

MINNESOTA DANCE ADVOCACY TASK FORCE
MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, December 30, 2024 – 5-6PM – (Zoom)

In attendance:

Mathew Janczewski (facilitator), Sarah LaRose- Holland, Louise Robinson, Jim Lieberthal, Kim Konikow, Michael Pettee, Sally Rouse, Tim Cameron, LaTia Childers, Gary Peterson, Helen Hatch, and Artemis Brown

Quick recap

Mathew Janczewski hosted a meet and greet for newcomers, including Artemis Brown and Helen Hatch, who shared their experiences and current projects. Helen, the producing artistic director of Hatch Dance, discussed her teaching schedule and a film showing planned for February. Mathew provided updates on the coordination of three town halls aimed at gathering input from the Minnesota dance community, with a request for proposals closing on January 15th. Artemis described her role as an Associate Creative Director at Hatch Dance and her involvement with the Virginia Twins dance theater company, fostering an open conversation among participants.

Gary Peterson raised concerns about the lack of dedicated funding for the arts in Minnesota, suggesting the establishment of a funding pool for projects under \$10 million, which could be managed by the State Arts Board and Regional Arts Councils. Mathew expressed frustrations regarding the funding thresholds for dance organizations, advocating for a reassessment of criteria to better reflect the unique challenges faced by dance companies. This discussion highlighted broader issues of funding and support within the arts community, emphasizing the need for systemic changes.

During the meeting, participants introduced themselves in a "popcorn" format, sharing their names, affiliations, and pronouns. This allowed for a diverse range of voices to be heard, fostering a sense of community. Mathew announced the extension of the RFP deadline to January 15th, emphasizing the importance of collaboration and outreach. He also encouraged engagement with legislators and city council members, particularly in light of recent support for the Bridge for Dance in Minneapolis, and suggested sending thank-you notes to maintain visibility.

The conversation shifted to the necessity of integrating multiple revenue sources for sustainability in the arts. Participants discussed the repetitive cycle of grant applications and the need for longer commitments to support artistic projects. Mathew highlighted the importance of educating audiences about the true costs of producing dance performances.

The meeting concluded with discussions on the financial disparities faced by artists, the potential role of Springboard in facilitating connections, and the need for greater collaboration

within the arts community to address funding challenges. Overall, there was a shared commitment to advancing dance initiatives and fostering community support.

Action Items:

- * Sarah LaRose Holland will assist Mathew Janczewski in managing the Dance Task Force social media and posting relevant information.
- * Mathew Janczewski will send out the legislator letter for personalization and distribution with the Minutes. Stressed the importance of engagement with city council and state legislators: even small notes of thanks are helpful when pertinent
- * Mathew Janczewski will start floorwork sessions at noon on the first Saturday of every month to engage the community as an alternative catching up with regards to what the MN Dance Task Force is up to (Zoom included for this session below).
- * Kim Konikow will call regional organizations to invite them to meetings and ensure awareness of the RFP.
- * Mathew Janczewski will post upcoming performances and relevant information on the Dance Task Force social media. Please check socials, follow and share.
- * Mathew Janczewski will reach out to Laura Zabel to discuss potential collaboration and resources upon conversation with Gary Peterson.

Key Questions:

- * How can we ensure that diverse voices from both rural and urban dance communities are heard?
- * How can we better engage with legislators and council members to support the dance community?
- * Is it every dance company, or only specific types of dance that will be included in the funding efforts?
- * What specific resources can be shared between dance organizations and Springboard?

Floorwork Zoom (catch up on all things MN Dance Task Force)

Saturday, January 4, 2025

12:00pm - 1:00pm

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81441144472?pwd=vqUleutwczFgPcbFUdRbD6fcII0gHY.1>

Meeting ID: 814 4114 4472

Passcode: 834939

NEXT MNDTF MEETING -

Monday, January 13, 2025

Zoom

5:00PM -6:00PM (4:45 pm -5:00 pm; new visitors welcoming)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83652493607?pwd=55tAkUHBmulU6cb18sv9ZWahlib6jI.1>

Meeting ID: 836 5249 3607

Passcode: 289119

MN Legislator letter template:

Month day, year

Dear Minnesota Elected Official,

As board members of {Name of Company, ie.Arena Dances} or As an independent dance artist and long-time contributors to Minnesota's arts scene, we write to bring attention to an escalating crisis: the overall decline in financial support for Minnesota arts, especially dance, and its subsequent impact on the longevity of significant dance institutions in the state. Over the last five years, the Twin Cities has experienced tremendous losses in the structure of its dance community – from companies and organizations to presenting spaces and schools. James Sewell Ballet's recent announcement that it plans to shutter operations compounds other recent closures, like Zenon Dance Company and Minnesota Dance Theatre – losses that impact far beyond attendees to shows.

Dance is vital to Minnesota's arts ecosystem. We benefit from strong arts programming; small to midsize organizations like Arena Dances amplify the well-being of Minnesota citizens. But dance organizations are struggling to keep operations afloat during this financially-pinched economy. Many institutions did not rebound after the pandemic. Lower audience attendance and a shrinking pool of corporate and foundation opportunities have created a gap in funding support available to small and midsize cultural organizations, and as a result, many simply cannot secure enough funding to stay operational, let alone to let creativity flourish through new works and outreach opportunities. The recent closure of the Cowles Center only exacerbates this sense of loss in the dance community.

Dance education in Minnesota has also taken a hit with many seven-county metro areas reducing dance programs in K-12 schools due to budget constraints. While Minnesota boasts one of the strongest dance education communities in the country as evidenced by policies and practices outlined in the Education Commission of the States 2019 Artscan at a Glance report, access to dance in public schools remains tenuous as districts face budget deficits and underfunded public levies. Dance in schools not only educates the whole child, but builds future audience members, too. To preserve public school dance education is to invest in Minnesota's future arts scene.

We implore you to work with local dance leaders to ensure the art form has a future in Minnesota.

Specifically, we'd like to see:

- 1) The Minnesota State Arts Board revise their giving guidelines to consider accommodation for dance organizations that have shown invaluable service to the

community with historic ability, especially over a {number of years, ie. 29 year history in the arts. }

- 2) Minnesota elected officials publicly recognize and support dance organizations across the state by attending shows, introducing legislation that financially invests in dance across sectors (ie, professional performance venues, community-based organizations, public schools), and joining conversations happening right now with local dance stakeholders to determine the best way to support dance's future in Minnesota ;
- 3) New funding opportunities dedicated exclusively to dance organizations to create a sustainable structure that values long standing small to mid-sized organizations to uplift the value of the dance artist internally with stable employment within dance (not a pick-up project to project model, but long standing company stability) to secure local dancers leaving for other national opportunities, assist Minnesota dance artists to tour throughout MN (bring back the Touring Grant, but paid to artists, not presenters- put it in the hands of the artists to work with) and rebuild lost performance venues.
- 4) New funding opportunities for dance service organizations to lift up, gather, listen to our community, and further the needs of dance in Minnesota.

Thank you for hearing our concerns. We would be happy to further discuss our call to action in a meeting, so please don't hesitate to request a follow-up meeting.

Sincerely,

The Board of {title of organization or independent artist}