

PRESS RELEASE



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DANCE/USA ANNOUNCES MICHELE KUMI (久美) BAER AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR –Seasoned Arts Leader to Guide National Service Organization into Its Next Chapter–

Washington, DC – (March 24, 2026) Following a national search, Dance/USA, the national service organization for the dance ecosystem, announces **Michele Kumi (久美) Baer as its new Executive Director**. A seasoned arts leader specializing in capacity building, organizational change, and field building, Baer brings decades of experience across the dance and nonprofit sectors. She will join Dance/USA in April 2026.

“For dance to thrive, all dancers and dance workers must move together. In Michele Kumi Baer, we found not only a leader of extraordinary range and depth, but a genuine partner in making these moves. Michele comes to Dance/USA having worked alongside our members as a dancer, a funder, a leader, and a coach. She knows what dance artists and organizations need, because she has lived it. I am confident that the next chapter of Dance/USA will be one our ecosystem can feel proud of,” comments **Juan José Escalante, Dance/USA Board Chair**.

“It is an honor to join Dance/USA at this pivotal time for our field. Our dance ecosystem has been experiencing multiple interlocking crises that have had profound political, economic, and cultural impacts. Collectively, we have an opportunity to fortify the future of dance,” shares **Michele Kumi (久美) Baer, incoming Dance/USA Executive Director**. “Our people — our artists, our teachers, our administrators, our organizers, and our other cultural workers — are some of our greatest assets in ensuring a future where our field is thriving. We may not agree on every goal, strategy, tactic, or style, but our ability to build healthy working relationships across our ecosystem — aligning our efforts, embracing conflict as generative, and honoring the field diversity that bolsters our resiliency — will be critical fuel towards a future that we all yearn and strive for.”

Baer has operated across all layers of the arts and culture space. She most recently served as Executive Director of Urban Bush Women and has worked with The New York Community Trust and Global Fund for Women, as well as consulting for the Mellon Foundation, Sundance Institute, and others. Her consulting and coaching practice has also included partnerships with the Center for Cultural Power, MAP Fund, Creatives Rebuild New York, NEFA's National Dance Project, Intercultural Leadership Institute, and the National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures.

A lifelong dancer, Baer's sensibilities as a mover and choreographer shape how she leads, strategizes, and collaborates. She has pursued deep study of dance traditions from West Africa (Mandé & Malinke), Brazil, and Haiti for more than 16 years, including travel to study with master culture bearers in Brazil and Mali. Born and raised on the ancestral and unceded lands of the Ohlone people, also currently referred to as the San Francisco Bay Area, she is currently based in Brooklyn, NY/ Lenapehoking.

Baer succeeds Sara Nash, who has served as Interim Executive Director since August 2025, guiding Dance/USA through this period of transition.

Michele Kumi (久美) Baer Bio

Michele Kumi (久美) Baer (she/they) is an arts leader devoted to igniting, kindling, and sustaining people's capacity to practice creativity, equity, and liberation in their lives.

Over the course of her career, Michele has designed and directed initiatives that have seeded new funding and cultural programs; fostered greater authenticity and trust among colleagues and collaborators; and advanced bold agendas to further social justice in the cultural and philanthropic fields. She has contributed to the arts and culture ecosystem as an advocate, executive, programs director, service provider, grantmaker, facilitator, coach, and performer.

Previous posts include work at Urban Bush Women, Race Forward, The New York Community Trust, and the Global Fund for Women. As a consultant, Michele's client roster has included the Center for Cultural Power, Creatives Rebuild New York, Creative West, Intercultural Leadership Institute, Mellon Foundation, National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures, and the Sundance Institute, among others.

Active in the nonprofit field, Michele regularly contributes to field-wide events, coalitions, and grant and fellowship panels. Past panel service includes the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Dance Project, the California Creative Corps Artist Fellowship, and the Constellations Culture Change Fund. A lifelong dancer, Michele's sensibilities as a mover and choreographer shape how she leads, strategizes, and collaborates. She has been committed to deep study of dance traditions from West Africa (Mandé & Malinke), Brazil, and Haiti for over 16 years and has traveled to study with master culture bearers in Brazil and Mali.

Born and raised on the ancestral and unceded lands of the Ohlone people—what people also currently refer to as the San Francisco Bay Area—Michele is a mixed race, East Asian, cisgender, and non-disabled woman. She is a proud Yonsei (fourth generation Japanese American) who has both Japanese and mixed European ancestry. It was learning about her family's incarceration during World War II that propelled Michele into critical inquiry at a young age. [Full bio and head shot on Dance/USA website.](#)

About Dance/USA

Propelled by our belief that dance can inspire a more just and humane world, Dance/USA will amplify the power of dance to inform and inspire a nation where creativity and the field thrive.

Established in 1982, Dance/USA champions an inclusive and equitable dance field by leading, convening, advocating, and supporting individuals and organizations. Dance/USA's core programs are focused in the areas of engagement, advocacy, research, and preservation. Learn more about Dance/USA at danceusa.org.

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