

Dance/USA Dance Forum (English Transcript for 1/10/2025)

[Captioner standing by]

>> Hi, everyone. Happy Dance Forum. If you can hear my voice, can we start making our way to our seats. If you can hear my voice, make your way to a seat.

>> Ladies and gentlemen, our program is about to start. Please take your seats. Thank you.

>> Hello, everyone. Happy Dance Forum. If you can please find your way to your seats, our program is about to begin. Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, please take your seats. Happy Dance Forum. Our show is about to begin. Please take your seats. Ladies and gentlemen, please take your seats, we are about to begin. Thank you.

>> LISA RICHARDS TONEY: Leave it to the dancers. Let's bring it. You know I was a dancer, so I'm very happy to be here. Good morning. Good morning. Yes. Thank you and welcome. Some of you got here today, maybe early last night. Welcome, you made it. And we're happy to have you. I'm Lisa Richards Toney President and CEO of The Association of Performing Arts Professionals. And I am delighted to have the opportunity and privilege to welcome you today. As you know APAP has had a long history with Dance/USA. And before we begin, I must start by congratulating Kellee Edusei and her entire team for another year of organizing the Dance Forum. Thank you, Kellee. All of us, all of us and there is a lot of conferences here, I was at a Jazz Congress yesterday, there is Wavelength, there is Under The Radar, Global Fest – don't get mad if I left yours out. There is too many. Okay, so all of us, including APAP, which is in its 68th year. Can you believe it? 68 years. We converge on New York this week, and you know it's January.

It's cold. But we're like trees growing in January. That is what we are. We are nourished differently, so we are unexpectedly bold. We're strong and don't you forget it. Dance USA, all of us, we're here to serve you and we need you, each of you. We need your support, We need your embodied knowledge and wisdom, your dreams. As service organizations, we're not just intermediaries, we're a place where transformational change happens; is that correct? Yes. All right. So I want to encourage you – and my remarks are very short -- to not take spaces like these for granted. They are not promised to us. We have to fight for them. The issues that the dance industry face today are real. The issues need solutions. They need our solutions, your solutions.

There is nothing passive about what we're dealing with now, so we cannot sit back. We have to be active in our listening and in our responses. We need to be present and get inside what we seek to transform. Showing up today is one way of doing that, so thank you. So those are my remarks. Fastest remarks I have ever done. Because you all have a lot of work to get to. And you don't need anyone just talking at you. So with that said, I would like to thank you again for being here. I hope that today's topics, and the ideas that

emerge, fill you up and absolutely lead you forward. I would like to introduce Abdo Sayegh Rodriguez, the Executive Director of Tu Dance and the Dance/USA Board co chair. Welcome. And thank you.

>> ABDO SAYEGH RODRIGUEZ: Thank you, Lisa, for your warm welcome to the Dance Ecosystem. Just an announcement, the Dance/USA team just mentioned to me that they are trying to get chairs to seat them, so please take a little patience and everybody will have a place to sit. So thank you, APAP, for partnering with Dance/USA for over 20 years to host the Dance Forum. Carving out a space for dance within the larger sector performing arts sector in the APAP community. The Dance Forum is always a time for collegiality and learning and building a strong future together. Hello, everyone. It's my honor to be the first from Dance/USA to welcome you to today's 2025 Dance/USA Forum, and to wish you a happy, joyous, and productive 2025. My name is Abdo Sayegh Rodriguez, and I am the Executive Director of Dance. Located on the land of the Dakotas and Anishinaabe people, also known as St. Paul Minnesota. I am also the current Board Chair of Dance/USA. My pronouns are he, him. I'm a Latino with short, black hair, some grey. This is the same introduction I did yesterday. Maybe you see the grey hair, it's okay. I'm wearing dark gray pants, a black turtleneck and a black jacket. I'm wearing silver earrings, and today I have a pendulum with my name in it.

Dance USA acknowledges the Indigenous present and future of the lands we currently occupy. We're living, working, creating, planning and dreaming on the indigenous land of Turtle Island an ancestral name for what is now called North America. This hotel sits on "Manahatta" also known as Manhattan. The traditional homeland and home of the Lenape Tribe. Dance /USA also pays respect to Seneca Village. Property owners who were removed from their land, and whose village was destroyed in the creation of Central Park. Where their sacred burial ground sits beneath. As we honor the Lenape Tribe and the tribe in Seneca Village, I am reminded that as cultural workers, it is in the dance and performing arts Ecosystem that we must do our part to care for, heal and invest in and remain rooted to our shared humanity. And we do that by honoring our past, being present in the now and dreaming a future of our wildest dreams and yet to be manifested. I also want to take a moment to acknowledge the devastation of the fires in California. And I also want to extend a call for how we can support our friends and colleagues that are going through those devastating fires.

Serving on the Dance USA board for the past eight years, and currently as the organization's Board Chair last year and this year, has been one of the greatest professional privileges of my career. It has been transformative. I am inspired by Dance/USA's mission to champion an inclusive and equitable dance field by leading, convening, advocating and supporting individuals and organizations. And Dance Forum is an embodiment of that mission. And so it is with abundance of gratitude and on behalf of Dance/USA, that I thank our institutional funders whose generous support makes Dance/USA's mission and vision possible. Thank you, Doris Duke Foundation, Harkness Foundation, Mellon Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts, Sherbert Foundation, and the Wallace foundation. I would like to offer – yes. I would also like to offer my deep appreciation to our sponsor the Art's Insurance Program and to the National

Leadership Council for Dance. Thank you. Thank you for your steadfast and ongoing support for Dance/USA. I'm also deeply appreciative of my board colleagues, thank you for being exemplary ambassadors of Dance/USA along with the Dance USA team in putting together our vision, mission and core values of creativity, connectivity, equity and integrity.

I'm honored to be with you as we reflect on new beginnings, new connections, and new opportunities. As we enter 2025, I'm excited for what is ahead for us, each of us personally, professionally, and as a sector. While we have all experienced, to varying degrees, challenges in 2024, I know as dancers, artists, and creators, we are resilient, and it is our resiliency that will shine in 2025. I want to say my thank you to the Dance/USA team for your unwavering ensuring that our precious dance Ecosystem thrives. Um, okay, I got a stop sign. I have to stop quickly. I'm going to skip this and then for access needs – it's stressful, you know? For access needs, please note that all amplified audio is being recorded for the purpose of creating readable transcripts that will be available to the public following this forum. So this means that any dialogue heard over the microphone will be captioned and transcribed, so be careful. Providing transcripts in English and Spanish is our way to connecting with those who could not be in person. We understand this is not an all-encompassing solution and yet hope to continue to offer transcripts as one of the many ways we can provide greater access to Dance/USA and in the Ecosystem wide conversation.

Please look for an email from Dance/USA with these transcripts after this meeting. And also, ASL and CART services are being provided today. Please scan the QR code on the screen for real-time captioning services right on your personal device. Accessible restrooms are located next to the Ballroom. If you need assistance, please find a Dance/USA team member wearing a gray T shirt with a Dance/USA logo. And lastly, please share your experience for the Dance/USA, um, tag us on social media at danceusa.org. Now it's my pleasure to welcome Dance/USA Executive Director, Kellee Edusei. Thank you.

>> KELLE EDUSEI: Right. Good morning, everyone. How are you doing? Yes, not awake yet. Not enough coffee. I know it's early, it's early. All right. Thank you for being here on a frigid January morning, and it being so early, and being fully present with one another. I'm going to echo something that Lisa said these spaces this opportunity to be together in community president with one another is not a given and so we do need to be grateful for and hold it precious and really fight for being together in community with one another so thank you for sharing that, Lisa. I am also being mindful of time, and I have a lot of notes sung to skip some stuff to for my notes.

I'm Kellee Edusei, Executive Director of Dance/USA. I am a cisgender, butterscotch skin woman. Today I'm wearing Dance/USA T shirt with my white blazer, gray heels, and black shoes. The lip color I've chosen is red. Yes, it's a hot color, right? It's an honor and privilege to be before you this morning with excitement for what 2025 holds for us individually and as a sector. With excitement for optimism for how our sector will continue nourishing the communities we are rooted in and connected to. And curious to see and feel the ways in which we collectively will continue to practice our values in real time. As

Abdo mentioned, and I think as we all know, and let's keep it real, 2024 had some highs that we can appreciate, and it also had some lows.

Politically and socially, we are in a tumultuous time. Since the start of the pandemic, we have witnessed a series of upheavals in our country's establishment, some for the good and some very necessary. And again, let's keep it real some that has made things feel worse. And yet change and a sense of uncertainty can be a natural source of anxiety especially when it feels beyond our control. Bertrand Evans Taylor, our Director of Government Affairs at Dance/USA has wisely advised me to share that advocacy during this new administration will require three things serenity, courage, and wisdom. We have to discern what political happenings we should and can prioritize.

Remaining firmly attuned to the needs of the dance ecosystem and focus on policies that will impact her sector like financial stability and sustainability for dance organizations. Providing living wages and benefits of movement-based artists. Yes. Yes. Offering robust career paths and professional opportunities within the dance ecosystem. Ensuring greater access and equity for all creative workers. Sustaining high quality education arts for the next generation. Yes. Yes. Yes. And advocating for an American culture that values the dance ecosystem's contributions that continually nourish and enliven our society. I'm here to affirm for all of us myself included that in 2025 we must double down on activating dance as a transformative tool. We must be reminded of our shared humanity and not our differences.

To heal wounds and not create new ones. To feel the abundance of life's energy pulsing through our bodies and not feel like everything has to be a struggle. Choice, choice is our most important life tool, so we get to do it with joy or choose to do it as a struggle. We can do the latter. And we need to get up and dance and be generous in passing the joy you feel onto others, so that they may feel it too. And that they may transmute that joy and give it to others. 2025 is our year I have been sharing with many of her board members that I'm in a vibe. If the vibe is not joy, if it is not love, if it is not about community, if it's not about coming together please get on another train track and don't let yours intersect with mine. Yes.

I often approach my work with a choreographic lens. So how do we also lean into that sensibility? Where do we bring improvisation into our work? How do we embody a sense of stillness and also at the same time be polyrhythmic? Inviting these qualities into our daily work habits can help enrich our daily work habits and impact the care which we produce and do the thing of whatever were doing in that moment whether it is creating a piece. Whether it is writing a grant. Whether it is doing a social media post. We're going to need these qualities in 2025 as we continue to navigate moments of uncertainty. As we continue to strategically advocate for in the indelible path of importance of dance. As we continue to build our muscles of resiliency.

And I am proud that Dance/USA is uniquely positioned to draw attention to and offer opportunities to advocate for the art forms. In the coming months and years, many of us in this room will be called to dance on the edges of our own comfort or discomfort whichever way you want to look at it. Interpersonal growth in order to support the growth

of our field and our organizations. To reimagine a future for this art form that embodies equity centers a collective practice of inclusion and cultivates a profound sense of belonging for all. I know I have experienced that dance on the edge very recently while navigating the reality of Dance/ USA's own financial position. Having exhausted all options, I, with support from the board, did have to make the difficult decision to restructure our team by eliminating two positions and adjusting one from full to part time. This is my truth; this is our truth. And it was a difficult decision to make and not done lightly.

I believe that we will come out on the other side of the stronger, more unified, more cohesive. And I am grateful for the team and the board's resiliency during this time. One thing I do want to say, and I know I've been given the stop sign but I do have a few other things to say. We are doing our strategic refinement process, and I just want to share last year on this stage, I did show the beginnings of that process with the wall. It has been months long. And was designed to help Dance/USA gain a better understanding of what it means to be a humble service to the ecosystem. And how we might evolve in order to meet your needs. I want to thank Mina Malik of Magpie Cultural Strategies and Dafina McMillan of McMillan Works for their work on our strategic refinement process. This process was developed in response to your call for more equitable and inclusive ecosystem and the way in which we operate. And it is also coincided with the tectonic shifts in our funding landscape.

For months, we've engaged the member community ecosystem in three ways, the first being member needs and benefits survey. The second being a broader ecosystem wide survey and the third has been through a series of intimate conversations with dance artists, administrators, presenters, and funders to do a bit of dreaming. And I want to thank the members of our strategic reframing impact group, someone whom I know is in the room today for driving the process forward. Today I'm pleased to share a few key themes from Mars to strategically framing process thus far. The first is advocacy. How can dance USA's spark advocacy beyond our scope of federal policy and to regional and local communities?

Connection and community, how can we deepen and/or think creatively more expansively about how we bring people together? I mean you all are here, but you are also sitting down. We can also get up, and we can also dance. Great. So how can we think differently about how we're bringing people together for a critical conversation that are needed in the ecosystem? What resources can we continue to provide or introduce that will support our current workforce of artists and administrators, and more importantly maybe the future generation. And last but not least, how can we expand the definition of dance? Yes, dance is what we see happening on a stage, and it is also what we do in our homes, and it is also what we see on social media, TikTok maybe. How can they all find a place within the Dance/USA community and be valued equally?

What are we going to do from here? So first, the Dance/USA team board we're going to keep unpacking these things and how they will transform our programming and offerings coming up. And then we will also be sharing out continually with the ecosystem the

updates. So check out our website because we're going to have everything is going to be there. I invite you to stay longer with us on this journey. And the last piece I want to say is that I want to challenge each of us in 2025, as we are here with one another and as we move into the spaces of APAP, to let dance move you. Let its energy take over your mind, your body, and your spirit.

When you are in the weeds about how to balance the budget, or struggling to articulate your why inspire others, or you're recovering from a decades long injury, or you just got injured doing what you love most, when you retooling the marketing plan or reimagining your programs, lean on the art form to activate your mind, body, and spirit. Let it lead you— yes. Yes, let it lead you to where it needs to lead you. Let it lead you to where you want to be. Be the embodiment of the art form. Okay, now I'm done. I know I took more time. I had to. Thank you. I want to invite Sara Nash to the stage. Sara, Director of Dance at the National Endowment for the Arts. Needs no other introduction.

>> SARA NASH: Hi. I'm going to speed through mine. I'm just kidding. Hi, everybody, this is Sara speaking. Thank you for the introduction, Kellee. I use she/her pronouns. I am a disabled white woman. I have chin length red hair. I've just taken my mask off so probably my face matches my bright red lipstick. That's how it is these days. And I am wearing a black blazer and kind of a chartreuse-green, blue black, tiger striped asymmetrical dress. Yeah, you know. So and I want to thank Kellee and Krystal, everybody at Dance/USA and also everybody at APAP. I don't know if Lisa and Krystal are still here but thank you for holding the space. Everybody's been watching Wicked.

I am genuinely really, really happy and very grateful that I can be here with you all today. I don't take that for granted. And I do want to say I have some slides that I think are coming up. The slides for access are pretty much all on a white background with blue titles and Black most of them are only. And I will describe the few images that will appear. And if we can go to slide one. Yet there we go great. So I am going to go over just a few updates this morning to let you all know about things that are happening in 2025. I know there's a lot of your minds. I'm going to talk about the work. So for anyone who is planning to apply to our main funding program which is grants for arts projects the new guidelines are out, they are on the website and available@arts.gov.

And the dance team Giuliana Micheli and Kate Folsom, who are not here, but are with me in spirit. We will be holding our annual dance guidelines webinar on Thursday, January 23rd, in case you want to join us. We're going to go to the guidelines. You can ask us questions. We'll be there for you, hopefully as you're working on your applications. And if you can't make it, don't worry, we're going to record it and it will also be on the website. And the webinar is free as always you do need to register. And you can do that at arts.gov/news/events, and then select the dance webinar and there is a lot of other webinars there as well in case you want to spend your time that way.

So there will be ASL interpretation and live captioning, and there will also be Spanish translation. As always, I encourage you to read through our guidelines, they are new, updated every year. And the first two deadlines of the year, just so you have those dates as well, will take place in February and then in July and each of those is a two part deadline.

I'm sorry if it makes it confusing, but the dates to remember our February 13 and February 26 and then we'll have everything again in July. Okay. Oh, is this it? Great. It's 2025 and I'm still learning technology. Great. There we go, that's what I want. Okay.

All right. So in addition to grants, another way that NEA can serve you all and be a resource is through research. And I'm really excited to share we commissioned AEA consulting to conduct a field scan on dance of disability. And the field scan is the second in a series joins our design and disability scan from 2021. The dance and disability field scan will explore the developments in the dance field. Basically, over the last eight years, since the 2016 future of physically integrated dance convening that was organized by Access Dance. Kind of using that as a marker to measure change. To see what remains the same what has changed since then.

And the research also examines current and ongoing challenges and opportunities experienced by deaf and disabled artists. The field scan is a collaboration between the dance discipline, the Office of Accessibility and also our colleagues in the Office of Research and Analysis, so it's a big team. And it's part of the agency's ongoing commitment to advancing opportunities for arts participation and practice and to support opportunities for all people to participate in the arts. It will include a literature scan a grants analysis focus groups and there was a public listening session that was held last June. I think some of you may have been in the Zoom room. And we hopefully hope it will have lots of presentations to follow.

It's going to be out hopefully the first part and early 2025, and the rest to follow later this year. Yay, it worked. All right. So last year, way back in January 2020, the NEA and the White House Domestic Policy Council co hosted the Healing, Bridging, Thriving Summit on arts and culture in our communities. This first of its kind national convening brought together leaders from a lot of different sectors everything from government officials, policymakers, funders, artists, academics, community leaders, and more to consider the ideas and policies and actions that we can take to better integrate the arts and health into our life.

And at the summit, NEA Chair Jackson announced the Arts Health and Wellbeing pilot initiative. And on this slide, what we're looking at is a picture of Chair Jackson interviewing the Surgeon General during the summit along with pictures of two publications, the 2022 federal plan for equitable long term recovery and resilience and a 2023 Surgeon General's advisory calls an epidemic of loneliness and isolation. So the pilot initiative will support artists and arts organizations that demonstrate promising arts and cultural approaches that address social connection belonging and mental health through the arts.

The pilot includes 1.35 million to support nine demonstration projects. And these nine projects were just announced publicly last month in December. Each project will receive \$150,000 towards this work. And the NEA will also be following the work documenting how these organizations are approaching it to identify promising practices. And all of that will, of course, be shared with the public as well. If you're interested in learning more about this initiative or the nine demonstration projects, or any of the agency's other work,

we actually do quite a lot in the arts and health arena. You can find out a lot more at arts.gov/impact/arts-andhealth. I really look forward to hopefully speaking with many of you over the next couple of days and throughout the year.

I love that we get together now, but I hope you all remember we are your public arts agency, and we are here to serve you to the best of our abilities. So thank you all so much, and have a great conference.

>> CATHERINE VARGO: Hello, my name Catherine Hagan Vargo. I am tall white woman with long dark auburn hair, with glasses, wearing a black dress and black blazer. And I'm here today to introduce the taskforce for dancer health. We are today going to cover who we are, what we are, our mission and history. Also, what we're doing past and present and what we're looking to the future to do. And, of course, how to connect with us. So our history and mission, we were formed at the request from the Dance/USA Council of Managers to Dr. Richard Gibbs in 2005. They wanted us to explore and make recommendations on how to prevent injury and illness in the professional dance population. Healthcare brothers us from across the U.S. We came together and created the first evidence-based screen in 2007. It was implemented in a pilot in 2006 with four companies across the U.S. This screen has been modified based on research and based on what's going on, and it's continually updated. We just went through a major renovation in the last year or so. So our overarching mission is to maintain the health, safety, and wellbeing of professional dancers. We do this by having a very collaborative approach with company management and also with AGMA, and our overall response to the request to Dr. Richard Gibbs was that we wanted to enhance overall dancer health. And how were we going to do that? We wanted to help in ways that would reduce injuries in healthcare costs. Recommendations was that we wanted to develop guidelines for nutrition and health education. We wanted to encourage cultural change in dance companies regarding body image and health. And we wanted to perform post hire annual musculoskeletal screens on paid time. So who are we? We are volunteer healthcare providers from across the U.S. We hold annual meetings, and we actually have one of our annual meetings have one tomorrow, here in New York City, it's a hybrid meeting. So if you're working with healthcare providers that are able to come to New York and join us, we'd love to meet everybody. If you are working with healthcare providers that can't come to New York, we do it hybrid. So that way we can make sure we're as inclusive as possible. Our Executive Board of task force on Dance/USA is a mixed professional group we usually have two physical therapists or athletic trainers and two physicians. However, we try and keep a good fresh group. And it's a rotating Board, so we are always having new ideas. So we're coming up with new ways to try and really advocate for dancers for health.

So what have we accomplished since 2005? Our initial project was screening. We wanted to look at kind of that baseline of what are the characteristics of professional dancers? We knew we could not necessarily help to enhance if we didn't know where we started from. So we started with the screening project and we really refined that and created a beautiful screen that encompasses a lot of the skills and things that dancers need. Our second project is if we wanted to reduce injuries, we needed to know more about what the injuries were. When were they occurring? What was the kind of injuries that were

happening? So we started the injury tracking project where we tracked injuries across seasons through multiple companies through multiple seasons. The other big piece of the puzzle that I think would be incredible for all of you to know about is our informational papers. Our informational papers are found on the Dance USA web site. If you scroll to the bottom of the main page, you can see the link to the informational papers is right there. These informational papers are written on a large variety of topics covering cardiovascular health, mental health, emergency preparedness, nutrition, and strength training.

These are all geared for the dancer in mind. These are not medical papers. They are short, usually just a few pages, meant to be read by the dancer in between rehearsals, after the rehearsals, things like that. Easily – um, they are not medical jargon. And so they are really designed with the dancer in mind. Our next project I'm going to pass over to Rosa, and she's going to talk about what we're doing currently.

>> ROSA PASCULLI: Good morning, everyone. I'm Rosa Pasculli. I'm a sports medicine physician outside of Atlanta. There is more snow there than here right now which is crazy. And I am a short white woman wearing a gray sweater and two pairs of Black pants. So our current project, Catherine talked a lot about what our goals were and our mission was as a task force. And this project is something very close to my heart. I have a background in personal training, and was really excited that we got to work on this. But the main goal that we had was really like what can we be doing for dancers to not only help reduce injuries but reduce time loss from injuries, reduce the cost of injuries.

And then along that how do we improve the dancers career? How do we decrease burnout? How do we improve the longevity of the career? And we kind of were thinking along these lines, what was the next project we could take on? And so I'm super excited to talk about this project which is coming to fruition now. Something that a lot of us on the task force felt strongly about is cross training for dancers. So this is taking on other physical fitness activities other than dance that can help and strength and actually improve dancers' performance and load.

So we have a cross training subcommittee that is based of physicians, physical therapists, athletic trainers and a core group of us actually created two workouts to start specifically need for dancers that would cover multiple genres. So this is not just for the ballet dancer or the contemporary dancer. And what we did is we kind of reviewed the literature we targeted specific muscle groups that have been shown to be deficient in dancers across multiple styles. Can the theory is what we know in the literature these potentially can predispose both somebody from injury so we wanted to work on those on both workouts we actually created a four minute to Tabata which is a four minute high intensity training workout to improve muscular endurance and cardiorespiratory fitness.

And so in September, we actually were able to film these up in Boston we use three incredible dancers in that area who are shown here. And we made two 30 minute workout videos. There is narration throughout. There is also modifications for each exercise in the each included dynamic warm up. A strength session so a one-minute strength and one resistance band strength and there is a conditioning section. And these are screen grabs,

like I said, and we are going to be presenting them to our group tomorrow and hopefully are going to be online starting next month were just figuring out where they are going to live. But they are going to be free, which is really exciting. We wanted to remove barriers to access one of the ones we have heard over and over again is the finance aspect.

And then we have a lot of really exciting future directions hopefully were going to put together research actually examining if these specific workouts to prevent with injury and thinking what can other projects look like and really going ahead with the strength section. We know this is an important part for all athletes, and that is in particular, so potentially adding in weights like dumbbells and kettlebells. But really excited about this and I can't wait to share with you. So if you want to learn more about us we would love to hear from you our e mail is down at the bottom. Anything that you want to know if you just want to introduce yourself. If you are really interested in implementing a dancer's screen for your company, if you want to know if there is anybody who works with dancers in your area or if you just want to say hi, we would love to hear from you. So thank you for your time.

>> MK WEGMANN: And the lavalieres are still live. Good morning, everyone. Good morning and welcome back.

>> LISA MOUNT: My lavalier is live. I'm Lisa Mount. I'm a woman of a certain age with more salt than pepper wearing a black coat with lots of letters on it. And delighted to be here with my beloved MK Wegmann to co facilitate the dance success stories portion. You want to give yourself a little more intro?

>> MK WEGMANN: Yes, I'm MK Wegmann of MK Arts Company based in New Orleans. I'm also a woman of a certain age, and I'm wearing a dark navy blue two piece outfit with a long skirt, black boots. And I have a navy-blue scarf around my neck. I welcome any pronoun.

>> LISA MOUNT: So we're here at the behest of the artists, agents, managers, producers and promoters council to offer an interactive session that is going to be at lightning speed. So be forewarned today to look at what is working. As we met with the council, we recognized that these are incredibly difficult times for all of us. And that our energy and our relationships are our primary resources. So they asked the two of us to facilitate a conversation with four sets of panelists who will offer you tiny three and a half minutes. And we're going to give every moment of these success stories to then spur some conversation at your tables about what is working.

I have to tell you, as a person who lives in New Orleans, Louisiana we both live in New Orleans, Louisiana, and who was a native of Santa Monica, California, this year has started out rough, really rough. And what I know about really rough times is that artists get to work, and we do what we do and so were going to spend her time focusing on what we can do rather than what we can't do or what stops us or what is at present. To borrow from my California vernacular, quit your bitching. Get to work.

>> MK WEGMANN: So I want to add this conversation follows on conversations that were held at RAW and MAX in 2024 and are intended to be carried forth into the future so there

are opportunities for the field to share success stories and to understand what can work and what we can do to move forward in challenging times.

>> LISA MOUNT: And what we learn about humans, we learn from stories, right? So I am going to start by inviting the three incredible leaders from Soles of Duende to take the three and a half minutes at our lectern so that we are active and onstage with you. Yes.

>> BRINDA GUHA: Carpeted stage. Carpeted stage. Hi, everybody. Good morning I am Brinda, the resident Kathak of Soles of Duende, a New York City multicultural based percussive dance company. You may have seen us performing at the Joyce last January as part of the American Dance Platform. We're sharing today from the perspective of newish to a market that performs with live music regularly we wanted to show the steep learning curve we have been on the last two years in hopes that those of you about to enter the market will gain perspective and knowledge from a couple of these very quick examples passing it to Castro.

>> AMANDA CASTRO: Good morning, everyone. My name is Amanda Castro, the resident tap dancer of Soles of Duende. Okay, we received an invitation to perform in a nonprofit service. The nonprofit service organization that specializes in live music that serves the vibrant Arab community and beyond. And we immediately say yes, we were so excited. Once on site, we discovered that they expected us to perform on a carpeted stage. At the time, we didn't have the language of the skill to say that we would not be able to perform. We literally dug for wood pieces from a dumpster, building out the necessary stage that day. As you can imagine, the stage was not safe.

And it was one of the most electric audiences we have ever performed for. We learned to not ever assume that our dear colleagues know how to present percussive dance even if the demographic and cultural layman is there passing it off to Arielle.

>> ARIELLE ROSALES: Hi, my name is Arielle Rosales. I am the resident Flamenco with Soles of Duende. Another instance, we agree to perform at Joe's Pub which you may know is one of New York City's most prestigious live cabaret spaces with a teeny tiny stage, and it's not built for dance. But Joe's Pub has incredible acoustics and a dedicated audience, so we said yes. Ultimately, it was a heavy lift for us to downsize our full-length work to squeeze into a 50 minute musical set, but it was worth every compromise. Two sold out performances build credibility in the music scene and led to other music based gigs. Bringing it back to Brenda.

>> BRINDA GUHA: And the last example is kind of full circle moment we received an invitation to perform in a Joe's pub equivalent in the Metro DC area is admit future performance but we did not have a dance floor to tour with it's not in the budget yet working on it so given our years of experience negotiating flooring and programming we need to reach out to her colleagues for help and so it was ultimately sold defines Ryan Johnson, yeah Ryan Johnson. That shifted and shared their percussive floor with this for this engagement just so that we would have the equipment that we needed to do our work in their neighborhood. So they organized all the tech directly with the venue and ensured that things would go really smoothly.

>> In summary, our learning curve delivered these teachings like artists do, we figure it out and we make it work. But the bad news is that it can place an undue burden on a part of the artist compromising performance but also leading to safety risks.

>> There is a need for comprehensive education around programming percussive dance artists. The good news is we now know for certain that music and dance go together, and we are excited that her work and live on the edge of like music programming.

>> The scripts, we have a nice script. These experiences have led us to you know create writers share knowledge and use language and connections to not compromise artistic integrity or risk or safety moving forward thank you so much for having us.

>> I would like to invite up Sarah Lewitus who is with mid Atlantic Arts to talk from the perspective of a funder.

SARAH LEWITUS: Thanks. Hi, everyone. My name is Sarah Lewitus. I use she and her pronouns. I'm a white woman with short brown hair. I'm wearing a red sweater shirt today. And I am a curator and producer, but I'm here in my role as a funder. Those things informed that work, and I work at mid Atlantic Arts with the Regional Arts Organization. If you live in the so called United States you have an RAO, Regional Arts Organization that serves you. And what many people don't realize that most RAO's offer programs that fund nationally. So for example, mid Atlantic arts artists international program funds artists directly core based anywhere in the so called United States not just the mid Atlantic region to perform at festivals internationally.

So last year, the US Artists International Program supported eight dance companies travel to festivals like the International Summer Festival in Germany, the Dance Umbrella Festival in the UK, and the Adinjamba Access Contemporary Dance Festival in South Africa, to name a few. So the US Artists International Program is one example of the debt success story another is the mid Atlantic arts is still offering funding to bring artists from anywhere in the country or the world to the mid Atlantic region to tour through the arts connect program. Over the past three program cycles arts connect has supported nine dance artists touring 228 presenting organizations within the region.

The program subsidizes 50% of the artists be up to \$10,000 which is obviously important, but it also fosters connectivity and dialogue between presenters in the region because it asked presenters to work together to present the same artists. A recent art connect grantee hosted a welcome dinner and talk with the dance artist they were presented to the program, and they engaged local prison abolition organizers to attend the performance speak to audience members in the lobby as it related to the content of the performance. So as offender and the person in the field I can honestly say that I feel that these are debt success stories but I'm not appear to gaslight you into saying everything is cool funding in the dance field. It's not. These mid Atlantic arts programs are a lot.

They are really, really competitive. And if you know about arts connect, you know the timing can be really, really challenging for presenters. And the changes happening with other funding programs in the fields and of course the sunseting of Max national grant making program is really disappointing for a field that is already stretched for financial

support. But all wrap up by saying that within many funding organizations were thinking about how to adjust our funding models to better meet the needs of the field within the restrictions of our institutions and in some cases to change those models entirely. So things were thinking about or that I'm thinking about our mentorship and resources for artisan presenters that are new to the field.

Had a forefront emergency preparedness support and disability justice in the design of these funding programs. And creating grant programs that leave room for artistic experimentation and even failure rather than funding exclusively completing tour ready performance. So if you want to learn more about our connect institutional change is really slow, but hopefully these changes will lead to more dances success stories in the not so distance future. If you want to learn more, you can find me at the booth, mid Atlantic Arts. And you can learn more about the other RAO's which also do incredible and amazing work @usregionalarts.org, thank you.

>> LISA MOUNT: Thank you, Sarah. So we heard from artists, we've heard from a person who holds the chair of funder. And now, we want to hear from two presenters the first of whom come on up, Kristen Brogdon is from Northrup at the University of Minnesota. And we want to thank you, Kristen, for doing this on extraordinarily short notice, as of yesterday. You still only have three and a half minutes.

>> KRISTEN BROGDON: Okay, I rehearsed. I'm really happy to be here. Hi, everyone. My name is Kristen. My pronouns are she/her, and my home base is on Dakota in Minnesota Makoce. I'm a white woman with blonde bobbed hair, and light blue glasses. My wardrobe today includes a black blazer and colorful sneakers that make me really happy. I'm the director of artistic and community programs at Northrup. And recently we have been focusing on building dance audiences by creating an environment of welcoming and belonging in our space. This has everything to do with the dance happening on our stage, and we have substantial opportunities to create programming throughout our building in our lecture space, in our lobbies, and on stage before the performance begins.

As a little bit of background, Northrup did research last year about removing barriers to access. Who wanted to hear from folks that don't come to Northrup, which is a tough crowd to reach. And so we hosted group conversations where we invited our campus and community partners to invite us and asked each person to bring someone who had not been to Northrup before. The two examples I will share are informed by what we learned and what was the learning. The first is about a lobby activation at a relaxed performance that we hosted this season with our partners at the autism Society of Minnesota, a.k.a. awesome.

They encouraged us to have a tactile aspect to the performance of this led us to invite six Twin Cities dance companies and schools to bring costumes and shoes to our lobby for everyone to touch and try before the performance of during intermission and after. The kids dove right in and adults were even more into it once we realized once they realize that this was for them too. And our community partners appreciated that they were also able to share information about their own classes and events with their audience. Other

sensory friendly elements of this performance included a sensory lounge, a lower sound level and freedom for audience members to move and make sound as they wish.

We had originally planned to keep the house lights aglow the entire show, but when we realized that a couple of the pieces on the program required complete darkness, we made a really easy switch to provide little battery-operated tea lights for anybody who needed them. Tickets for the show were pick your own price to minimize financial barriers and were finding the offering performances tailored to folks with autism and other sensory sensitivities helps other audiences feel relaxed as well and it was a chance for Minnesota dance community together and for us to shine a spotlight on them too. Secondly, we're inviting community partners to cohost affinity events in conjunction with our performance.

These affinity events take a lot of different forms depending on who the partner is and who the audiences that they're working with, but they include allows for meet ups prizes and swag, Photo Booths, pop up exhibits, whatever we can make happen with our engagement manager and interns. Among all of these things, one of the surprisingly impactful factors has been inviting our partners to join us for on stage welcome. I know people have strong feelings about current speeches, but I believe in them is the best tool that we had to welcome audiences and their genuine responses to dance and tour spaces. And we hear again and again about how much it means to our partners and to their communities to have a chance to be heard from our stage.

We're only scratching the surface here. So if you want to talk more about the research, the staffing, or the community engagement behind these examples, please find me in person or via e mail. Thank you.

>> LISA MOUNT: Thank you. Go, Christy. Go, Christy. Our final lightning round panelist is the amazing Christy Bolingbroke from NCC, National Choreographic Center Akron.

>> CHRISTY BOLINGBROKE: Thank you. Lisa, I was worried you were going to call us as a presenter when you said you meant today's presenters. For those that are not familiar with the National Center for Choreography, we are neither presenter nor funder nor artist. But I like to think that we operate in the cracks of the system and our foundation for this field so everyone can dance. Because in any space, all of us play those roles. If you're not familiar also with NCC, Akron, we were established in 2015 in the National Center for Choreography that is based in Akron, Ohio. Is dedicated as a space for regional development toward new work and dance, to strengthening the national ecosystem and to advocating for dance and the creative process as an essential part of culture in this country. Just that.

I'm going to talk to you thank you for supporting. I'm going to talk to you about technical residences. And we were asked not to pitch the name of specific artists but talk to me afterwards. So technical residency, we had one scheduled with an artist in 2020/2021 season. And, of course, it got postponed due to COVID. It had raised \$25,000, NCC Akron was providing half of that, and the artist had a fund tour designated grant to support the other half of that. And then we rescheduled not once, twice, three times a charm. And were finally able to realize that in January 2024. Two additional challenges. A, due to

inflation, travel and housing was at 30 to 40%. I'm seeing some nodding heads. And B, the artist had found a way to already premiere the work that that grant had been raised for. Because artists find a way.

So while the artist designated funds were still available to bring the work to our community, the artist actually needed technical residency to develop a whole other work with a completely different cast. I asked if they had a recording of that other work, and they did. Because in another aspect of NCC Akron's programming we can be a artist to R&D new ideas but we also recognize as an advocate for dance we can be a space for audiences to experiment with art form. It was a multi camera shoot. It was two hours which is a little long to ask people to come in and watch a two hour recording of something that was meant for live performance, but the quality ensured that we could work with our local art house cinema another nonprofit to stage a different type of event.

The artist said yes, and then I am really grateful for the trust, but I might've pushed him a little bit further when I said that I choose four different excerpts and show them out of order because the formatted structure was different. And I'm so grateful that they said yes again. A sidebar I did share these notes with the artist and events. And I said hey, is this how you remembered it? And they said yes. But they also let me know and gave the feedback the multi times of rescheduling, the consistency of communication that was administrative rehearsal. And that gave them the confidence and trust in us and vice versa. We learn by practicing. If we can we do it in the studio all the time, we can do it administratively as well.

So we were able to make it happen. I wanted to offer a couple of suggested lessons learned. One, aggregate resources. A curatorial value here at NCC Akron all parties should have a vested interest in the successful experience. And we use a joint budget tool so everyone understands where the money comes from, and we can collectively model out our options. Two, presenters stay curious about the artist developmental art. You won't present or work with them on everything. But staying open and informed helps you be ready to respond to inevitable challenges together. Three, let go in order to make space for something else and this could mean something as basic as tinkering with the format of an existing program structure. Four, patience and persistence. This isn't just about the next gig, or even just next season seek out ways of engaging in practices to cultivate a long term relationship and an ultimately longevity in this field. Thank you.

>> MK WEGMANN: I want to thank all of the panelists for their presentations. I think there is an incredible amount of information that was conveyed in a short period of time so I'm going to summarize a few things that emerged very quickly as things from every single presenter here first of all flexibility the ability to adapt to different circumstances. And that is really key to be able to successfully tour because the vast variety of spaces and organizations across this country who may want to present dance need to know that the artist can be flexible for them that there is not rigidity in it. Key also is artists being prepared to tour. And that was again reiterated by everyone.

From a technical residency to having a tech writer. If you don't know about having a tech writer before you start or your dream of touring, then you're going to face a lot of

challenges and barriers. Another is working in partnership, the idea of bringing in community partners. The idea of talking to the audience of bringing the audience into the processes which is a really big shift from the idea that of the transactional relationship the audience is only there to have bought a ticket and to watch a show. As opposed to the ideas that the artists convey or the culture that they represent speaking to the audience and the audience being able to respond. So the engagement of the audience, not just seeing them as ticket buyers.

And then finally, transparency about finances. When you work in partnership, when you work jointly, understand the costs that everyone has, and participating in the project. Be prepared to jointly fund raise and be prepared to jointly share those resources among the partners. So there is a lot of ideas that we have heard of were going to break into tables now Lisa's gonna introduce that and I hope these ideas will have spurred conversations to come, thank you.

>> LISA MOUNT: Beautiful. Thank you, MK. She handles the substance; I just do the style. So we have about 15 minutes for conversations among you to respond to what you've heard, but more importantly to do the data sharing of your own success stories. Where going to have about ten minutes after that to hear a very quick popcorn from your tables so as you're talking to each other we ask that you share your talk space relatively equitably and if you think there is something worth sharing somebody identify themselves as all report out because when we come back into this big group, look for folks who are literally popping up and we run mics to you.

For those of you who are in the standing room only section, hooray, find three or four people to have a conversation with them. Remember that these kinds of conversations are going to do more listening than talking. Ready? I'm starting the 15 minute talk time counter. Have a good conversation about what works. It is so difficult to stop talking. I know this because I'm still talking. And yet, you are still speaking so please bring your conversations to a close. We're almost there. We have a place for this table to tell their story to the whole group. Don't make me come out there and get you yes. If you can hear my voice club once if you can hear my voice club twice. Here we go. So this group is going to tell a very brief story. Right over there, you're in the queue for third.

>> My name is Jody Sperling. I'm the founder and artistic director of Time Lapse Dance. And my people volunteered me to tell my story which is one of collaboration and partnership. I am the eco artist in residence at the New York Society for Ethical Culture. They are a humanist organization. There has never been an artist there. There has never been a dance company in residence at this space, but for the last two and a half years, we've been occupying and making a home in spaces that were empty and bringing dance and creating an ongoing partnership not just with the size Society's membership but also with the communities that they serve in the New York City Housing Authority complexes.

So it's been a way to grow our work literally to have a rehearsal and ongoing performance based to partner and collaborate with the staff and the members to grow an audience for dance and for a joyful experience of moving with dance and also to bring this work to the larger surrounding community.

>> LISA MOUNT: Brilliant modeling thank you. We're going over here and then I think her table here was next in the queue.

>> Hello. My name is Alex Scheinman with Garth Fagan Dance, Executive Assistant. One topic that was brought up well, I brought up is how I was inspired by the ideas how we can reimagine audience collaboration and one event that we take part in a Rochester New York is the first Friday Rochester were a lot of different visual performing arts have open reversals and open doors for the first Friday of every month. And now I'm starting to think about how can we get the people who are walking to different organizations and around the downtown and downtown Rochester maybe they can go on stage maybe they can interact with the dancers in a more non transactional way which was— so I'm coming up with some ideas.

>> LISA MOUNT: Alright. So we know there is some speaker here, but who wants to be on deck? Yep, right over there, we gotcha.

>> Hi. I'm Judith Flex, the Director of Luminario Ballet in Los Angeles. And just a quick breath for all of my colleagues and friends and family who live there. LA is quite wiped out at the moment. But our LA colleagues are here, and I love you guys. Our company has existed for 15 years, was started as a collaborative company and we still are a collaborative company. We do contemporary belly lay we do contemporary dance we do dance theater and aerial dance, and I have 1 of my aerial choreographers with me Joy Weber and my core director also a ballet choreographer will recruit Symphony Orchestra's for the LA Phil to local musicians. We do mostly original work. We are showcasing here, and our topics to boot, could go in every direction from misogyny to drug addiction to joy and love.

And this year were just working on joy and love. Because like everybody else here, we've been through a lot and were all hanging on by their fingernails. So with regard, to interacting with the audience is something that were discussing and our colleague Jerry Weber has been actively doing it and we're learning from her and same with our colleagues from Brazil, Linda here who is sharing her I'm sorry, Linda Yuden and she is sharing her experiences as well as her Chicago colleagues. All of you guys, blessings. And I know some of you, hi.

>> LISA MOUNT: Thank you, we love that. Thank you so much. We're moving on to this section but who's on deck without room for one more story after this there is. Okay I have been given the word that there can be two more so after this we'll go to Eric. And then, Lula you're gonna close us out. Thank you, ma'am.

>> Hi. My name is Diana. I'm the current residence at the Natural Portrait Gallery in Washington DC, and also the Artistic Director of Moveius Contemporary Ballet in Washington DC. My table mates volunteered me to tell my story, which is one of collaboration with DC based organizations, first, at the portrait gallery. One of the great things of being an artist in residence there is that we have a platform a big event. And I also do work that relates to environmental and topical issues in society. And so for their environmental leaders exhibit, my ballet glacier climate change ballet brought in over 700 audience members to the free event with another 1,700 that responded online to the event, and these are free events.

And then, again, a later ballet over the summer related to the environmental leader, Rachel Carson, and her love of birds and conservation brought in another 500 people with a bout thousand and RSVPing online. So what we learned from that is that by partnering with organizations like the portrait Gallery we get a better amplification of message but also that ballet which is an art form people love combined with topics that people care about, like the environment and climate change, can bring in new audiences.

The second success story of two, is that over the past several later years we are able to purchase our building and designed a thank you designed a novel partnership with an affordable housing developer. So now we're codeveloping a redevelopment that will be 20,000 square foot art center. 100 units of affordable housing including deeply affordable units with 30% meeting the family income mark. As well as a net zero energy building. So in doing that, we're showing how a dance organization can actually help a city achieve its goal.

>> LISA MOUNT: Thank you. Awesome.

>> Thank you. Housing equity, climate, resilience and art access. Thank you.

>> LISA MOUNT: Beautifully done, thank you. All right, we're going over here.

>> Good morning, everyone. My name is Eric Fliss. I'm the managing director of the Dennis C. Moss Cultural Arts Center in Miami, and Susan Callahan has volunteered me to speak on behalf of the group. We are a cultural arts Center multi disciplined arts Center in Miami located more in the suburbs than the urban core of the city. And as we started to program and particularly programming dance with negotiated with our artist to provide master classes for the community. We quickly realized that in the suburban areas of Miami, professional dancers did not exist, and we had to pivot and create community dance classes.

But over the period of time, we have actually engaged our young professional dancers with the center in opportunities to use our space, to perform in our space, and sometimes it worked in a way where they would actually work at the center as an administrator, and they had free studio time. Over time, they have been able to showcase their work at the theater bringing in more dancers from the community and connecting them with the center and I'm happy to say now when we bring in an artist, we're able to still have a community class but we also offer master classes in 20 to 25 professional dancers will show up and they are now. Advocates for the center bringing in more and more friends to the center and helping us engage audiences so thank you.

>> LISA MOUNT: All right, last group.

>> Okay. Is it okay now? I have to stand in the light.

>> LISA MOUNT: Find your light. Find your light.

>> I feel it. So we're all healers and we're all part of the solution. That is the first success because our art is what's making everyone in a tiny bit of way part of the healing. So a lot of time arts get left out of the process but I'm here to say that the reason that my company has survived is because I believe in my art. I believe that if I don't do it, who will?

And I believe in what Virginia Capers said always have something to say, stand in the light and then say it. Otherwise, no one will have the opportunity to hear your voice. Now sometimes, we as artists, are just kind of so settled and set in our ways, it's hard to get up. Because we are always like yeah, let it out. Say something. Do something. And that's what we're doing. Our dance company we're proud to say owns our own dance building. And we had tried to communicate yes, see that's what I'm talking about. There should be applause. If we know how hard it is to own anything and being an artist. I'm so proud of you all. I said that because most of the time other people, and big business projects, don't believe artists can pay for anything. That is what we're up against until we prove them wrong, and we did so. We own our building free and clear. As a point of that success, it's been a goal to always— I'm cut off? Okay.

>> LISA MOUNT: That was a little bit of the signal, yes.

>> I've always wanted to be a part of the solution in my community and I know that rehearsal space has been a issue so we have created a program with our advanced resource center where there is a process where artists can come and rehearse interspace where the dance resources provide the space let's face it we can't do it for free but we can't do it if we're helping each other so I get a chance to come and have free response personal space and we try to bring the prices down for a friend that are not part of that but we continue to move on so they have a rehearsal space and an opportunity to perform the dance all day dance Festival, which is free to the community. The largest Soul Festival of the city of Los Angeles, which was started on our property because we got tired of being on a stage about the size of the table to do our work.

So we said that's okay, we have our stage, we'll do our own thing. Not everyone in dance that wants to showcase calls and says, we want to be in the festival. So we showcase not only professional companies but young youth companies as well. So the audience has come to our area sits in our chairs they get to see the young children the youth the teenagers and professional companies and emerging companies which is all in my concept a way of introducing my community to a wide perspective look at what dances dance is not one thing it's many things. But as long as we're going to say I didn't understand that. But when you come to Little Washington, that's an all day festival. You see a group doing something, you are like I didn't know that was dance. I learned something today. That's what it's all about. So I want to say we are the success so you all should applaud yourselves because that's who we are. That's who we are. And I'm going to give the microphone back now, because you're both standing behind me. Thank you.

>> LISA MOUNT: We celebrate you. I'm going to ask you to give us two minutes of summary and transition to MK and then Dance/USA to close our time together. Go ahead.

>> MK WEGMANN: So I think one of the most important things that I heard was from the success stories from the people at the tables is getting dance beyond the formal stage not abandoning the formal stage but going beyond it particularly collaborating with non dance arts organization almost everyone spoke of collaborations that extended beyond the dance community even going— of the opportunity for presenting toward dance to grow your local dance community that is a message to presenters. I think Eric's message about

how he grew the community in Miami, the dance community in his part of the Miami area.

Working with joy and in challenging times we really need to keep joy and love at the forefront. Because we do have the solutions. As Lula so eloquently stated, we are the solution. Artists have an important role to play in our communities, to make our communities healthy and successful. And I think the stories of how organizations partnered, how dancers solve problems in the moment as they performed the worker got ready to perform the work and the partnering across organizations much as other arts organizations but beyond the arts community to the issues like the environmental issues in our communities that are facing so congratulations again this started with success story panels and WAH and at MAX 2024. We're here with success stories and the plan is for there to be said similar forums at WAH and Max again. So if any of you who are participating in other forms who wanted to organize on your own, and other forum success stories of dance in your communities, take the initiative and do that spread the word of what we can do to help face the changes that we are all anticipating coming and which have already come.

>> LISA MOUNT: Organize, organize, organize. There we go. Yes. So we are now I'm going to invite Juan José Escalante from Miami City Ballet to come and close this gathering. It is an honor and a privilege to be of service to Dance/USA, to the dance Ecosystem, to this room. Thank you all.

>> MK WEGMANN: Thank you.

>> JUAN JOSE ESCALANTE: Hello. Or as we say in Miami, hola. I'm here to give some thank yous, make an announcement and an invitation. And I know that I have ten minutes. All right. First of all, thank you Lisa Mount and MK Wegmann for facilitating an insightful and inspiring conversation on success stories as it relates to the dance touring from the Ecosystem. Thank you, Sara Nash, from the NAA for sharing critical updates from the agency. And thank you, Catherine Vargo and Rose Pasculli for the Dance/USA's own test scores on dancer health, for sharing more about the valuable support we provide our dancers. And congratulations on celebrating 20 years of service in 2025. Give it up for them, guys. Okay that's the thank you part. As a form of announcement, my name is Juan José Escalante. My pronouns or he, him, they. I am the Executive Director of Miami Ballet located on the land of the Miccosukee people, also known as Miami Beach Florida.

And I am honored to have been recently selected as Dance/USA Board Chair elect. Yeah, I was surprised to. I look forward to learning from and working with all of you this you in my role as board chair elect and I look forward to gathering in 2026 when my official term starts. On another note, I decided to accept the nomination to the position because I feel that the arts in general are in the middle of a very serious and critical storm. And the only way especially dance. And I feel that the only way we're going to get through the storm as if we work together coast to coast. I have been doing this for a very long time. And in my time, I have encountered three very specific groups of people.

The first group is people that show up every day and make it happen. This is all of you. Yes, give it up. The second group is these folks that show up and watch it happen every day.

And the third group is a group that shows up and wonders what the hell happened. So I'm going to use something I heard from Lisa. If you're in that group, quit your bitching and start working. So thank you. As a description, I have brown skin. I'm a 6' 1" man, wearing a black blazer, dark gray sweater, white shirt, black pants, a pair of sneakers with bright laces that somebody told me that it looks so dope. And an orange watch, for some reason. I also want to echo the abundant sentiment of gratitude I heard throughout today's updates and conversations by offering on behalf of dance USA's Board of Trustees we have the dance music team, our collective gratitude for you all.

For your full engagement during today's that's for them. And with this in mind, we encourage you to do two things one is share your dance form experience in your key takeaways from today and please tag us at DanceUSA.org in social media. That would be useful. And the second thing is we want you to access this QR code that is going to come up and complete a survey which is going to take a few minutes. By participating in the survey, you will make a lasting impact on future forms and the Dance/USA programming decisions moving forward, which we appreciate that. While you do that, I want to offer our most sincere gratitude to our institutional funders, sponsors and individual donors. Your generosity makes our work and humble service to the dance ecosystem possible.

To Lisa Richards Stoney and the entire APAP team for your steadfast partnership. The interpreters for the ASL services. And the Viscardi Center I almost called it the Bacardi Center you can tell that I'm from Miami for today's CART and transcript services. And to Kalyn Jacobs who is visually capturing today's dance forum. But before I leave the stage, and we launch into the APAP conferences and attend the showcases and hectic schedules, I wanted to invite you all each and every one of you to join me the Dance USA team and the Dance USA Board of Trustees as well as your colleagues to join us in Chicago June 17th through the 20th, 2025 for the Dance/USA 2025 conference.

As you know, Dance/USA National Conference is an invigorating gathering of us united by our interest in advancing the art form of dance, which we love so much and didn't really want to see celebrated in the right. So come to Chicago in June to honor leaders within the Ecosystem share and learn about new resources and connect with peers throughout the conference we will have opportunities to discover approaches to share problems strengthen our relationships with each other and be immersed in the vibrancy of the Chicago dance community that community is dope so the very station for the conference will launch in a week so keep an eye in your inboxes for that and register please okay so did we put the QR code? Okay, great.

Well, I am looking forward to seeing you all again soon, to seeing you in Chicago. Have a wonderful conference, and I hope it's very productive. So thank you very much.