

3/23/2020

DANC Community Response Meeting Notes

II. Tenets/Principles of DANC

1. DANC (pronounced D-A-N-C or “dank”) is a group organized by and for its members. The primary purpose of DANC is to create safe, equitable, and sustainable working conditions for freelance dancers.
2. DANC operates on the unionizing principle that when laborers organize together in solidarity, we can create pressure for safe and dignified working conditions and reasonable wages.
3. DANC has no position on issues except for those positions agreed upon by a majority of its members. All goals and actions taken by DANC are determined by a majority vote of DANC membership.
4. Anyone who self-identifies as a freelance dance artist can become a DANC member. Your signature to our solidarity statement makes you a DANC member with a vote.
5. The DANC Steering Committee is an open group of volunteer members dedicated to contributing the regular labor necessary to keep DANC running and growing. SC members do not make crucial decisions on behalf of DANC beyond the administrative tasks required to facilitate meetings, communication, and actions determined by DANC members.
6. DANC focuses on the working lives of freelance dancers. We focus on artists in the role of “dancer” because dancers should legally be classified as employees (not independent contractors) and, as such, can legally unionize.
7. DANC is volunteer-run. There are no fees to become a DANC member. At present, DANC does not have a budget.

Evvie Allison ^^^

Meghan Wright -

III. Community Response Meeting Statement:

This meeting is open to anyone who is curious about DANC. There may be press at this meeting today; however, you may request for anything you say to remain off the record. As in our general meetings, meeting notes--with initials of speakers only, not names--will be shared to our website and newsletter audience. If there is anything you wish to keep within the confines of this meeting, please let us know in the meeting and we will honor your request to keep them out of the public meeting notes. Please do not share anything not included in the public meeting notes beyond this meeting.

The main purpose of Community Response meetings is to come together and share our experiences as dancers in this moment of crisis. As such, please keep your shares confined to your experiences as they relate to your work as a dancer or dance artist.

We are sensitive to the unpredictable size of this meeting today. Please keep your shares in the discussion to 3 minutes or less to allow as many people to speak as possible. [Megan] will keep time; when you have reached 2 minutes, you will hear a chime that lets you know you have 1 minute remaining. At 3 minutes, you will hear another chime letting you know your time is up.

Antuan -

IV. Invite all in the chat to intro selves (CHAT)

Name, pronouns if desired, artistic identity/occupation, city, + what is your primary concern right now

Antuan- concerned about freelance dancers being able to support themselves. Many of us are 1099 workers and can't apply for unemployment.

Introduce yourself in the chat - Name, Pronoun, Artistic Identity, City, Primary Concern

Evvie-

Gradschool in Illinois, thesis show cancelled - not paid for anyway. Had a show of my own work coming up in a museum, I am in dialogue with the museum, they will pay me and pay on time. Low fee. How to gather funds to pay another dancer and I have no idea what rehearsal will look like or when we can do that again. They have invited me to maybe share something live streamed- would prefer in person. Yay museum.

Antuan-

I work at Met Opera. One good example: freelance choreographer I work for, she moved the show to november, was tricky, she only had 3 dates to choose from but went for it. Any rehearsals between now and April were cancelled but paid us 50% of our income for that time. She is losing \$5,000 regardless.

Maggie-

3 big gigs in museums that are postponed 6-18 months, no dates or payment details yet. Director has hired me separately to teach private and get a bit of money. Helpful but no solid info around when I'll get paid or IF I'll get paid.

Megan-

Work for a choreography center in ohio, residency was cut short to get out, paid everyone in full for that residency time. The center doesn't depend on tickets but gets fundraising from outside. Do you know why you were paid?

Suzette-

Based in Berlin, had a gig in Baltimore that took place (for which compensation was distributed) . 3 California jobs cancelled and unpaid. Indeterminate because they all seem to be postponed and wondering if they should distribute the cash if the show still might happen. Survival, community, proxies for connection.

Griff-

Director of organizing and outreach at AGMA. We're dealing with a lot of stuff right now. Gigs cancelled on them by theaters and presenters. Force Majeure - get to cancel contracts. The ones who are in better financial shape are doing more than others. Some of our folks are solo singers, independent contractors even if they should be classified employees, not eligible for unemployment and losing gigs. Dancers in companies have more support than solo artists. Good resources on the [AGMA website](#). Make sure unemployment is extended - letter to Chuck Schumer - Don't know if the biggest companies will be around at the end of this year. Nobody is doing "well" right now. Posted link to [Freelance Artists Resource Page](#)

Siobhan-

A writer, might write, this meeting is off the record, not reporting!

Antuan-

<https://linktr.ee/danceartistsnationalcollective>

Tara-

4 longer term residencies cancelled, holding fee. Have not received contracts for the 2 tours that were supposed to happen in May. Work as producer for dance companies - many gigs cancelled, partial artist fees with hopes that it'll be rescheduled, but uncertainty keeping things up in the air. Some theaters are asking artists to pay them back out of fear. No rescheduling.

One of the opportunities we had included dance rehearsal over Zoom, but they've been a great place to think about how dance work and performance work does happen virtually - yay for *persistence*

Nadia-

Mutual aid resources here :

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1wwR-oY6ftGOEecWP4iNwUb0r2Pwewm3t_H3ho--vI_k/edit?urp=gm ail_link#gid=0

Abigail-

Primarily an artist for own work. I lost a significant gig with travel, teaching and performance. [One helpful resource is a text Jumatatu + Marya are working on](#). Attempting to get the fee, was really useful to have that language for how to proceed. Short term: not trying to take too much action immediately on longer term things. But as I think long term, the idea of artists having a collective voice about how to interface with institutions particularly about projects in soft conversations which might get derailed. Institutions will be precarious but also will be listening to us about how to not drop everything and start from scratch with these relationships and projects.

Additional note from chat: Major concerns—health of our whole ecosystem. If serious money doesn't come from the government, I fear that small institutions will—if they survive—drop months of programming and especially projects that are still in stages of conversation. I am concerned ALWAYS about artists thinking of ourselves in a larger context with workers who are vulnerable both in the short-term and the longer-term, those who may gig not out of choice but out of need. I am concerned about institutions—with good cause—shifting resources to support people and projects on an emergency basis and how that will affect projects and artists that do not fit into those categories. There are so many piecemeal efforts going out right now. I would love us as communities and field/ industry to agree on some more organized calls. ...I am going to reach out to the lead organizer at W.A.G.E. (Working Artists in the Greater Economy) to connect DANC's work with theirs. I'll be in touch with DANC steering committee about this.

Meghan-

Also worried about soft conversations around projects getting lost in the PAUSE

Nadia-

Dancer to Choreographer, Choreographer to Institution about how to advocate for yourself in both of those scenarios.

Evvie-

As a body of dancers, eventually providing a floating contract that is flexible and adaptable from gig to gig. No one wants to be the only dancer speaking up, why unionizing or organizing is powerful. Any convo that is had between a dancer and choreographer should be had with entire cast and choreographer so that we can be in solidarity with each other. And people feel supported in talking with their employer and not singled out.

Meghan-

If theater cancels all projects, are these choreographers discussing with themselves about how they are all being protected?

Evvie-

Our primary focus is discussing the lives of dancers- dancers should be legally classified as employees bc of the nature of our work and that is our focus. Bottom pressure going up. While knowing there is complications when this happens in the upper levels.

Antuan-

Not necessarily my worry to talk to the institutions, but I can reach out to the choreographer.

Griff-

That's what a union is, it is people coming together to create power and in this case the power to apply upward pressure on this industry that tends to rely on the artists on stage absorbing whatever financial shortcomings there are in the production. Collectively apply upward pressure. Having convos with people who are hiring you to dance, there is some truth to language being important, but also collective pressure is important. A bit flooded, if individual request - probably can't respond - will reach out to DANC - DANC can filter your requests to AGMA.

Email DANC - freelancedanceartists@gmail.com (<---- unemployment benefit help)

Evvie-

Will continue to send resources as we go.

Raha-

"I'm curious about freelance artists who are/have been also supporting themselves financially with service work/non art related work and how that has been affected. I wonder about building solidarities with these sectors."

We are headed into a much larger recession coming up, I make some money through dance and some through other affected avenues. Long term strategy building solidarity, it would have to include much larger sectors to mobilize. I wonder about dancers in solidarity with other sectors, we need to figure out how our needs and situations converge with other working people even as we have more specific dance related issues.

Meghan-

There are longer term goals that we can focus on. I would love for these meetings to be fast reactive but also longer term slower vision work.

Nola-

she/her dancer, server, educator, brooklyn, Griff made me think about organizing with AGMA and writing to Schumer about getting unemployment for those who are on 1099s. This year or last year more than any other year I'm concerned about my recorded income. How to go about seeking unemployment, will I get any help if my income is very low.

Evvie-

Good reason to be classified as an employee, legally this is what must be done.

Alex-

Long term for sure get dancers on as employees, in the short term we need to get people money now regardless of previous employment

Malerie-

Freelance dancer, between commercial/small gigs, if i don't perform, I don't get paid. How can we really thrive in this time, audience will be afraid to see shows for months, or they don't have the money to pay for tickets. Performing for us can change, hopefully this will not be permanent. Free info, and classes, what does all these classes mean for people? Our companies depend on festivals in the summer to help pay for things, if this is cancelled, how do we continue to bring in revenue for dancers and dance teachers?

Meghan-

Short term

- mutual aid
- relief funds
- What do we do?

Long term

- policy
- formalizing the work that we do (venmo, handshake no contract)