careers easier. By building connections within our community and learning that it is okay to ask for help, we open ourselves up to this abundance. And who knows? Perhaps you have a skill that could help a friend fulfil their next artistic goal. By staying connected and supporting each other, we can move our field forward together. (This photo is from "BodyBusiness" - that's me with the pointe shoes. Credit: Kearra Gopee)



4. Listen Up

As a first year Junior Committee member, and as one of the group's younger members, I've learned a tremendous amount about the inner workings of New York's dance community just by listening to my peers talk about their challenges and achievements in the field. So, in 2016, I resolve to find more people to listen to and learn from as a young dance advocate. There are so many artist-advocates doing amazing work in NYC, and many of them already offer public forums and events to help people learn about any dance-related topic you could imagine, from diversity to labor rights to personal financial skills. Since equity is something I'd like to learn more about this year, I have a personal goal of attending either (or both) the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond's "[Undoing Racism](#)" workshop or Urban Bush Women's [Summer Leadership Institute](#). If you have other suggestions of people and groups I can learn from, please let me know - catch me on Twitter

with [@kaethonbroadway](#).

If you haven't yet reflected on what changes you'd like to see come about in 2016 - whether that's for yourself, your family, your job, or your neighborhood - I encourage you to take 20 minutes to set a few goals. Share them with a friend so that others can hold you accountable and help you stay on track. Here's to a happy, prosperous, and peaceful 2016 for all!

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