

DANCE/NYC RESEARCH ROUNDTABLES

12:00-1:30 PM and 3:00-4:30PM

Thursday, June 27, 2013

Mertz Gilmore Foundation, New York

Overview

Dance/NYC and research partner Fractured Atlas convened two roundtable discussions for select stakeholders—specifically, researchers, service organizations, and consultants (reached through the Arts and Culture Consultants Network)—to discuss future directions in research. The discussion will inform an updated State of NYC Dance, based on the Cultural Data project and select fiscal sponsor data, and future Dance/NYC studies. It may also inform other discipline-specific and arts wide research. In total, there were 22 attendees representing 22 organizations. Dance/NYC Executive Director **Lane Harwell** and Fractured Atlas Research Director **Ian David Moss** gave opening remarks and presented a brief overview of past Dance/NYC research and the forthcoming *State of NYC Dance* report. Dance/NYC Special Projects Manager **Leigh Ross** and Fractured Atlas Research Fellow **Sarah Lenigan** attended both sessions and took notes. Statements in these pages include their notes and additional feedback.

Organizations Represented:

- Dance/NYC (*Board, Advisory Committee, Junior Committee, Staff*)
- Arts & Culture Consultants' Network
- Australia Business Arts Foundation
- Battery Dance Company
- Cultural Data Project
- Dance Resource Center of Greater Los Angeles
- Exploring the Metropolis
- Foundation Center
- Greenstein Consulting
- HAP'nings NOW Inc.
- Insight Dance Company
- Law Office of Elissa Hecker, Esq.
- Lower Manhattan Arts League
- New York City Arts Coalition
- New York Live Arts
- New York State Bar Entertainment, Arts, and Sports Law Committee
- One Percent for Culture
- Opera America
- Pentacle
- Queens Academy of Arts & Dance
- The Alliance of Resident Theatres/New York
- The Field
- Third Rail Projects

Additional feedback on these minutes has been provided by representatives from the following organizations:

- Artisin
- Dance/USA
- Dance Critics Association
- Municipal Art Society of New York

Expectations and Context for Longitudinal Analyses

- **SAMPLE SIZE AND RANGE:** The sample size of fiscally sponsored artists will grow. I see a lot of emerging and very young artists just coming out of school who are interested in performing as well as making, and rather than going the traditional route of dancing for many years and then moving into choreography they are ready to do it *right now*. The conversation with these young dance makers is often ‘I’m interested in doing some sort of nonprofit/for-profit hybrid, or combining other skills sets with my work in dance,’ and I don’t know how interested these different groups are in incorporating as a nonprofit.
- **SAMPLE SIZE AND RANGE:** I think with the boom of Kickstarter and crowd-funding there are a lot of different ways to raise money now, so a lot artists, particularly individual artists and smaller organizations, may say “why do you even need to be a nonprofit now? Or even be fiscally sponsored?”
- **SAMPLE SIZE AND RANGE:** In terms of larger organizations, there have been a lot of partnerships happening and mergers, so that may change the sample size as well.
- **SAMPLE SIZE AND RANGE:** I anticipate seeing a decline in the number of institutions, and growth in organizations choosing not to become a 501c3.
- **SAMPLE SIZE AND RANGE:** Growth in the number of organizations in the CDP or sample of fiscally sponsored dance makers may not correlate to growth in the sector. The CDP sample size may indicate the perceived utility of the CDP. The absence or presence of organizations in the CDP over time may also help us understand how organizations operate.
- **SAMPLE SIZE AND RANGE:** I’m concerned about the CDP’s ability to capture information about organizations that are hybrid and/or not set up as a 501c3.
- **SAMPLE SIZE AND RANGE:** As Congress moves to ease the challenges of visa acquisition, it could be beneficial to analyze and access changes in sample size and range, as well as geographic impact (either positive or negative). This could also affect funding patterns.
- **UNDERSTANDING GEOGRAPHIC SHIFTS:** I think you’ll see the trend toward outer boroughs increase because the economy of space in Manhattan makes it difficult for artists to self-produce there. There is a limited amount of producing and presenting organizations in New York, and a lot of young organizations are self-presenting. Especially in Brooklyn and Queens—there’s a strong sense of borough identity and a lot of artists are relocating there.
- **UNDERSTANDING GEOGRAPHIC SHIFTS:** We will continue to see more and more people move to the outer boroughs, and then they’ll raise the price of real estate there too. There’s a ceiling to that unless we come up with a solution for more subsidized space.
- **UNDERSTANDING GEOGRAPHIC SHIFTS:** I don’t expect we’ll see much of a geographic shift away from Manhattan in the CDP. What would be interesting to look at is the location of organizational headquarters in relation to the date of formation. The CDP does not provide information on where the groups are performing in the metropolitan area, where their workers live, or where their audiences are based.

- **ACTIVITY GROWTH AND DECLINE:** Dance/NYC's first State of NYC Dance looked at Dance groups at a very specific point in time, 2009 and 2010. What we may find by looking at activity and audiences are indicators on how groups are recovering from the economic crisis, or whether there may be a longer-term trend towards consolidation.
- **AUDIENCE TRENDS:** There was a really interesting Diane Ragsdale article that came out recently, in which she said that the focus is increasingly placed on financials and rather than mission driven programming. I think once you're thinking that way there is a concern of access, it decreases who you are able to bring into the organization and excludes those that might not be able to pay \$25 or \$30 a ticket. You want to have organizational stability and a public good component.
- **TOURING:** Touring may continue to increase, as will its importance in relation to organizational budget size. Touring may not be cost-effective for the largest groups [those with budgets over \$5 million.]
- **TOURING:** I perceive a major challenge with marketing, outreach, and/or audience development for touring organizations and companies. Costs related to touring are increasing, and some may find it challenging to realize profit and/or break-even.
- **FINANCIAL DYNAMICS:** I think it's important to examine the mix between earned and contributed income for different types of organizations. Presenting organizations in my discipline tend to have about 80% of income coming from performance fees, but service or education organizations tended to have a much greater proportion of donations.
- **FINANCIAL DYNAMICS:** I think segmenting by borough will also illuminate different financial dynamics. I would expect that the level of dependence on government funding varies by borough.
- **FINANCIAL DYNAMICS:** I believe funding sources are diminishing and that we may see a decline in institutional funding across the board.
- **FINANCIAL DYNAMICS:** Funding patterns are going to change in the next two years, given the turnover in City government.
- **FINANCIAL DYNAMICS:** The shift from subscriptions to individual ticket sales has been happening for more than 20 years and it will continue.
- **FINANCIAL DYNAMICS:** I suspect we'll see a decline in the dollar amount of tickets in relation to the quantity sold if we examine that issue in the CDP.
- **FINANCIAL DYNAMICS:** It think it would be beneficial to track across cultures and ethnicities to assess any differentiation in funding, donations, or ticket sales. It would also be beneficial to track and access the variances between generations and age groups.
- **WORKFORCE PATTERNS:** As organizations have more staff turnover and more part-time and volunteer workers, it's difficult for them to manage day-to-day administrative work. I wonder if we'll see less full-time employment on the administrative side, as well as on the artistic side.

Most Relevant Focus Areas for Participants

- **AUDIENCE TRENDS:** I love the question about paid versus unpaid...I've noticed that more groups have free attendance. It would be great to say, for example: "75% of dance organizations have free or low cost attendance at least part of the time." This speaks to the question of access, and how dance groups, in particular, may be serving the public of New York.
- **AUDIENCE TRENDS:** Audiences are important. As a consultant, if a client moves to a different venue, there is concern about moving the audience with them. How do they keep their audiences? If you develop a local following it's hard to get that following to go very far.
- **AUDIENCE TRENDS:** The dance community is very insular, and it's often the same people going to see performances by a variety of groups. There's an expectation that the groups will be performing at all of these different theatres, so that creates an audience who expect that and will follow them there. However, that doesn't create space for new audience members who don't have an understanding that they'll need to go all over the city, and while it's easy to keep audience members, it's hard to expand and get new ones who are unfamiliar with these different venues.
- **ACTIVITY GROWTH OR DECLINE:** It's important to look at the number of performances, and what does that mean in terms of how employment is defined and what attracts funding and so forth. Nobody wants to fund work that an artist already presented, you do it for four nights and you're done—even though revisiting a work is a tremendously different experience. Nobody's saying to the big museums, "you know, we've already seen these pictures! Or, it's been up for a week, take it down!" As a performer, this is impacting the quality of the work—you can't make it the best that it can be, because you can't really get in there and live it.
- **ACTIVITY GROWTH OR DECLINE:** The CDP mentions number of premieres and tracks the number of performances. It is critical to look at the percentage of premieres by budget size to illuminate who's leading in creativity.
- **FINANCIAL DYNAMICS:** I'm definitely interested to see if groups are still in the black. How much is coming from earned versus contributed. I tend to think that dance companies other than really large ones don't have a lot of restricted income. Or if it's restricted to their programs.
- **FINANCIAL DYNAMICS:** The data will be important to corporate funders. There's also corporate support that happens in-kind or that is applied to special events, like the gala table, which isn't reflected in the data set. I wonder if there's a way to drill deeper or survey corporate funders?
- **FINANCIAL DYNAMICS:** I wonder if we could calculate the average fee per performance? Not talking ticket prices, but average fees, what are groups commanding when they tour?
- **FINANCIAL DYNAMICS:** Health insurance. I've just broken the 200-mark on a show I'm working on and I'm thinking, how can I maybe eliminate some of this other work I'm doing? I'm looking at the cocktail of work opportunities and I'm still not sure. [One of my other jobs] funds my health insurance, so I don't know...I feel like the health issue really drives those decisions.
- **UNDERSTANDING GEOGRAPHIC SHIFTS:** What are the needs of artists in the "outer boroughs" and are they being served? Do they to go into Manhattan to rent space or perform?

- **UNDERSTANDING GEOGRAPHIC SHIFTS:** As a consultant, understanding the geography is huge. You want to see where the money is.
- **WORKFORCE PATTERNS:** I'm interested in the whole economic picture, and what force can the dance world have as part of a growing economy—so I'm interested in workforce, and in questioning how we can grow an industry if we can't pay our dancers.
- **WORKFORCE PATTERNS:** Philadelphia has witnessed a decline in number of employees relative to the number of independent contractors. They also saw an extraordinary level of volunteerism. So it would be interesting to make the comparison.
- **WORKFORCE PATTERNS:** As an artist, I'm interested to see if it's true that the number of independent contractors is increasing, is everybody really going part-time, is full time decreasing?
- **WORKFORCE PATTERNS:** I'm wondering what's happening with intellectual property, when you have so many part-time employees and independent contractors, who owns the rights? I'm concerned that new choreographers coming out of college aren't thinking about that, that artists aren't thinking about their legacies, which is a really important thing—that they're just thinking short-term, about the next production. Can they take these dances and perform them somewhere else?
- **WORKFORCE PATTERNS:** As a performer, I'd be really curious to see what information is in the CDP about what types of workers there are, what types of jobs? I'm curious to see if there's an overlap with the jobs reported in the [*Dance/NYC Junior Committee's Dance Workforce Census*] and the CDP.

What's your stake in dance and culture research?

- **SERVICE ORGANIZATION:** I hope that these trends of wanting research and financial information to back your work up will show that organizations have a plan, and even encourage failure...the idea that even if you fail you can show your funder that you have a plan and you were never intending to take the money and just see what happened.
- **SERVICE ORGANIZATION:** Funders often think something is happening but data can be a reality check. You can say "this is what's actually happening; the state department is funding tours, not private funders," or etc.
- **LEGAL COUNSEL:** As a lawyer, I'm thinking of issues like licensing and collaboration agreements with sponsors. My concern is that businesses are set up properly to begin with.
- **RESEARCHER:** If we have all of these new people establishing these hybrid entities, what does that look like in ten years, what sort of problems will come up as that growth happens? Will they transition into larger organizations or will they stay small?
- **CONSULTANT:** As a consultant, I want to know as much as possible about how groups are managing, how they handle their budget, manage internal resources, how they look at the market and their competition, and how they are able to creatively problem solve. I want to see the big picture. Especially for smaller groups—I'm interesting in seeing segmentation around budget size. The more segments we can look at the better for me.

- **CONSULTANT:** The research is most important for fundraising. Just knowing that this data is there as a resource when I need to be able to talk about statistics and make the case to funders, to have the hard data there, that is really helpful.
- **CONSULTANT:** It is important to examine data by discipline, and across generations, cultures, and sectors; and to assess the impact of the external environment (e.g. geographic, political, social, psychographic, demographic, etc.) on organizations of all sizes. It's also important to look at leadership and sustainability. Boundaries are blurring between disciplines; how is this impacting the sector, if at all? It's also useful to consider the "flavor of the month" and the needs and/or buzz of the current moment. For example, how are natural disasters impacting the funding and/or giving to these entities, if at all?
- **CORPORATE SPONSOR:** My background is more on the corporate side. If you look at audience demographics that will resonate with corporate sponsors; they want to be able to align their sponsorship with that type of information. Corporations want to see a plan, they want a return on investment. It's got to be more than just art for arts sake. They want to know how it will help move their business forward. Altruistically, they'd like to say "this is wonderful, we'll support it," but they need a return on the investment. That return will vary by each corporation and what they are looking for. The arts are associated with hospitality, so that's one area...but even then it's difficult to see how they moved business forward—"by taking Joe to the ballet, how do you know if Joe increased his order of widgets?" I think you need to think very creatively about what you can offer the corporation.
- **ARTIST:** A lot of these topics have impact on the trajectory of a career, I'm watching these dancers in their 20s join the company [I dance for], and there are some of us approaching, or past, our 40s. How we approach our careers and what we're willing to sacrifice or not sacrifice is very different.
- **ARTIST:** As an artist, there's a real problem around not having enough hours to claim that you've actually lost a job. If we could use the data prove that we could add these hours up and that we're now "unemployed," we could show that we deserve the kind of break that other disciplines, that actors, are getting.
- **FISCAL SPONSOR:** As a fiscal sponsor who works primarily with smaller groups, it's a priority to understand their needs in terms of the day-to-day. We know there is a huge shortage of funding, so how do we direct more resources toward them, how can we provide technical assistance? And what are the venues and who are the stakeholders that I can approach with this information? To say, "these are the people that I represent and serve and this is the impact that they're having, and how can I make this impact grow?" The small dancemakers, \$25,000-\$100,000 is a relevant comparable for us.
- **ADVOCATE:** From an advocacy perspective, it's that ever-elusive quality of life benefit, and it drills down to "how does this impact my neighborhood, my community, my school district? How does this impact me locally?" I think that's really about getting geographic.
- **ADVOCATE:** If we want to talk to multiple City agencies and have an interagency conversation, hypothetically, what data would be helpful for those types of conversations? If you're talking to the Department of Homeless [Services], the Department of Aging, the Department of Youth and Community Services, demographics are key. [They want] to know how many organizations serve

the incarcerated, how many serve at-risk youth. They want to know how dance is helping them. That's the way in to an interagency conversation.

- **ARTIST:** I think many artists would be willing to implement programming for the incarcerated, or for hospitalized individuals, or other groups. Because artists are doing “the hustle” they're not necessary aware, but if there was funding around these kinds of projects they would be willing. If we could create funding opportunities for specific demographics that would be incredibly successful, and maybe data is a way to get to that. So the other side is how the artist is enabled to have these kinds of conversations with potential stakeholders.

How could this discipline-specific research serve sister disciplines and the wider creative economy?

- **Local-National Opportunity:** If we create data locally or within a specific discipline that's the starting point for a broader conversation. What do these conversations look like under a national umbrella?
- **Sister Disciplines Opportunity:** I would hope that other disciplines, like music, could use this as a model to get research funded. The more information that we have, the better advocates we can be and the better we can run our organizations.
- **Sister Disciplines Opportunity:** I think the dance and theater communities have a lot in common, esp. those groups whose budgets under \$100,000; 51% of local companies fall in line with that.
- **Sister Disciplines Opportunity:** There's probably a significant overlap between dance constituents and theater constituents, so data about dance is really useful to [theater service organizations].
- **Sister Disciplines Opportunity:** I think actors take it as part of their experience that they'll be unemployed, but I don't hear that as much amongst dancers. They struggle with even claiming they're a dancer because they're doing so many other jobs, they're not underemployed, they're overemployed. It's a distinction that might be useful to look at. Looking at the identity of employees.

Final Thoughts and Unanswered Questions:

- **Space Need:** In terms of the need for rehearsal space in New York, we feel that the CDP doesn't really touch on that, and also asking “what kinds of things do you use your space for, what disciplines do you rent to?”
- **Investment in Research:** There ought to be a question on a future survey about how many dance companies are paying, or are willing to pay, for field research and evaluation.
- **Inclusiveness:** We need to do a better job of understanding organizations not represented in the sample, like those organizations who aren't applying for funds that require use of the CDP. We need to be thinking about equity and groups who are focused on social justice and community building.
- **Inclusiveness:** The questions of inclusiveness, funding streams, access and equity, are key. What I'm hearing from this conversation is that we might 1) advocate improving the data source to capture information on the kind of work organizations are doing and who's doing that work; 2) do more outreach to encourage groups not currently represented in the CDP to enter their data; 3)

supplement CDP data with other sources; and 4) look at groups in the CDP not currently identifying themselves as “dance.” We know that our disciplines are hybrid and some are identifying as “folk,” for example, so how do we capture that? And all of the dance happening in community centers and churches.

- **Inclusiveness:** We shouldn’t resign ourselves to the categories before us, we should keep looking more expansively...see who’s on the CDP and who isn’t, and start looking elsewhere. We don’t want to stop looking broadly, but what we also want to do right now is to put the data that we have before us to use in the best way that we can and acknowledge what the challenges are and who’s not in there, and we certainly can do this better, how the data sources can be better, how we can do our outreach better—and also to recognize that if the field doesn’t look how we want it to look we should figure out what that means and try to create the world that we live in.
- **Inclusiveness:** I’m seeing that some of the discussion points highlight the challenge of providing trend data through the CDP and saying something meaningful about dancemakers and individuals who don’t/can’t report their activities through the CDP. It sounds like many around the table think that the issues of small groups reporting in CDP are similar to those that are individuals or fiscally sponsored.
- **Inclusiveness:** If you’re looking at non-CDP research specifically, I wonder what would happen if you took an artist-centric approach to future research (that is to say, not collect information from the fiscally sponsored entities, but the individuals that make the performances and etcetera happen). That may help crack the nut on the issues and needs of individual artists.
- **Inclusiveness:** [It would be useful] to assess what portion of the audience or potential audiences are working parents, and related issues such as how the fact that most performances are at night impacts parents’ abilities to attend shows. For instance, if a show is at night, one has to hire a babysitter, which significantly increases the real cost of attending a show. Also, if nearly all shows happen at night, we are missing opportunities to expose young kids to dance and thereby grow the dance community. The same goes for social dance.
- **Addressing Long-Term Challenges for the City and State:** The non-dance sources of revenue for our artists are not available in the CDP. How do we keep artists in New York City, and get funders and government to see the importance of supporting young artists? If other cities are cheaper to live in than New York City, people are going to stay in New Jersey and work there, there are a bunch of empty buildings they can populate.
- **Sample size and range:** I would also encourage you all to look at “birth” and “death” information among dance groups. When the NYC dancemaker census was done there was a considerable amount of “churn” at the bottom. This suggested that there was a limit to the number of dance groups operating in NYC at any given point in time, and among the smaller groups, a certain lifespan that could be expected.