

JUNIOR COMMITTEE

[Apply](#) [JComm Blog](#) [Member Bios](#) [About](#)

Wednesday, June 29, 2016

The Current and Future Challenges Facing the Dance Field

By Caryn Cooper

[► Share](#) | [Print](#) | [Download](#)

Last week Dance/NYC in partnership with the Archive of New York City Cultural Policy and the Jerome Robbins Dance Division of the New York City Public Library for the Performing Arts came together to host a Town Hall event: A Forum for the Dance Community about Partnerships with the City of New York. Bringing together leaders of the dance field, they all spoke about the current and future challenges facing the dance field here in New York.

The program began with an opening keynote by City Council Member, Majority Leader, and Chair of the Cultural Affairs Committee, [Jimmy Van Bramer](#). He spoke about the recent passing of the New York City Cultural budget. For the upcoming fiscal year (which starts July 1), there will be a \$17 million increase for the arts and an extra \$10 million for operational support. It was successful as our collective voice as an arts field was heard and it is reflected in the new budget. However, there is still much work to be done.

Much of that work to be done came out during the panel discussion. The panelists featured the following speakers: Jonah Bokaer- Chez Bushwick and Center for Performance Research, Garbi Christa- Snug Harbor Cultural Center, Simone Eccleston- Harlem Stage, Charles Rice Gonzalez- BAAD, Shelia Lewandowski- The Chocolate Factory, and Linda Shelton- The Joyce Theater. Each spoke about the unique challenges for their organization/neighborhood. However, after hearing each person speak, it became apparent of what common challenges our field is facing.

One challenge that was common among all the speakers was Space. There are not many places available to create dance in. Gabri spoke about how Snug Harbor is the only place in Staten Island that dancers can rent studio space from. It was also mentioned that if there is space, it is not affordable. Particularly in this NYC real estate climate, choreographers are constantly being priced out and can't afford to have space to create. Sheila referred to this as "creative gentrification." If your organization is part of the [Cultural Institutions Group \(CIG\)](#), then the City owns your building. But, many arts organizations do not own their space. They lease their space and are constantly wondering where they are going to be once the lease is up. And if you do own your space, you may owe hundreds of thousands of dollars in real estate taxes that many nonprofit arts organizations cannot afford.

Another challenge that came up in conversation was around Funding. There seems to be some inequity in the ways funding reaches organizations. Garbi talked about how there are some funds she doesn't qualify because of some limitations in the guidelines. Charles spoke about how sometimes the small groups can get the short end of the stick with funding initiatives. Simone mentioned that while it is nice when the City has new initiatives, there needs to be a way to make these initiatives sustainable for the future and not be just a nice idea.

All artists need support, resources, and opportunities to create and share work. It is my hope that some of these issues will be addressed the first-ever [Cultural Plan for New York](#). But, I absolutely agree that there is still work to be done. But we need to keep our voices alive. As tiring and frustrating it may be, we need to continue to engage our school boards, community boards, business improvement districts (BID), and local politicians. It may be a slow process, but we need to keep our voices aloud. It is only when we stop, that our voice is lost.

If this all sounds interesting to you, it's not too late to join this conversation! You can feel free to email your questions or comments to citypartnerforum@gmail.com.

[< back](#)[previous listing](#) • [next listing](#)