

Closing Report

When I first started my internship at the Oakland Ballet Company Office, I wasn't exactly looking forward to it. I had wanted to intern at a museum. To me, working at an office seemed boring, even if it was an office concerned with an art form that I love. I was worried that seeing the administrative side of ballet would ruin its magic for me. As it turned out, I was totally wrong.

The main project that I worked on while I was at Oakland Ballet was digitizing the company's archives. They had a file for every single ballet they had ever performed, with programs, choreographer's notes, lighting designs, and photographs. My job was to make a digital record of when and where each ballet had been performed, and who had danced in each performance. It was fascinating, because many of the files dated back to the 70's and 80's, and I was getting to see pieces of dance history both local (like programs from Oakland Ballet performances) and worldwide (like letters from master teachers and choreographers at the Royal Ballet in London). It was like being a dance historian. I learned so much about the way that ballet/the ballet aesthetic has changed over the years, and about who was involved in dance at different times. It was especially interesting when I came across names that I recognized, teachers and choreographers that I had worked with myself.

One of the big challenges that I faced during my archival project was due to incomplete information. Many of the files only included portions of programs that only detailed cast lists, without specifying a date or venue. I had to do a lot of detective work to find out the missing information. This involved looking at fine print on programs, or looking in other files to discover or verify missing dates. This definitely took a lot of patience, dedication, and careful thinking to

accomplish. However, I felt that the challenge really helped me to develop critical thinking skills. I think that the little mysteries I uncovered and solved also made my work at my internship much more interesting.

In addition to the archival project, I helped out with many of the routine tasks of an arts organization. This often helped me to develop more tech skills. I used Salesforce to input data about donors to the company. This helped Oakland Ballet know who had donated money to them at various fundraising events and galas, and it helped them to reach out to/thank their donors. I also had to help out with contracts for dancers, rehearsal directors, stage managers, etc. I scanned contracts into the computer system and made sure that the company had received all of the contracts that they needed.

My internship was an incredibly valuable experience. I had already worked with Oakland Ballet in one capacity, dancing as a student dancer in their production of the Nutcracker for five years. Being able to see what went on behind the scenes was illuminating, especially from the perspective of a dancer. It has made me think seriously about working in arts administration in the future.