



Canadian Dance Assembly ~ L'Assemblée canadienne de la danse
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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

February 7, 2007

In attendance:

Slade Lander, Dance Umbrella of Ontario (DUO)
Kate Franklin, Ambitious Enterprises / firstthingsfirst productions
Tal Aronson, Integrated Dance Artists Collective (IDAC) and Dance Collection Danse (DCD)
Janine Scotte, School of Toronto Dance Theatre (STDT) student
Michael Caldwell, Crazyfish Collective
Amanda Hancox, Dancer Transition Resource Centre (DTRC)
Julye Huggins, Princess Productions
Tina Fushell, Ambitious Enterprises
Amanda Acorn, STDT student
Jennifer Dick, Canadian Alliance of Dance Artists (CADA) / Moonhorse Dance Theatre
Justine Greenland-Duke, CADA
Christine Moynihan, DUO
Denise Fujiwara, Fujiwara Dance Inventions
Diana Groenendijk, Independent Dance Artist
Heidi Strauss, Independent Dance Artist
Helen Yung, CDA
Shannon Litzenberger, CDA

Summary of Discussion

Professional Realities of Independent Artists and Collectives

- What are the challenges related to working on a project-to-project basis?
- Project budgets: pre and post grant application results – What are the realities associated with managing resources when pursuing creative projects? What do arts councils expect?
- How do we implement professional standards in our current environment? What can we do to help improve this environment?

The discussion opened by contextualizing the independent artist as having a lack of infrastructure and many roles to play to facilitate a career. One participant expressed that that funding agencies are asking for things that artists don't feel equipped to do. It was observed that individual artists are perhaps being evaluated against criteria that are more appropriate for organizations. Project-based initiatives require a built-in administrative support structure when there is a lack of an operating situation.

Dance Umbrella of Ontario (DUO) staff offered that feedback from Councils (specifically the Toronto Arts Council); indicate that too many artists are applying for productions grants too quickly. Funders would rather see a project broken into smaller, more manageable stages. There was a general commentary from the group that all the arts councils seem to be saying that they want the process to slow down, that they want the artists to take their time.

Some concerns were expressed around having emerging and senior artists applying in the same programs. A question was asked around whether or not independent artists are talking to the arts councils? It was noted that a reciprocal relationship between artist and funder is important to ensure the art form is being served. While individual conversations are important, it was also noted that collective efforts are needed. The community needs to pro-actively inform policy decisions.

Canadian Alliance of Dance Artists (CADA) staff pointed out previous discussions and attempts at having a committee to review and critique changes to application forms and policies at arts councils, so as to provide feedback to the funders.

CADA briefly presented their Professional Standards for Dance document and announced two upcoming workshops on Communications and Conflict Management, and Contingency Planning.

There was some concern expressed around standards not being followed even by some relatively established choreographers, and the difficulties in feeling expendable in the context of our current environment where dancers would rather be underpaid than not work at all. Some strategies were discussed around how to manage upholding minimum standards such as pre-negotiating contracts or having rehearsal stewards. Alternative forms of payment were also discussed, such as royalties from future performances or recognition as a donor. There was some general discussion on whether the councils might be able to do some policing of final reports, to check if the artistic fees paid were at an appropriate level.

Questions were raised around contingency planning when desirable funding levels aren't attained for any given project. There was also some discussion around establishing a track record as an emerging artist in order to obtain funding, and needing to first work towards achieving a desirable working standard. It was expressed that having the support of more established artists (such as mentors and creative advisors) when pursuing projects can help add credibility to grant applications for new artists entering the profession.

Councils have said that they need applications to be made as honestly as possible, illustrating the needs of the community. Meeting participants concurred that councils simultaneously need to increase maximum grant sizes to respond to the real costs of projects (that include a minimum fee standard for dancers). Having those honest portrayals of what the community needs means councils can use that information to make the case to increase their budgets.

In the latter part of the meeting, some general tips were exchanged about applying (and re-applying) for funding. There was some discussion around gathering the various resources and support needed to facilitate artistic projects, such as finding studio space, website set-up, and mentorship.

DUO hosts an emerging artists group that meets on the first Saturday of each month at the DUO offices.