

*Nous tenons à vous faire remarquer que pour l'instant, les rapports des réunions ne sont disponibles qu'en anglais.*

## **Regional Meeting**

**Toronto, ON at the Dancer Transition Resource Centre office – 250 the Esplanade  
January 26, 2007**

### **In attendance:**

Slade Lander, Dance Umbrella of Ontario (DUO)  
Isorine Marc, CORPUS  
Tal Aronson, IDAC and Dance Collection Danse  
Ann-Marie Williams, Dance Ontario / CanDance  
Jay Rankin, TDT  
Amanda Hancox, DTRC  
Judy Harquail, CDA  
Sarah Lochhead, independent artist / Dance Current Magazine  
Jessica Whitford  
Shelly Hay, independent artist  
Christine Moynihan, DUO  
Denise Fujiwara, Fujiwara Dance Inventions  
Michael Trent, Dancemakers  
Christina Loewen, Danny Grossman Dance Company  
Bengt Jorgen, Ballet Jorgen  
Mimi Beck, CanDance

### **Summary of Discussion:**

The meeting was conducted in two parts. Some participants attended only the second part.

#### **Part I – Advocacy presentation and discussion by Shannon Litzenberger, CDA and James Missen, CCA**

Shannon presented an overview of the following advocacy initiatives and CDA's role in each:

- Children's Fitness Tax Credit
- Canada Council for the Arts – National Advocacy Strategy for Dance and New Initiatives presented by the CDA and RQD, new one-time funding allocation of \$50M and increase to project programs budget.
- Ontario Arts Council – November 14<sup>th</sup> arts day, Brian Webb's presentation to the Ontario Standing Committee on Finance

It was noted that it would be of interest to the community to find out if SOFI asks from the dance sector corresponded to the needs identified in the CDA/RQD work.

Participants agree that the dance community needs to work on building relationships with MP's and MPP's.

James presented an overview of the CCA work and ways to stay informed about upcoming initiatives.

James pointed out that the \$30M (of the total \$50M) that is due to be allocated to the Canada Council in 2007/08 is not yet guaranteed. Advocacy to ensure the government will follow through is needed.

A question was raised around Status of the Artist and the lack of attention to the provincial Ministry's Advisory Committee of Arts and Culture report that was released in late 2006.

There was some discussion around the current federal government's view of the arts. James noted the federal government's propensity toward an American-style philanthropic infusion model for supporting artists. Concern was expressed around conservative policies that were tried previously in Ontario by the Harris government and failed. Was failure then attributed to a lack of proper execution by the artistic community? These policies and initiatives should be analyzed and evaluated to determine why they didn't work and even if they could have worked with further development.

The CCA is looking at the Liberal platform as it develops for next election. It looks like they are putting together a 5 goal platform, in a similar format to the Conservatives' current and savvy 6 goal plan. These plans are not likely to feature the development of the arts and culture sector as a priority goal so the CCA is looking at how to integrate our arts and culture issues, wherever possible, into the goal-oriented platforms. The Conservatives will likely develop a new 6 pt. plan for the next election. Their current platform goals generally include: Accountability, Security, Tax cuts, Communities (which is where the arts fit in to their plan). The CCA is looking at how to integrate the arts and culture into other areas of the platform.

## Part II – Community Discussion Forum

The following questions were sent out in advance of the meeting:

- Can Toronto artists and companies be better showcased on local, national and international stages?
- How can we work collectively to get Canadian institutions to increase the profile of Toronto artists and companies?
- Are there ways for us to work together to develop local audiences for dance?
- The studio space crunch: who's got space/ who needs space?

A number of other questions and potential discussion topics were brought forward including:

- How can emerging artists and companies be nurtured by more established artists?
- Harbourfront's new programming directions
- The closure of the Toronto International Dance Festival
- How can Toronto artists/companies help newcomers to Toronto transition here?
- Toronto dance community's relationship to TAPA – they could/do have more responsibility in these areas – Sparks, audience development and facilities
- Young Centre – was dance consulted? Does it meet dance's needs?
- Touring: How can we do this better, do this more, have more of us do this, and in places outside of Ontario?

It was decided that the first two questions were of most interest to the majority of participants. These were - Can Toronto artists and companies be better showcased on local, national and international stages? and, How can we work collectively to get Canadian institutions to increase the profile of Toronto artists and companies?

- Jay Rankin informed the group of his plans to try and put together a showcase in Montreal around the time of the Festival TransAmerique (FTA) and the IETM, when there will be over a thousand national and international presenters and participants. Not only would this be a tremendous opportunity for artists to increase their profile nationally and internationally, it could also be a great time for professional development for artists that don't know how to present themselves in this type of environment. (How do you market yourself to people with a European aesthetic? Is your show polished and ready to travel?)

There are two main difficulties that Jay is encountering: finding the infrastructure to pull this event off; and informing artists in time so that they submit their work for the selection process, and then inform them in time for them to gather their resources to head abroad. How do we keep momentum going and make this part of dance's infrastructure?

- A question was posed around whether or not to lobby the OAC? Some dance artists want to tour in places other than within Ontario. Moreover, Ontario artists will continue to have a hard time building their profile without national and international exposure. It's difficult for Ontario artists to be valued in Ontario until they're recognized internationally. Is it possible or likely that OAC would support touring outside of Ontario? It's a good sign that the OAC seemed receptive to Jay's proposal about a showcase in Montreal.
- It was noted that there is a tension between Ontario artists' desires to perform elsewhere, and OAC's mandate to serve all Ontarians.
- Questions were raised: Can Dance Ontario lobby the OAC for us? What if we had a Made in BC or *Danse Sur Les Routes*? Could DanceWorks take on such a role for us?
- There are some of those within the community who have succeeded in touring the province widely and regularly. Ballet Jorgen and Motus O, among others. Looking at best practices is important. Bengt Jorgen asserted that there may be resources within the Ministry of Canadian Heritage and the Councils

to undertake this task of raising our profiles, and/or the profile of Toronto/Ontario dance. He expressed that his touring experience has shown him the fragmentation and lack of infrastructure in this area of dance.

- Can the government pay for international presenters to come to Ontario for a dance festival?
- Perhaps we need a Toronto Dance Business association of some sort? Can Dance Ontario help with this?
- What about the difficult question around the basic quality of our art?
- What can we learn from Vancouver? What did they do and what do they have that we don't?
  - Dance Vancouver
  - Dancing On The Edge
  - The Scotiabank Dance Centre
  - Kokoro's International Dance Festival
- Drawing from the experience of other regions can be helpful. Vancouver, in particular, came out of a hostile economic situation. How did they survive and flourish? Good administration and management? Artistic vision and leadership supported by good administration and management?

We need to go on the trade junkets. Currently very few people can go out to existing ones (since they need agents who represent at least two artists and there aren't very many dance agents in Toronto).

- It was noted that the Toronto Arts Council used to have a touring program. What now?
- The meeting participants requested the CDA assist the Toronto dance community with initiatives that would assist us with touring and marketing. Shannon reiterated that the CDA's role is to listen to the issues being discussed to understand the milieu and better represent the field, but that local organizations would be most appropriate to follow through with actions.
- Next steps were identified, including connecting with TAPA, and coordinating future topic based meetings. Support was expressed to further the idea of a 'Toronto Dance Development Board' or something of the like.