



# Defining "Small-Budget" Dance Makers in a Changing Dance Ecology

dance/NYC<sup>®</sup>

IN ALLIANCE WITH DANCE/USA



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- ✓ Digital Version: The layout has been designed continuously and free of complex layouts in order to maintain a simple and consistent body flow for screen readers.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>4</b>	Land & Historical Acknowledgment
<b>6</b>	About Dance/NYC Values of Justice, Equity & Inclusion
<b>8</b>	Testimony
<b>11</b>	Introduction
<b>15</b>	Data Highlights
<b>18</b>	Foreword
<b>23</b>	Research Context & Methodology
<b>33</b>	Key Findings
<b>33</b>	What Are “Small-Budget” Dance Makers?
<b>59</b>	Who Leads “Small-Budget” Dance?
<b>79</b>	What Are the Workforce Dynamics of “Small-Budget” Dance?
<b>95</b>	What Are the Experiences of “Small-Budget” Dance Makers?
<b>107</b>	Recommendations
<b>152</b>	Appendices
<b>154</b>	Acknowledgments

## LAND & HISTORICAL ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Dance/NYC would like to acknowledge that the City of New York is located on stolen land.

More specifically, Lënapehóking: The unceded homeland of the Lënape People, who are also recognized federally as the Delaware Nation of Oklahoma, Anadarko Oklahoma; Delaware Tribe of Indians, Bartlesville, Oklahoma; Stockbridge-Munsee Community, Bowler, Wisconsin; and in Canada: Munsee-Delaware Nation; Moravian of the Thames First Nation, Delaware of Six Nations. The Lënape People are the original inhabitants of this land and gave Manhattan island its name: Mannahatta, meaning “hilly island” or “place where we go to gather the wood for the bows.”

After the arrival of Dutch and British colonizers, the Lënape began to endure systematic attacks on their people and way of life that eventually led to their forced removal from the homeland they'd loved for over 10,000 years. The Dutch and British committed atrocious acts of murder and massacre, imprisonment, and warfare that included rape, scalp bounties, and decimation of plant and animal food sources on which the Lënape people depended. In a concerted effort of land appropriation, Lënape people were forcibly removed from their lands in an ongoing series of violent removals and relocations. Although New York City is home to the largest urban Indigenous population in the United States, due to this forced migration and the systematic violence that continues today, the majority of Lënape People and their main political and cultural governance now reside in Oklahoma, Wisconsin, and Ontario; far from their homeland of Lënapehóking.

Additionally, inspired by Adrienne Wong of SpiderWebShow ([spiderwebshow.ca/author/adriennewong](https://spiderwebshow.ca/author/adriennewong)) in what is currently called Canada, I invite us to consider the legacy of colonization embedded within the technologies, structures and ways of thinking we use every day. This report is published in digital and print forms, made possible by the use of equipment and high-speed internet not available in many Indigenous communities—equipment that often leaves significant carbon footprints contributing to climate change that disproportionately impact Indigenous communities worldwide. We acknowledge that these inequities are our shared responsibility and our roles in reconciliation, decolonization, and allyship.

Dance/NYC recognizes that as an organization based in NYC, we have benefitted and continue to benefit from this systemic displacement and subsequent erasure of Lënape people and governance.

### Today we are working to:

- ✓ First, ensure we learn and research best practices for acknowledging the land we occupy;
- ✓ Second, intentionally invest time, resources, and energy in establishing and nurturing relationships with local Indigenous and First Nations artists and organizations, and create opportunities with the many Indigenous artists living in NYC; and
- ✓ Third, that we move beyond acknowledgment and into needed reparation and equity. Dance/NYC must make concerted efforts to collaborate and make pathways for Lënape artists and leaders to return to Lënapehóking, today.



It is for this reason that we recognize and reflect on the centuries of violence, displacement, forced migration, and settlement here; as well as the centuries of resilience and leadership on behalf of all Indigenous and First Nations peoples on Turtle Island, that have led to our livelihoods in New York City today.

This acknowledgment is by no means meant to be the complete and only embodiment of this practice—nor of the movement for reparations in the United States—and remains only a small part of a series of learnings, commitments, and actions that it is a part of.

**Dance/NYC encourages readers of this report to participate in this acknowledgment with us by considering the history of the land you occupy and what reparations you can begin to make, today.**

Continuing our practice of recognition we would like to name openly the legacies of:

1. The African Slave Trade;
2. Migration & Immigration Patterns;
3. The Disability Rights and Disability Justice Movements; and
4. LGBTQ+ fight for Justice

These areas and tactics of oppression through which white supremacy and settler colonialism have enacted and sustained its power over time are not the only areas, but rather, the main focuses of Dance/NYC's ongoing Historical Acknowledgment practice and our justice, equity, and inclusion initiatives.

## **ABOUT DANCE/NYC'S LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT PRACTICE + RESOURCES**

As a service organization, Dance/NYC often gets requests from artists and colleague arts organizations to share our Land Acknowledgment "language" and/or "protocols." At this time, these are materials we typically do not publicly share in written form. For the purposes of this report and in order to properly practice deference to First Nations, Indigenous, and Lënape peoples, we have included the acknowledgment in this medium.

**However, we request that no portion of this acknowledgment be replicated or used publicly, privately, or in any form.**

For Dance/NYC, the practice of doing research, crafting the words, learning about the history of the land we collectively work on and its original stewards, and deciding how and in what way we speak about that land is an *integral* part of the acknowledgment, itself. Dance/NYC's Land Acknowledgment process is ongoing and includes significant research; internal staff conversations and trainings; and intentional and ongoing relationship with Indigenous artist and activist Emily Johnson, who consulted on the initial writing of this acknowledgment, several follow up edits, and ongoing conversation about deepening our work and investment in Lënape artists and leaders. This has also included the financial compensation for Emily's ongoing work and some initial offerings of financial reparations to Lënape organizations. The land acknowledgment is the start of a new relationship to this land—Lënapehóking—that should be lifelong.

**We encourage the members of our community, our colleague organizations, and friends to begin their own practice of land acknowledgment.**

As a place to start, Dance/NYC has compiled a *Land Acknowledgment Resources* page at [Dance.NYC/For-Artists/Resource-Pages](https://dance.nyc/for-artists/resource-pages), which will be regularly updated and includes a resource list compiled by Emily Johnson that includes additional First Nations and Indigenous artists and scholars leading this work. We encourage all processes of Land Acknowledgment to include the development of intentional relationship and accountability with a First Nations artist and/or organization that includes compensation for ongoing work; a direct offer of reparations to Indigenous and First Nations artists and/or organizations in Lënapehóking; and a clear articulation of measurable actions and ongoing commitments for the future.

# ABOUT DANCE/NYC

Dance/NYC's mission is to promote the knowledge, appreciation, practice & performance of dance in the metropolitan New York City area. It embeds values of justice, equity & inclusion into all aspects of the organization.

It works in alliance with Dance/USA, the national service organization for professional dance.

Dance/NYC serves the dance community through five core programs, action-oriented research; advocacy; leadership training, networking, and convening; technological resources and visibility through [Dance.NYC](#); and regranting.

## Values of Justice, Equity & Inclusion

Dance/NYC believes the dance ecology itself must itself be just, equitable, and inclusive to meaningfully contribute to social progress and envisions a dance ecology wherein power, funding, opportunities, conduct, and impacts are fair for all artists, cultural workers, and audiences. It seeks to advance policies, investments, programs, mindsets, and actions that remove and prevent inequities that exist along the continuum of lives in dance, from the public school classroom to the stage.

Dance/NYC's approach cuts across its public programs—advocacy and research; leadership training, networking and convening; technology and visibility; and regranting—and all aspects of its operations. Its approach is intersectional, building upon multiple issue areas that together create a more just, equitable, and inclusive dance ecology. Dance/NYC's approach is also grounded in collaboration. It recognizes generations of people and organizations working to advance justice, equity, and inclusion in the arts and culture and strives to contribute to their efforts. In alignment with these relationships of accountability with various stakeholders and communities, Dance/NYC reviews these commitments on a biennial basis. The next update to our agenda and commitments to justice, equity, and inclusion will be released at the 2020 year-end. It has established ongoing, formal partnerships with colleague arts service organizations, and continues to work in alliance with Dance/USA. Learn more about our partners on our website at [Dance.NYC/equity/equityinclusionpartners](#).



## Dance/NYC is currently focused on three main issue areas:

### Racial Justice Agenda

[Dance.NYC/RacialJusticeAgenda](#)

Dance/NYC seeks to dismantle white supremacy in dance and amplify the voices and autonomy of the African, Latina/o/x, Asian, Arab, and Native American (ALAANA) community. Please refer to Dance/NYC's *Racial Justice Agenda* to learn more about our work.

### Disability. Dance. Artistry. Agenda

[Dance.NYC/DDAAgenda](#)

Dance/NYC aims to dismantle ableism in dance and amplify the voices and autonomy of disabled people. It seeks to advance a cultural ecosystem that expressly includes disabled artists and disability communities. In doing so, it puts disability front and center as a positive artistic and generative force. Dance/NYC launched its *Disability. Dance. Artistry.* initiative ([Dance.NYC/equity/disability/disability-initiative](#)) on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Please refer to Dance/NYC's *Disability. Dance. Artistry. Agenda* to learn more about our work.

### Immigrants. Dance. Arts. Agenda

An agenda is in formation.

Dance/NYC seeks to dismantle xenophobia and nativism in dance and extend the role of dance artistry in fostering the inclusion, integration, and human rights of more than three million immigrants in the New York City area. Dance/NYC launched a multiyear *Immigrants. Dance. Arts.* initiative in 2018 ([Dance.NYC/equity/immigrant-artists/immigrant-initiative](#)).

Dance/NYC's use of terms builds on learning with Race Forward's Racial Equity in the Arts Innovation Lab ([raceforward.org/practice/nyc-arts](#)) and established leaders and experts in justice, equity, and inclusion. Dance/NYC recognizes that language is constantly in flux and that words might have different meanings depending on their context and use. Please refer to a full glossary and resource directory: [Dance.NYC/JEIdirectory](#).

### Dance/USA Statement on Equity & Inclusion

As a reflection of Dance/NYC's ongoing relationship to Dance/USA, Dance/NYC adopted Dance/USA's former national statement on and core values of equity and inclusion as adapted for Dance/NYC. In June of 2019, Dance/USA updated their core values ([danceusa.org/danceusa-core-values](#)) and mission and vision, ([danceusa.org/missionstatement](#)) to reflect their strategic plan ([danceusa.org/new-strategic-plan](#)).

Read the full statement and Dance/NYC's commitment to equity and inclusion through itemized actions at [Dance.NYC/equity/values](#).

# TESTIMONY

"The work of Dance/NYC, the work of this study, is critical in understanding the ways that dance is made in our city: who is doing it, what models are they using, how are they paying for it, will they be here in a year, and what will it mean to our culture if they are not. The full-time, year-round dance-company model has been in decline for decades; full-time dance jobs are rare; the dance-making field is comprised of and fueled by the work of small companies. These dance makers generate work, employ dancers, and expand the horizons of choreography. They work in every genre, every neighborhood, every community of our city. But they are underfunded and undervalued. This study, diving deep into the details and the data of "small-budget" dance-making shines a much-needed light on this ecosystem. Once understood, we can fight for policies to make it sustainable, funding to make it prosper. If this work is not done, if action is not taken to save, value, and nourish these vital dance makers, our city will be poorer in every sense of the word."

Lucy Sexton Executive Director,  
New Yorkers for Culture and the Arts



“In New York City's vibrant and diverse dance community, smaller organizations are an especially important driver of creativity and equitable opportunities, as this research from Dance/NYC helps us to see more clearly than ever. In order to defend and support this ecosystem—a particularly urgent need in light of the current crisis—we need to understand it. This report looks at the smaller dance groups from a variety of angles, and provides valuable insights into ways we can all come together to support this powerful but vulnerable network of dance makers and workers. I especially applaud the report's examinations of traditional concepts of value. If we shift the conversation on whose skills and talents we collectively uplift and celebrate, redefining and expanding how we think of value, skill, and expertise in this context, we can help to foster a creative community that welcomes, engages, and thrives on the experiences and skills of all of our city's many communities, and particularly those BIPOC residents whose skills and experiences have been historically under-appreciated across mediums. Congratulations to Dance/NYC and all the contributors to this report, which will help keep our conversations focused on what's important.”

Gonzalo Casals, Commissioner,  
NYC Department of Cultural Affairs







# INTRODUCTION

In 2016, Dance/NYC confirmed a long-standing theory in our field—the smallest organizations and groups represent the majority of the dance-making sector but have disproportionate access to resources.

We learned that the smallest organizations have incredible capacity to adapt to changing conditions over time and that they better reflect the diversity of our city than larger groups. So why is this segment of the field able to continue to create and adapt despite access to resources that differs so greatly from its larger counterparts? Why did this disparity exist and what would these members of our community need to move from survival to thriving? How could we as a sector ensure that there is a place for them in the future, where their experiences are grounded in justice? What actions would we need to take to ensure this happens?

These questions catalyzed this two-year initiative designed to complement Dance/NYC's Dance Advancement Fund and to build on the *State of NYC Dance & Workforce Demographics* study (2016) ([bit.ly/2016StateOfNYC](https://bit.ly/2016StateOfNYC)), which first identified this area of inquiry, as well as other previous studies such as *Advancing Fiscally Sponsored Dance Artists & Projects* (2017) ([Dance.NYC/DanceFiscalSponsors2017](https://Dance.NYC/DanceFiscalSponsors2017)) and *Advancing Immigrants. Dance. Arts* (2019) ([bit.ly/AdvancingImmigrantsDanceArts](https://bit.ly/AdvancingImmigrantsDanceArts)).

So far we've learned that "small-budget" dance identifies itself as resourceful, adaptable, entrepreneurial, strong, fluid and community focused, with unique freedom of creativity—and alternatively does not wish to be identified by the number of dollars spent in any given year. These dance makers long for resources that will facilitate focus on depth of process and value (as opposed to product and volume) and provide them with knowledge, consistency, sustainability, inclusivity and equity that will allow them to thrive. These results are not surprising, but reinforce and deepen our understanding of the issues at play rooted in white supremacy.

More unexpected was the unfolding of the moment in which this work was completed. Initially, this research was timed to inform the implementation of CreateNYC, New York City's first-ever cultural plan ([createnyc.cityofnewyork.us](https://createnyc.cityofnewyork.us)). Now, it has the potential to inform survival and reinvention strategies as our field and the sector urgently respond to the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and participate in social and racial justice movements inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement in response to the murders of Black people at the hands of a white supremacist system. This moment presents new openness and opportunity for change and a necessary call to action. We cannot continue business as usual.

Our approach throughout this study, its recommendations, and the actions it will engender responds to the urgency of this moment and is anchored on our values of justice, equity, and inclusion, as a service organization and collective of dance workers.

Those values, exemplified through our commitment to provide data—a tool for change in our policymaking and funding sectors—build on our *Disability. Dance. Artistry.* and *Immigrants. Dance. Arts.* initiatives and ongoing workforce research. The findings and learnings of those deep investigative projects inform our intersectional approach, allowing for this focus on "small-budget" dance makers to attend to the nuanced and overlapping experiences of oppression of our diverse constituency.



On May 29, 2020 in our *Open Letter to the Dance Community in Response to the Murders of Black People* ([bit.ly/DNYCOpenLetter](https://bit.ly/DNYCOpenLetter)) we declared that we would, “Ensure that we continue learning about, investigate, identify and undo manifestations of these [white supremacist] systems in our internal operations and external programming.” This research report is one step toward keeping that promise. For the research team and Dance/NYC staff, this required a slow and iterative process of questioning our assumptions, listening deeply, and revisiting the stories of our bodies for those members who still are or were a part of this segment of the field.

The research process and resulting report were intentionally designed to collect and present data on the characteristics, inner-workings and needs of this segment of the field, but also enliven the data with the voices of “small-budget” dance makers.

The study includes a variety of quantitative and qualitative data sources ranging from NYC arts datasets, survey collections, and previous Dance/NYC research. Personal essays from a cross-section of the dance community, from “small-budget” dance makers to those in the funding, administration and technology spheres, provide important insights on emerging themes and ideas to inform the future of “small-budget” dance. Additionally, echoed throughout are the questions, ideas, and provocations put forth by survey respondents and convening participants, whose contributions served as the foundation for the research recommendations. Within this research, the numbers tell a story, but the faces, voices, and lived experiences of these dance workers remind us that this numerically-defined segment of the field is comprised of human beings.

One of our points of pride in this process is that our research has resulted in a report that is both rigorously accessible and aesthetically functional to guide reading and absorption. As a result, the report is rich in content, but also long in format. We have provided additional tools to help our constituents easily access study highlights and outcomes. Data highlights, executive summary, recommendations, and social media materials are all available in multiple languages and digital forms ([Dance.NYC/SBDMdata2020](https://Dance.NYC/SBDMdata2020)). The full report is also available digitally and in print ([Dance.NYC/SBDMdata2020](https://Dance.NYC/SBDMdata2020)).

Ultimately, our hope is that the data and stories found within this report serve as a tool to advocate for and reimagine the dance ecosystem we hope to build—one centered in justice and thriving for all its members and contributors—and the necessary actions we can begin to take to get us there.

From private funders to public agencies, from individual dance workers to presenters and educational institutions, all of us can contribute to this new future.

Finally, I would like to thank The New York Community Trust and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for their continued leadership and support in bringing this report to life; the Ford Foundation for their funding support of the Dance Advancement Fund; the Department of Cultural Affairs for their partnership; and researcher Carrie Blake, Senior Consultant & Research Director, Webb Mgmt. I thank the Dance Advancement Fund grantees and the Dance/NYC staff for bringing their stories and wisdom to this work. And all of the “small-budget” dance makers across New York City who are represented—this study is for and because of you.



**Pa'lante!**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alejandra', written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Alejandra Duque Cifuentes**  
Executive Director

**This letter was written  
in collaboration with Carrie Blake  
and the Dance/NYC Team.**

# DATA HIGHLIGHTS

## “Small-budget” dance is relevant.

- The majority of “small-budget” dance organizations have **longevity**, with 83% having been established a decade or more ago.
- Most “small-budget” dance makers identify their practice as focused on Contemporary (32%) or Modern (24%). The next largest **genre** is National Origin/Ethnicity-Specific (12%).
- Consistent with previous Dance/NYC research, the majority of New York City-based “small-budget” dance organizations (50%) are **headquartered** in Manhattan—while there is greater representation in regional areas (11%), than The Bronx and Queens (6%).

## “Small-budget” dance is resourceful.

- The majority of “small-budget” dance entities operate on the lower end of the \$25K to \$1M **budget range**—78% have budgets between \$25K and \$250K.
- “Small-budget” dance organizations are heavily reliant on **volunteer labor**, engaging an average of 1 full-timer, 20 volunteers, and most commonly, a working board of directors via a nonprofit 501(c)(3) structure (74%).
- “Small-budget” dance entities are highly reliant on social media, with 97% using social media posts for **marketing and outreach**.
- Nearly all “small-budget” dance organizations receive **funding** from individual donors (92%) or earned income (88%), while lower proportions raise funds from private foundations (72%), government sources (65%), and corporations (56%).
- More “small-budget” dance entities access **in-kind contributions** (75%) than foundation, government, or corporate sources. These contributions have an average annual value of \$29,735.



## “Small-budget” dance is diverse but could better reflect the characteristics of New York City.

- With 48% ALAANA representation, “small-budget” **artistic leadership is more diverse** than the nonprofit dance workforce (32% in 2016), and the New York City Cultural Affairs Workforce (33% in 2019.) New York City is at least 68% ALAANA.
- Just over one-quarter (27%) of “small-budget” artistic leads are **immigrants** as compared to 37% of New York City.
- In this study, no “small-budget” survey respondents **identified as disabled** despite previous Dance/NYC research that reflects the presence of disabled dance makers. Approximately 11% of New York City residents identify as disabled.
- The majority (42%) of “small-budget” dance makers belong to Generation X (b. 1965-1981), as compared to 21% of New York City, revealing **opportunities to engage older and younger artistic leadership.**
- Most (61%) “small-budget” artistic leadership **identify as female**, though this segment includes slightly less female representation than the nonprofit dance workforce studied in 2016. For comparison, 52% of New York City identifies as female.
- Nearly one-third (31%) of “small-budget” dance makers **identify as LGBTQIA+** as compared to 4% of New York City.

## “Small-budget” dance needs funding, training, skilled labor, and reliable pay.

- Nearly all “small-budget” dance makers **need funding for salaries/wages** (95%) and general operations (93%). More than half (56%) indicate that the salaries/wages category is their most critical funding need.
- “Small-budget” **artistic leads work with many organizations and fulfill many roles.** Most (85%) work with more than one organization and nearly half (48%) fill four or more roles for an organization or project including artistic, managerial, and/or administrative responsibilities.
- The majority of “small-budget” artistic leads (55%) **do not earn a regular salary from their work in dance** and just 21% have a full-time job in dance.

## FOREWORD

# A Chance to Know More, To Build Again: "Small-Budget" Dance Makers in 2020



PHOTO: AMBIKA RAINA

TARA SHEENA

This essay was written over the course of an extraordinary month: May to June 2020.

During this time, months into New York's shelter-in-place mandate as a result of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), the Minneapolis police brutally murdered George Floyd—a father, mentor, blue-collar worker, and Black man—igniting worldwide momentum in support of the Black Lives Matter movement and its abolitionist demands.

If the unexpected impact set forth by the global COVID-19 pandemic did not rattle the field of dance enough—the closings, the cancellations—the current uprising seeded and led by Black organizers and abolitionists presents a moment of great reckoning for our nonprofit structures.

As many have pointed out, this occurrence of "double pandemics" serves to greatly amplify the inequities in our dance ecosystem across wealth, gender, race, disability, and citizenship status—inequities that have always been there, but have taken a renewed spotlight during this time. Recent activity—like the collectively crafted *Creating New Futures Phase One* document ([bit.ly/392tINZ](https://bit.ly/392tINZ)), IABD's open letter to



White institutions ([bit.ly/IABDOpenLetter](https://bit.ly/IABDOpenLetter)), the mobilizing of The Dance Union's town halls ([nyti.ms/3Of94WT](https://nyti.ms/3Of94WT)), and Nana Chinara's *Open Letter to Arts Organizations Rampant with White Supremacy* ([bit.ly/2ZuitLc](https://bit.ly/2ZuitLc)), to name a few—lay bare these engrained injustices. These actions point to things we've known (racism in the field, the pervasive exploitation of artists), while reinforcing the importance of naming the problem in order to address it. In our "nonverbal" art form, it is easy to enter into a kind of precedent of deluded thinking around the ways we communicate; our skills in movement, choreography, adaptability, physicality, and the like often create a culture where it is easy to evade the truth of how value is placed on laboring bodies.

Now, with no room to ignore what we know to be true, a collective provocation has emerged: what can our new future in dance hold?

On this front, the statistics and wealth of anecdotal accounts gathered through this research on "Small-Budget" Dance Makers (SBDM) help us to capture a set of circumstances for foundational thinking. Within this research, we know that SBDM make up the lion's share of artists in NYC dance (84%), but have access to a small fraction of possible funding from government and foundation sources (10%) ([bit.ly/2016StateOfNYC](https://bit.ly/2016StateOfNYC)). All of the available data shows that SBDM make up the majority of dance-making entities in NYC, yet they largely remain shut off from much of the resources: an issue of distribution, not necessarily scarcity.

Over the course of the past year, Dance/NYC held a few in-person meetings for this SBDM research to convene around data sets revealed through these findings. These meetings (I participated in two) held potent weight for this process, as it provided a physical space to take in the existing data, assess the gaps (of which there are many) and engage in guided dialogues in order to document reactions in real-time.

Much of the data here was also mined from surveys of SBDM distributed through Dance/NYC's website, e-newsletter, email/phone communications, and a listserv of their grant recipients. However, the survey respondents—comprised of "small-budget" dance maker organizations and groups—never exceed 111 total, a small number when you think about the potentially large community of dance maker entities within and beyond my own scope in NYC. This data is indisputably illustrative, to be sure, and is meant to serve as a figurative snapshot of the numerous SBDM in our city.

I do want to highlight a few gaps that I feel are important for the context and possible reach of this research. The researchers note a lack of significant representation of disabled and immigrant dance makers in the survey data (although representatives from these communities were included in both convenings). These two populations are most affected by issues of accessibility, inhibiting their abilities to "show up" for certain resources and opportunities, but even more, exposing ingrained thinking that prevents this facet of the dance community from receiving significant support from funders, curators, press, and peers.

Nonetheless, this data does provide a useful snapshot in certain ways, like defining the number of roles artistic leads play (spoiler: a lot), the range of funding sources these dance makers access, and areas where the most support—monetary and otherwise—is needed. Most importantly, this research can reveal important narratives around persisting inequities in this field—long-standing inequities that far predate the current pandemic—and what that means for the flow of resources, labor (paid and unpaid), and opportunities across our sector.

These meetings established SBDM as an inherently resilient, scrappy, entrepreneurial sector of the dance community. As I participated in these dialogues—myself a performer for many of the SBDM captured here—I always saw these reactions as a sort of coded language for the countless groups who lack adequate institutional support and structures but are expected to function as if they did.

"Small-budget" dance makers are inventive and strong, so much so that their operations and productions often appear as a facade of well-funded endeavors, when really the opposite is true. Have we all trained ourselves more in this illusion than the reality?

Skepticism aside, I recall a simple yet profound moment at a previous research meeting. In an open discussion on changes that could be leveraged by this research, the artist Davalois Fearon made a suggestion that for each grant application an artist submits, that artist should be able to review a few applications in return. That way, they would hone skills in critique and feedback while, importantly, gaining valuable insight into how other artists are addressing and languaging their creative priorities. It was met with a lot of enthusiasm in the room—a seemingly tangible action that could be implemented easily, without excess staff, labor or funding, and a way to address the pervasive lack of transparency in review processes.

The past months have seen myself and countless other artists greatly distanced from the life in dance we built. I feel like I am a benched athlete, sitting on the sidelines, peering into a very frustrating and harmful game. This time away has allowed me to see how ostensibly simple shifts—like Davalois' suggestion for clear, altruistic peer reviews—can become the norm: direct deposit for all fees and awards; land acknowledgments for all public events (including online events); accessible application forms; and compensation for time spent submitting applications, whether or not we receive the final award.

I want those examples—changes that have quickly, “magically” materialized in the face of COVID-19—to be the standard, not the exception.

These small changes allow us to do away with much of the exclusionary minutiae that have kept so many SBDM under-resourced and under-valued for so long (especially, and crucially, SBDM led by BIPOC, female, trans, gender nonconforming, immigrant, and/or disabled leadership). It is my strong belief that relinquishing these low-level administrative and operational distractions will have overwhelmingly positive effects for SBDM to work toward more sustainable processes.

With the absence of these kinds of distractions, what is left, you ask?

A chance.

A chance for more radical shifts.

A chance to rebuild and redistribute.

A chance for power and pay equity.

A chance to trust, empower, and abundantly compensate leadership by Black, Indigenous, trans, nonbinary, immigrant, refugee, and disabled artists.

A chance to know ourselves and our self-defined communities, more.

A chance to enact systemic change.

A chance we may never get again.

We would be remiss not to take it.


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TARA SHEENA IS A DANCER, WRITER, AND INDEPENDENT ARTS MANAGER BASED IN BROOKLYN, NY. AS A PERFORMER, SHE HAS COLLABORATED ON NEW PROJECTS WITH CATHERINE GALASSO, IVY BALDWIN, GILLIAN WALSH, LEYYA MONA TAWIL, NADIA TYKULSKER, URSULA EAGLY, LINDSEY DIETZ MARCHANT, STORMY BUDWIG, AND MARION SPENCER. RECENTLY, SHE WAS FEATURED IN THE PAGES OF DANCE MAGAZINE (MAY 2020) AND NAMED AS A RECIPIENT OF THE 2020 EMERGING ARTIST AWARD FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN. HER ORIGINAL WRITINGS HAVE BEEN SUPPORTED BY GIBNEY, DANCE/NYC, THE KNOCKDOWN CENTER, AND CRITICAL CORRESPONDENCE, AMONG OTHERS. SHE WAS BORN IN DETROIT, RAISED IN MICHIGAN, AND GRADUATED FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN IN 2011. [INSTAGRAM.COM/TARASHEENA](https://www.instagram.com/tarasheena) • [TWITTER.COM/TARASHEENA](https://twitter.com/tarasheena) • [LINKEDIN.COM/IN/TARA-SHEENA](https://www.linkedin.com/in/tara-sheena)









# RESEARCH CONTEXT & METHODOLOGY

This report is the result of a targeted two-year initiative that complements Dance/NYC's Dance Advancement Fund and directly responds to recent findings on the inequitable distribution of resources in the NYC metropolitan area's dance field.

With this initiative, Dance/NYC is acting on its core values of justice, equity, and inclusion ([Dance.NYC/equity/values](https://dance.nyc.gov/equity/values)) and building on its leadership in advocacy and action-oriented research.

As previously noted, Dance/NYC's *State of NYC Dance & Workforce Demographics* (2016) ([bit.ly/2016StateOfNYC](https://bit.ly/2016StateOfNYC)) revealed that legally registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit dance organizations with budgets of less than \$1 million comprise the vast majority (84%) of total dance groups yet access only 10% of the total revenue. The study, which also analyzed revenue shifts over a six-year period, found that revenue decreased for this part of the field, overall. It also showed that the smallest dance groups, those with budgets of less than \$100,000, experienced particularly significant revenue loss, with a 32% decrease in total funding and a 38% decrease in foundation support.

Despite this, the research indicated that the smallest organizations demonstrate the greatest capacity to adapt, and have workforces that better reflect the racial diversity and presence of disabled people in New York City's population than the workforces of larger dance organizations studied.

A subsequent piece of Dance/NYC research, *Advancing Fiscally Sponsored Dance Artists & Projects* (2017) ([Dance.NYC/DanceFiscalSponsors2017](#)), further highlights the challenges facing dance-making entities operating with lean budgets, namely the challenges associated with the fiscal sponsorship structure, the ability to pay living wages, and the need for affordable rehearsal space.

While the timing of this study can continue to inform the implementation of CreateNYC, New York City's first-ever cultural plan, and the City's Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) funding practices and priorities, it is now better positioned to more immediately inform desperately needed support and shifts in the field to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In March 2020, as COVID-19 began to severely impact the New York/New Jersey region, Dance/NYC mobilized resources and launched research to inform its efforts to advocate for and support the field. As of June 2020, survey data includes input from 924 individual dance makers and 280 organizations/projects/groups, with 76% of responding organizations and projects having budgets between \$25K and \$1 million. Preliminary findings suggest that this part of the field is showing some resilience, with a smaller proportion of organizations experiencing or anticipating cash flow issues as compared to larger budget groups. At the same time, organizations in this segment of the field expect to lose about 40% of their operating budget (avg) as compared to groups with \$1 million+ budgets, which anticipate contracting by 9%.

## Project Cohort

This work was informed by the grantee cohort of Dance/NYC's most recent Dance Advancement Fund. These "small-budget" artistic leads played a significant role in guiding and informing this study. A full list of the project cohort can be found on page 153 of this report.



## Language Description

For the purpose of this research effort, the term "**small-budget**" refers to organizations, groups, and projects that create and/or deliver dance programming with annual budgets between \$25K and \$1M. Dance/NYC recognizes the vast nature of this budget range and sought to understand the uniqueness and any disparities among various subsets of this segment. The term "small-budget" was immediately contentious within field research and discussions with the project cohort. Comments on this dialogue are included later in the report.

The terms "**dance maker**," "**organization**," and "**group**" are interchangeably used to refer to organized and legal entities that are managed by the artistic leaders invited to participate in this research. As the study explores, these entities might have 501(c)(3), LLC, or another type of legal structure. Note that this research was designed to engage artistic leads of dance-making entities, and not individual dance makers and practitioners that work outside of a formal structure.

The term "**project**" refers to a fiscally-sponsored project. Fiscal sponsorship is a formal arrangement in which a 501(c)(3) public charity provides financial and legal oversight to an entity that does not have its own 501(c)(3) status. Sponsored projects are eligible to solicit and receive grants and tax-deductible contributions that are normally available only to 501(c)(3) organizations. Only recently have some grantmaking entities provided eligibility for fiscally-sponsored projects.

For this report, Dance/NYC uses several race, ethnicity, immigration, and disability-specific terms. Following the leadership of local community organizers; Justice, Equity, and Inclusion Partners ([Dance.NYC/Equity/EquityInclusionPartners](#)); members of our *Disability. Dance. Artistry. and Immigrants. Dance. Arts.* task forces; and experts in justice, equity, and inclusion; Dance/NYC uses wider understandings of race, ethnicity, immigration, and disability-specific terms, prioritizing self-identification recognizing each term as a marker for identification and membership within specific minority groups connected by social, political, and cultural experiences. Please refer to Dance/NYC's Justice, Equity, and Inclusion Glossary and Resource Directory ([Dance.NYC/JEIdirectory](#)) for reference.

## Terms used in this report include:

**ALAANA/BIPOC:** The racial and ethnic identifier “ALAANA” (African, Latino/a/x, Arab, Asian, Native American) is used rather than the term “people of color,” which can be perceived to minimize differences and the many identities that exist. Dance/ NYC acknowledges that the terms enclosed within the acronym ALAANA are not necessarily those that best represent these communities. BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) is a similar identifier that is used in the context of the current Black Lives Matter movement to strengthen Black identity.

**Disability:** The terms “disability” and “disabled” are intended as markers for identification and membership within a specific group—connected by social, political, and cultural experiences—and not intended to assign medical significance. This use of language follows movements in disability studies and disability rights, discussed in detail in Simi Linton’s seminal *Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity*. Further, this research encompasses all impairments—mobility and physical, sensory (including, but not limited to, vision and hearing), intellectual, cognitive and/or learning, and psychological, whether readily apparent or not.

**Immigrant:** The term immigrant is broadly defined by the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) as “any alien in the United States, except one legally admitted under specific nonimmigrant categories,” and is the common referent for permanent resident aliens ([dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/datastandardsand-definitions/definition-terms#permanent\\_resident\\_alien](https://dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/datastandardsand-definitions/definition-terms#permanent_resident_alien)). Dance/NYC’s use of the term “immigrant,” allows individuals to self-identify as immigrants regardless of their classification by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, and includes people who are foreign-born and their descendants.

**White Supremacy:** “White supremacy as a descriptive term and useful term to capture the all-encompassing centrality and assumed superiority of people defined and perceived as white, and the practices based on this assumption. White supremacy, in this context, does not refer to individual white people and their individual intentions or actions but to an overarching political, economic, and social system of domination. While hate groups that openly proclaim white superiority do exist and this term refers to them also, the popular consciousness solely associates white supremacy with these radical groups. This reductive definition obscures the reality of the larger system at work and prevents us from addressing this system.” (*White Fragility*, Robin DiAngelo. 2018. [robindiangelo.com/publications](https://robindiangelo.com/publications))

**Reparations:** The International Center for Transitional Justice ([ictj.org/our-work/transitional-justice-issues/reparations](https://www.ictj.org/our-work/transitional-justice-issues/reparations)) offers that, “reparations serve to acknowledge the legal obligation of a state, or individual(s) or group, to repair the consequences of violations—either because it directly committed them or it failed to prevent them.” In the U.S. the movement for reparations to be offered to Black people and the descendants of enslaved Africans, in addition to the ongoing call for Indigenous sovereignty and reparations to be offered to Indigenous communities, has built momentum with the resurgence of Black Lives Matter. Dance/NYC is deepening its learning in this area and is reflecting on its role in the reparations movement. Read more about reparations on Dance/NYC’s Racial Justice Resources page ([Dance.NYC/for-artists/resource-pages/RacialJusticeResources](#)).

Dance/NYC recognizes that language is constantly in flux and that words might have different meanings depending on their context and use. At the time of the publishing of this report, Dance/NYC is in the midst of its biennial process of reviewing, adjusting, and adding terms across its justice, equity, and inclusion initiatives; Racial Justice, Disability. Dance. Artistry. and Immigrants. Dance. Arts. Agendas; and Glossary and Resource directory; that better reflect its learnings in the field and feedback from staff, committees, and constituents.

## Methodology

These findings were developed over a 9-month period, October 2019 to June 2020, informed by three (3) opportunities for input and data collection that were scheduled and designed iteratively.

### Defining “Small-Budget” Dance Makers in a Changing Dance Ecology Research Conference • [Dance.NYC/SBDM](#)

On November 3, 2019, Dance/NYC convened a group of 90 leaders of dance groups and projects with budgets of less than \$1 million for a day-long examination of how this segment of dance makers create work, address racism and inequity, engage community, and advance their own sustainability. Conversations also explored the role of this segment in redefining and achieving success in an ever-changing cultural landscape, and the impacts of historical notions of budget size. The agenda and program for the day are appended to this report.



Discussions at that conference were informed by review and analysis of data on dance makers from four sources:

- SMU DataArts Cultural Data Project profiles from 115 nonprofit 501(c)(3) dance organizations in the NY/NJ metropolitan region (2017)
- 263 Dance/NYC Dance Advancement Fund applications (2017 & 2019)
- 25 Dance/NYC Dance Advancement Fund grantee reports (2018)
- 151 fiscally sponsored projects and artists that identify dance as a primary discipline, highlighted in Dance/NYC's *Discovering Fiscally Sponsored Dance Artists & Projects* (2016)

### Survey of "Small-Budget" Dance Makers

Dance/NYC worked collaboratively with Webb Mgmt from October 2019 to January 2020 to develop and issue an electronic survey protocol informed by the review of existing data, preparation for the November conference and Dance/NYC's knowledge of the field. The survey, available as an appendix to this report, was organized into sections focused on organization/project details, dance-making and presentation activity, artistic leadership and demographics.

Survey data were collected from 111 dance-making organizations and groups operating with budgets between \$25K and \$1 million. An additional 19 dance makers with budgets of less than \$25K completed the survey but have not been included in this analysis, given the study parameters. The size of this dataset is comparable to the size of the dataset of 115 NY/NJ regional Cultural Data Project profiles received from SMU DataArts to provide context for this study. Previous research suggests that the New York/New Jersey metropolitan region might include 700 or more "small-budget" dance organizations, groups or projects, suggesting that the survey results could reflect representative input from 15.8% of "small-budget" artistic leadership.

The survey, also available as an appendix to this report, was designed with three primary sections:

- Questions about the organization/group/project, location, leadership, workforce, funding profile, and needs;
- Questions about the dance-making and presenting profile of the organization/group/project, including artistic leadership;
- Optional demographic questions on race, disability, age, gender identity, and LGBTQIA+ identity, provided courtesy of SMU DataArts. To ensure that all survey participants can see themselves in the options provided and do not feel excluded

by the choices, SMU DataArts ensures demographic questions offer respondents a broad range of options for self-identification as well as the opportunity to write in an identifier. At the same time, it ensures that data collected can be meaningfully compared to benchmark demographic data, including the US Census.

Where possible, findings on “small-budget” dance makers, including demographics of leadership, are compared to findings for the nonprofit dance workforce defined in *State of NYC Dance and Workforce Demographics* (2016) ([bit.ly/2016StateOfNYC](https://bit.ly/2016StateOfNYC)), data recently released on the diversity of the New York City Cultural Affairs Workforce ([www1.nyc.gov/site/dcla/programs/diversity.page](http://www1.nyc.gov/site/dcla/programs/diversity.page)), and data for New York City's population as a whole, using US Census Bureau American Factfinder 2013–2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Findings on dance makers who identify as LGBTQIA+ are compared to the results of a 2014 Gallup research study, known to be the most recent data on NYC's LGBTQIA+ population.

### **Dance Advancement Fund Cohort Gathering**

Dance/NYC convened 30 Dance Advancement Fund Grantees (2019 & 2020) for a three (3) hour meeting at Ballet Hispánico on March 6, 2020, to discuss preliminary findings and recommendations, and explore key issues that had been identified through research to date that required additional input and clarity. Topics included the characteristics of a healthy dance-making ecosystem, the ideal organizational framework, and challenges facing artistic leads.

### **Essayists**

Dance/NYC commissioned reflections from ten (10) dance workers, either making dance or working, in or alongside the field in relevant ways. Their stories are integral to the body of research and enrich and enliven the quantitative data, while informing the recommendations.

## **Limitations of Data**

In the design of this study, Dance/NYC prioritized depth and quality of input over volume of respondents. This approach informed the design of a mixed-method process with two points of qualitative data collection scheduled on either side of an in-depth electronic survey.

Dance/NYC identified its community of “small-budget” dance makers and emailed a survey link to those addresses. It was not feasible to survey a random sample and so non-probability sampling was used—this means that we cannot calculate the odds of any one “small-budget” dance maker being selected. In addition, “small-budget” artistic leads were invited to communicate the survey opportunity to their colleagues. This is referred to as “snowball sampling,” whereby research participants recruit other participants. Both of these methods can create bias and suggest that the survey findings are not necessarily representative. That said, research shows that snowball sampling is a method that is particularly effective in engaging hard-to-reach, vulnerable population groups.<sup>1</sup>

Electronic surveys in general have limitations. First, they limit participation for people who are not technologically savvy and/or lack reliable access to Internet, email, or other relevant technology. They also rely on self-selection—someone who receives the survey decides whether or not to complete it, based on factors such as the recipient’s level of trust in Dance/NYC, privacy/confidentiality concerns, the timing of receipt, nature of communication, and demographics. Research shows that survey participants are generally more likely to be educated and affluent White women. In addition, younger people are more likely to participate than older people.<sup>2</sup>

The response was impacted by the time of year in which the survey was live—November 2019 to January 2020—a time when many disconnect from work and email. It was also affected by the conditions under which the dance field, and specifically, this part of the field, operate—with limited available time, capacity, and resources. The length and content of the survey, which could have required some respondents to reference documents, likely impacted response. Particularly given the wide range of organizations in the study cohort, not every question pertained to or could reasonably be answered by every recipient.

1. Shaghaghi, A., Bhopal, R. S., & Sheikh, A. (2011). Approaches to Recruiting ‘Hard-To-Reach’ Populations into Re-search: A Review of the Literature. *Health promotion perspectives*, 1(2), 86–94. [doi.org/10.5681/hpp.2011.009](https://doi.org/10.5681/hpp.2011.009)

2. Smith, W. G. (2008.) Does gender influence online survey participation? A record-linkage analysis of university faculty online survey response behavior. Dissertation from San Jose State University, San Jose, CA. [eric.ed.gov/?id=ED501717](https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED501717) (accessed September 14, 2020.)

Finally, the study results are deeply informed by the leadership of dance organizations and groups that made a personal investment in the process, either by traveling to and participating in a half-day or day-long event, and/or providing significant details about their organization/project, its activities and their own demographics.

The resulting survey sample is a reasonable but imperfect representation of this part of the field. For example, while disabled respondents participated in this study's convenings, there were no disabled survey respondents. There are also fewer responses relative to other efforts. Dance/NYC's Dance Advancement Fund drew 184 applications from entities with budgets under \$1 million in 2020. In 2016, *Fiscally Sponsored Dance Artists & Projects* studied 151 dance artists and projects. Ongoing research on the impact of COVID-19 on the dance field has included input from 246 (and counting) organizations and entities with budgets less than \$1 million. In addition, by examining organizations and projects in the \$25K to \$1 million budget range, this work excludes independent dance workers and all dance makers that work with less than \$25K, who in many ways still function as business entities and/or groups. It is also worth noting that anecdotal evidence suggests that these study parameters also limit representation within some boroughs, such as Queens and Staten Island, where Dance/NYC has learned that lack of access to space and funding resources keeps organizations under the budget threshold established for this study.

Many areas of inquiry for this study were informed by a review of existing research as well as previously described datasets. In the context of this study, members of the cohort questioned the accuracy of the DataArts profiles reviewed, citing their own experiences and tendencies to "fudge numbers," which informed discussion and recommendations.

**Finally, we must acknowledge that this work is culminating in the midst of a pandemic and the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement, one of the most significant racial justice movements in decades (if ever). Nonetheless, it highlights issues that affected "small-budget" dance well before this moment and many of those issues have now been exacerbated. Our hope is that this work can contribute to change that is leveraged by this moment.**







# KEY FINDINGS

## WHAT ARE "SMALL-BUDGET" DANCE MAKERS?

"We're trying to define ourselves through a capitalistic mentality and an outpouring of emotion is not being supported by the fundamental definition of what we are. We are not just low-budget, under-budgeted or small company, we are mighty and fierce and more resourceful than most people will ever understand."

From the very beginning of this study process, Dance/NYC explored the nature and background of the term "small-budget." As noted, the study cohort included a large swath of organizations—potentially 84% of the field as noted in previous Dance/NYC research. The budget range clearly represents a wide variance. How can we classify a \$25K and \$1 million organization or project in similar terms? How will this work result in recommendations that are relevant for organizations and groups that exist on both ends of that range? And why must we classify groups based on monetary resources, rather than other measures? Ultimately, the term "small-budget" gained a set of quotation marks, in an effort to acknowledge its challenges and explore the opportunity to redefine it.

As expected, at the first study convening, the term inspired immediate discourse. Many did not identify as “small-budget” and had never considered their operating budget as a point of distinction or classification.

They instead identify as resourceful, adaptable, entrepreneurial, strong, fluid and community focused, with unique freedom of creativity—not by the number of dollars they spend in any given year.

The cohort acknowledged that the term “small-budget” comes from grantmaking institutions, the same institutions who were supporting this research and the related discussion. This inspired rich conversation centered on the influence that philanthropy has on the arts ecosystem and, in particular, this part of the dance field. Discussions focused on the challenge of navigating a system rooted in white supremacy, and its structural racism, which many believe leads to the inequitable distribution of resources. Subsequent research, including the survey protocol whose findings are summarized in the following pages, was then designed to explore the characteristics, dynamics and challenges of “small-budget” dance in an effort to unpack and respond to these identified issues.

## BUDGET CATEGORY

### “Small-Budget” is Actually “Very Small-Budget”

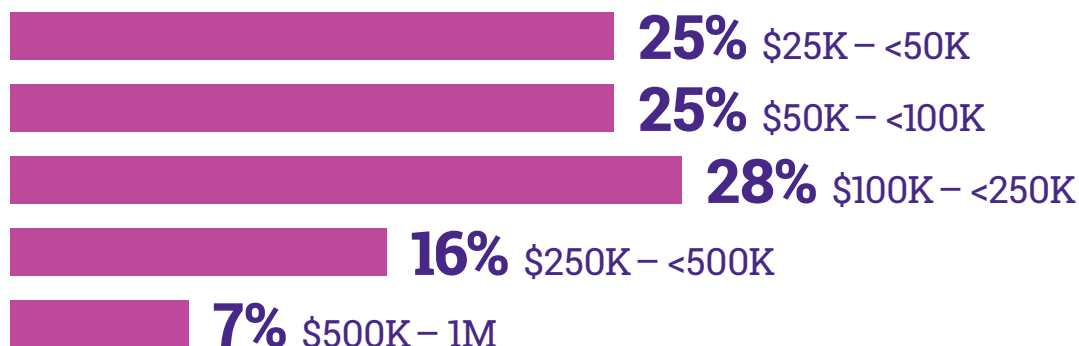
Of 109 survey respondents, 78% have budgets between \$25K and \$250K, 16% have budgets between \$250K and \$499K and 7% have budgets over \$500K.

Survey responses from Dance/NYC's *Coronavirus Dance Impact Survey* (2020) ([Dance.NYC/covid-19/Impact-Survey/Overview](https://dance.nyc.gov/covid-19/Impact-Survey/Overview)) reinforce this finding, to an extent. Of 213 responding organizations, groups, and projects within the \$25K to \$1M budget range, 71% have budgets between \$25K and \$250K, 23% have budgets between \$250K and \$499K and 6% have budgets between \$500K and \$1M.

In discussion and open-ended survey responses, study participants often indicated that working within the higher end of this budget range is remarkably different than the lower end.

#### FIGURE

### Most “Small-Budget” Dance Makers Have Budgets <\$250K



#### BUDGET CATEGORY (n=109 survey respondents)

Alt text: This bar chart shows the distribution of budget categories among survey respondents (n=109): \$25K–<\$50K (25%), \$50K–<\$100K (25%), \$100K–<\$250K (28%), \$250K–<\$500K (16%), \$500K–\$1M (7%).

In addition, the \$25K to \$1M budget range is not inclusive of most independent artists. For example, the average budget size for 151 fiscally-sponsored dance respondents studied by Dance/NYC in *Discovering Fiscally Sponsored Dance Artists & Projects* was \$18,341. And 33 of 280 organizations (13%) responding to Dance/NYC's *Coronavirus Dance Impact Survey* (2020) estimated annual budgets of less than \$25K for 2019.



## ESSAY

# In These Pandemic-Times We Remind Ourselves And Others Not To Be Afraid To Dwell



PHOTO: JONAS HIDALGO

XIMENA GARNICA

Multidisciplinary Artist / Artistic Co-Director LEIMAY

In reflecting on success,  
I resist framing through economic  
and data-driven devices.

I can, however, share some of LEIMAY's story and thoughts about "success" and "structures", or better, about our relationalities. I/we/LEIMAY/CAVE (the organization, ensemble and space) seek to rescue many of these words that have been kidnapped (and ought to be rescued) by reflecting on our values.

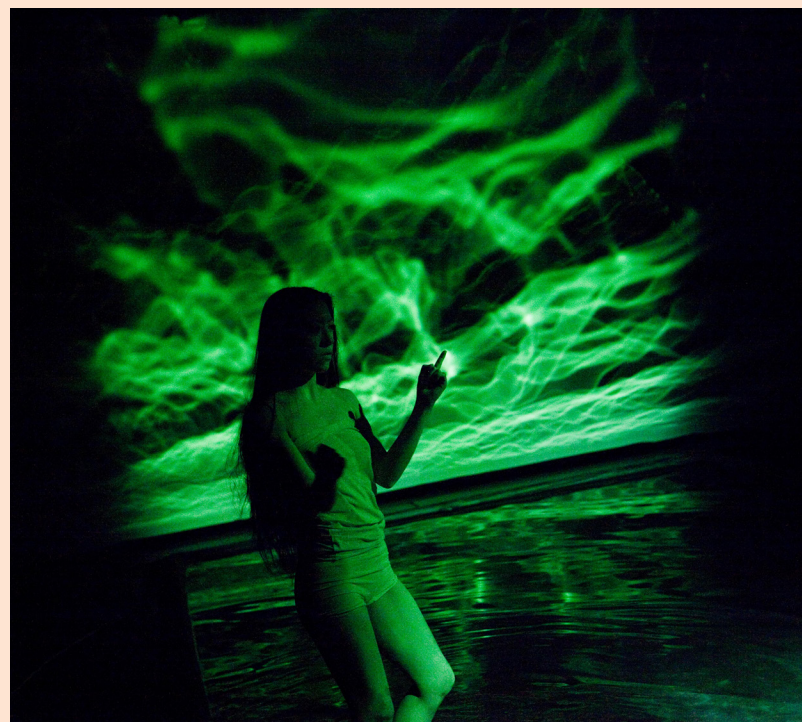
I would like to share the way we define "I" or "we"—the person/the people. Shige Moriya (my partner) and I have been sharing a life and art practice together for almost two decades, but our existence is not understood as a partnership of two individuals. For us, "I" is not an individual; "I" only exists in relation to place. In that sense, we only exist because of our relationships with each other, with our environment, and with other beings—human and non-human—so, at LEIMAY, we try to create conditions in which "I" can only be found in our entanglements, and do not exist outside of the entanglement. At one time in its history, the Japanese language did not have a word for individual; instead, 人間 (NIN-GEN, literally, person-place or person-in-relationship) was used. The current word for individuals is 個人 (KOJIN, item-person). In some indigenous Andean languages like Aymara, "I" is also

approached in its multiple relationalities: NAKA-NAKA (I in plural, inclusive of the environment and excluding another group or person), NAKA-NTI (another person and I, with me united for an action), and NAKA-RU (to my person, repercussion of the action of another person towards my persona). These are examples offered by other languages where the possibility for "I" to exist is only because of the other and because of its immersion in the environment. "I" can not be perceived as just as an autonomous individual.

In our experience practicing these other ways of "I," when the language surrounding us does not have these ways of being, when our condition as immigrants has removed us from our birth environments and immediate biological families, and when the systems in place do not include these ways of "I," tensions often arise. We use those tensions in our "work," and through it, we crack the hegemonic structure of autonomous individualism so that relational human existence in relation to place may emerge. We resist to be visible only through racial, religious, ethnic, gender, social, and cultural identifiers. We resist the demands of solely becoming "item people," and yet, we do not negate that we are also all those pluralities of the "I."

When I write "work," I am not defining it solely by transactional economic values. Without excluding those values entirely, we are approaching work not as actions of gain to remain alive or to accumulate resources, but as a way to constantly transform, and as a way to coexist in our entanglement.

In this way, labor gains multiple dimensions and multiple realms—and because we live through our work, the act of artistic creation is part of our ritual of living together.



XIMENA GARNICA FLOATING POINT WAVES. PHOTO: PIOTR REDLIŃSKI

When we find our existence in relationship to place through work, and when that sense of existence and a collection of values is shared with others, a kind of cluster is created. We like to think of us, LEIMAY and CAVE, as this kind of loose knot or cluster. But there is more to this entanglement. The threads weave and the cluster is transverse, both outwards and inwards. These threads are powers that are constantly pulling and pushing our entanglement, and we have to cultivate an ability for our entanglement to affect what is pulling us apart or keeping us together, in order to stay in relation to place while keeping connected. We do not always "succeed." We have to understand the conditions and forms of this circulation of powers. We have to find mechanisms to affect them while they are affecting us. These mechanisms could be seen as structures, but we prefer to think of them as a circulation of relationalities.

For the first part of our existence as entanglement, we did not have any "legal organization;" we kept the resource circulation by independent means. CAVE as a space came into existence in 1996 and the nonprofit was incorporated in 2003. We do not live solely by that structure but currently, it signals many of our relationalities. We have used this structure to the best of our abilities to keep the circulation of resources fueling the entanglement in which our artistic practices are embedded. However, the forces of the powers ingrained in the 501(c)(3) structure are many times at odds with our capacities and values; its powers demand too much from us and do not often supply us with ways to fulfill those demands.

Perpetually, we are asked to justify our existence by quantitative methodologies to fulfill the collection of data that in turn justifies the funders' own existence to the powers to which they are subscribed to. It is a never-ending loop of justifications.



NANA CHINARA. LEIMAY OUTSIGHT SERIES. PHOTO: BRANDON PERDOMO



Besides using the nonprofit model as a way of circulation, we have found various overlapping mechanisms to keep our entanglement. However, we discovered that regardless of the mechanism, if any relationality lacks trust and care, it ends up positioning us in misalignment with our values. Therefore, we have to constantly practice value realignment. In New York, "art," just like many words in our language, has been kidnapped from its entanglements. The prevailing powers related to art are preeminently production, performance, and object-driven. The nuances of human-place entanglement are not valued. Presenters want the experience, but not the people who make the experience. Funders want the projects, but not the artists, nor the administrators, and definitely not the spaces. The City wants to appropriate the cultural fame, but not pay for its invention. Therefore, artists are left forced to work from their "I" (item person/individual), to work toward the imperative of product or object production, or face extermination. And just like that, art slowly and quietly becomes detached of any entanglement.

We can not negate the power of our art to procure social change or to serve a cause, or its potential to have a worthy market value; however, our art ought to be embedded in the entanglement and revealed through daily common rituals.

We do not intend to live solely by the mechanisms imposed by power without constantly developing an ability to affect them, and we reject to live a life without poetry. For us, it has always been the time to look at what our entanglement values are, to question language, to be curious about our environment, and to question what our aesthetics are based on. In these pandemic-times, we remind ourselves and others not to be afraid to dwell.

I would have preferred to end here, however, since this writing is published in the framework of a study that can be used to advocate for the wellbeing of the dance field, and for funders to learn how to best support artists and "small-budget" arts organizations, I am wary that my writing so far might not have yet offered direct-enough points to the presented data, so, I will be outspoken, and share some additional thoughts:



## To funders, maybe this is the time when you start trusting us.

To the Funders who, in the past, have rejected "small-budget" organizations such as CAVE Organization, Inc's. requests for general operating costs because our budget was not large enough, our board not stable enough, or our infrastructure seemed weak—you failed to look at our trajectory and our fiscal debt-free financial health; you failed to see that our infrastructure is not weak, it is malleable; you failed to see our entanglement. For those who do not even consider us for multi-year funding because our budgets are not large enough—you have been unable to grasp our values and the ritual repetition in the transformation of our programs; you have held us captive by forcing us to prove our worth every year, and you are pushing our programs to a static framework in which we may lose the immediacy necessary to affect powers and other entanglements.



For those who reject our pledges to fund salaries because you were not convinced we had a staff infrastructure or capacity to manage the staff—*you failed to see that for two decades, we have been leading teams of people who love and are passionate about their work.* To the Funders who told us our community was too isolated or too alienated because our numbers did not show a reach of tens of thousands—*please fund our salaries so we can reach multiple entanglements, but also please understand that sometimes, a deeper engagement with a handful of people in a room can change the ways we exist and care for this world.* For those who did finally fund us—*please consider additional payments to cover reporting expenses—you are holding us as hostages of data. You are contributing to our burn-out.* For those whose funding criteria never includes the support of process, or the support for developing technique and method, or fund the cultivation of new companies—*you failed to see that not all young dancers want to be freelancers—ours want to be part of an Ensemble; there are certain groups who are actually developing a new practice, a form, and a technique together. Craft and form are also sprouts from an entanglement. The root of our work is the corporeal, its materiality, and its evanescence.*

And finally, for those who have declined to present us, or fund our art work because you have issues with its nature, or because it was too obscure, or because its subjects or intentions did not feel relevant enough to the social issues of our time, or we were not properly connecting our work to identity politics or social justice causes, or pop culture, or ... — *hopefully, this pandemic has arisen in you enough curiosity to tackle existential questions of being, interdependence, and coexistence, and hopefully now, our work and entanglements like ours can gain a new relevance for you and our times.*




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XIMENA GARNICA IS A COLOMBIAN BORN ARTIST BASED IN BROOKLYN, WORKING IN THE VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS FIELDS. WITH HER PARTNER, SHIGE MORIYA, XIMENA IS THE CO-FOUNDER AND CO-ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF THE ARTS ORGANIZATION LEIMAY AND THE MULTIDISCIPLINARY PERFORMANCE GROUP THE LEIMAY ENSEMBLE. THE WORD LEIMAY IS A JAPANESE TERM SYMBOLIZING THE MOMENT OF CHANGE AS IN THE MOMENT BETWEEN DARKNESS AND THE LIGHT OF DAWN, OR THE TRANSITION FROM ONE ERA TO THE OTHER. THEIR WORK IS ROOTED IN QUESTIONS OF BEING, PERCEPTION, INTERDEPENDENCY, AND COEXISTENCE. SHE HAS BEEN NOMINATED FOR THE USA ARTISTS FELLOWSHIP AND THE HERB ALPERT AWARD, AND SHE WAS RECENTLY A DISTINGUISHED VISITING PROFESSOR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA RIVERSIDE. [LEIMAY.ORG](http://LEIMAY.ORG) • [INSTAGRAM.COM/LEIMAYFOUNDATION](https://www.instagram.com/leimayfoundation) • [FACEBOOK.COM/LEIMAYFOUNDATION](https://www.facebook.com/leimayfoundation)

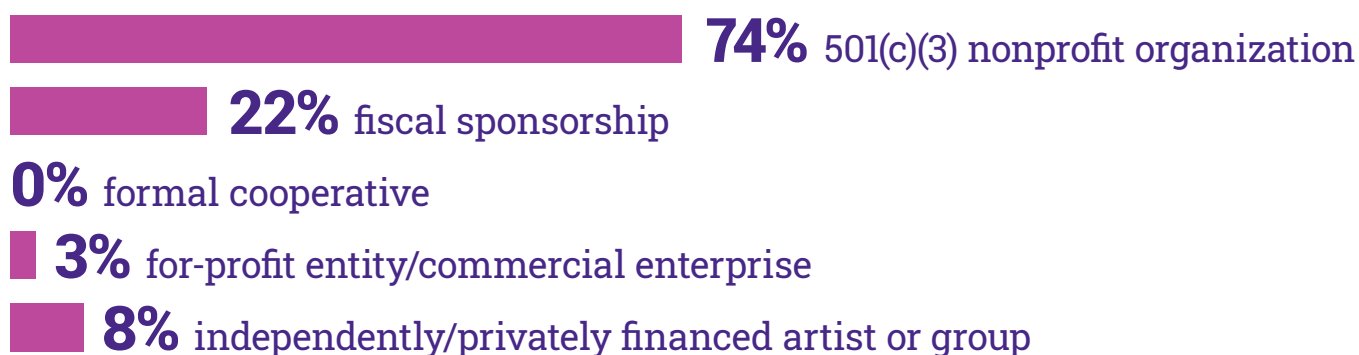
## STRUCTURE

### Most “Small-Budget” Dance Makers Operate a Nonprofit

Most survey respondents, 74%, utilize a nonprofit 501(c)(3) operating structure, while 22% use fiscal sponsorship. A small proportion, 3%, are for-profit/commercial and 8% consider themselves to be independent of any structure. No survey respondents use a formal cooperative. Note that the survey allowed respondents to indicate more than one structure type (as many work with more than one entity simultaneously), which is why these figures in total exceed 100%.

#### FIGURE

#### 501(c)(3) is Most Common, Followed by Fiscal Sponsorship



#### STRUCTURE (n=111 survey respondents)

Alt text: This bar chart shows the distribution of organizational structures used by “small-budget” dance makers among survey respondents (n=111): 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization (74%); Fiscal sponsorship (22%); Formal cooperative (0%); For-profit entity/commercial enterprise (3%); Independently/privately financed artist or group (8%).

Segmentation analysis reveals that dance makers using fiscal sponsorship work with the smallest budgets; 46% of dance makers using fiscal sponsorship have budgets between \$25K and \$50K, while 18% of dance makers using 501(c)(3) structures have budgets in that range.

Existing structures are challenging. “Small-budget” dance makers using the 501(c)(3) shift their work to fit into funding opportunities associated with that structure. Those using fiscal sponsorship feel strained by the costs associated with using a fiscal sponsor (often 3% or more of their budget). Fiscal sponsorship also feels temporary or like a stepping stone to many that use it, with an inherent expectation to move toward a 501(c)(3), given the growth or longevity of a project.

The challenges and demands of these structures have shifted dance-making and dance makers' careers. Some have modified the content of their work to meet funding opportunities. Others have limited the breadth of their work and careers to stay independent and work on multiple projects simultaneously or avoid the demands and constraints of fundraising required to sustain a larger 501(c)(3).

The research reinforces a long-discussed lack of satisfaction with these structures. It also reveals some ambivalence on the topic given a lack of viable alternatives and a need to continue to access funding from philanthropic sources, many of which require 501(c)(3) status, affiliation with a fiscal sponsor, particular operating budget parameters, and even a bank account. Some "small-budget" dance makers acknowledge a desire to change how they manage their work, but a lack of knowledge or motivation to consider alternative structures that might be available or established. Discussion of the inadequacies of the nonprofit operating structure are not new to the dance field or the arts sector. But they were articulated with new dimension by these artistic leads, many of whom work with multiple organizations or projects, simultaneously.



## ESSAY

# Success Through the Looking Glass



PHOTO: AMUN ANKH RA

**MICHAEL MANSWELL**

Artistic Director, Something Positive, Inc.

Success is often calibrated by the amount of money that a company can generate in a year, or how many glowing reviews are received from celebrated critics for performing in the best houses, or a combination of those things.

However, for most "small-budget" dance makers this is not a reality. A company like mine, Something Positive, Inc., is happy to experience at least one of those success factors in any given year. It is often a hit or miss situation (more miss), or in some instances a magical combination that just seems to "happen," not derived from careful or strategic planning. The "success" that can lead to longevity and some level of permanence in this business, often so elusive, has to be re-evaluated to allow for some sense of achievement, continuity, and worth.

Something Positive, Inc. is one such "small-budget" dance maker that has had to redefine the term. Founded by Cheryl Byron in the late 1980s as a vehicle for her unique form of Caribbean expression, the company was a collective of dancers, singers, and instrumentalists with Byron as writer, composer, lead performer, and choreographer. Dance was its primary form of expression, intertwined with a genre called "Rapso," of which Ms. Byron was its acknowledged "Mother." Ms. Byron as a mentee and protegee of Dr. Pearl Primus, one of the pioneers of American Modern Dance, was the right choice for the helm of this company.

She also came from a family of artists; one uncle was a sought-after Limbo dancer, and another a playwright and professor of theatre arts at a New York university.

The company, from its inception, was bursting with life and energy and ready to take on the world whose success, if measured monetarily, was a failure. We performed at prestigious venues to critical acclaim but much of it was financed and supported by Ms. Byron on her adjunct lecturer's salary. Yes, they (the performers) were paid for their services, but not enough to support a full-time complement of artists. A recalibration was definitely in order, so in 1992 Cheryl Byron & Something Positive became Something Positive Inc., a not-for-profit, charitable, 501(c)(3), performing arts organization, poised and ready to accept grants and funding to truly crest the wave. Success, as defined by monetary comfort, would surely be ours. We had what it took artistically but now we were a "legitimate" organization that was eligible for funding. We were comfortable and optimistic.

Very little funding came and the "gymnastics" required to get any funding, governmental or private, was discouraging in the extreme. We continued to perform and hone our craft in donated space during the week and rented space on the weekend in Spanish Harlem. Bookings were healthy, especially during Black History Month and Kwanzaa. Ms. Byron supplemented the income by paying for space and costumes, and all the performers were paid for every performance. We were busy and happy, for the most part, except that we needed more: more funding, that is.

The artistic vision was never in question.

Audiences were satisfied but our bank accounts did not reflect that. We wanted to be a fully-funded performing arts organization. We realized that having the charitable status was not a magic wand or passport to such funding. To be truly "successful," we needed to pay a Development Director, have a working Board of Directors, an excellent Treasurer, and an Executive Director.

The result was the loss of our not-for-profit status.

It was truly disheartening. We were maturing as an organization, had begun to plan and streamline our activities, and started to travel internationally.

The big question was, should we continue as a not-for-profit organization, or drop the handle altogether and launch ourselves into a new market with a new profile? We decided to keep the 501(c)(3) status. Success had to be recalibrated yet again, however.

The COVID-19 crisis has driven us to yet another plateau of evaluation to ensure longevity and relevance. The company, as a "small-budget" dance maker, has the responsibility to make great, relevant, and satisfying work, be fiscally responsible to our stakeholders (including NYS & other agencies), and plan and execute programs and performances that keep performers, audiences, and critics engaged and returning. All those pots simultaneously bubbling on the fire have to be monitored carefully. The question that still remains, though, is how to stay relevant, engaged, and successful in an age of dire public health concerns and social distancing.

At present, our status as a nonprofit has stood up to the assault, at least temporarily. I have no doubt that we will weather the storm, however; it is the recovery that is of concern. Our not-for-profit status has allowed us to apply for some funds because of canceled engagements. The hope is that there will be more of that kind of funding coming soon. The school closures have removed our options of donated rehearsal space for the summer months and maybe beyond. We will have to use some of the funding and some of our savings for space rental. The PPP (forgivable loan program) is closed to us because we do not meet the payroll activity requirement as a "small-budget" dance maker. That PPP funding would have cushioned us as we rolled over to a viable online presence, and could have secured us additional rented space to recoup and retrain once the crisis abated.

The shift due to the crisis has moved us to question our status and its real value. Our conclusion is that there should be a mandatory training program for anyone or any group planning to launch, manage, or govern a 501(c)(3) organization. Running organizations structured like Something Positive is not for everyone, so other options need to be at least explored prior to deciding on the not-for-profit route. "Knowledge is Power," and had we been made aware of and been trained in meeting the annual filings and other reporting procedures, most likely we would not have had to endure the loss and costly reinstatement of our status.

The inability to access much-needed funding from the PPP forgivable loan program is yet another harsh lesson in governance. Had we known that certain requirements were needed for successful (responsible) day-to-day operations and fiscal management of the organization, we would have been more scrupulous in attending to those details.

Training, and funding for training, for emerging, mid-life, and maturing organizations is necessary and should be mandatory before launching a not-for-profit organization, and might help to stem the tide of the demise and difficulties many small-budget dance makers find themselves experiencing due to pandemics or crises like COVID-19.

Success must constantly be redefined in  
a changing landscape, but not while gasping  
for air or clutching at straws.



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MICHAEL MANSWELL IS A DANCER, CHOREOGRAPHER, TEACHING ARTIST, DIRECTOR, AND SINGER. MR. MANSWELL PRESENTS LECTURES, WORKSHOPS AND RESIDENCIES IN DANCE, MUSIC, THEATER, AND TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS PRACTICE.

[SOMETHINGPOSITIVEINC.ORG](https://somethingpositiveinc.org) • [INSTAGRAM.COM/MICHAELMANSWELL](https://www.instagram.com/michaelmanswell) •

[FACEBOOK.COM/MICHAEL.MANSWELL](https://www.facebook.com/michael.manswell) • [LINKEDIN.COM/IN/MICHAEL-MANSWELL-2A6200B](https://www.linkedin.com/in/michael-manswell-2a6200b)



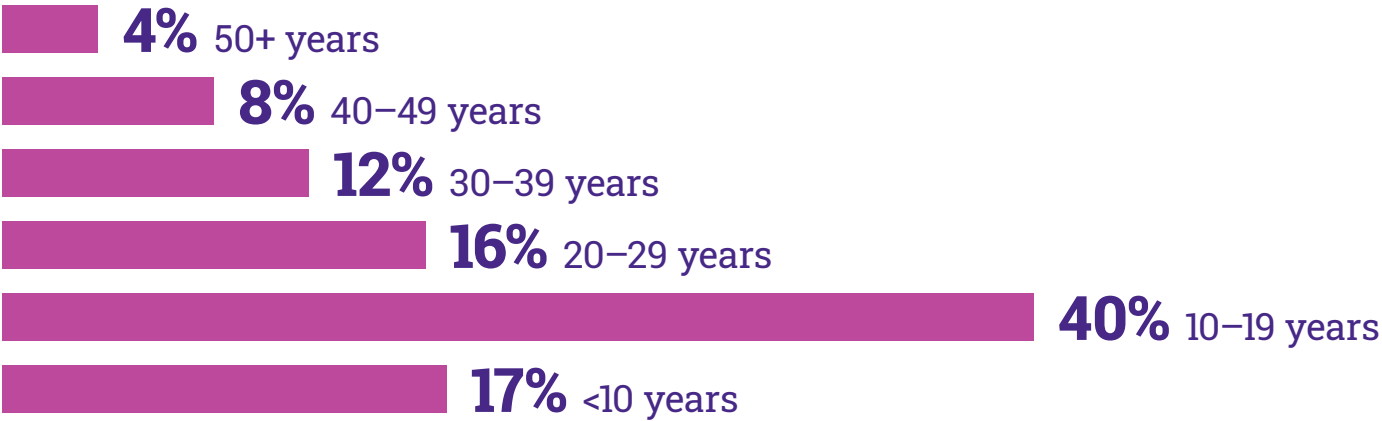
LONGEVITY

# Majority of “Small-Budget” Dance Makers Have Endured

The majority, 83% of survey respondents, work with organizations and projects that were established a decade or more ago, with 40% having been established 10 to 19 years ago. This suggests that the majority of dance makers in this part of the field have proved resilient and managed ongoing sustainability, while 17% of the field has been operating for less than 10 years.

FIGURE

## Most Have Operated for More Than a Decade



### YEARS IN OPERATION (n=107 survey respondents)

Alt text: This bar chart shows the distribution of Years in Operation among survey respondents (n=107): 50+ (4%); 40 to 49 (8%); 30 to 39 (12%); 20 to 29 (16%); 10 to 19 (40%); Less than 10 (17%).

## LOCATION

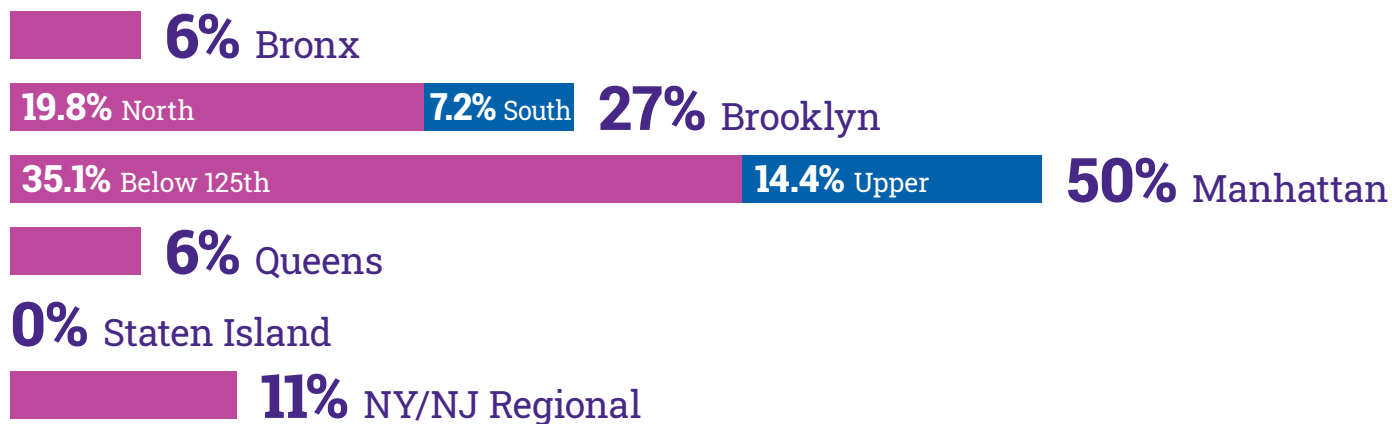
### Majority are Headquartered in Manhattan

About half of “small-budget” dance entities are headquartered in Manhattan. Just over a quarter are centered in Brooklyn. A notable portion, 11%, operate from regional locations beyond the five boroughs. This means that the respondent pool has greater representation in regional areas of New Jersey and Upstate New York than the boroughs of The Bronx and Queens, both at 6%. This distribution is generally consistent with the location of organizations responding to Dance/NYC’s other research efforts, including the *Coronavirus Dance Impact Survey* (2020), with one exception—this sample may be short on respondents from Queens.

There were no respondents from Staten Island, which was not surprising given the few dance organizations centered there, apart from Staten Island Ballet and competitive dance troupes and schools. Recent conversations with Staten Island arts leadership suggest that this is at least partially due to a lack of appropriate and affordable dance space. It was also suggested that some independent artists are working to strengthen the borough’s cultural community and increase its cultural activity. Dance/NYC continues to build relationships in Staten Island and support identified issues and goals, for example through the Rehearsal Space Subsidy program, which supports access to affordable dance studio space.

#### FIGURE

### More Based in Regional NY/NJ Than The Bronx & Queens



#### LOCATION BY BOROUGH (n=111 survey respondents)

Upper Manhattan includes neighborhoods above 125th Street: East Harlem, Harlem, Inwood, and Washington Heights. South Brooklyn includes Borough Park, Canarsie, East New York, Flatbush, Flatlands, Sunset Park, and South/Southwest Brooklyn as defined by the New York City Department of Health.

Alt text: This bar chart shows the distribution of Location by Borough among survey respondents (n=111): Bronx (6%); Brooklyn (27%) – South Brooklyn (7.2%), North Brooklyn (19.8%); Manhattan (50%) – Upper Manhattan (14.4%), Manhattan Below 125th (35.1%); Queens (6%); Staten Island (0%); NY/NJ Regional (11%). The data for South Brooklyn and North Brooklyn is stacked in one bar labeled Brooklyn, with blue indicating South Brooklyn and magenta indicating North Brooklyn. The data for Upper Manhattan and Manhattan Below 125th is stacked in one bar labeled Manhattan, with blue indicating Upper Manhattan and magenta indicating Manhattan Below 125th.

# GENRE

## Majority of “Small-Budget” Dance Makers Focus on Modern or Contemporary Dance

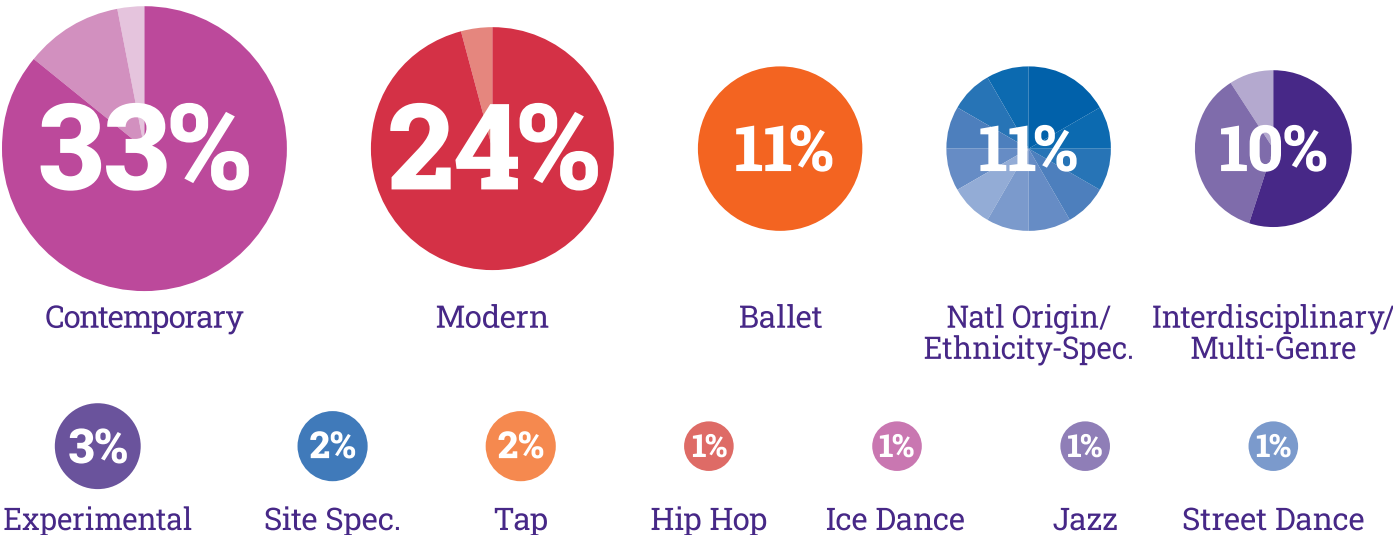
“Small-budget” dance includes a vast set of genres. The 108 open-ended responses included 28 different genres, which were then classified into larger categories, revealing that 56% of respondents primarily work in contemporary or modern dance.

The next largest genre is national origin/ethnicity-specific dance (12%), which includes 11 different sub-genres reflecting classical, traditional and folk dance practice from around the globe as follows:

- Bomba-Afro-Caribbean
- Butoh
- Ecuadorian folklore
- Flamenco/Spanish Dance
- Folk
- Georgian Traditional Dance
- Indian classical dance
- Latin
- North Indian classical Kathak dance
- Puerto Rican Folklore
- Traditional world dance

### FIGURE

## National Origin/Ethnicity-Specific is Third Largest Genre



### GENRE (n=107 respondents)

Alt text: The pie charts displays the distribution of Genres among survey respondents (n=107): Ballet (11%); Contemporary (32%); Experimental (3%); Hip-Hop (1%); Ice dance (1%); Interdisciplinary/Multi-genre (10%); Jazz (1%); Modern (24%); National Origin/Ethnicity-Specific (12%); Site-Specific (2%); Street dance (1%); Tap (2%)





## FIGURE

## Less Common Genres Have Smallest Budgets

	BUDGET SIZE (number of respondents, segmented by genre)						Total
	\$25K – <50K	\$50K – <100K	\$100K – <250K	\$250K – <500K	\$500K – \$1M	Budget N/A	
<b>Ballet</b>	3	5	1	1	2	0	<b>12</b>
<b>Contemporary</b>	14	4	10	4	3	0	<b>35</b>
<b>Experimental</b>	0	1	2	0	0	0	<b>3</b>
<b>Hip-Hop</b>	1	0	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
<b>Ice Dance</b>	0	0	0	0	1	0	<b>1</b>
<b>Interdisciplinary /Multi-genre</b>	3	3	3	1	1	0	<b>11</b>
<b>Jazz</b>	1	0	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
<b>Modern</b>	3	8	6	8	0	1	<b>26</b>
<b>National Origin-Specific/ Ethnicity-Specific</b>	2	2	5	2	0	1	<b>12</b>
<b>Site-Specific</b>	0	1	1	0	0	0	<b>2</b>
<b>Street Dance</b>	0	0	0	1	0	0	<b>1</b>
<b>Tap</b>	0	0	1	0	1	0	<b>2</b>
<b>No Answer</b>	0	3	1	0	0	0	<b>107</b>

Of organizations with budgets of more than \$250K, 72% identify ballet, contemporary or modern as a primary genre, while 64% of groups with budgets under \$250K do. This shows that less frequently identified genres, including jazz, Hip-Hop, national origin/ethnicity-specific, street dance and tap tend to have more limited financial resources than more commonly identified genres of ballet, contemporary, and modern.

## MARKETING

### Social Media is Widely Used for Outreach



### High Reliance on Digital Tools to Get Word Out

"Small-budget" dance makers are highly reliant on social media, given its affordability and wide accessibility. More than 97% use social media posts for marketing and outreach, while 73% use posters/flyers and 50% use paid advertising. Just under one-third (32%) use community organizers for outreach.

Social media is a tool that "small-budget" dance makers feel they must use, despite the fact that some find it daunting and distracting from mission and goals. There is an understanding that it must be part of a broader communications strategy that includes traditional tools as well as personal connection.

"Small-budget" dance makers have other marketing challenges, as well, including limited access to imagery that effectively engages audiences and communities, and finding the time and resources to devote to marketing in the midst of wearing so many hats. In particular, the groups with more limited financial resources need support, tools, and education to support their digital marketing efforts, specifically social media. This includes the ability to access professionals who document dance, such as videographers and photographers. Questions posed by "small-budget" dance leaders include: When and how is it best to use social media? How much is too much? How are compelling social media stories developed and delivered? How can social media be used to develop and deepen relationships and dialogue with constituents and supporters? Can and should volunteers be engaged to support social media marketing?

# FUNDING SOURCES

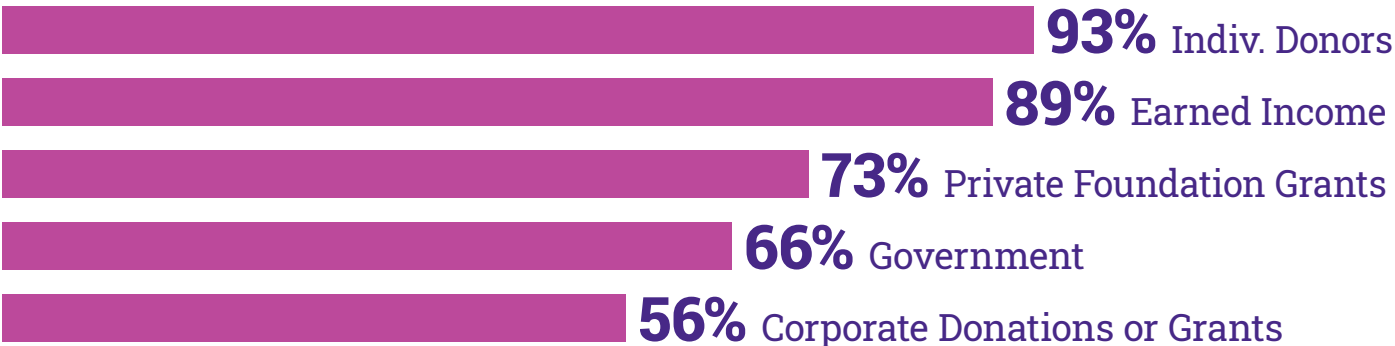
## “Small-Budget” Dance Makers Maintain a Diverse Funding Mix

Nearly all “small-budget” dance makers receive funding from individual donors (93%) or earned income (89%), while lower proportions raise funds from private foundations (73%), government sources (66%), and corporations (56%).

Notably, 68% of “small-budget” dance makers that identify as ALAANA are accessing grants from private foundations, as compared to 73% of all respondents and 82% of White (non-Hispanic) respondents. Similarly, 60% of ALAANA “small-budget” dance makers access government funding, as compared to 66% of the total pool and 73% of White (non-Hispanic) respondents.

### FIGURE

## Highest Reliance on Individual Donors and Earned Income from Programs and Services



### FUNDING SOURCES (n=103 survey respondents)

Alt text: This bar chart shows the distribution of Funding Sources among survey respondents (n=103): Individual Donors (93%), Earned Income (89%), Private Foundation Grants (73%), Government (66%), Corporate Donations or Grants (56%).

It is also important to note that 75% of survey respondents receive in-kind contributions on a regular basis, more than access foundation, government, or corporate sources. These respondents estimate in-kind contributions with an average annual value of \$29,735. Organizations most frequently receive rehearsal, administrative or performance space as an in-kind contribution, and some artistic staff donate their time and services.



This reliance on individual donors, earned income, and in-kind support reflects three characteristics consistently discussed with the study cohort. For many, these income sources are the lowest hanging fruit, given limited barriers to access as compared with foundation, government and corporate dollars. In-kind and individual donations also tend to have the fewest strings attached—allowing leaders to use the funds at their discretion. However, in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, these sources dissipated most quickly, leaving these groups highly vulnerable.

“Our systems are structured this way, where the top is defining the ways in which the bottom should be presenting itself in order to be right, and... in order to be worthy of the funding.”



BETSY GREGORY, MEG HARPER, SHERYL SUTTON, KEITH SABADO, BRIAN BERTSCHER, BEBE MILLER AND PAUL LAZAR.  
BIG DANCE THEATER. PHOTO: JULIETA CERVANTES

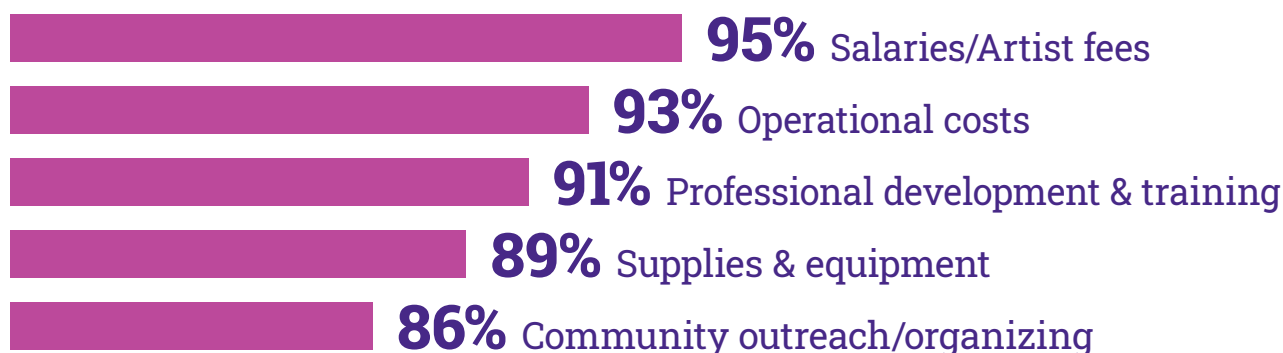
## FUNDING NEEDS

### The Needs of “Small-Budget” Dance Makers Can be Addressed with Flexible Funding

The majority (95%) of respondents express a need for funding for salaries/wages with a similar proportion (93%) needing funding for general operations. More than half (56%) indicate salaries/wages as their most critical funding need. These needs remain consistent even during the pandemic, with 84% of “small-budget” dance groups’ identifying salaries/wages as a critical funding need in Dance/NYC’s *Coronavirus Dance Impact Survey* (2020).

#### FIGURE

#### Funding for Salaries/Wages Remains High Priority



#### TOP 5 FUNDING NEEDS: % indicating Needed or Very Needed (n=107 survey respondents)

Alt text: This bar chart shows the distribution of Top 5 Funding Needs (Percentage of respondents indicating 'Needed' or 'Very Needed') among survey respondents (n=107): Salaries/Artist fees (95%); Operational Costs (93%); Professional development and training [marketing, financial management, strategic planning, booking and touring] (91%); Supplies and equipment [purchases or rentals] (89%); Community outreach/organizing (86%).

Survey respondents were also asked to provide input on “needs not mentioned.” The most frequently mentioned needs concerned fundraising (17 mentions), followed by travel and space (10 mentions each).

Other frequently mentioned needs include funding for organizations, groups, and projects that have been in existence for less than 3 years; capacity building and temporary/flex resources to support flexible and nimble operating structures; affordable space for creation; and affordable artist housing. Perhaps most significantly, dance makers noted a need and desire to move beyond “survival mode” to a more consistent and stable operating scenario—a place that they considered “thriving” over surviving.

Prioritization of the single most important funding need varies somewhat by demographic. Of all survey respondents, 56% identify salaries/artist fees as the top priority, while 23% identify operational costs as top priority, followed by professional development and training for 5% of respondents. More ALAANA (34%), LGBTQIA+ (32%), and respondents living in the Bronx (31%) and Queens (43%) identify operational costs as top priority, while more immigrant (64%), female (64%), and Manhattan-based (63%) dance makers identify salaries/artist fees as top priorities. In addition, 9% of immigrant respondents identify professional training and development as a top priority, as compared to 5% of the complete respondent pool.

The prioritization of these needs differs substantially from previous Dance/NYC research in one important way. In two recent studies, *Advancing Immigrants. Dance. Arts.* (2019) and *Advancing Fiscally Sponsored Dance Artists & Projects* (2017), nearly all respondents identified affordable performance and development space as needed. Interviews conducted for the latest iteration of *Performing Disability. Dance. Artistry.* (2018) ([bit.ly/PerformingDisabilityDanceArtistry](https://bit.ly/PerformingDisabilityDanceArtistry)) also cited space needs as critical. In this study, support for costs related to space was less of a priority, with 72% of respondents identifying mortgage, rent, and other space-related expenses as needed. It is important to note that the question wasn't framed in quite the same way for this research. Previous research expressly asked respondents to classify needs for affordable space whereas the survey for this study asked respondents to classify funding needs for rent, mortgage, and other space-related costs.

“How do we define our value as makers, creators, artists and therefore the community uplifters? If we are valuing ourselves a place of satisfaction by the work we are doing, and not putting a monetary definition to it, it's hard for funders to define what we need as artists, fundraisers, community outreach builders.”







# KEY FINDINGS

## WHO LEADS "SMALL-BUDGET" DANCE?

"Having grown up in this country, having the experience of being exposed to so many different things, I want to tell the stories that we all share."

While "small-budget" dance is somewhat consistent in terms of how it facilitates dance-making and accesses funds, the individuals that lead these organizations, groups, and projects are quite diverse. For example, "small-budget" dance is nearly half ALAANA, more than one-quarter immigrant, and nearly one-third LGBTQIA+. Even still, its leadership could better reflect the demographics of New York City through more racial/ethnic diversity, representation from the disabled community, and more age diversity. The following demographics represent artistic leadership, as opposed to the complete workforce of this segment of the field.

POULOMI DAS, SONALI SKANDAN, NJIDEKA EMENOGU, KUMARI MAYSHARK-PATEL, JIVA DANCE. PHOTO: LEO HSU



## HERITAGE, ETHNICITY & RACE

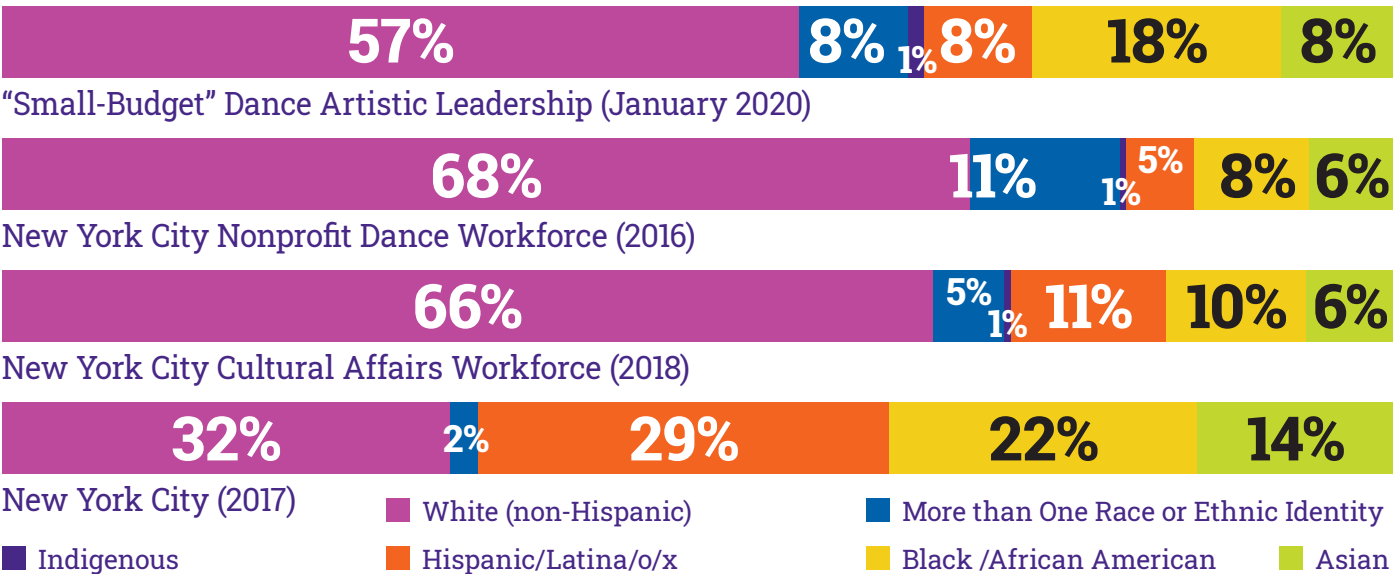
### Artistic Leadership is More Diverse than the Wider Field

Of survey respondents, 57% identifies as White (non-Hispanic), 18% as Black/African American, 8% as more than one race or ethnic identity, 8% as Hispanic/Latina/o/x, 8% identifies as Asian and 1% as Indigenous. Respondents who identify as Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) respondents are included as White in these figures for comparison to New York City. While the U.S. Census Bureau considers these identities White (non-Hispanic), Dance/NYC recognizes these identities as ALAANA.

With 48% ALAANA (African, Latina/o/x, Asian, Arab, and Native American) representation, "small-budget" artistic leadership is more diverse than the field-wide nonprofit dance workforce studied in 2016, which was 32% ALAANA. Specifically, 18% is Black/African American as compared to 8% of the nonprofit dance workforce. It is also more diverse than the NYC Cultural Affairs Workforce, which was 33% ALAANA (10% Black/African American). However, "small-budget" dance artistic leadership is significantly less diverse than the City's population, which is at least 68% ALAANA. And, again, that figure is conservative because the US Census includes Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) respondents as White.

#### FIGURE

#### Nearly Half Identify as ALAANA



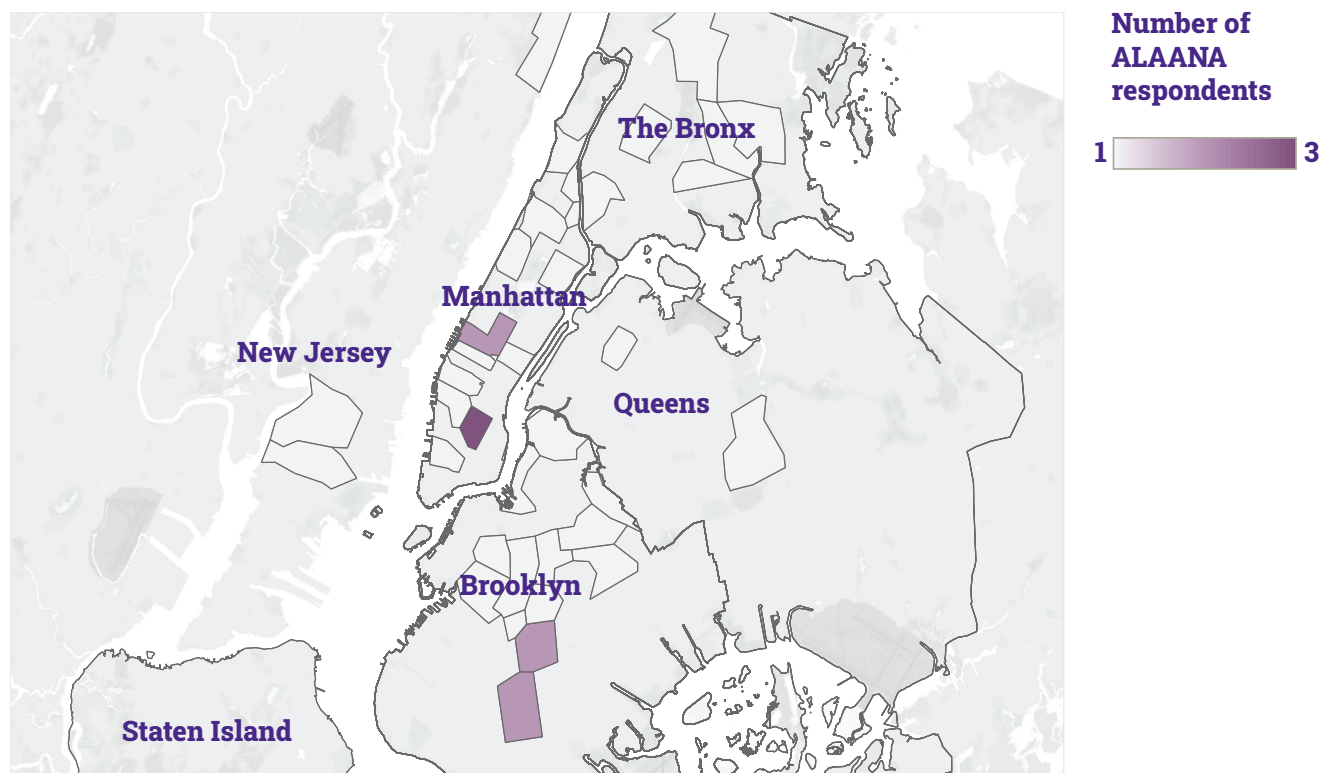
#### ETHNICITY & RACE (n=90 survey respondents)

Does not include respondents who declined to self-identify their race or ethnic identity since there is no equivalent in the U.S. Census data for New York City. All groups are mutually exclusive.

Alt text: This graph shows the distribution of Ethnicity & Race among survey respondents (n=90) in comparison to State of NYC Dance & Workforce Demographics (2016) data, DCLA Workforce data, and New York City data: Survey Respondents - Asian (8%), Black/African American (18%), Hispanic/Latina/o/x (8%), Indigenous (1%), More than One Race or Ethnic Identity (8%), White (non-Hispanic) (57%); State of NYC Dance & Workforce Demographics (2016) - Asian (6%), Black/African American (8%), Hispanic/Latina/o/x (5%), Indigenous (1%), More than One Race or Ethnicity (11%), White (non-Hispanic) (68%); DCLA Workforce 2018 - Asian (6%), Black/African American (10%), Hispanic/Latina/o/x (11%), Indigenous (1%), More than One Race or Ethnicity (5%), White (non-Hispanic) (66%); New York City - Asian (14%), Black/African American (22%), Hispanic/Latina/o/x (29%), Indigenous (0.2%), More than One Race or Ethnicity (2%), White (non-Hispanic) (32%). Does not include respondents who declined to self-identify their race or ethnic identity since there is no equivalent in the U.S. Census data for New York City. All groups are mutually exclusive.

Segmentation analysis by borough shows that a higher percentage of ALAANA respondents, 14%, reside in the Bronx, compared to 6% percent of the full sample, and in Brooklyn, 33%, compared to 27% of the full sample. The following maps locate survey respondents by ALAANA identity and organizational zip code, showing that ALAANA respondents are distributed through the Bronx, Manhattan (22% of respondents in Upper Manhattan are ALAANA) and Brooklyn (86% of respondents in South Brooklyn are ALAANA.) White respondents tend to be concentrated in Manhattan and North Brooklyn.

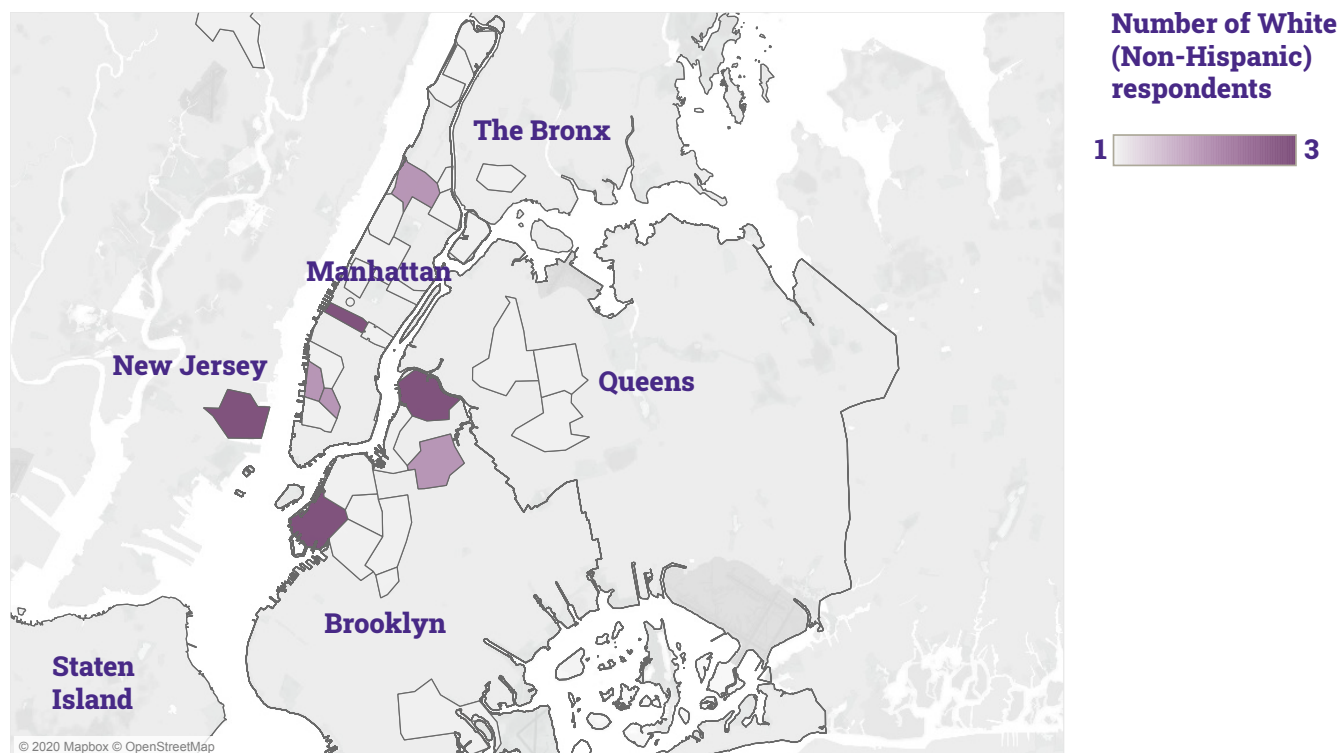
**FIGURE: ETHNICITY & RACE: ALAANA by ZIP Code**



'Small-Budget' Dance Artistic Leadership data is valid as of January 2020.

Alt text: This bird's-eye map of Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the surrounding areas uses color saturation to show the geographical distribution of ALAANA survey respondents. Neighborhoods are outlined in black, and each area is shaded light grey, light purple, or deep purple depending on the number of ALAANA respondents from that area. Light gray indicates one respondent from the area, and deep purple indicates three respondents. In Lower Manhattan, zip code 10003 includes three survey respondents. In midtown Manhattan zip code 10018 includes two respondents. Two zip codes in South Brooklyn, 11226 and 11230, each have two respondents. There are 34 different zip codes around The Bronx, Central/North Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens, New Jersey, and Long Island that include one ALAANA survey respondent.

**FIGURE: ETHNICITY & RACE: White/Non-Hispanic by ZIP Code**



'Small-Budget' Dance Artistic Leadership data is valid as of January 2020.

Alt text: This bird's-eye map of Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the surrounding areas uses color saturation to show the geographical distribution of White (non-Hispanic) survey respondents. Neighborhoods are outlined in black, and each area is shaded light gray, light purple, or deep purple depending on the number of White (non-Hispanic) respondents from that area. Light gray indicates one respondent from the area, and deep purple indicates three respondents. There are four zip codes with three respondents, including zip code 10036 in midtown Manhattan, zip code 11222 in North Brooklyn, and zip code 07032 in New Jersey. There are four zip codes with two respondents including 10027 in Upper Manhattan, 10012 and 10014 in Lower Manhattan, and 11206 in Central Brooklyn. Twenty-six zip codes include one survey respondent. These are located in Manhattan and North/Central Brooklyn, with a few in Queens and New Jersey.

Segmentation analysis shows that more respondents that identify as ALAANA are male (48% vs 44%), Millennial (58% vs 44%) and LGBTQIA+ (57% vs 44%) and born outside of the US (61% vs 44%).

These data reinforce findings articulated in the *State of NYC Dance & Workforce Demographics* (2016). They also may reflect Dance/NYC's deepening engagement with ALAANA dance artists, particularly immigrant artists, and/or may foreshadow a growing diversity in the field. These findings align with Dance/NYC's intended goals through its racial justice agenda to amplify the voices and autonomy of the African, Latina/o/x, Asian, Arab, and Native American (ALAANA) community.

Cross tabulations by additional identity categories are available in the datasets included as an appendix.



## ESSAY

# The Conundrum of an ALAANA dance maker



PHOTO: RUSSELL HAYDN

SONALI SKANDAN, Artistic Director, Jiva Performing Arts

The mission of Jiva Performing Arts in NYC is to develop and present new voices in the classical arts of India and increase the visibility of these arts for all communities.

Our dance-making highlights the accessibility of these art forms, and often addresses and relates our classical works to modern society and the diverse urban atmosphere in which we live. Our dancers, staff and board have come from diverse backgrounds including: Asian, African, European, Indigenous and across religions from Christian to Hindu and Muslim.

This diversity is reflected in the work we produce and believe in, such as our most recent evening-length dance production, *The Four Horsemen*, which shows that western thought can be merged with Indian classical dance, music and poetry. By merging ideologies of East and West, we tackle themes and ideas that are not clearly evident and show the universality of human experience and narratives. Through this kind of work we hope to redefine the narrow vision of specific "dance-genres." We also use ideas of modern dance staging and formations within the work we create. Our works often include talkbacks and interactive sessions, to allow the untrained viewer and new audiences into our process and art form.

Jiva also has a vibrant educational focus, where we train the next generation of dancers and musicians. In the Indian Classical tradition, dance is often seen as the embodiment of the music, and therefore our programming and education go hand in hand.

Most of our students have grown up in NYC, and possess a hybrid notion of culture and community. Our teaching methodologies reflect our ability to relate the classical arts in meaningful ways, allowing our students to become dance makers and creators using their own unique experiences and skills. Jiva's capacity as an arts inspirer also rests in our ability to present young and upcoming talent in NYC, giving them a rare platform to showcase their work.

All our work is done within the parameters of a “small-budget” dance maker. As so often is the case for smaller companies, we stretch every dollar we earn to fulfill our mission. We have learned to maximize our resources and do more with less.

Jiva has one full-time Artistic Director (myself), freelance dancers and teachers, as well as a part-time Program Assistant. Being one of the few professionally presented Indian classical companies in NYC, we have been able to garner the respect and support from our peers and the larger mainstream dance community. In our 13 years of existence, we have created a supportive donor base from the community we serve, and we receive support from federal, city and state arts councils, and are just starting to receive access to smaller foundational support. We are missing the larger institutional supporters typical of bigger and more mainstream dance companies. We are reliant on our program income as well as our annual fundraising Gala to garner funds for our creative year.

Dependence on individual donations to support our work has created some disadvantages and some small advantages, as well. Having little access to mainstream dance-making funds (from larger foundations that may support western dance, i.e., ballet, modern) gives us a smaller pool from which to apply, greater competition within the narrow categories, as well as less visibility nationally. Apart from the difficulty in identifying foundations and grants that may support smaller companies, we have also had difficulty defining what it means to create work in the world of classical dance—the notion that traditional arts or folk arts remain static and cannot be altered or adapted is very constraining. Thus, the categorization of our work is often very problematic and not easily definable. We have often had to justify the creation of new choreography as a “traditional” dance maker. In my experience, grantors prefer Indian classical dance work that is classified as “traditional,” “classical,” “historical,” as opposed to “experimental,” “ground-breaking,” “challenging.”



JIVA DANCE. PHOTO: ZHIYUAN YANG

There have been some advantages of remaining financially autonomous as well—we are free to create work that speaks to us, and we are not confined to work within the parameters set out by larger granting agencies.

Our organizational structure can remain flexible; we can be large one year and smaller another year, based on our projects and budget. That does come with caveats as stated above, and often our work remains mostly independent and on the fringes of the mainstream arts world. Our smaller budget size gives us the flexibility to set our own goals, but those goals can often be very limited, and the ability to dream larger becomes constrained. Our access to publicity and a substantial marketing budget is limited, productions are smaller; our ability to hire PR agents and booking agents is also often limited.

Being a small- budget dance maker who is also considered ALAANA also confounds some of these issues; we often are underrepresented in large festivals, or represented by a token dance company. Our styles are conflated into one term—Indian classical dance—without acknowledgment of the particular style or genre in which we work.

Our creative prowess or choreographic risks are often not understood. Dance critique remains a very exoticized and surface-level assessment. We are characterized predominantly by our educational role in the community (i.e., carriers, preservers of culture), rather than as creative arts professionals.

Our "small-budget" size is exacerbated especially during this unprecedented time of COVID-19. We have, unfortunately, had to let go of most of our staff, and the work has been shouldered by myself. Our fundraising year and the donations that we would normally expect are questionable and therefore, our ability to function fully and plan for this year and next has been curtailed. The isolation we feel has been greater, as we compete with larger dance companies for access to federal and local support structures. We have had to redefine what it means to remain visible and active—through social media platforms and online interactions. This is certainly a challenging time for all artists, especially those that rely on program income and a solid giving structure.

As a choreographer in the world's dance capital, I see that there needs to be a systemic shift in the understanding of smaller budget dance-makers—from the granting agencies to the agents and critics, more has to be invested in providing the tools to understand how the majority of us work, what it takes to sustain us and help us to go beyond just sustainability to be thriving, respected and nurtured artists in this climate. Now is the perfect time, as we consider a post-pandemic society where diversity, equity and inclusion are the norm and not the exception to the rule.




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**SONALI SKANDAN IS A PASSIONATE AND ACCOMPLISHED ARTIST OF BHARATANATYAM, AND REPRESENTS A GENERATION OF ARTISTS THAT ARE DEDICATED TO THE ART OUTSIDE OF ITS HOMELAND. SONALI HAS BEEN AN NYC RESIDENT FOR ALMOST 30 YEARS, AND HER WORK REFLECTS THE URBAN, DYNAMIC AND DIVERSE ATMOSPHERE INHERENT IN THE CITY. THIS HYBRIDITY ALLOWS HER TO INFUSE HER ART WITH VARYING SENSIBILITIES AND PERSPECTIVES WITH WHICH SHE CREATES WORKS THAT ARE UNIQUE AND FRESH. SONALI'S VISION IS TO CREATE WORK THAT EXPRESSES THE EVOLVING NATURE OF BHARATANATYAM AS AN ART FORM THAT IS RICH IN TECHNIQUE, HISTORY AND CULTURE BUT ALSO HAS THE CAPACITY TO TRANSFORM AND TRANSCEND BOUNDARIES OF GEOGRAPHY, LANGUAGE AND TIME. SONALI IS THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF JIVA PERFORMING ARTS, WHERE SHE TEACHES AND CREATES ENGAGING DANCE PRODUCTIONS TO INCREASE THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE CLASSICAL ARTS, AND JIVA DANCE, A PROFESSIONAL DANCE COMPANY PRESENTING COMPELLING WORKS BASED ON BHARATANATYAM.**

**[JIVADANCE.ORG](http://JIVADANCE.ORG) • [JIVAPERFORMINGARTS.ORG](http://JIVAPERFORMINGARTS.ORG) • [INSTAGRAM.COM/JIVAARTS](https://www.instagram.com/jivaarts) • [INSTAGRAM.COM/SONALISKANDAN](https://www.instagram.com/sonaliskandan) • [FACEBOOK.COM/JIVAPERFORMINGARTS](https://www.facebook.com/jivaperformingarts)**



# PLACE OF BIRTH

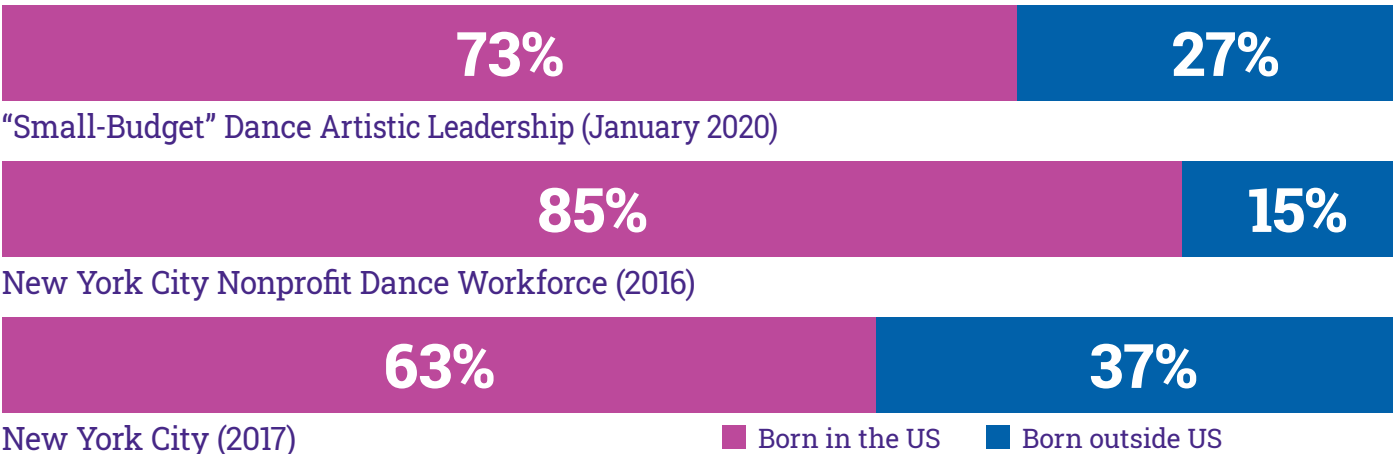
## Immigrant Dance Makers are Significant in “Small-Budget” Dance

Just over one-quarter, 27%, of survey respondents were born outside of the US. These respondents were born in North America, Latin America, Europe, the Middle East, and East and South Asia. None were from Africa.

Respondents		Respondents	
Canada	3	Italy	1
Colombia	1	Jamaica	2
Ecuador	1	Japan	2
France	1	Philippines	1
Germany	2	Portugal	1
India	2	Taiwan	1
Iraq	1	Trinidad & Tobago	1
Israel	2	United Kingdom	1

FIGURE

### Still Potential for Increased Engagement



### PLACE OF BIRTH (n=96 survey respondents)

Alt text: This bar chart shows the distribution of Place of Birth among survey respondents (n=96) in comparison with Immigrant Dance Workforce Demographics (2017) and New York City Population (ACS 2017). Survey Respondents – Born in the United States (73%), Born outside the United States (27%), Immigrant Dance Workforce Demographics (2017) – Born in the United States (85%), Born outside the United States (15%), New York City Population (ACS 2017) – Born in the United States (63%), Born outside the United States (37%).

This 27% is larger than the population of immigrant dance workers responding to Dance/NYC's *Coronavirus Dance Impact Survey* (2020) (21%). It is also notably larger than findings reported in Dance/NYC's *Immigrant Dance Workforce Demographics* (2018), which estimated that 15% of the nonprofit dance workforce was born outside of the US. Even still, there is a notable gap between the "small-budget" respondents born outside of the US and that of the City's immigrant population (37%). The presence of immigrant artists in this study sample is not surprising, given its alignment with Dance/NYC's *Immigrants. Dance. Arts.* research, which found that 45% of immigrant dance organizations have budgets of less than \$100K, as compared to 32% of all dance organizations represented in the *State of NYC Dance & Workforce Demographics* (2016).

These data very conservatively suggest immigrant representation in artistic leadership of "small-budget" dance, as they only account for place of birth and do not include people who were born in the US but have at least one parent from outside of the United States. Dance/NYC's *Immigrants. Dance. Arts.* research has defined immigrants to include people of multiple generations who also identify as immigrants.

Additionally, through its *Immigrants. Dance. Arts.* initiative, Dance/NYC has invested in developing and deepening relationships with immigrant dance artists. While it is possible that the community of immigrant dance artists has grown, it is more likely that Dance/NYC's investments, advocacy, and service to this part of the field have garnered trust and inspired more immigrant dance artists to share information and provide input. Nonetheless, this finding reinforces Dance/NYC's *Immigrants. Dance. Arts.* objectives to engage and elevate immigrant dance artists and workers.

## DISABILITY

# “Small-Budget” Dance Must Elevate Disabled Workers to Artistic Leadership

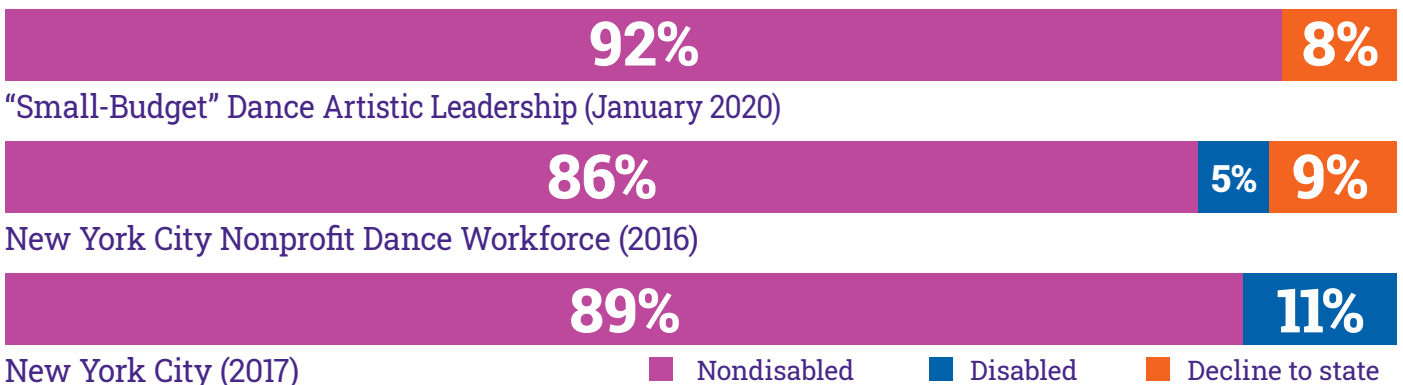
No survey respondents identified as disabled, though previous Dance/NYC research shows that disabled workers are present in dance. Notably, 10% of sponsored dance, 6% of the nonprofit dance workforce, and 3% of individual dance workers responding to Dance/NYC’s Coronavirus Dance Impact Survey (2020) identified as disabled. For context, 11% of New Yorkers identify as disabled.

It is important to reiterate that this survey was directed to artistic leadership. Dance/NYC’s Disability. Dance. Artistry. initiative reinforces this finding, suggesting that its support and increased activity has not resulted in more disabled people taking on roles of artistic leadership. However, that initiative confirmed that the disabled community is present in “small-budget” dance through organizations led by non-disabled artists and organizations with operations headquartered outside of NYC that deliver programs in the City. For example, at least one organization in this study’s cohort engages disabled artists, but has an artistic director that does not identify as disabled.

In addition, the challenges facing the disabled dance community are pervasive. There are many obstacles that either inhibit the establishment of disabled-led dance entities or force them to close. Before the pandemic, some of these obstacles were being addressed. But that progress is likely retracting and challenges are being exacerbated, suggesting a need to urgently support disabled artists and arts workers.

## FIGURE

### No Survey Respondents Identified as Disabled



## DISABILITY (n=97 survey respondents)

Alt text: This bar chart shows the distribution of Disability Identity among survey respondents (n=97) in comparison to State of NYC Dance & Workforce Demographics (2016) data and New York City Population (ACS 2017) data: Survey Respondents – Nondisabled person (92%), Disabled person (0%), Decline to state (8%); State of NYC Dance & Workforce Demographics (2016) – Nondisabled person (86%), Disabled person (5%), Decline to state (9%); New York City Population (ACS 2017) – Nondisabled person (89%), Disabled person (11%).

## ESSAY

# The Misgivings of Capacity



PHOTO: MARK WICKENS

JERRON HERMAN, *Dancer, Disabled Artist*

As a young dancer with Cerebral Palsy, I was fortunate enough to bypass most industry initiations by virtue of an entity, then Heidi Latsky Dance, establishing a different set of metrics for my and their success.

I didn't train in the typical fashion like my non-disabled and even disabled counterparts; instead, I was first taught I already possessed identifiable traits of a dancer and could operate at a professional level. In this environment, I then learned dance vocabulary and politics on the job, and finally embraced the form. My contributions to movement vocabulary periodically elevated me in the field and now I independently make work. I am encouraged by this unique microcosm of exchange.

The industry expanded first to welcome me and then to receive my new ideas. Now, there's a normalcy with my "type" of dancer where there was not. Could it be that small organizations could also benefit from this elasticity, to be legitimized for what they contribute beyond fidelity to certain thresholds?



Often, operating budgets primarily signify a company's capacity. I understand the metric supposes the certainty of a staff, a growing donor base, continued professional activity, but the health of these categories is never as considered. We know this because a figure even slightly below a threshold automatically disqualifies one from applying for funding, regardless of intention. If we compound the ideological or demographic specialty of an organization, this health and consideration is even more important to the survival of diverse and equitable forms that operate in and out of these held thresholds.

In my ten years of experience with the disabled community in the arts, I've witnessed tremendous creativity in light of scarcity and lack of equal opportunity. When it seemed we wouldn't be typically presented for some time, Heidi Latsky devised a series of public installations that became the kaleidoscopic *ON DISPLAY*. Rather than wait, we pushed. Kinetic Light does not condense its activities to onstage venues but creates films and technologically artistic experiences that increase how nimbly disabled people can access art. They do not compromise their ethics for an opportunity and often serve as a venue's initial encounter, a trial by fire, in creating a truly accessible environment.

Our assumptions on capacity often stop us from strengthening the whole system by limiting the influence of different dance cultures on the industry.

JERRON HERMAN. PHOTO: GRACE KATHRYN LANDEFELD





PHOTO: DAN KIM / MIKNAD

As Physically Integrated Dance (PI) and Disability Arts (DA) grow in recognition they have already evolved to showcase distinctive cultural products. These products are certainly new movement vocabularies but also organizing protocols, access/care procedures, and rigorous atypical exhibitions. A company's fidelity to these necessarily informs its activity in scarce moments. When the industry stalls, the company's other pillars, like activism, can move ahead.

I often wonder how many typical companies could benefit from a Disability Arts perspective to bolster their procedures to ethically distribute power.

Let's take access workers as an example: employing ASL interpreters, captioners, and audio describers in a production supports the entry of more blind/low vision and Deaf/heard of hearing patrons. However, it also has the unintended effects of improving an audiences' comfort with a work, even increasing dance literacy, in an integral way. This is a central product of a "marginalized" group.

Unfortunately, for all the offerings from the DA community, most venues are still inaccessible to welcome audiences, let alone disabled artists, and season programming still persists to invite one PI company or disabled artist a year. In this climate, it takes a disabled company twice as long to amass a production history that legitimizes their capacity. Whereas capacity should even moreso mean context— income relative to gigs, productions relative to invitations, donors relative to literacy of the form, *relationship*. These matter to assess the true legitimacy of an entity.

We're nearing a time to authentically recognize diverse contributions but should also acknowledge diverse systems that expand entry and challenge typical efficiency principles.

These systems are unique in smaller organizations due to their various techniques for survival. Through their responses to scarcity, the whole field could identify strategies of equity that ensure multipronged longevity beyond fiscal health. Within disability arts there is a principle of interdependence and the looking inward encourages the form's growth by not supposing an expertise or threshold, rather welcoming supposes an elastic exchange that will fluctuate and develop for everyone's benefit.



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JERRON HERMAN IS A DANCER. HIS LATEST WORKS HAVE SEEN PREMIERES ACROSS NYC INCLUDING THE WHITNEY MUSEUM. HE HAS ALSO SERVED ON THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES AT DANCE/USA SINCE 2017. [JERRONHERMAN.COM](http://JERRONHERMAN.COM) • [INSTAGRAM.COM/JERRONHERMAN](https://www.instagram.com/jerronherman) • [FACEBOOK.COM/10152416190435127](https://www.facebook.com/10152416190435127) • [LINKEDIN.COM/IN/JERRON-HERMAN-9924355B](https://www.linkedin.com/in/jerron-herman-9924355b)

## AGE/GENERATION

### “Small-Budget” Dance Maker Artistic Leads are Older than the Wider Field

Findings suggest “small-budget” dance artistic leadership is mostly adults, aged 39–55 or Generation X. More specifically, 42% of survey respondents were born between 1965 and 1981, compared to 32% of the nonprofit dance workforce, and 21% of New York City.

#### FIGURE

#### Majority are Gen X



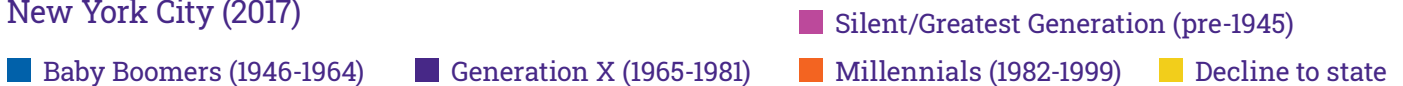
“Small-Budget” Dance Artistic Leadership (January 2020)



New York City Nonprofit Dance Workforce (2016)



New York City (2017)



#### GENERATION (n=91 survey respondents)

Alt text: This bar chart shows the distribution of Generation among survey respondents (n=91) in comparison to State of NYC Dance & Workforce Demographics (2016) data and New York City Population (ACS 2017) data: Survey Respondents – Silent/Greatest Generation [pre-1945] (6%), Baby Boomers [1946-1964] (25%), Generation X [1965-1981] (42%), Millennials [1982-1999] (26%), Decline to state (1%); State of NYC Dance & Workforce Demographics (2016) – Silent/Greatest Generation [pre-1945] (5%), Baby Boomers [1946-1964] (27%), Generation X [1965-1981] (32%), Millennials [1982-1999] (36%); New York City Population (ACS 2017) – Silent/Greatest Generation [pre-1945] (9%), Baby Boomers [1946-1964] (22%), Generation X [1965-1981] (21%), Millennials [1982-1999] (49%).

Only 26% of “small-budget” survey respondents fall into the Millennial generation (born between 1982 and 1999) while 49% of the City population does. Baby Boomers are well-represented, with 25% of survey respondents falling in that group, as compared with 22% of the City population. However, only 5% of survey respondents fall into the Silent/Greatest Generation (born before 1945), as compared to 9% of the City population, suggesting potential opportunity to better engage older dance makers. No survey respondents were born after 1999.



The age of the survey respondent (artistic leads) correlates to the longevity of organizations. All of the artistic leaders for organizations in existence 40+ years that provided their age are led by Baby Boomers or members of the Silent Generation. In addition, more than half (57%) of the large set of organizations established 10 to 19 years ago are led by members of Generation X. And the majority (63%) of those established less than 10 years ago are led by Millennials.

Findings suggest younger artistic leaders of "small-budget" dance reside outside of Manhattan, particularly in Brooklyn, and older members reside in Manhattan. For example:

- Brooklyn includes 27% of all respondents yet 38% of Millennials.
- The Bronx includes 6% of all respondents yet 13% of Millennials.
- Manhattan includes 50% of all respondents, 60% of Silent/Greatest Generation, and 57% of Baby Boomer respondents.



BORN DANCING. PHOTO: RUSSELL HAYDN

## GENDER

### “Small-Budget” Dance is Mostly Female

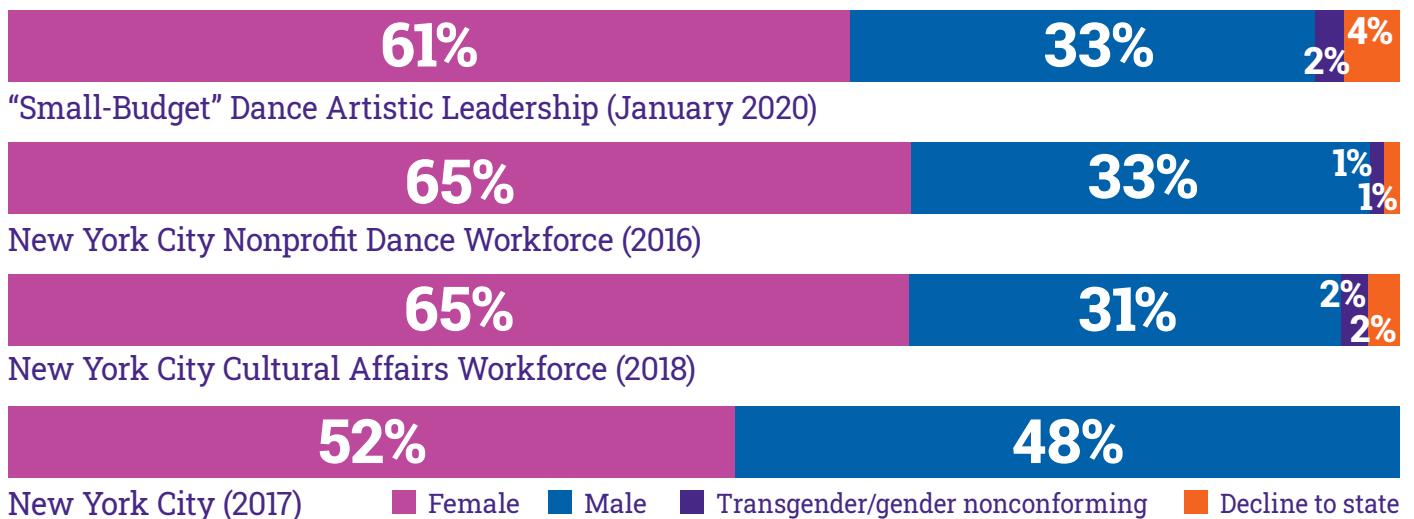
In the aggregate, 61%, of “small-budget” dance maker respondents identify as female, 33% identify as male, and 2% identify as gender queer/gender nonconforming. No survey respondents identified as gender queer/non binary, intersex, trans man, or trans woman. New York City is 52% female and 48% male, according to US Census data. The US Census does not include any gender identity categories other than female and male.

While “small-budget” dance leadership is majority female, it is less so than the nonprofit dance workforce, which was 65% female in 2016. For context, Dance/NYC's *Coronavirus Dance Impact Survey* (2020) respondent pool is 69% female and the sponsored dance workforce is 77% female.

Segmentation analysis by borough shows that the majority of “small-budget” dance artistic leads in each borough identify as female. Of respondents who identify as male, 52% are based in Manhattan, 15% in Brooklyn, and 9% in each of Queens and the Bronx. Of respondents who identify as female, 43% are based in Manhattan, 33% in Brooklyn, 7% in the Bronx, and 5% in Queens. Both respondents that identify as gender nonconforming are based in Brooklyn.

#### FIGURE

### Majority are Female but Less So Than the Wider Field



#### GENDER IDENTITY (n=99 survey respondents)

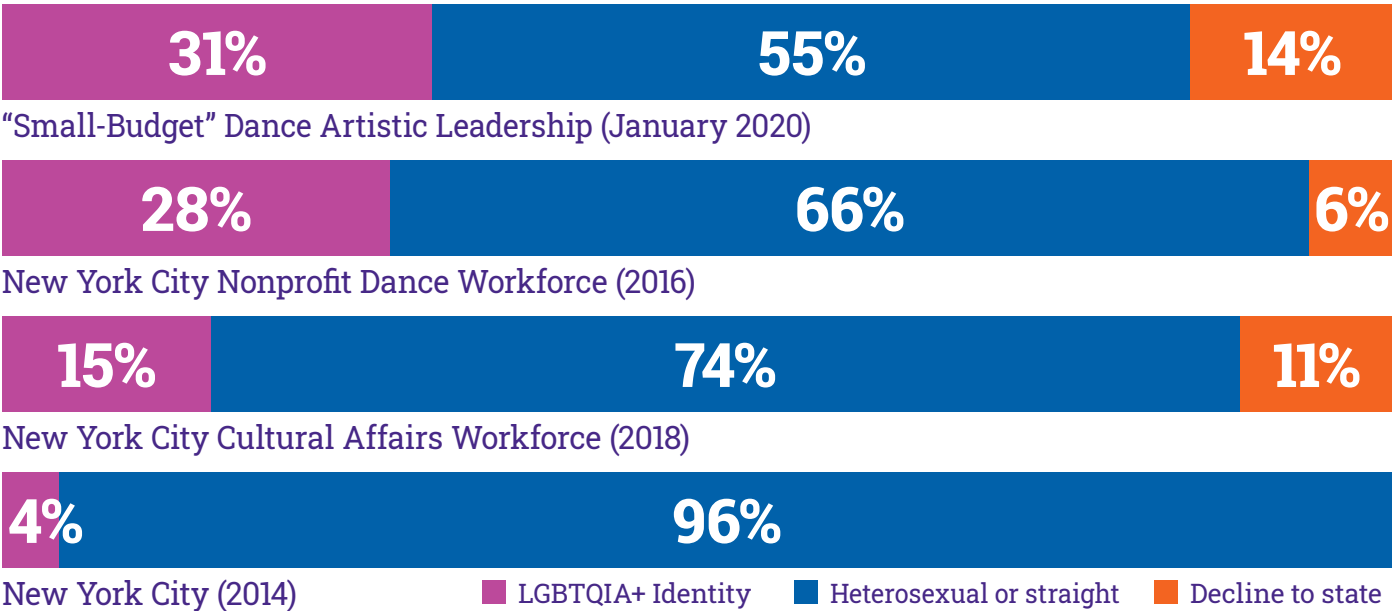
All text: This bar chart shows the distribution of Gender Identity among survey respondents (n=99) in comparison to State of NYC Dance & Workforce Demographics (2016) data, DCLA Workforce 2018 data, and New York City data: Survey Respondents – Female (61%), Male (33%), Transgender/gender non-conforming (2%), Decline to state (4%); State of NYC Dance & Workforce Demographics (2016) – Female (65%), Male (33%), Transgender/gender non-conforming (1%), Decline to state (1%); DCLA Workforce 2018 – Female (65%), Male (31%), Transgender/gender non-conforming (2%), Decline to state (2%); New York City – Female (52%), Male (48%).

# LGBTQIA+

## The LGBTQIA+ Community is Well-Represented in “Small-Budget” Dance

Nearly one-third or 31% of “small-budget” dance makers, identify as LGBTQIA+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual), while 55% do not. The percentage identifying as LGBTQIA+ is higher than the nonprofit dance workforce (28%), NYC Cultural Affairs Workforce (15%), and significantly higher than the percentage of the local population, which is 4% LGBTQIA+, according to a 2014 Gallup research study, the most recent data available for the LGBTQIA+ community. Segmentation analysis by borough shows that Manhattan is home to the greatest share (43%) of LGBTQIA+ “small-budget” dance artistic leadership.

**FIGURE**  
 Nearly One-Third Identify as LGBTQIA+



**LGBTQIA+ IDENTITY (n=97 survey respondents)**  
 New York City is regional data from a 2012–2014 Gallup study.

Alt text: This bar chart shows the distribution of LGBTQIA+ Identity among survey respondents (n=97) in comparison to State of NYC Dance & Workforce Demographics (2016), Cultural Affairs Workforce Demographics Pilot Study (2019), and NYC Metro Area (Gallup 2012–2014) data: Survey Respondents – Yes (31%), No (55%), Decline to state (14%); State of NYC Dance & Workforce Demographics (2016) – Yes (28%), No (66%), Decline to state (6%); DCLA Workforce 2018 – Yes (15%), No (74%), Decline to state (11%); NYC Metro Area (Gallup 2012–2014) – Yes (4%), No (96%).







# KEY FINDINGS

## WHAT ARE THE WORKFORCE DYNAMICS OF "SMALL-BUDGET" DANCE?

"I think dancers have always had an ability to work in very challenging environments. I wish that it wasn't so hard because I think the work would be better."

"Small-budget" dance makers are frustrated around their need to carry such a large and varied set of responsibilities, most of which are connected to the demands of the nonprofit model. They understand their strengths and weaknesses. Most excel on the artistic side—with passion that drives them to do this work—but they acknowledge a need and even yearn for more training, resources and support to manage the administrative side. They believe they would be more successful if they could spend less time managing the many intricacies of a nonprofit structure and place more focus on making and presenting dance.

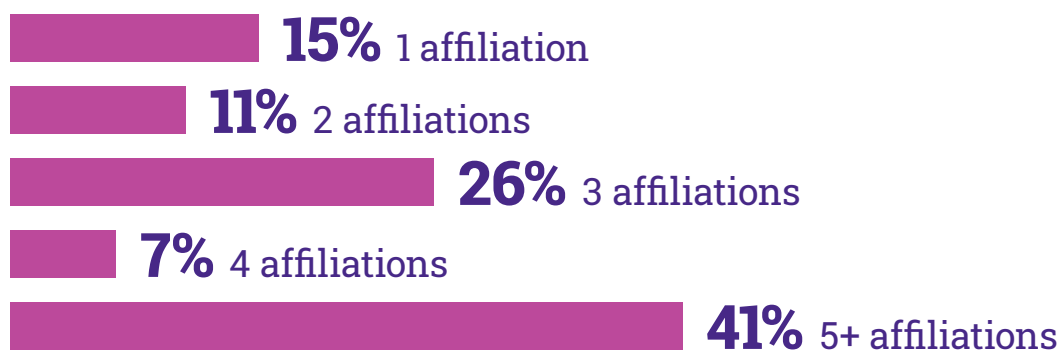
## ARTISTIC LEADS

## “Small-Budget” Dance Demands Fractured Focus and Vast Skill Set

Artistic leads are affiliated with multiple projects and organizations over the course of a given year. This research shows that 85% are affiliated with more than one project and just under 41% are affiliated with five or more projects.

## FIGURE

Almost Half Affiliate with Five or More Organizations or Projects Annually



### ARTISTIC LEAD: Number of Affiliations (n=92 survey respondents)

Alt text: This bar chart shows the distribution of the Number of Affiliations of Artistic Leads among survey respondents (n=92): 5 or more (41%); 3 (26%); 1 (15%); 2 (11%); 4 (7%).

The majority of artistic leads—53%—do not earn a regular salary from their work in dance. While 21% do have a full-time job in dance, most piece together their livelihoods through a series of freelance and/or part-time positions in the dance field. Just over one-third (34%) have employment outside of dance, in addition to their work as an artistic lead.

## FIGURE

Majority Do Not Earn a Regular Salary from Their Work in Dance



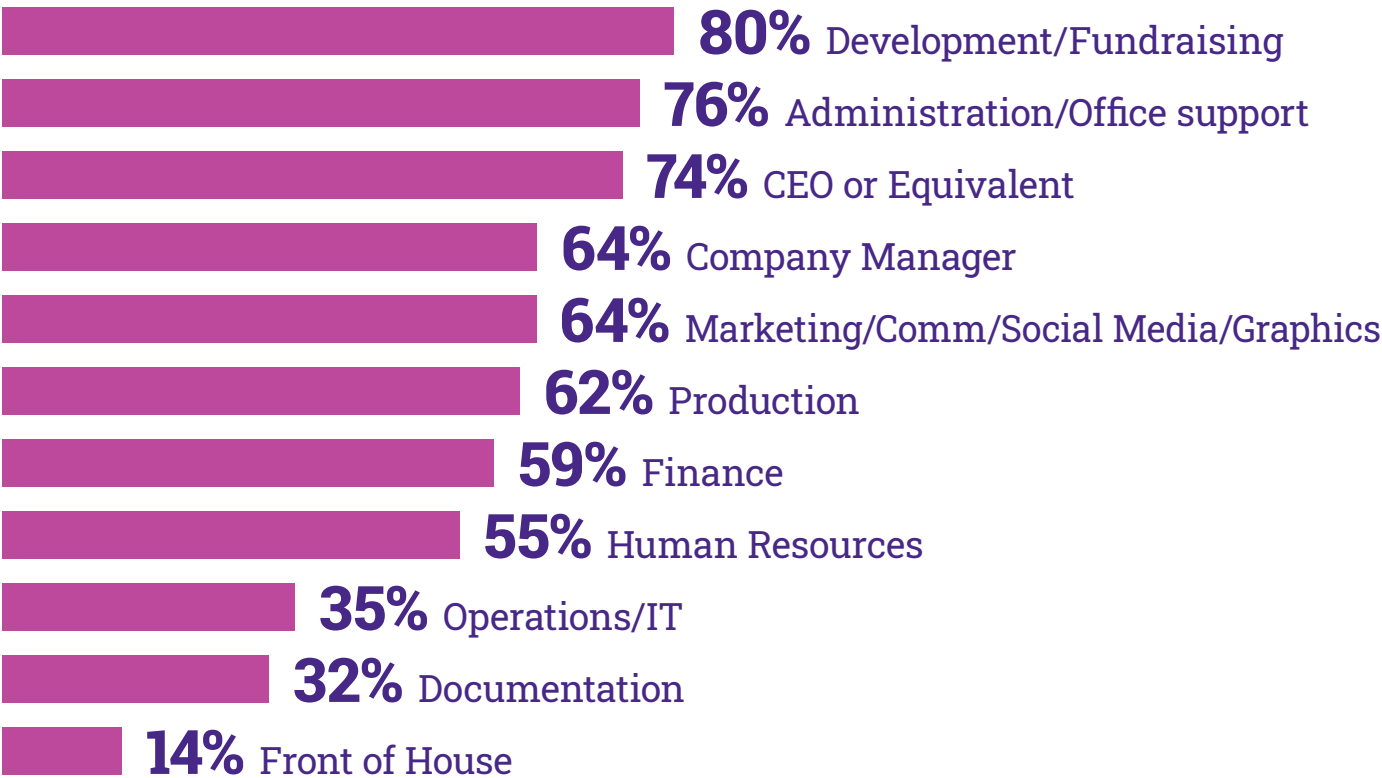
### ARTISTIC LEADS: Earn Regular Salary (n=92 survey respondents)

Alt text: This bar chart shows the distribution of Artistic Leads that earn a regular salary from their work in dance among survey respondents (n=92): Yes (47%); No (53%).

Artistic leads fulfill many roles. In addition to being in charge of the artistic side of their entity, 80% work on fundraising, 76% fulfill administrative roles, 74% function as the CEO, and 64% work on marketing. Findings show that 48% of artistic leads fill four or more roles for their organization or project.

**FIGURE**

# Nearly Half Fill Four or More Roles for an Organization or Project



## ARTISTIC LEADS: Other Roles (n=97 survey respondents)

Alt text: This bar chart shows the distribution of Other Roles of Artistic Leads among survey respondents (n=97): Development/Fundraising (80%); Administrative/Office support (76%); Chief Executive Officer (74%); Marketing/Communications/Social Media (64%); Company Manager (64%); Production (62%); Finance (59%); Human Resources (55%); Operations/IT (35%); Documentation (32%); Front of House (14%).

## ESSAY

# Firmly Planted, Yet Rising



PHOTO: RAY BEEN3 OF ROK

ANA ROCKAFELLA GARCIA  
Full Circle Souljahs

Full Circle Souljahs/Full Circle Prod Inc is a Break dance-based nonprofit dance company led by my husband, Gabriel Kwikstep Dioniso, and I, Ana Rokafella Garcia.

We are regarded as two international street dance masters who have helped to bring Hip Hop culture from the street to the stage and to academia. We have been fortunate to enjoy support from Bronx and NYC grassroots organizations that have helped keep the company afloat and visible in the local community. Despite the present crisis, Full Circle remains vibrant and aware of its responsibilities to continue marching forward as an ambassador of culture.

Full Circle began to shift from a crew to a dance company in the early 90's when we met dancing on the streets of Times Square. Realizing that the commercial mainstream had extracted Rap music from its cultural base, Kwikstep wanted to create a platform to help establish the roots of Break dance and keep Hip Hop's elements together while offering professional training for aspiring dancers. We applied for nonprofit status and together we began to be a presence in the dance theater world, representing authentic Hip Hop from its birthplace. Soon our brand of Hip Hop storytelling, complete with beat boxing, DJ'ing, politics and even Congas, excited NYC audience members of all ages. As a husband and wife duo, we were



inspiring young artists to consider a future in directing, writing, acting, filmmaking, or as founders of their own companies or crews. Many of our students moved onto other careers as event planners, fitness trainers, music producers and actors, fortified by the life lessons found in the weekly training sessions, performances and job opportunities offered by the company.

Kwikstep and I as individual artists were held in high regard by the local community because we leveraged our street dance skills into professional careers. We nurtured relationships with arts organizations in NYC (especially in the Bronx) after performing for festivals or as part of seasonal dance activities. These very relationships helped us to learn about funding cycles, tax filings and other necessary administrative requirements.

Full Circle managed to survive dry spells, including the lack of theatrical bookings or not receiving grant awards, by redirecting focus to other realms such as accompanying our students to breaking battles or self-producing local dance events.

One of those events was a party known as *Behind The Groove*. It became an early model of a successful monthly dance party, where the DJs only played classic Hip Hop and Club dance music. We also provided a space for dancers to experience the nostalgia of NYC's club heyday. *Behind the Groove* took place at clubs, dance studios, and recently at a Parkour gym location in Brooklyn. Party sponsorships and door revenue helped to cover overhead expenses during dry spells. Back in 2018, Times Square Arts booked *Behind The Groove* as a site-specific 4 night program in the heart of Times Square that would celebrate NYC's underground dance community by hosting dance battles. Danspace Project recommended *Behind the Groove* to Times Square Arts after presenting Full Circle's Hip hop theater show *Boxed In* as part of their season. This is an example of the kind of independent connections that have kept the company visible and financially thriving despite the lack of a management team or a booking/touring agency. We also ask that our dancers contribute modest monthly dues in exchange for weekly training sessions and to take on small promotional tasks such as updating the company website and social media accounts so we do not have to pay someone to take on these duties. Our board members have been found through our workshops and events after they prove to be committed to helping out and sharing advice.

Full Circle Souljahs has many generations of dancers and artists that have been affected by the coronavirus, and we have reached out to make sure they are all following nutritional regimens and hopeful about their futures as we evolve into more virtual interactions. Kwikstep has begun going LIVE on Instagram (three times a week), offering dance classics and connecting with dancers who tune in, offering a message of resilience and courage. I have performed for BAAD Cinco de Mayo to help keep my audience connected and hopeful. Full Circle had received funds from the Mertz Gilmore Foundation to introduce theatrical dancing to two female Hip Hop choreographers, but had to suspend activities due to the shutdown. However challenging it would seem without access to lighting and sound, the two choreographers agreed to meet with me mid-May via Zoom, to continue developing ideas and record the sessions so they can be prepared should Gibney Studios open up in early September. Three female dancers are rehearsing with me for a Bronx Pride outdoor concert that is waiting to happen once park permits are granted in NYC. Our members are expanding their skills beyond dance battles by offering classes online and promoting their knowledge gained through our training.



ROKAFELLA. PHOTO: JOE CONZO

Full Circle has lasted for several decades in the underground street dance community by developing well rounded, highly sought after dancers. It also has an undeniable presence in the larger NYC dance scene as a group that brings local talent and authenticity to the stage.

Kwikstep and I embrace the changing trends while hanging onto Hip Hop's legacy, striking a delicate balance between preservation and evolution. Despite the ebb and flow of the company's office space, event-based managerial staff and occasional residencies, Full Circle Souljahs keeps trusting the artistic process to produce magic even now, at this time of global pandemic. This is how the company, forged out of a need to offer permanence and ownership to young people of color who are born in NYC, succeeds in providing uplifting examples of tenacity and resilience.



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ROKAFELLA IS A MULTI FACETED AFRO LATIN ARTIST WHO IS INTERNATIONALLY KNOWN FOR HER BREAKDANCE/STREET DANCE MASTERY. SHE CO-FOUNDED NYC'S ONLY BREAKDANCE THEATER COMPANY FULL CIRCLE SOULJAHS WITH HER HUSBAND STREET DANCE PIONEER AND HISTORIAN BBOY KWIKSTEP. SHE IS CURRENTLY A PART TIME PROFESSOR AT THE NEW SCHOOL AND SHE OFFERS CLASSIC HIP HOP DANCE CLASSES TO BEGINNERS AT NJPAC IN NEWARK AND IN MANHATTAN AT PERIDANCE STUDIO. • [LAROKASOUL.COM](http://LAROKASOUL.COM) • [INSTAGRAM.COM/BGIRLLROKAFELLA](https://www.instagram.com/bgirllrokafella)

# VOLUNTEERS ENGAGED

## “Small-Budget” Dance Relies Heavily on Volunteers

“Small-budget” dance is highly reliant on volunteer labor. In fact, on average, survey respondents report engaging 1 full-time employee and 20 unpaid volunteers over the course of a year. Just under half, 44%, do not have any full-time paid employees and 20% have volunteer CEO (or equivalent) positions, but none report volunteer artistic director roles. Other volunteer labor largely supports administrative functions, including administration (40%), marketing/communications (35%), fundraising (31%), and finance (16%).

### FIGURE

Volunteers Exceed Avg Full-Time Paid Employees by 20x



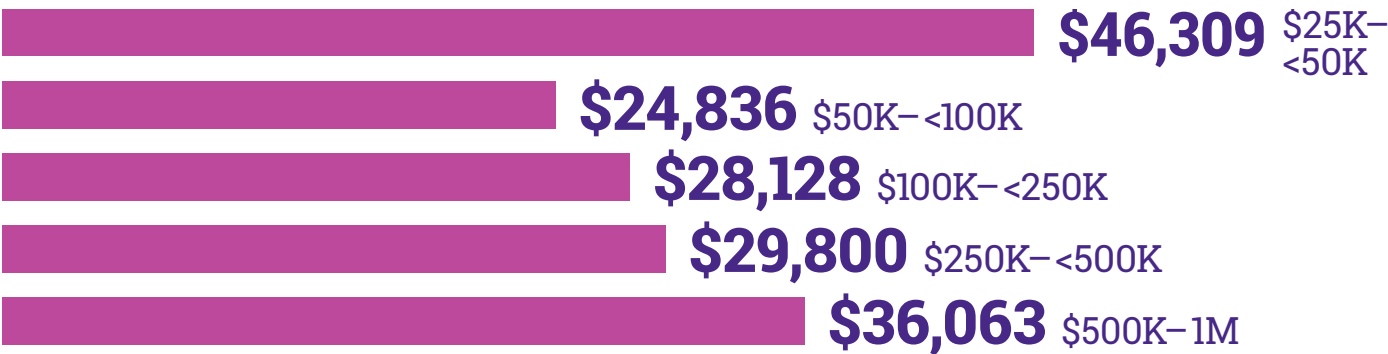
### STAFFING & LABOR (n=111 survey respondents)

Alt text: This bar chart shows the distribution of Staffing and Labor among survey respondents (n=111): Average Full Time Paid Employees (1); Average Unpaid Volunteers (20).

The average annual value of volunteer labor is \$32,542. This value is highest for organizations with the smallest budget size, which report an average volunteer labor value of \$46,309.

### FIGURE

Smallest Budget Organizations Have Highest Average Value of Volunteer Labor



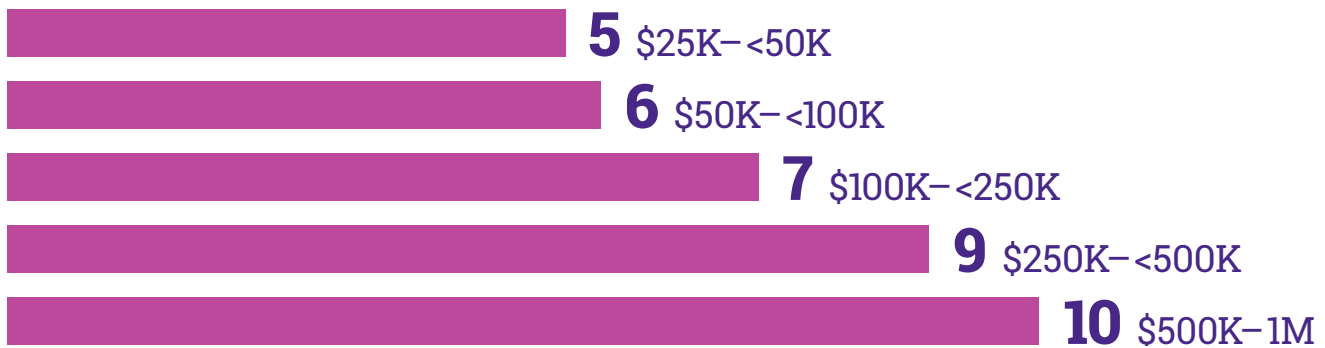
### AVERAGE VALUE OF VOLUNTEER LABOR (n=88 survey respondents)

Alt text: This bar chart shows the distribution of the Average Annual Value of Volunteer Labor among survey respondents (n=88): \$25K–<50K (\$46,309); \$50K–<100K (\$24,836); \$100K–<250K (\$28,128); \$250K–<500K (\$29,800); \$500K–1M (\$36,063).



## FIGURE

## Board Size Increases with Budget Size



## AVERAGE NUMBER OF BOARD MEMBERS (n=82 survey respondents)

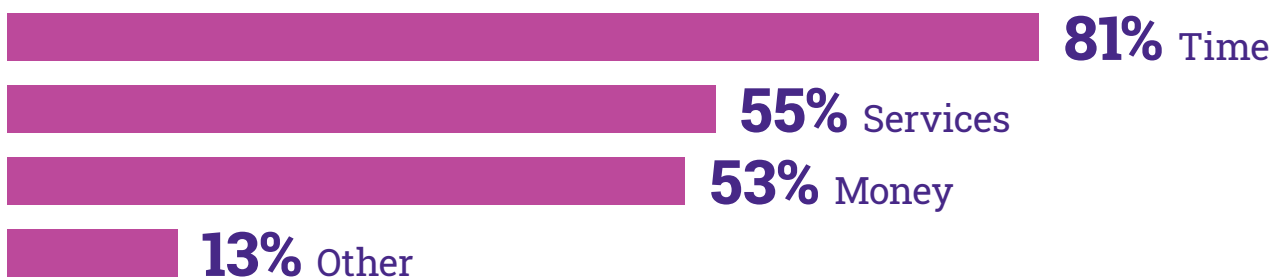
Alt text: This bar chart shows the distribution of the Number of Board Members among survey respondents (n=82): \$25K–<50K (5.1); \$50K–<100K (5.5); \$100K–<250K (6.9); \$250K–<500K (8.5); \$500K–1M (9.5).

Because most survey respondents are nonprofits, most have boards of directors, which are an important part of the “small-budget” volunteer labor pool. Those with boards tend to have small working (hands-on) boards with an average of 7 members. The average number of board members increases with budget size, from 5 for the smallest budget groups to nearly 10 for the largest.

Nearly all, or 81%, of “small-budget” groups require their board members to give time, while just over half, require board members to give services (55%) or “strongly suggest” board members give or raise funds (53%).

## FIGURE

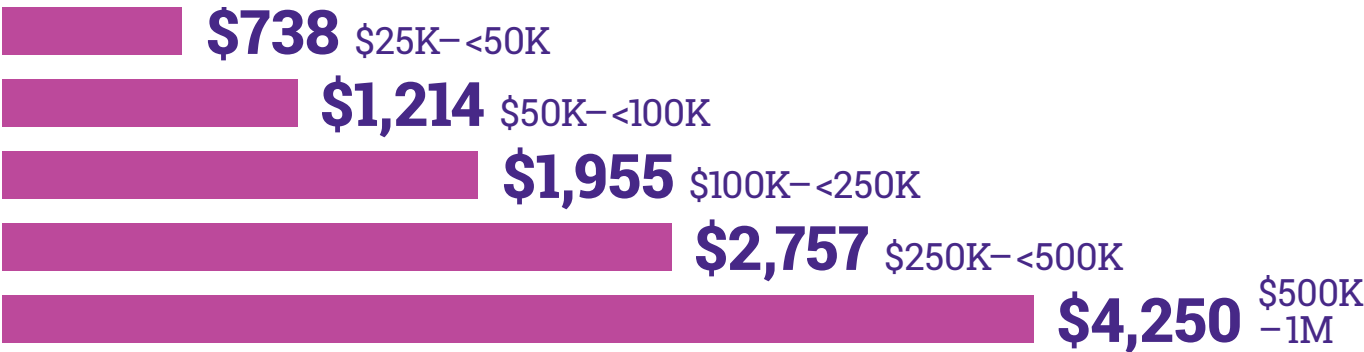
## Most Board Members Volunteer Time &amp; Labor



## BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES (n=83 survey respondents)

Alt text: This bar chart shows the distribution of Board Responsibilities among survey respondents (n=83): Time (81%); Services (55%); Money (53%); Other (13%).

**FIGURE**  
**Suggested Board Contribution Increases with Budget Size**



**AVERAGE SUGGESTED BOARD CONTRIBUTION (n=42 survey respondents)**  
Alt text: This bar chart shows the distribution of Average Suggested Board Contribution among survey respondents (n=42): \$25K–<50K (\$738); \$50K–<100K (\$1,214); \$100K–<250K (\$1,955); \$250K–<500K (\$2,757); \$500K–1M (\$4,250).

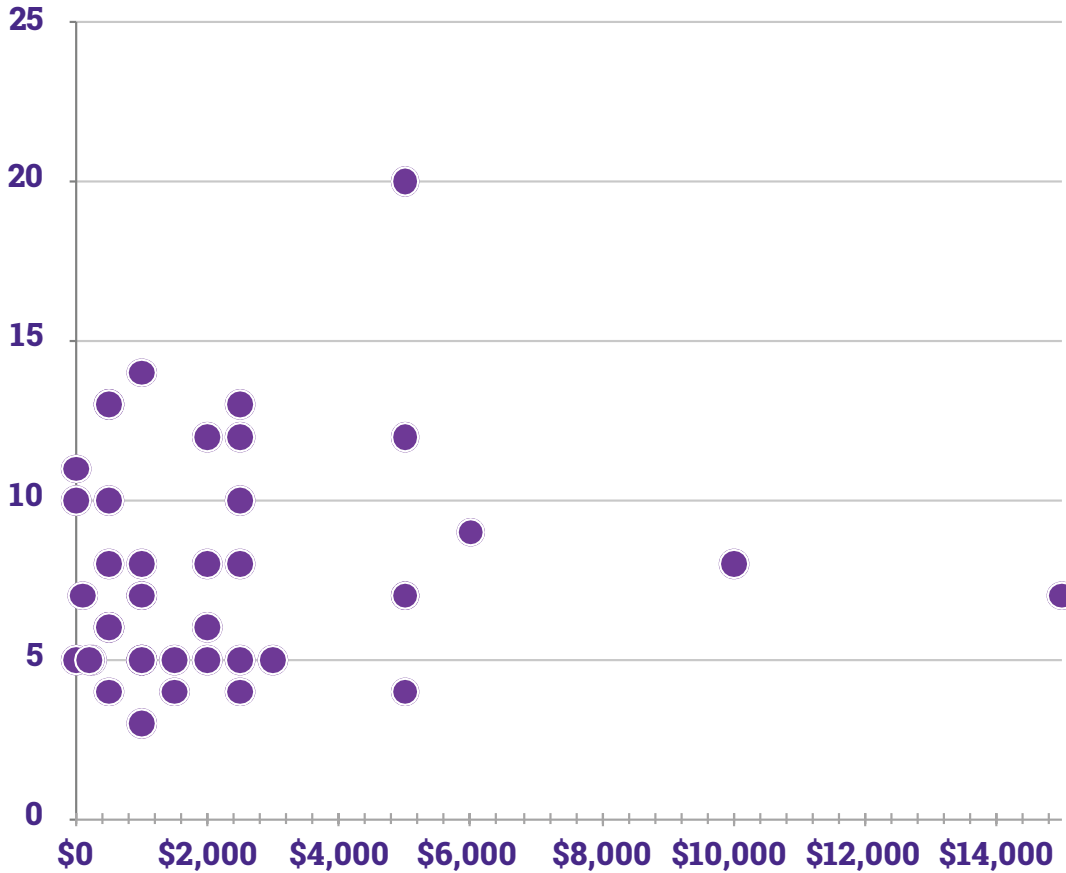
Board members that are required to give or raise funds have an average goal of \$2,500 though it is often optional and not enforced. The average “give or get” requirement increases with budget size, from \$738 for the smallest organizations to \$4,250 for the largest.



KIMIE PARKER (COMPANY ARTIST) SIDRA BELL DANCE NEW YORK. PHOTO: UMI AKIYOSHI PHOTOGRAPHY

## FIGURE

## "Give or Get" Requirement Does Not Correlate with Board Size



### SIZE OF BOARD VS SUGGESTED BOARD CONTRIBUTION (n=42 survey respondents)

Alt text: This scatterplot charts the relationship between the Size of Board (y-axis) and Suggested Board Contribution (x-axis) among survey respondents (n=42). There is a cluster of organizations with less than 10 board members with a suggested donation at or below \$2,000, and a sizable number at \$0 to \$500. Outliers include a 6 person board with a suggested donation of \$15,000, a 7 person board with a suggested donation of \$10,000, and a 20 person board with a suggested donation of \$5,000.

However, the suggested board contribution does not correlate to the size of the board. Board "give or get" requirements tend to sit in the range of \$500 to \$2,500 regardless of board size, with a few exceptions.

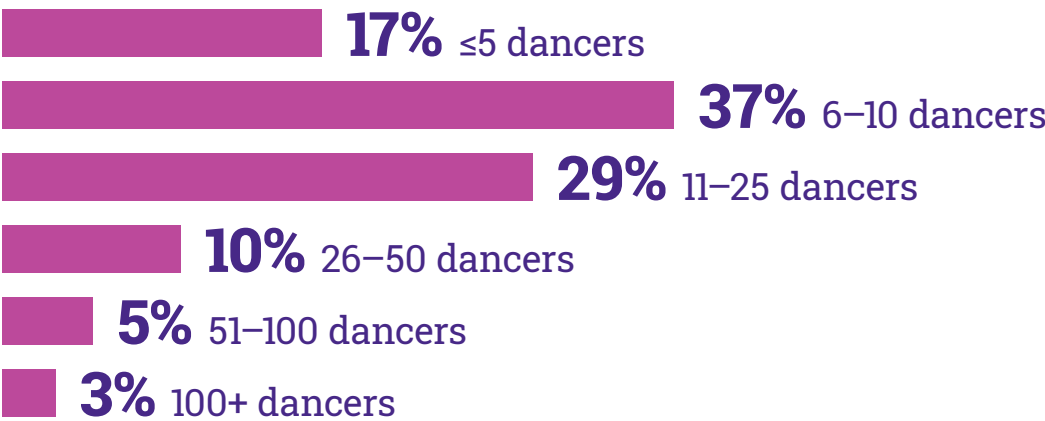
# DANCERS ENGAGED

## “Small-Budget” Dance Makers Prioritize Paying Artists

More than half of survey respondents (54%) engage 10 or fewer dancers annually and 89% of dancers receive some sort of financial compensation, though paying dancers a living wage remains a priority for “small-budget” dance makers. There are a few organizations that engage many more dancers, mostly for festival activities.

### FIGURE

Most Dancers are Compensated But Paying Them a Living Wage Remains a Goal



### NUMBER OF DANCERS ENGAGED ANNUALLY (n=104 survey respondents)

Alt text: This bar chart shows the distribution of Number of Dancers Engaged Annually among survey respondents (n=104): 5 or less (17%); 6 to 10 (37%); 11 to 25 (29%); 26 to 50 (10%); 51 to 100 (5%); 100+ (3%).

This research did not delve into wage levels or overall compensation for artistic leads, the dancers they engage, or other paid personnel— a topic that will be addressed in future research.



## ESSAY

# Investing in Infrastructure: The Role of Research and Data Collection

CLARISSA SOTO JOSEPHS, Associate Director, Pentacle



PHOTO: PENTACLE

How can we help more artists?  
Moreso, how can we help artists  
develop infrastructure so that they  
can become sustainable entities?  
These are questions that drive me and  
keep me inspired on my quest to find  
sustainability for “small-budget” artists.

While there is a lot of anecdotal information from first-hand experience, it is also important to invest in research and data collection so that we can move forward in a strategic and thoughtful manner. Dance/NYC has done a wonderful job creating a space for these conversations and leading thoughtful data collection, further demonstrating that there is a lot that we can do to help our industry move forward towards sustainability.

In my experience working with “small-budget” artists, many times these artistic entities work on a project basis and are rarely able to plan long-term due to a lack of infrastructure. Most of the artist’s time is allocated to direct programming and fundraising. There is often no administrative staff to assist in tracking the data needed or to complete the actual reporting required. However, investing some time into research and data collection can help artists in strategic decision making, enhance programming, and ultimately get them one step closer to sustainability.

Through the collection of data, artists are able to create benchmarks for success. By creating specific benchmarks both financially and artistically, artists can create a clearer path towards their goals and hold themselves accountable each step of the way.

The measuring and analysis of data will help artists see what is working and what needs improvement. This will initiate a systematic approach to analysis and revision, and ultimately help them make strategic decisions both in the short and long-term. This approach will also bring to light setbacks that need to be re-strategized. It can be applied to financials, audience engagement, outreach, marketing, touring, and many other aspects of one's artistic entity. Inherently this will help improve programming from year to year, prepare you for reporting requirements, and in turn show up on your bottom line.

The collection of data can also serve as an archiving resource that can help artists build upon their own history. By tracking your data, you can begin to compare your programming activities from one year to the next.

The ability to look back at previous years' data can be a helpful tool when making projections for the future. An example of this is in budgeting. One of the most valuable tools when making budget projections is to look at your previous years' actual data. It can be used as a starting point and can guide you in making accurate projections.

Fundraising has also increased the importance of data collection. Many times, "small-budget" dance makers are unable to meet grant deadlines due to the lack of infrastructure in place. Grants highlight the need for data collection because they require artists to submit budgets, statistical reports, and other supplemental materials within a set time frame. If this data has not been tracked along the way, it takes a lot of time and resources to collect the data needed to submit a grant by the due date. This is also the case when it comes to presenting reports to a potential funder or your Board of Directors. Data collection has become necessary when raising money.

It is important to understand that research studies are only as good as the data they use to make conclusions.

Though self-reporting can be an efficient way to collect data, it can also leave room for error and discrepancies. This is why it is important that artists create formal systems for collecting and analyzing their own data. While it may take some time and resources upfront to create efficient and effective systems, it will be worth it as your entity begins to grow. The larger your artistic entity grows, the more challenging it can be to organize and measure data after the fact. Therefore, I would recommend to artists that they begin creating these systems and processes right from the start. Artists are sure to see the benefits in both the short- and long-term.



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CLARISSA SOTO JOSEPHS HAS WORKED AS AN ARTS ADMINISTRATOR AND EDUCATOR FOR NEARLY A DECADE. AS THE ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF PENTACLE, SHE HAS MERGED HER PASSIONS FOR DANCE AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP BY HELPING DANCE ARTISTS NAVIGATE THEIR CRAFT WITHIN THE PERFORMING ARTS AND NONPROFIT FIELDS...WORKING WITH HUNDREDS OF ARTISTS, TRAINING MORE THAN 200 INTERNS IN ARTS ADMINISTRATION, AND DEVELOPING INNOVATIVE WAYS TO BRING SUSTAINABILITY TO YOUNG ARTISTS. • [PENTACLE.ORG](https://pentacle.org) • [INSTAGRAM.COM/CSOJO89](https://www.instagram.com/CSOJO89)







# KEY FINDINGS

## WHAT ARE THE EXPERIENCES OF "SMALL-BUDGET" DANCE MAKERS?

"I've always been interested in physical presence being the way to advocate, to envision, and to signal a change."

The numbers tell a story, but the faces, voices and lived experiences of "small-budget" dance makers remind us that this numerically-defined segment of the field is comprised of human beings. These dance makers long for change that facilitates depth of process and value (as opposed to product and volume) and provides knowledge, consistency, sustainability, inclusivity, and equity that will allow them to thrive. The urgency of this moment brings new light and depth to issues that define success and address justice, equity, and inclusion.

# (Re)defining “Success”

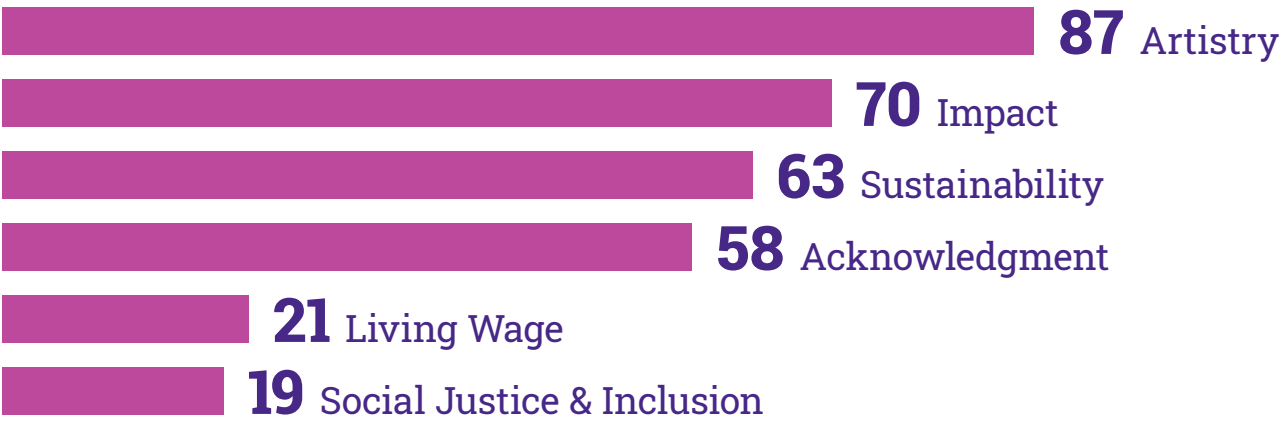
How do “small-budget” dance makers define success and what does that suggest about their needs and priorities? Much like “small-budget,” the connotation of the term “success” was also widely debated in study convenings. The research revealed that “small-budget” dance is frustrated with the typically held notions that an arts entity’s success is defined by audience size, number of commissions/engagements, positive reviews, and trajectory from small-scale to large-scale or from project-based to formal organization.

“Small-budget” dance makers acknowledge that public and private funders, individual donors, venues, audiences, and the general public subscribe to notions of success in a very narrow way—and some artistic leadership admitted to using these metrics, though problematic, to measure success for themselves and their organizations, groups, and projects.

How should “success” be defined? This research did not result in viable alternatives for the term but revealed six areas of priority that contribute to “small-budget” dance entities’ sense of value and worth.

## FIGURE

### “Small-Budget” Dance Makers Define Success in Terms of Six Priority Areas



#### TERMS USED TO DEFINE SUCCESS: Number of mentions (n=97 survey respondents)

Alt text: This bar chart shows the distribution of Terms Used to Define Success among survey respondents (n=97): Artistry (87%); Impact (70); Sustainability (63); Acknowledgment (58); Living Wage (21); Social Justice and Inclusion (19).

**Artistry:** Having the autonomy to make high-quality work that reflects relevance, creativity, excellence, originality, and risk-taking in dance. Connected to this is a need to access resources and tools that support artistic practice and collaborations, either through existing or new structures. And the ability to find and celebrate the value and intrinsic worth of the artistic process, perhaps even more so than outcomes.

**Impact:** Providing value and facilitating unique connection with and between individuals and community. This value and connection can be defined and quantified in countless ways around engaging audiences, creating dialogue, strengthening community, enriching life experience, and inspiring emotions such as joy and passion.

**Sustainability:** Consistently accessing requisite funding and resources (time, space, wages) to allow “small-budget” projects and groups to persist, persevere, grow (if desired), and thrive.

**Acknowledgment:** Feeling visible, valued and acknowledged (in terms of self and others), ranging from public recognition and critical acclaim, to performance opportunities, to personal feelings of fulfillment, empowerment and pride.

**Living Wage:** Earning sufficient and stable income to support dance-making as a career that provides a reasonable quality of life, also extending to adequately compensate dance workers for their role in making dance.

**Social Justice & Inclusion:** Combating white supremacy and structures of power inherent in dance-making and dance giving, including racism, ableism, and the inequitable distribution of resources, which leads to undervalued and under-resourced dance communities.

Fundamentally, survey input and discussions at convenings reveal that “small-budget” dance is compelled to move away from value, success or “worth” defined solely by numerical figures, and instead toward definitions based on “process over product,” individuals over structures, depth of engagement over breadth of audience, community accountability over funder accountability, and social impact over economic impact.

## Addressing Racism & Inequality

### “Small-Budget” Dance Makers Are Negatively Impacted by Oppression, Racism & Implicit Bias

Throughout the study process, “small-budget” dance makers articulated the many challenges and barriers they confront in making, sharing, and sustaining their work. The challenges they shared that were rooted in systemic racism and other forms of oppression manifest in two ways.

Externally, “small-budget” artistic leadership confront oppression and racism as they share and fund their work, engage audiences and donors, access funding from public and private entities, seek touring and performance opportunities, and advocate for themselves as individuals and organizations in the arts ecosystem and society. In convenings, “small-budget” dance makers describe these external barriers being rooted in classism, racism, ableism, and xenophobia, resulting in:

- Difficulty attaining the recognition, independence, and trust required to be effectively valued and supported as essential to society, leading to low wages, challenges to accessing benefits, affordable housing, and other life necessities;
- Inequitable access to philanthropic funds, which in turn limits sustainability and growth. This study’s findings show that ALAANA “small-budget” dance makers disproportionately access funding from private foundations and government sources as compared to White-led groups in this segment;
- Disparate levels of understanding and education around how to best legally protect, manage, and fund work, noted within this research as a particular challenge for immigrant artists who are without experience or knowledge to effectively navigate tax and financial structures in the US;
- Prioritization of resources to engage with and respond to funders on their terms in order to survive, which traps dance makers in the funding cycle and mitigates ability to move beyond those structures; and
- Limited opportunities for presentation and touring given the elevation of Eurocentric art forms and dance genres within arts and culture.



Internally, “small-budget” dance makers describe being impacted by racism and oppression in terms of the structural frameworks that drive the creative process, organizational management and oversight, and resource allocation. This internal racism and oppression results in:

- Lack of ALAANA, immigrant and disabled representation in artistic leadership as evidenced by demographic data on the characteristics of “small-budget” artistic leads which shows that leadership is not representative of New York City as a whole;
- Work generated through oppressive structures that put artistic leads and choreographers in strong positions of power over dancers and/or other collaborators;
- Pressure to compromise artistry (and mission for nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations) to meet financial needs and expectations, despite a consensus that artistry is the most critical contributor to success; and
- High reliance on volunteer and in-kind labor, as resources are prioritized for production and not for the individuals that make the work happen.

## **“Small-Budget” Dance Makers Are Committed to Anti-Racist & Anti-Oppressive Practices**

In response, many “small-budget” dance makers are centering their work on anti-racism and anti-oppressive practices. In convenings, they expressed a desire to access structures and resources that will allow them to prioritize social justice and inclusion and pay artists a living wage. They long to reinvent the ecosystem to dismantle structures of power inherent in the creative process. And they are committed to establishing field-wide accountability and interdependence in response to oppression and racism.

This work is beginning but requires more attention and action, both inside and outside of the dance ecosystem. Within research convenings, several artistic leads described efforts to redistribute hierarchical power through deliberately designed creative development processes that have become more focused on partnership and collaboration. For some, the work to eliminate bias is becoming more deeply embedded in the construct of their organization or project’s artistry, infrastructure, management and values. For others, it is more aspirational but necessary to address, particularly given the nationwide dialogue around systemic racism. Generally, there is a commitment to openness and inclusivity but specific goals and actions to combat implicit bias have not yet been brought to bear.



## ESSAY

# #thehustle or How We Might Redistribute Power So This Is A 70s Dance, Not An Ongoing Fight For Worthiness

LAUREN SLONE, Director of Grants and Research, MAP Fund



PHOTO: ERIN TINDOL

In April, Dance/NYC invited me to respond to this prompt: “Imagine if and how the funding community could use or is using new definitions of impact as a metric for grant evaluation? (i.e. social impact, emotional impact or otherwise...) Are there precedents inside or outside of the arts?”

In the past, I wouldn’t have hesitated to answer these questions, as I spend most of my waking hours exploring equity and power redistribution in MAP Fund’s ([mapfundblog.org](https://mapfundblog.org)) grantmaking and relationship-building practices. Yet it seemed that the world itself was asking me to pause and listen for what this moment has to say about our field’s interdependencies.

What I know so far is that I'm angry about ongoing anti-Black violence and the underlying inequities that have been allowed to compound and spread widely enough to devastate an entire sector. No one could have predicted this global pandemic, but We [all of us in the field] have known on various levels how much risk arts workers have been amassing, and how economically vulnerable Our people have been/are/will be in the immediate future.

It is my hope that questioning our questions may lead to better solutions. As such, I've tried to highlight the assumptions that are embedded within the prompt itself. I'm certain they connect to our ecology's relational imbalances and failure to mitigate financial fragilities on a spectacular scale.

**Assumption (A):** *Imagine if and how the funding community...*

Even as this frame asks for new definitions, presumably to arrive at metrics that better correlate to arts workers' actual conditions, funders still have the agency to author, evaluate, and make consequential decisions. For example, MAP seeks out annual feedback about our work from constituents, but we generate the questions and set our own benchmarks for output.

I'm not aware of any substantive mechanisms for dance artists, producers, or presenters to participate in defining funders' impact, nor do they have tangible ways to meaningfully shift—or even be made aware of—funders' discretionary choices. Power and financial risks remain insulated, rather than shared. Thus, redefining impact must also mean changing who defines it.

Revision: Imagine if arts workers could use definitions of impact to evaluate their funders' decision-making (i.e. a funding organization's existence would be contingent upon how well it is serving its constituents' metrics)?



**Assumption (B):** *...the funding community could use or is using...*

Here, “use” is predicated upon the ways in which the entire ecology must continuously prove value because of the economy and marketplaces we are all nestled within. While there are vastly different scales of precarity, everyone—from artists to foundation officers who are fighting to sustain programmatic budgets—has to develop a significant practice in repeatedly justifying their worthiness to participate in the field.

Although MAP has no requirement that artists demonstrate impact in their application, grantees speak to it in final reports. We try to create the kind of relationships where arts workers feel encouraged to speak honestly about their experiences. More often than not, they generate positively spun narratives, in part because of tremendous fears about naming a grant’s (frequently insufficient) coverage of actual costs.

It is worth noting that final reports have an implicit function beyond the earnest desire to learn about artists’ work and reach. As an intermediary, the information serves as a tool for demonstrating MAP’s value in our own fundraising efforts (i.e. our philanthropic investment played a partial role in artists’ accomplishments). We need “success stories” because our survival is bound in the artists’ work and reach.

If “proving” worth remains a capitalist necessity, can we find other ways of doing that which don’t require arts workers to produce gratitude tales and miraculously balanced budgets?

**Revision:** Imagine if the entire dance ecology could save time, energy, and dignity if it did not have to invent new definitions of its value over and over again?

**Assumption (C):** *...new definitions of impact...precedents outside of the arts?*

Like for-profit entities, "measuring impact" in dance is often rooted in the belief that value doesn't exist unless it is made visible, and that artistic effort must have a concrete, calculable result. This feeds into a sprawling fantasy narrative that the field has perpetuated and internalized: artists happily sacrifice themselves on a free climb towards a fully-funded, infinite opportunity career pinnacle.

Often celebrated under the seemingly benign guise of "DIY ethos" or "artist as entrepreneur," (rather than the extractive, individualistic, perpetual GDP growth mindset that it is), we actively push arts workers to expand. We surmise that if "successful," they will eventually attract enough resources to create and share their work in perpetuity. To this end, funding partners try to use impact-related data to determine the "right" inflection points for investing in an artist's career, which is supposed to help them get on the golden pathway to sustainability (i.e. self-sustaining rather than reliant on philanthropy). It also absolves arts institutions from sharing responsibility for bolstering infrastructure, mitigating fragility, or sharing risk.

The stark message underneath this narrative is that if artists are not able to simultaneously tour more, make more projects, gain more audiences, have more of an online presence, build more relationships with community members, sell in more marketplaces, build more cash reserves, receive more merit awards, acquire more social capital, and gain more control over their distribution, it is because *they are failures*—and back to the point of this essay—they have no demonstrable impact, which ultimately means that they are unworthy of support. This dynamic is particularly acute for those who are systemically oppressed, including BIPOC, QTPOC, LGBTQIA+, disabled, immigrant or undocumented, elder, rural, and women-identifying arts workers.

And so, everyone pursues #thehustle amidst increasing levels of profound burnout and justified frustration.

If "fully-funded, infinite opportunity career pinnacle," was a real place, we would have seen someone actually reach it, and Artist Relief ([artistrelief.org](https://artistrelief.org)) (MAP is a coalition member and our staff contribute labor to the collective effort) would not have an unfathomable number of applications ([artistrelief.org/news](https://artistrelief.org/news)) for dire emergency funding right now.

Of course, we want artists to make work, and for that work to scale according to the size of their evolving visions. However, the overemphasis on impact helps all of us to ignore the emotional, operational, personal, and financial fragilities that arts workers hold disproportionately, and the reality that the vast majority have little or no access to the level of capital that would be substantial enough to resource their work and collaborators, let alone sustain their well-being.

Revision: Imagine if the dance ecology could use new definitions of financial support grounded in the specific realities and vulnerabilities of arts workers to strategically bolster emergency savings and cash flow, eliminate debt, support rest/well-being, and share operational risk amongst creative constellations of individuals and organizations?



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TRAINED AS A DANCE ARTIST AND SYSTEMS ANALYST, LAUREN SLONE HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS A “CHOREOGRAPHIC THINKER,” WHICH MEANS THAT SHE LOVES TO DESIGN PATHWAYS FOR PEOPLE TO ACHIEVE THEIR HOPES AND VISIONS. SINCE 2005, SLONE HAS CREATED AND RE-IMAGINED GRANT PROGRAMS, ARTS EDUCATION CURRICULA, A YOUTH MENTORSHIP PROGRAM, PRESENTATION PLATFORMS, AND PERFORMANCE PROJECTS THAT DEMOCRATIZE PUBLIC ACCESS TO ARTS AND CULTURE LOCALLY, NATIONALLY, AND INTERNATIONALLY.

[LAUREN-SLONE.COM/NATIONALGRANTMAKING](https://lauren-slone.com/nationalgrantmaking) • [INSTAGRAM.COM/RAMBLINREE](https://www.instagram.com/ramblinree) • [TWITTER.COM/THEMAPFUND](https://twitter.com/themapfund) • [LINKEDIN.COM/IN/LAUREN-SLONE](https://www.linkedin.com/in/lauren-slone)







# RECOMMENDATIONS

## HOW CAN WE MOVE "SMALL-BUDGET" DANCE MAKERS FROM SURVIVING TO THRIVING?

"'Small-budget' doesn't capture what we offer. We have a value that a bigger organization may not be able to achieve and the more others know that value, the more we could gather the resources we need."

The characteristics, inner-workings, and needs of "small-budget" dance are unique. This segment is more diverse, resourceful, and nimble than the field as a whole. It is focused on "process over product" and "value over volume." These defining characteristics contrast starkly with the priorities of historical funding practices and the legal and operating structures in which "small-budget" dance works, as well as the capitalistic economic principles that govern art making in the US.

## FRAMEWORK FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to derive recommendations from the data collected, many broad themes and historical contexts needed to be distilled into a usable filter. The findings, taken together with NYC's current climate, gave rise to the following framework of analysis. The three (3) broad recommendations named below are influenced by:

### 1) The pervasive impacts of racism and inequality.

Dance/NYC's work has revealed vast disparities that impact dance-making and its research, programs, and activities are built on a resolve to advance justice in the field in response. So, at the heart of each recommendation is a commitment to address the effects of white supremacy and its tactics of oppression—racism, ableism, xenophobia, to name a few—on the field, as well as the structures of power that were built on these tactics.

### 2) The relevance of this moment and its impact.

As this study progressed, so did the arrival and spread of COVID-19, the most significant public health crisis to face our global community in more than a century. Dance/NYC's *Coronavirus Dance Impact Study* (2020), including "small-budget" organizations, groups and projects, will be published in the coming months. Preliminary findings suggest that "small-budget" dance is at risk, with the smallest organizations projecting losses that on average amount to 40% of their operating budgets, and this risk is deepening as the pandemic persists. As a result, while some of the following recommendations address issues that have long been discussed in the field, all are magnified with new depth, tone, and urgency.

### 3) The need for collective action.

"Small-budget" dance is doing the best it can under existing conditions but these findings suggest it needs more to thrive. These needs, and the ability to fulfill them, extend beyond the dance ecosystem and require cross-collaborative and intentional advocacy at the neighborhood, city, state, and federal levels.

The data and dialogues collected through this work, as well as the existing body of research, have identified a series of stakeholders with the agency to advance “small-budget” dance towards new definitions of success, resilience, and sustainability.

These stakeholders include:

- Foundations, public agencies, and donors;
- Arts organizations, fiscally-sponsored projects, and dance-making entities of all types and sizes;
- Artistic and administrative leaders of organizations, groups, and projects;
- Dance presenters and venues with budgets over \$1M;
- Individual dance makers and dance workers;
- Educational institutions; and
- Service organizations.

Each recommendation includes action items for relevant stakeholder groups. With every stakeholder engaged in meaningful advocacy and action, “small-budget” dance will move from a place of surviving to thriving.



## RECOMMENDATION 1

### Value “Small-Budget” Dance Workers As Dignified Laborers

“Perpetually we are asked to justify our existence by quantitative methodologies to fulfill the collection of data that in turn justifies the funders’ own existence to the powers they are subscribed to. It is a never-ending loop of justifications.”

Across this study’s convenings, “small-budget” dance makers spoke to the ways their work is undervalued and how that message is reinforced through fee structures, working conditions, lack of labor protections, and so on. This research, along with other field-wide research such as the *Coronavirus Dance Impact Study* (2020), has articulated the related challenges facing individuals that comprise this segment, including:

- Low, varied, and intermittent compensation which requires workers to piece together multiple gigs and projects (including work outside of the field for 34% of “small-budget” artistic leads);
- Inaccessible medical and mental health care;
- Lack of respect and provision for the rest and therapies required to care for the body as an instrument of dance work;
- The need to fulfill a wide and varied set of responsibilities that typically have no limits on the length of a workday and respect for work/life balance;
- The search for affordable and accessible space in which to develop and present work; and
- The related mental load of navigating a livelihood that is inconsistent, uncertain, multi-dimensional, and multi-faceted.

3. Valcour, M. (2014). The Power of Dignity in the Workplace. *Harvard Business Review*. Retrieved August 11, 2020, from [hbr.org/2014/04/the-power-of-dignity-in-the-workplace](https://hbr.org/2014/04/the-power-of-dignity-in-the-workplace)

4. Sayer, A. (2007). Dignity at Work: Broadening the Agenda. *Organization*, 14(4), 565–581. [doi.org/10.1177/1350508407078053](https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508407078053)



At the same time:

- The general public and funding community place value and focus on the “final product,” rather than on the process and people who create and deliver that process;
- Educational institutions provide artistic training, but the curricula do not consistently provide administrative or financial training to empower artists to effectively manage their work and career; and
- The sector, and particularly public agencies, advocate for the investment in the arts as an industry and economy, with little focus on the artists that work within it.

This all suggests that while the art is valued, the art maker is not. Artists are not yet considered necessary and thus are not compensated as such, despite their proven contributions to economic growth, quality of education, personal health and wellness, and community identity and pride.

Beyond the arts, research shows that dignity in work incorporates ideologies of recognition, trust, autonomy, and self-mastery.<sup>3,4</sup> People feel dignity in work from basic working conditions and treatment but also from what is gained from their work, such as feelings of self-worth, recognition, prospects for growth, and, most important in capitalistic society, monetary compensation. Many of the needs and labor concerns surrounding “small-budget” dance are connected to these issues, as well as societal structures that preclude worker groups and multiply oppressed communities from accessing living wages, affordable housing, healthcare, and other basic needs and rights.

In order to meet the needs of “small-budget” dance, the value of dance work must be redefined and accepted as dignified labor. That can then lead to necessary fair labor standards for the field’s workers, including wages, work conditions (duration, time of day, temperature, safety, equipment, and tools), working environment (culture, processes, structure, management), and more. These standards will re-center individuals in dance-making and allow “small-budget” dance to focus on consistency, sustainability, inclusivity, and equity.

## TAKING ACTION

How can we ensure “small-budget” dance workers are valued and supported as dignified labor?

## Actions for Foundations, Public Agencies & Donors

- ✓ Partner with other stakeholders (dance organizations, projects and groups, artistic and administrative leaders, individual dance makers and dance workers, community organizers, presenters, large-scale dance organizations/venues, educational institutions, service organizations, etc.) to develop wage standards for dance workers and a bill of dance workers' rights;
- ✓ Prioritize funding for community organizers and groups with proven commitment to paying artists living wages, and ensure that if project-based funding is employed, a significant portion is dedicated to living wages for artists, including the provision of benefits;
- ✓ Develop long-term relationships based on trust and mutual accountability with "small-budget" groups by making long-term investments through multi-year, unrestricted funding for wages, operations and programs;
- ✓ Fund dance-specific leadership development and training resources with specific focus on board development resources and training for artistic leads with multiple and varied responsibilities;
- ✓ Reorganize the funding hierarchy by engaging artists in every level of the grantmaking process;
- ✓ Prioritize funding for historically under-resourced groups, specifically organizations that are led by and predominantly serve ALAANA, disabled and immigrant folks; Specifically focus on groups that are well-positioned and already accountable to their communities, aiming for reparative and long-term funding; and
- ✓ Reduce barriers to accessing support by:
  - Strengthening funding opportunities for newly established and individual artists in light of funding practices that limit eligibility for entities with less than 3 years of operations;
  - Reducing budget thresholds for eligibility, specifically prioritizing groups with budgets under \$250K;
  - Simplifying submission processes, improving accessibility of applications and extending application timelines; and
  - Creating funding opportunities for artists working outside of the 501(c)(3) model.

## Actions for Artistic Leads & Company Leadership

- ✓ Prioritize resources to support the essential needs of artists, with reparations paid to Black and Indigenous artists, including living wage as well as time and space for mental and physical wellness and care;
- ✓ Engage in intentional advocacy at the neighborhood, city, state, and federal levels for increased wages, wage standards, and clear and transparent employment policies and practices (employment status, wages, benefits, contract terms) to position dance as dignified work and artists as necessary workers.
- ✓ Partner with other stakeholders (funders, public agencies, dance workers, community organizers, presenters, large-scale dance organizations/venues, educational institutions, service organizations, etc.) to develop wage standards for dance workers and a bill of dance workers' rights;
- ✓ Create decision-making structures that eliminate hierarchy and provide transparency around wages, benefits, and accommodations provided to all involved workers, including leaders and artists;
- ✓ Utilize contracts that include transparent details of technical riders, access riders, and clear descriptions of wages earned and the rights of workers; and
- ✓ Address internal manifestations of racism, ableism, and xenophobia present in audition and rehearsal processes, collaboration practices, intellectual property ownership and crediting, performance conditions, and role assignments that mitigate opportunities for participation and promotion by ALAANA, disabled and immigrant communities.

# SPOTLIGHT

## SLMDances

Sydney L. Mosley Dances (SLMDances) is a New York City-based dance-theater collective that works in communities to organize for gender and racial justice through thought-provoking, experiential, and interactive dance performance.

The Collective's core values include humanity, which prompts the organization to honor the truth that every artist and collaborator brings to the work; **transparency in the organization's internal and external practices**; and learning that occurs bilaterally among peers in class, rehearsal, and performance.

In 2017, the Collective developed a statement outlining its approach to race and gender equity, which included a commitment to always pay and present trans, cis, nonbinary, queer, disabled, fat, masculine presenting, Black women and femmes of all generations, and to maintain a composition ratio of 60% Black folks and 40% non-Black people of color and white folks. The Statement also provided clear guidelines for how the collective's members uplift the stories of Black folks in the artistic visioning process and audience development.



## Actions for Individual Dance Makers & Workers

- ✓ Partner with other stakeholders (funders, public agencies, artistic and company leadership, presenters, large-scale dance organizations/venues, community organizers, educational institutions, service organizations, etc.) to develop wage standards for dance workers and a bill of dance workers rights;
- ✓ Engage in community organizing and advocacy around dance workers' rights at the neighborhood, local, state, and federal level;
- ✓ Participate in efforts to disband systems of oppression and racism that inherently exist in artistic and administrative functions of dance-making and demand wage reparations for Black and Indigenous artists;
- ✓ Demand fair labor standards when negotiating agreements and contracts, ensuring that expectations, safety protocols, issues of liability, insurance, work hours, and payment schedules are agreed upon in advance and always clearly articulated in a written contract;
- ✓ Develop processes to guide decision-making around wages and work opportunities, such as acceptable conditions under which to provide/engage unpaid labor, and determining wages that align with true costs and value.

# SPOTLIGHT

## Creating New Futures

Creating New Futures' Phase 1 Working Guidelines for Ethics & Equity in Presenting Dance & Performance is a living document, ongoing conversation, and outline of the needs and desires of arts workers in the dance and performance fields.

It was drafted as a call to action to address the deep-rooted inequities and deficiencies in the field that were amplified by the global pandemic and recent social events.

The project's overall goal is "to create a more equitable and inclusive dance & performance ecosystem, in which everyone can thrive." In furtherance of this goal, the document acknowledges the need for reparations for Black, Indigenous, and other people of color; sets an anti-oppression intention for the impending work; and promotes transparency, accountability and collaboration with all, regardless of status and power.

Resulting **guidelines of Phase 1 include a set of functional protocols that outline equitable and just practices in funding, booking, cancellations, and artist and presenter relations**, including the execution of deal memos and contracts that specifically state each party's level of financial and scheduling commitments and stipulations that outline guarantees, deposits or full payment in the event of cancellations and extraordinary circumstances.

Phase 2 is now emerging and is formed by working groups that include: Black and Indigenous Survivors group, Disability+ group, Intersectional Riders group, and a Contracts/Force Majeure group, with potential groups in discussion like the Natureculture Watershed group. There will be a variety of virtual public convenings and new writing added to the public document late in fall 2020.

## Actions for Presenters & Dance Organizations/ Venues with Budgets Over \$1M

- ✓ Ensure artists, dance makers, and other personnel earn a living wage for engagements and equitably share artist-related expenses with dance makers, such as travel or immigration fees;
- ✓ Engage in intentional cross-sectoral advocacy at the neighborhood, local, state, and federal levels for increased wages, wage standards, and clear and transparent employment policies and practices (employment status, wages, benefits, contract terms), to position dance as dignified work and artists as necessary workers;
- ✓ Partner with other stakeholders (funders, public agencies, artistic and company leadership, individual workers, community organizers, educational institutions, service organizations, etc.) to develop wage standards for dance workers and a bill of dance workers' rights;
- ✓ Reorganize the decision-making hierarchy by providing transparency and engaging artists in every level of the programming process, including residency programs;
- ✓ Engage in strategic programming planning to ensure the breadth and diversity of the field is effectively represented in offerings;
- ✓ Address internal bias present in programming decision-making and staffing that prioritizes White Eurocentric dance and limits curation and performance opportunities for ALAANA, disabled, and immigrant "small-budget" dance makers;
- ✓ Utilize contracts that include transparent details of technical riders, access riders, and clear descriptions of wages earned and the rights of workers, including intellectual property and credit for their work; and
- ✓ Create accessible, affordable, and safe spaces for dance makers to rehearse and perform without fear of discrimination.

# SPOTLIGHT

## Performance Space New York

Performance Space New York has been the leading purveyor of radical self-expression, and the antithesis to mainstream arts presenting since 1980.

Their lasting position in the now-gentrified East Village fuels their commitment to remain an artistic force in inclusive and community development.

In January 2020, the organization expanded upon this commitment to artistic-driven inclusion with **an announcement that the governance of all operations would be entrusted to a group of New York-based artists**—an initiative entitled O2020. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and its related disruptions, the cohort of artists was given untethered access to the inner workings of the organization, including the total annual production budget.

As of March 2020, a bevy of programming was rolling out, including Open Movement conceived by Jonathan González, which would offer free, weekly theater space without the need for reservations; Permission Slipping, a series of workshops in movement and mental practice organized by Monica Mirabile; Brujas World Syndicate, an experimental union for cultural producers; and Radio Bonita, a radio station that would stream directly from the Performance Space lobby. The initial project was set to last one year. Time will tell what adjustments will be made due to the pandemic.



## Actions for Educational Institutions

- ✓ Partner with other stakeholders (funders, public agencies, artistic and company leadership, individual workers, presenters, large-scale dance organizations/venues, community organizers, service organizations, etc.) to develop wage standards for dance workers and a bill of dance workers' rights;
- ✓ Enhance curriculum and training to address the benefits and impacts that artists and arts workers provide to individuals, communities, and society as a whole;
- ✓ Develop curriculum and learning opportunities to create pathways for disabled, immigrant, and ALAANA artists to advance to artistic leadership;
- ✓ Teach students about the many roles and responsibilities (educator, administrator, community organizer) that may be required of dance makers, including dance advocacy, mechanisms for managing emotional and mental health, and principles of arts administration needed to manage their work as individual dance makers and/or managers of projects and organizations; and
- ✓ Model the practice of paying artists a living wage by engaging in fair labor practices and standards for arts workers and educators.

## Actions for Dance Service Providers

- ✓ Partner with other stakeholders (funders, public agencies, artistic and company leadership, individual workers, presenters, large-scale dance organizations/venues, community organizers, educational institutions, etc.) to develop wage standards for dance workers and a bill of dance workers rights; and
- ✓ Continue to develop partnerships and to conduct advocacy efforts to support essential needs of artists and workers in the field's "gig economy," particularly in terms of a living wage and basic needs.

# SPOTLIGHT

## The Chocolate Factory Theater

The Chocolate Factory Theater has supported the development and presentation of new dance, theater, and interdisciplinary work since 2005.

The Theater strives to be a leading supporter of artists, at all stages of their careers, who challenge themselves artistically and elevate the cultural landscape of New York City. Founded and led by artists, the Theater recognizes and appreciates the practice of artistic development as a lifeline for all artists. As such, intimate relationships are cultivated with artists as equal partners, and residencies are equipped with services and benefits that support every aspect of development, including fair wages for those involved in the creative process.

Each year, **lead artists and their collaborators are awarded multi-week, salaried residencies** with the necessary infrastructure to develop new work for presentation in New York City, across the U.S., and the world. As a further commitment to artist development, the Theater provides professional archival services to residents, so that their work is memorialized and available to wider audiences







## ESSAY

# Let's Connect These Dots: Exploring More Ways to Document/Report/Assess the Impact of "Small- Budget" Dance Makers & the Spaces They Create



PHOTO: DFINNEY PHOTOGRAPHY

ALISON MCNEIL

Chief Creative Officer, McNeil Creative Enterprises

For nearly 20 years, I've led efforts and initiatives with the intention of creating resources, removing roadblocks and designing roadmaps to make arts and culture accessible to all.

My varied experience has expanded my professional network, which afforded me the opportunity to connect with many talented, well-intended and thoughtful grantmakers, presenters, arts service organizations, dance professionals, theatre professionals, and music professionals throughout the arts and culture ecosystem. It also contributed to my ability to ask critical questions, while remaining mindful of what is said and unsaid, addressed and unaddressed.



As a Black woman arts administrator working at the intersection of strategy, philanthropy and evaluation, I recognize the complexities at play in funding and performance measurement and have witnessed how those complexities have negatively impacted many artists and arts organizations that typically fall in the “small-budget” category.

Unfortunately, many that fit into the “small-budget” category are also the artists and arts organizations that have historically been excluded, underfunded, underrepresented and marginalized in the philanthropic sector. It is a systemic issue that is often tied to and perpetuated by well-meaning grantmakers that have set restrictive indicators and require narrow grant reporting requirements as evidence of capacity, effectiveness, ability, project success and impact.

My observations show that oftentimes financial or product-related outcomes are the most tangible to document and track, and the easiest to interpret over a short period, so they are prioritized. Indicators and outcomes that are more closely tied to shifts in behaviors, attitudes, knowledge, action, policy and opportunity are better evidenced after being tracked over a longer period of time, and in most cases require an ongoing consistent investment over a multi-year period. So, by and large grantmakers, via their application and reporting requirements, request that artists and arts organizations document impact using indicators that are mostly tied to financial goals (i.e., attendance numbers, ticket sales, performance/experience satisfaction) or “product” based outcomes (i.e., did it happen or didn’t happen). As a result, only a portion of the real impact is documented and reported by grantees, which in turn creates an incomplete picture of what is actually happening because the arts exist in communities. To be fair, this is likely due to grantmakers trying to demonstrate value to their board members. Boards request data on the efficacy of how the funds were disseminated and granted.

I've partnered with grantmakers, arts service organizations and artists that embrace the notion that documenting, reporting and assessing a more holistic set of performance metrics supports arts advocacy and increased funding attempts. As a result, they have benefitted from being able to tell a more complete story of what has happened because of their investments and efforts. More comprehensive narratives create increased awareness about the role of the arts in their respective communities. Collectively—through these efforts—our priorities shift to (1) generating more reflective performance measures that paint a holistic picture of what's actually happening through the creative and artistic process, and ultimately demonstrating a more expanded set of impacts and outcomes both within the arts and community; (2) unpacking what needs to be documented, tracked and reported, and by whom; and (3) managing the expectations of the grantmaking boards around short, intermediate, and long-term change and impact. It's an intentional shift and change on the part of grantmakers, artists and arts organizations that requires transparency, compassion, curiosity, and a belief that it's a useful and beneficial tactic.

I've witnessed and supported this sort of evolution firsthand and observed the gratitude that emerges due to the enhanced awareness created, expanded narrative around impact, and reduced burden on grantees.

For example, for two years, I had the pleasure of partnering with a foundation that has continuously increased its financial and resource investment in artists and community-based organizations that work collaboratively to design and deliver creative and artistic solutions aimed at advancing health equity.

During the program's evolution, we worked together to define holistic performance measures that were (1) aligned with the expanded program goals, (2) satisfied the priorities of the board, (3) integrated insights from artists and community-based organizations, and (4) helped to outline clear criteria and design assessment instruments for the grantmaking and reporting process. The program's evolution changed the way the entire program was implemented, thereby creating room for new measures to be tracked and new stories to be told. Now, in addition to counting the number of program attendees, or tracking the number of investments made (which were more quantitative in measure and previously tracked), this program began to track—among other things—

the (1) quality of the partnerships and relationships built as a result of the program, (2) new technical skills learned because of participation in the program, (3) varied ways that they assessed the artistic aesthetic produced by the grantees, and (4) the expanded mindsets and grantee program operational shifts because of participation in the grant program.

In the end, because they embraced an expanded set of measures, their storytelling was more compelling and contributed to their ability to make the case for their expanded reach in community and the need for additional funding for this program.

Tracking their expanded measures made it possible to also describe how their investments contributed to: building relationships, cultivating creative solutions for achieving health equity, embracing change; acknowledging bias among their board, staff, grantees; and local community members, and strengthening intersections between the arts and health. In the end, this grantmaker learned that this grant program offered value beyond just the financial grant. Findings showed that the intellectual and social capital gleaned from this effort was just as impactful as the financial capital. Finally, because they were clearer about their performance measures, they were able to manage their board's expectations on what might happen in the short-term and what was more realistic for the long-term gains.

When reflecting on how we achieved the work described above, it was a collaborative activity that benefited by:

- ✓ inviting varied voices to the table to participate in honest conversations about how to tweak the program's design and delivery;
- ✓ listening to learn and acknowledging new ways of thinking;
- ✓ offering compassion for past program iterations, including its mistakes and failures;
- ✓ participating in technical assistance trainings that assisted with revising the monitoring instruments used to articulate what was being tracked and why;
- ✓ upholding artists as clear leaders in the design process.

I've had the pleasure of participating in various engagements that have benefitted from this approach. I invite funders to consider these recommendations when thinking about ways to assess the impact of "small-budget" dance makers:

- ✓ Revisit your grant program's goals and integrate the following types of outcome measures when articulating what your applicants/grantees need to track and report:

**Intellectual Capital:** may be evidenced by tracking thought partnership, community building, new skills, resource sharing, advocacy and civic engagement, innovation and creative solutions, expanded mindsets, and aesthetic enrichment.

**Social Capital:** may be evidenced by tracking new relationships built, new lines of communication generated, collaborations that emerge, new opportunities created, leveraging personal connections, trust, and cooperation.

**Financial Capital** [often reported or documented]: may be evidenced by tracking attendance, sales, money granted/received, and shifted operations.

The examples above are by no means an exhaustive list of indicators. Your indicators and outcome should definitely be linked to the program's goals and vision. Instead, use these to start to begin the dialogue for what might be missing from a grantmaker's current set of indicators or outcome measures.

- ✓ Provide technical assistance training for grantee program and development staff at the beginning of the grant program, so that everyone is on board about which indicators and outcomes to track, and how.
- ✓ While the grantees use more holistic performance measures to track their grant-related efforts over the course of the grant period, have your grantmaking staff or evaluation consultants speak with the grantee staff and document what's happened over the course of the grantee projects. Reduce this burden off of your grantees and let them focus on being creative.
- ✓ Manage your and your board's expectations, and attempt to define clear parameters that outline how and what impact looks like over a short-term (3-6 months), intermediate (6-9 months), and long-term (over 10 months) period.



The artistic process is one that evolves over time. Its impact isn't always evidenced by immediate products or financial goals.

Consider when indicators like the ones noted above can and should emerge during various phases of your program and your grantee's efforts. Ultimately, we are all in this together all of us committed to making a positive contribution through our work. Perhaps some of these tips will help us get there.

For questions about this approach and examples of other organizations that have adopted these methods email me at [alison@mcearts.com](mailto:alison@mcearts.com).




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ALISON T. MCNEIL IS A NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED AWARD-WINNING STRATEGIC THINKER AND CREATIVE ENTREPRENEUR WITH NEARLY 20 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN PERFORMING ARTS AND EDUCATION. SHE LEADS WITH THE INTENTION OF CREATING RESOURCES, REMOVING ROADBLOCKS AND DESIGNING ROADMAPS TO MAKE ARTS AND CULTURE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL. WITH TECHNICAL EXPERTISE IN NONPROFIT MANAGEMENT, GRANTMAKING, ASSESSMENT AND PROGRAM EVALUATION, ALISON HAS LED MULTI-MILLION-DOLLAR CHANGE EFFORTS THAT HAVE DIRECTLY INFORMED POLICY, GRANTMAKING, AND STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS. HER EFFORTS HAVE ALSO FORTIFIED LEADERSHIP AND SECURED GRANTS THAT EXPAND EQUITY AND ACCESS FOR WOMEN, EMERGING LEADERS AND COMMUNITIES OF COLOR. • [MCEARTS.COM](https://mcearts.com) • [INSTAGRAM.COM/MCEARTS](https://www.instagram.com/mcearts) • [TWITTER.COM/MCEARTS](https://twitter.com/mcearts) • [LINKEDIN.COM/IN/ALISONMCNEIL](https://www.linkedin.com/in/alisonmcneil)

**NOT EVERYTHING  
THAT IS FACED CAN  
BE CHANGED, BUT  
NOTHING CAN BE  
CHANGED UNTIL IT  
IS FACED.**

**- JAMES BALDWIN -**

**THE SECRET OF CHANGE  
IS TO FOCUS ALL OF  
YOUR ENERGY, NOT ON  
FIGHTING THE OLD, BUT  
ON BUILDING THE NEW.**

**- SOCRATES -**



## RECOMMENDATION 2

### Create Infrastructure that Induces Long-term Equity & Sustainability for “Small-Budget” Dance

“None of these structures were meant to serve most of us anyway, so if I’m adopting the values of the superstructure, then I’m working against myself and my communities.”

“Small-budget” dance makers suggest that the dance ecosystem is flawed, citing critical issues inherent in many aspects of the field such as low wages, the basis of philanthropy, and structures of power and racism, all of which seem to be magnified by broader social movements such as the labor movement, anti-capitalism, and more recently Me Too/Time’s Up and Black Lives Matter. All of these issues connect to the structures through which dance is created, managed, supported, and shared.

“Small-budget” dance makers lament existing structures, particularly the 501(c)(3) operating model. They find the system inherently unsustainable and inequitable, rooted in colonialism, capitalism, and slavery. They believe the dance ecosystem must be reimagined to be inclusive, not competitive, to eliminate resource hoarding. These ideas connect to the current movement around reparations for Black and Indigenous populations. Until these fundamental changes take place, the need for each entity to individually fundraise will require much “small-budget” dance to navigate the 501(c)(3)’s difficult administrative and artistic duality that can ultimately strangle their work.

Until the ecosystem is reimagined, or in support of its own reinvention, the issues related to structures can be addressed in two (2) ways.

**1) Via alternative structures:** The first is to promote alternative structures for dance-making. There are a few imperfect alternatives to the 501(c)(3). Fiscal sponsorship is a reasonable option for many, but it is not typically a viable long term solution given its cost structure and need for fundraising and administrative resources. B Corps, or the more attractive L3C (low-profit limited liability corporation), are still infrequently used by arts groups perhaps due to a knowledge gap, reliance on earned revenue, or fear of lacking access to philanthropy. L3C’s allow for nonprofits to also have a for-profit arm, which typically is most useful for funding entities.

Some arts groups, including those focused on disciplines outside of dance, create cooperatives or collectives (organized as LLCs, nonprofits, or sometimes informal agreements) to bring small groups and individuals together to benefit from shared efficiencies, resources, and risks. (This concept has new relevance in the world of quarantine, social bubble, and education pods that have resulted from COVID-19.) There are also artistic leads and groups who work on a project basis, as individuals with a sole proprietorship or as freelancers outside of the confines of the more formal and complicated organizational structures. Both of these approaches mitigate access to funding opportunities due to the tax benefits associated with the 501(c)(3). That said, some members of the grantmaking community are working to eliminate barriers and no longer require applicants to be organized as, or affiliated with, nonprofits or show longevity.

**2) By modifying the 501(c)(3):** The second approach is to organize or participate in efforts to modify the 501(c)(3) to require training for people who establish and lead these entities, better distribute power, address race equity issues, limit pressure to fundraise, incorporate a periodic review process, and simplify mergers and closures. This is, of course, bound to require significant time and resources, given the work required to make changes to tax laws and business structures.

Regardless of the approach, this research suggests that new or improved structures should:

- Limit the number of roles currently fulfilled by artistic leads;
- Combat anti-oppressive practices and inequities inherent in the ecosystem including racism, ableism, and xenophobia;
- Support reparations and build reparatory commitments of resources and programmatic focus into the entities' operations;
- Limit reliance on private philanthropy;
- Be lean and nimble, allowing an entity to expand and contract as needed through partnership or collaboration; and
- Include life cycles (or at least opportunity for renewal) and make it easier (and accepted) to merge, consolidate, or dissolve.

The field must provide training and resources around existing alternative structures (cooperatives, LLCs, etc.), create frameworks for dance-making entities interested in these structures, advocate for the establishment of new legal structures in New York and New Jersey States, and support other structures that advance dance-making and provide more means of production to artists, for example in connection with social entrepreneurship. We must also continue to advocate for the acceptance and advancement of these alternatives within the public sector and private foundations to the extent that artists earning profits are not considered wrong or unjust. Diversifying the set of structures that exist within the ecosystem has the potential to decentralize pools of resources, providing “small-budget” dance makers with more control over their process, product, and future.

## TAKING ACTION

What actions can we take now to reinvent “small-budget” infrastructure to be sustainable and equitable?



## Actions for Public Agencies, Private Funders & Donors

- ✓ Prioritize funding for historically under-resourced groups, specifically organizations that are led by and engage ALAANA, disabled and immigrant folks; Specifically focus on groups that are well-positioned and already accountable to their communities, aiming for reparative and long-term funding;
- ✓ Reduce barriers to accessing support by:
  - Strengthening funding opportunities for newly established and individual artists in light of funding practices that limit eligibility for entities with less than 3 years of operations
  - Reducing budget thresholds for eligibility, specifically prioritizing groups with budgets under \$250K
  - Simplifying submission processes and extending application timelines
  - Creating funding opportunities for artists and groups working outside of 501(c)(3) models and alternative models;
- ✓ Develop long-term relationships based on trust and mutual accountability with “small-budget” groups by making long-term investments through multi-year, unrestricted funding for wages, operations, and programs;
- ✓ Fund dance-specific leadership development and training resources with specific focus on board development resources and training for artistic leads with multiple and varied responsibilities;
- ✓ Ensure that internal staff and leadership of public agencies and private funders represent the communities they serve;
- ✓ Reimagine grantmaking and funding processes with goals of widening accessibility for ALAANA, disabled and immigrant-led organizations and redefining impact in terms of process and value, rather than the product, volume of audiences, reach, or consistency of activity;
- ✓ Underwrite and participate in training on legal structures that support the development and delivery of dance-making, including both nonprofit and for-profit structures; and
- ✓ Engage in intentional, cross-sectoral advocacy at the local, state, and federal levels for recognition and use of existing alternative legal structures as well as tax law changes and the establishment of new legal structures and organizational frameworks.

# SPOTLIGHT

## **The Black Art Futures Fund (BAFF)**

The Black Art Futures Fund (BAFF) is a consortium of philanthropists whose mission it is to support all genres of Black art and strengthen the future of Black arts and culture through grantmaking, board-matching, and donor cultivation.

Its vision is two-fold: to grow arts and culture philanthropy and provide general operating support to community-centered arts and culture organizations.

Black Art Futures Fund grants general operating awards to organizations or fiscally sponsored entities, founded or led by and primarily serving Black communities, with budgets of \$750,000 or less. We consider a variety of factors, but mostly celebrate the organization's prior work, as well as the impact of its work on the defined community. Specifically, we are interested in moving people and resources to organizations that amplify Black art, its impacts on their audiences, administrative and artistic staff, board members, and community members. Grantees join a national community of organizations and engage in collaborative learning and networking opportunities, and the community of supporters Black Art Futures Fund extends around the globe.

## Actions for Artistic Leads & Company Leadership

- ✓ Prioritize resources to support the essential needs of artists, including a living wage, as well as time and space for mental and physical wellness and care;
- ✓ Require staff and board to participate in training on the 501(c)(3) and its benefits, limitations, and requirements;
- ✓ Address internal manifestations of racism, ableism, and xenophobia present in audition and rehearsal processes, collaboration practices, intellectual property ownership and crediting, performance conditions, and role assignments that mitigate opportunities for participation and promotion of ALAANA, disabled and immigrant communities;
- ✓ Continue to address the role of hierarchical models in sustaining systems of oppression;
- ✓ Commit to learning about structures outside of the 501(c)(3) with potential to re-center focus on creating and delivering dance programs and community value;
- ✓ Engage in cross-sectoral collaboration to support innovation and access to new funding opportunities;
- ✓ Engage in intentional, cross-sectoral advocacy at the local, state, and federal levels for recognition and use of existing alternative legal structures as well as tax law changes and the establishment of new legal structures and organizational frameworks; and
- ✓ Create inclusive decision-making protocols that reinvent hierarchy within organizational structures.

# SPOTLIGHT

## KM Dance Project

KM Dance Project is a New Orleans-based dance company that presents progressive multidisciplinary work that lies at the intersection of dance, theater, and social justice.

**The company is organized as a low-profit limited liability company, L3C—a newer type of limited liability company present in a few states.** An L3C is considered a for-profit limited liability company that furthers one or more charitable or educational purposes within the meaning of the Internal Revenue Code. Where legal, L3Cs may be formed as independent entities, or as for-profit subsidiaries of nonprofit organizations. L3Cs can earn income and enjoy the appreciation of property, but financial gain cannot be a significant purpose or outcome of the company's operations.

KM Dance Project uses art to challenge societal standards that perpetuate inequality, inequity, injustice, and acts of violence suffered by marginalized communities. The company values the creation of dance as a tool for education, healing, and social change. A core part of the company's mission is the provision of opportunities for young dancers to learn dance technique and choreography through the KM Dance Project Youth Ensemble. Members of the Ensemble receive training in dance and composition as well as leadership development skills. The educational arm of the company supports young aspiring African American female dancers/choreographers in the greater New Orleans community.



## Actions for Individual Dance Makers & Workers

- ✓ Partner with stakeholders to imagine alternative structures to organize dance-making and dance sharing;
- ✓ Engage in cross-sectoral collaboration to support innovation and create new funding opportunities; and
- ✓ Engage in intentional, cross-sectoral advocacy at the local, state, and federal levels for recognition and use of existing alternative legal structures as well as tax law changes and the establishment of new legal structures and organizational frameworks.

## Actions for Presenters & Dance Organizations/ Venues with Budgets Over \$1M

- ✓ Establish mechanisms to support the development and delivery of work by "small-budget" entities through structures such as fiscal sponsorship or incubation programs;
- ✓ Provide performance opportunities and thus increased visibility for dance makers working on a smaller scale, with specific focus on ALAANA, disabled and immigrant-led groups;
- ✓ Engage in reparations by establishing formal and transparent policies and programs that prioritize ALAANA, specifically Black and Indigenous, dance workers through efforts such as priority access to space and programs and free or reduced rental rates and admissions; and
- ✓ Engage in intentional, cross-sectoral advocacy at the local, state, and federal levels for recognition and use of existing alternative legal structures, as well as tax law changes and the establishment of new legal structures and organizational frameworks.

# SPOTLIGHT

## Dance Mission Theater

Dance Mission is an artist-driven, feminist organization dedicated to building community, addressing social justice issues, exploring cultural identities, and promoting inclusivity in the San Francisco Bay area through the production of new works, instruction, and performance.

Many female artists, artists of color, and culturally specific ensembles consider Dance Mission Theater to be their artistic home.

As such, Dance Mission is a vital anchor for the local artistic ecosystem. As a presenter and producer of other choreographer's works, education provider, and incubator, the organization ensures that historically marginalized communities are afforded an accessible space for dance and performance in an increasingly unaffordable city and region.

This August, Executive Director Krissy Keefer announced that **the organization would begin a reparations program** to contribute to the correction of inequities highlighted by COVID-19 and the Black Lives Matter movement. In an effort to show genuine solidarity with Black colleagues, audiences, and children, the organization devised a plan to offer free theater space, free tuition for youth classes, and reduced rates for adult classes and rehearsal space for people of African descent.

## Actions for Educational Institutions

- ✓ Create a laboratory for the development of alternative structures and train dance makers on all possible operating frameworks to support the creation and delivery of work;
- ✓ Teach dance makers about the dance-making ecosystem, including how to navigate nonprofit structures, while also encouraging alternate approaches to defining dance careers and working in the field;
- ✓ Provide learning, teaching, and paid/hands-on training opportunities for ALAANA, disabled and immigrant dancers, dance administrators, and other dance workers;
- ✓ Ensure ALAANA, disabled, and immigrant workers maintain equitable representation and participation in the development and delivery of dance programs, along with their student body or student groups.

## Actions for Dance Service Providers

- ✓ Advocate for modifications to 501(c)(3) that require training for people who establish and lead these entities, shift the power distribution, incorporate a periodic review process and simplify mergers and closures;
- ✓ Support and participate in the development of new legal structures and operating frameworks that allow leadership to focus more on artistic process and less on day-to-day operations such as management, fundraising, and marketing;
- ✓ Provide training to dance makers on how to develop and manage a 501(c)(3), and teach them about alternative structures, specifically engaging immigrant artists to explain the benefits and risks involved in navigating various arts and legal frameworks in the US; and
- ✓ Develop and advance social and racial justice, disability justice, and immigrant rights agendas to prioritize resources and investments devoted to dismantling racism and other forms of oppression present in dance-making that impact ALAANA, disabled, and immigrant workers.

# SPOTLIGHT

## The Arts Community Alliance

The Arts Community Alliance (TACA) is an arts funding and service organization based in Dallas, Texas that supports the cultural community of North Texas through the provision of flexible funding and resource-building programs.

Recognizing the challenges of operating a nonprofit arts organization, let alone sustaining one, **TACA offers various grant-making, capacity-building, and thought leadership programs.** The largest granting program is the Arts General Operating Grant, which provides unrestricted grants to performing and visual arts organizations in Dallas County. Grantees are encouraged to use awards for any combination of resources necessary to meet their operational needs.

Grantee Cry Havoc Theater Company states that "TACA's support inevitably opens new doors for small and mid-sized organizations." Grantee Dallas Black Dance Theatre states that "TACA's commitment to the growth and sustainability of local arts organizations has made it a catalyst in building Dallas' vibrant arts community."

In response to COVID-19, TACA temporarily suspended its Arts General Operating Grant Program and replaced it with a series of grants that comprise the TACA Resiliency Initiative- a concerted effort to support Dallas arts and cultural organizations in response to the pandemic.



## ESSAY

# The Digital Let Down



PHOTO: LIZA VOLL PHOTOGRAPHY

SYDNEY SKYBETTER  
Professor, Brown University

15 years ago, every dance company in New York simultaneously realized that everybody else on the planet already had a website.

In contrast to the post-9/11 days of militarized economic contraction, the Internet seemed full of potential to fill coffers and galvanize audiences. There was a mad rush to catch up to the zeitgeist, during which the language of online presence cohered. Audience behaviors were reduced to data and described as "impressions," "conversions" and "click-throughs," which became common phraseology. We started having meetings where we would say things like, "How is The Data looking?" From within a fraught historical moment, The Data promised verging-utopian alternatives to the world at hand.

Around this time I was a struggling choreographer who had been illegally downloading music for years, and thus considered myself an Internet expert. I sensed an opportunity to subsidize my small dance company, and co-founded a web design firm with the goal of ushering the arts into digital relevance. I was not remotely qualified for such matters, and bought a clipboard to compensate for my inexperience. Those of us who eventually mastered the rhetoric and kremlinology of "The Data" came to be in high demand. As companies realized they had no idea how to be online, consultants could charge more and more to deliver byzantine products that clients would, at best, only partially use. Foundations underwrote large, data-crucibling technologies like Content and Contact Management Systems, making money available for online platforms of operational datafication while diminishing funds for general operating expenses. Dance companies that had previously relied on managers, agents and presenters to interface with audiences felt newly empowered to connect with fans, if in intensely mediated fashion. Companies "saved money" by spending less on personnel and more on digital connectivity.

The increasingly online ecology radically shifted who was empowered to connect dances to spectators, evidencing a digital turn as much about data as labor.

The bet was that investments in dance online would bring about a resurgence of dance offline. The bigger one's online presence, the more likely it seemed that ticket sales and donations would recoup expenses. This incentivized ceaseless investment in digital audiences, now metonymically reduced to numbers of "friends" and "followers." Sometimes, data-informed strategies transformed how dance companies "engaged audiences," especially those with the biggest budgets. The visionary work of Erik Gensler and Thomas Cott at Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, and Kristin Sloan's pioneering video campaigns for the New York City Ballet, excited the field and served as case studies. (For those with smaller budgets, though, no amount of data helped us stray from precarity and pervasive poverty mentality.) The gambit was that centering data would address structural problems like declining ticket revenue and subscriber bases, as well as exponentially increased real estate expenses and online competition. Investment in the Internet turned into dependency. Datafied dreams sold to boards of directors helped rationalize exorbitant fees for web designers and technologists, all while the field failed to pay living wages for the very artists such projects were notionally supporting. It's not clear what choice we had, though.

The Internet economy never permitted not going online.

Dance artists rushed into the digital with a naive hope grounded in the increasingly proliferated knowledge that the old ways of dance-making were becoming impossible. The field sought a salve, but ended up with an accelerant.

This digital register is fairly new, but the Western dance tradition has always been parameterized by data. Whether tickets sold or money spent, how closely one sat to the French monarch, or in registers of ballerinas' "gentlemen protectors," data has long and profoundly shaped the constitution of our field. Until recently, a successful season could be determined on the basis of total seats sold, which itself could be read as a data proxy for overall popularity and cultural vitality. Contemporarily, we are preoccupied with data in the form of "likes," "retweets," and statistics on diversity and inclusivity; contemporary notions thoroughly of our time.

Sometimes, such data leads to narrow bands of progress, such as when promulgation of industry stats makes possible collective attention to longstanding inequities in our field, and provides language to describe and resist.

Culture sector data, however, is a representation of—and not the same as—cultural activity. Data is the map, not the territory, an abstraction with tenuous tethers to the realities of the sector on the ground. Data requires interpretation. Shoshana Zuboff, in *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, refers to those empowered to “read” data as “priests,” in that they are entrusted with the power and privilege to incantate otherwise arcane texts into the stuff of action. How one contends with data is ultimately not a question of science, but faith.

The field used to operate on the belief that audience attention could be monetized in the form of ticket sales. (This, despite dark jokes about the dance economy functionally consisting of the same few twenty-dollar bills being passed back and forth, forever, across all of our shows.) To sustain ourselves amidst various and ongoing cultural and economic cataclysms, we turned to a data priesthood whose digital platforms promised that virtual gestures of affection, such as “likes,” were attentional abstractions translatable into ticket revenue. In retrospect, it seems our priests had other intentions. If this strategy succeeded at anything, it was the viral promulgation of platforms vastly better at monetizing our audiences than we are. Look at us. Now, we’re all online. We’re all creating content. We got virtual audiences to pay attention, but the clicks and likes are a structural guarantee of revenue only for the monopolistic platforms on which they occur.

The dogma of the not-for-profit dance company may not live past its current collision with COVID-19 and capitalism.

I am instead hopeful for rising artists like Catie Cuan (a choreo-roboticist) Maya Man (a dancer who works with code) and Marjani Fortè-Saunders (a choreographer and organizer); feminist, anti-racist artists with distributed companies and expertise in the data they curate and fashion into careers.

Such data-based practice is massively expanding, but is preoccupied with such different aesthetic and operational concerns as to be frequently invisible to the “professional” dance field. I believe these artists are the future of our sector, even if available data frequently registers neither their presence nor importance.

The ways we surveilled and interpreted audience behavior at the near beginning of the Internet era was a dress rehearsal for our now.

I've experienced works that I never would have been able to access previously, media only available because of a fearful, COVID-induced economic contraction. The dance world pivoted online like never before, generating and interpreting scads of data. The old ways of dance-making (that is, from a month ago) are now quite impossible, and yet we dance on, amidst the prior ghosts of hope for any world other than the one we now find ourselves in.



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HAILED BY DANCE MAGAZINE AS “ONE OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE IN DANCE TODAY,” SYDNEY’S WORK HAS BEEN PERFORMED AT SUCH VENUES AS THE JOHN F. KENNEDY CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS, JACOB’S PILLOW AND THE JOYCE THEATER. HE IS THE FOUNDER OF THE CONFERENCE FOR RESEARCH ON CHOREOGRAPHIC INTERFACES, AND IS A PUBLIC HUMANITIES FELLOW AND LECTURER AT BROWN UNIVERSITY.

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### RECOMMENDATION 3

## Coordinate Resources for “Small-Budget” Dance Makers

“Partnerships and sharing resources is going to be completely vital to sustaining this ever-growing dance community in New York City.”

These findings suggest that this segment of the field needs administrative, fundraising, and marketing training and resources to support their artistry and aspirations while exploring the potential for new structures. Collaboration is a fundamental part of dance as an art form—it also has great potential to support sustainability. The pandemic has already inspired new collaboration in the field, as dance makers come together for field-wide calls and share resources to help one another navigate unprecedented challenges.

Training and centralized services specific to “small-budget” dance can help fulfill needs identified in this research, including:

- ✓ Training to support general operations including:
  - Data collection, data organization, and data best use practices to support dance-making, fundraising, advocacy efforts, and sustainable operations;
  - Administrative functions areas such as financial management, compliance, and human resources; and
  - Marketing and community relations strategy and tools, including community organizing and social media outreach;
- ✓ Consulting and training for entities and individuals to address systemic inequity toward:
  - Eliminating institutional and individual racism (organization and leadership-specific)
  - Robust diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility policies and practices
  - Reparations programs;

- ✓ Pools of hourly or contract-based human resources that help organizations and projects expand and contract capacity, as needed, including access to dance ecology workers such as photographers, videographers, and massage therapists;
- ✓ A dance-specific leadership development pool of professional and volunteer human resources;
- ✓ More consistent performance opportunities and visibility for “small-budget” organizations and projects;
- ✓ Shared services that build day-to-day capacity in functional areas such as marketing, fundraising, and financial management; and
- ✓ Affordable shared space for creation and collaboration.

These resources must be made available to those working within and outside of formal structures. One possible delivery mechanism might be for larger organizations to develop and provide these services to groups with fewer resources. As one member of the study cohort said, “those with more institutional power should respond to the needs of those with less institutional power.” Another delivery mechanism might be to close or merge organizations and redistribute resources, accordingly and appropriately.

## TAKING ACTION

How can we develop and share resources that prioritize investment and focus in artistry for “small-budget” dance?

# SPOTLIGHT

## PURPOSE Productions

PURPOSE Productions supports creatives, organizers, and institutions in the mothering of purposeful work.

This anti-capitalist collective of freelancers is rooted in a value system that honors and celebrates ancestral, communal and individual labor, and their work is guided by strategy, self-determination, and intersectional cultural consciousness.

PURPOSE defines their work as mothering because it encompasses the mental, emotional, and spiritual labor alongside valuable organizing skills necessary to activate purpose. Their collaborative practice continues to define and refine the workspace, flow, and practice that sustain individual and collective thriving.

This national team supports a diverse collection of visionaries and institutions focused on arts, social change, entrepreneurial development, and more.

**PURPOSE provides these creatives with responsive, collaborative guidance through visioning partnership, project management, marketing, event support, family-centered strategizing, and a range of unnameable caretaking.**

The PURPOSE team is committed to inviting artists and organizers towards abundant, collectivist praxis by prioritizing relationship-building and considering all resources, including bartering, when defining compensation.

PURPOSE's support is individually tailored to address the goals, needs, and resources of every creative collaboration.

## Actions for Public Agencies, Private Funders & Donors

- ✓ Support programs and organizations focused on cooperative resources and knowledge sharing for smaller budget dance entities;
- ✓ Fund training programs for artistic leads and "small-budget" arts workers on topics of race equity, anti-racism, reparations, financial management, human resources, compliance, fundraising, marketing, social media, and more;
- ✓ Support work surrounding shared governance and leadership development; and
- ✓ Engage organizations or organizers embedded within relevant communities or constituencies to regrant funds and compensate them for their time and expertise.

## Actions for Presenters & Dance Organizations/ Venues with Budgets Over \$1M

- ✓ Provide expertise, training, and management of centralized resources for "small-budget" entities;
- ✓ Adopt policies and practices that include more transparency, such as for the creation of residencies and the availability of related funds, as well as contracts with tech riders, access riders, and a clear description of wages earned and the rights of the worker; and
- ✓ Thoughtfully and intentionally build fundraising practices and organizational culture to eliminate resource hoarding and ensure that funds, training, and other external resources requested and utilized are truly needed and valued.



# SPOTLIGHT

## **City University of New York Dance Initiative**

The CUNY Dance Initiative (CDI) is a residency program that connects New York City dance choreographers and companies with rehearsal and performance spaces on 13 CUNY (City University of New York) campuses across the five boroughs.

CDI, administered by The Kupferberg Center for the Arts at Queens College, is designed to counter the impact of NYC's rising real estate prices on local dance production and presenting, strengthen relationships between CUNY students and the professional NYC dance field, and introduce new dance audiences to the system's performing arts centers.

A transformative incubator, CDI subsidized 130 residencies for emerging and established NYC choreographers between 2014 and 2019; granted over 7,000 hours of studio and stage time to these artists, and sponsored workshops and masterclasses that engaged over 3,500 CUNY students. CDI artists receive a minimum of 25 hours of rehearsal space, a baseline honorarium of \$500, the opportunity to hold an open rehearsal, class, or lecture, as well as negotiated performance fees and marketing and technical support for performances.

## Actions for Artistic Leads & Company Leadership

- ✓ Engage in ongoing data collection to inform organizational decision-making, advocacy, marketing, and fundraising efforts; and
- ✓ Come together in mutually-beneficial and collaborative settings to openly share data, knowledge, and experience; prioritize resource and knowledge sharing in ways similar to artistic collaboration.

## Actions for Individual Dance Makers & Workers

- ✓ Come together in mutually-beneficial and collaborative settings to openly share data, knowledge, and experience; prioritize resource and knowledge sharing in ways similar to artistic collaboration.

## Actions for Educational Institutions

- ✓ Connect "small-budget" dance makers with affordable and available space, particularly during months with less instruction; and
- ✓ Open access to research, journals, and publications with potential to provide "small-budget" dance makers with history and insights to support the content, development, and delivery of their work

## Actions for Dance Service Providers

- ✓ Facilitate the development and delivery of shared resources (administration, human resources, accounting, grant writing, regranting, legal, space, etc.) and training opportunities in areas such as accessibility, compliance, social media outreach, and the development and delivery of digital programming, particularly in light of the crisis.
- ✓ Partner with dance workers to design programs that centralize policy, training, consulting/advising to support "small-budget" dance makers and combat racism and oppression, specifically considering shared policies, practices and commitment to reparations, improved accessibility, equitable decision-making, employment, and advancement opportunities for ALAANA, disabled, and immigrant artists and workers.

# SPOTLIGHT

## Administrative Support Program | Pentacle

With a firm belief in the role of artists as influential, global citizens, Pentacle aims to provide the support systems necessary so that artists can ‘focus on what they do best—create art and engage with audiences.’

As such, the organization offers comprehensive, administrative services through the Administrative Support Program. Each component of the Administrative Support Program is designed to orient artists towards sustainability. Services include:

- Mentorship with experienced and interested arts leaders;
- Access to part-time administrative staff that works under the guidance of Pentacle's Program Director;
- Intern recruitment, training, and onboarding;
- Access to discounted studio space, in partnership with Nancy Meehan Dance Company, at Westbeth Artists Housing Building;
- Professional development sessions with administrators who have expertise in capacity building, management, marketing, grant writing, booking, touring, and fiscal administration;
- Access, on a first-come, first-served basis to Materials for the Arts, NYC's premier creative reuse organization;
- Opportunities to present in person or through virtual programming at three, Pentacle-produced showcases: Fall Further at Dixon Place, APAP at City Center Studios and Pentacle Presents at a venue outside of NYC; and
- Free membership to Pentacle's fiscal sponsorship program, Unique Projects.

Members of the program receive \$1000 worth of services per year.

If an artist requires additional services during their contract period, those services may be added on a flat-fee basis per service.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

"I want to say strongly that \$25,000 is one marker and there are so many artists working below that.

A majority of my peers are [working below that.] People are using their own money to make that happen."

### **Advancing a Research Agenda to Empower the Field In and Beyond This Moment**

The characteristics and lived experiences of "small-budget" organizations, groups, and projects represented in this research should ultimately inspire us to shift our focus away from building institutions. We must instead invest in the establishment of new mechanisms and frameworks that center the personal and professional well-being and prosperity of the individuals working within the dance ecosystem. Within new frameworks, "small-budget" dance makers need freedom from institutional and hierarchical structures, less reliance on historically inequitable funding practices rooted in white supremacy, and more equitable distribution of resources and knowledge, particularly for ALAANA, disabled and immigrant-led groups. These changes will support the individuals that make up the dance ecosystem and in their ability to thrive. When the individual dance workers thrive, the collectives, groups, institutions, and practices they work within will also thrive.

This research reinforces and adds a new dimension to field- and sector-wide issues that impact "small-budget" dance, some of which are urgently dire. And, it leads to important questions and considerations for Dance/NYC and the field as we look to the future.



- ? What is the true make-up of the field in terms of genres, structures, resources, geographical distribution, and individuals represented?
- ? How must we refine our study methods to eliminate bias, expand participation, and ensure we have a representative picture of the dance ecosystem via input from all genres, roles, and workers, including independent, disabled, and immigrant dance makers and those in geographies like the Bronx, Queens, Staten Island, Upper Manhattan and South Brooklyn, which were not well-represented in this study?
- ? How do funding and fundraising structures impact dance-making and the size and strength of the field at-large, particularly in terms of in-kind contributions, taxation (i.e. donations), and the system of philanthropy, which is rooted in white supremacy and oppression?
- ? How can we establish field-wide accountability and interdependence in our work to respond to oppression and racism, and in turn re-imagine what is needed for us to thrive?
- ? What are the dynamics of workforce compensation, and how can we better quantify and address pay disparity in order to advocate for living wages, benefits, and dance as dignified labor?

And, most urgently, in terms of this moment:

- ? To what extent has the size and make-up of the field changed and how might it continue to change as the pandemic continues? How can we support the well-being of the field in light of significantly diminished resources and increased competition for the resources that remain?
- ? How might we nurture dance workers as human beings along with their work in dance?
- ? What has this moment stopped us from doing, what is it forcing us to do, and what has it made space for us to do?

Dance/NYC is dedicated to engaging in research and advocacy that responds to these and other issues as the field enters a new reality full of unprecedented challenges that also bring new opportunity and openness. We are committed to capturing the stories of the field and using those learnings to empower the sector. Our efforts are deeply collaborative and rely on input from all parts of the field—please email [research@dance.nyc](mailto:research@dance.nyc) to submit feedback, questions, or ideas for the future.

# APPENDICES

## Datasets

Full datasets can be found online at [Dance.NYC/SBDMdata2020](https://dance.nyc.gov/SBDMdata2020)

## Survey of “Small-Budget” Dance Makers 2019

Survey in English is available online at [Dance.NYC/SurveySBDM2019](https://dance.nyc.gov/SurveySBDM2019)

## Survey of Coronavirus Impact Organizations, Groups, and Projects

Survey in English is available online at [Dance.NYC/OrgCovidSurvey](https://dance.nyc.gov/OrgCovidSurvey)

## Survey of Coronavirus Impact Individual Dance Workers

Survey in English is available online at [Dance.NYC/IndCovidSurvey](https://dance.nyc.gov/IndCovidSurvey)

## Defining “Small-Budget” Dance Makers in a Changing Dance Ecology Conference Program

The Defining “Small-Budget” Dance Makers in a Changing Dance Ecology Conference program agenda, speaker bios, and event details are available at [Dance.NYC/SBDM](https://dance.nyc.gov/SBDM)

## Resources

This report was informed by Dance/NYC's Dance Advancement Fund grantee cohort.

Learn more about the Dance Advancement Fund at:  
[Dance.NYC/programs/funds/danceadvancement](https://dance.nyc.gov/programs/funds/danceadvancement)

## Dance Advancement Fund Grantees

### 2020–2021 Cohort

Alpha Omega Theatrical Dance Company; Arthur Aviles Typical Theatre/BAAD! Bronx Academy of Arts and Dance; Ayazamana Ecuadorian Dance Group; Big Dance Theater; The Black Iris Project (fiscally sponsored by New York Live Arts and The Foundation for Independent Artists, Inc.); Bombazo Dance Co, Inc.; Born Dancing; Dances For A Variable Population; Dancing in the Streets; Davalois Fearon Dance (fiscally sponsored by The Foundation for Independent Artists, Inc.); Divine Rhythm Productions (fiscally sponsored by Fractured Atlas); Eglevsky Ballet Company of LI, Inc.; Elisa Monte Dance; Fist and Heel Performance Group; Full Circle Souljahs; Jaamil Olawale Kosoko (fiscally sponsored by New York Live Arts); Jiva Performing Arts; Kyle Marshall Choreography (fiscally sponsored by The Foundation for Independent Artists, Inc.); LEIMAY; MBDance (fiscally sponsored by Bronx Academy of Arts and Dance [BAAD!]); Miguel Gutierrez (fiscally sponsored by UNIQUE PROJECTS, INC.); Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company; Nimbus Dance; Sidra Bell Dance New York (SBDNY, Inc.); Something Positive, Inc.

### 2018–2019 Cohort

Angela's Pulse (fiscally sponsored by Brooklyn Arts Exchange); Arthur Aviles Typical Dance Theatre; Asase Yaa African American Dance Theater; Calpulli Mexican Dance Company; Camille A. Brown & Dancers (fiscally sponsored by Fractured Atlas); Claudia Schreier Choreography, Inc.; Diversity in Arts and Nations for Cultural Education, Inc. (DANCE); Divine Rhythm Productions (fiscally sponsored by Fractured Atlas); Donna Uchizono Company; Eiko & Koma; Ephrat Asherie Dance (fiscally sponsored by New York Live Arts); Flamenco Vivo Carlota Santana; Gallim Dance; Gamelan Dharma Swara; Heidi Latsky Dance; Jessica Lang Dance, Inc.; Jiva Performing Arts; Kate Weare Company (fiscally sponsored by Fractured Atlas); Liz Gerring Dance Company; Reggie Wilson/Fist and Heel Performance Group; Sidra Bell Dance New York; The People Movers (fiscally sponsored by Fractured Atlas); Topaz Arts Dance Productions; Yaa Samar! Dance Theatre; ZviDance.

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Dance Service New York City, Inc.'s (DBA Dance/NYC) mission is to promote and encourage the knowledge, appreciation, practice, and performance of dance in the metropolitan New York City area. It embeds core values of justice, equity, and inclusion into all aspects of the organization. Dance/NYC works in alliance with Dance/USA, the national service organization for professional dance.

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