Executive Summary

Callahan Consulting for the Arts (Callahan Consulting) conducted a study for The Joyce Theater (The Joyce), funded by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation (The Mellon Foundation), to determine how The Joyce might better support choreographers in developing work of the highest artistic quality. Many choreographers are self-taught, building on their careers as accomplished dancers, but The Joyce wondered whether choreographers need more or different opportunities for training or related services.\(^1\) While initially intended as an internal study, The Joyce and The Mellon Foundation are sharing this research with the dance field so that its findings might be used to inform or improve other programs.\(^2\)

Research explored: the professional choreographic training opportunities currently available in the United States through college programs and from other organizations and individuals; the training (or lack thereof) of select choreographers working in the United States and the factors that contributed to the development of their choreographic voices; and select training methods in Europe.

The views expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Methodology

Callahan Consulting began by reviewing background materials and research on choreographic training and quality that have been completed by other leaders in the dance field, including reports, essays, textbooks, other books about artists’ creative processes, and evaluations of programs designed to serve artists in developing choreography. The consultants analyzed statistics related to choreographic training from 132 colleges with dance departments and additional limited information on a larger set of 628 colleges. Twenty-five interviews were conducted with national leaders within the US dance field. A purposeful sample of artists and other professionals was selected for their longtime expertise in the field and includes: choreographers who have produced work of high quality or who have exceptional promise; dance educators in higher education and other institutions; national leaders with extensive experience in presenting, funding, writing, and dance history; and administrators of service organizations and associations. Because a goal of the research was to compare services and facilities offered to choreographers in the US to what is offered abroad, site visits were conducted in Europe at three national choreographic centers in France, in the cities of Paris, Angers, and Caen, as well as to the Performing Arts Research and Training Studios (PARTS) in Brussels, Belgium. Information was gathered on two additional centers, as well as Netherlands Dance Theater.

About the Full Report

The full report begins with US Colleges and Choreographic Instruction, a quantitative look at the major source of choreographic training in this country, to give a broad view of opportunities to pursue choreography within undergraduate and graduate degree programs. This report makes some broad projections of the numbers of students who may be entering the professional dance field with hopes of being choreographers. The Literature Review moves from the numbers into the ways in which choreographic training is offered within colleges, including pedagogy, curricular standards, and the issues and debates that surround choreographic instruction. The Review then shifts outside of academia to the professional field, to the programs and opportunities for artists to learn and develop their craft, as well as the writings of artists on how they choose to make work. The Interviews with US Artists and Leaders
section distills the viewpoints of some of the leading artists and supporters of dance and choreography in the country regarding if and how choreography can be taught; the best ways to support choreographers; and the factors that enhance the quality of choreography. The Models from Europe for Training and Support section explores some of the structures and formats that are used abroad in training and supporting choreographers for potential application here in the US. Finally, the Assimilation and Recommendations section highlights key points and recommendations from the research and adds some suggestions for new strategies.

The topic of choreographic training and development is a conundrum—one that is not easily solved nor lightly addressed. Moreover, the dance field would not agree on a sole definition of artistic quality, which is a highly subjective measure of excellence. The multiplicity of viewpoints, as well as the training methods and support systems that have been developed both in the US and abroad, bring home this point. This study and report would not have been possible without the involvement of 43 professionals—choreographers, scholars, presenters, and other experts—who have spoken, taught, and/or written about this topic over the past 50-plus years. It is hoped that the full report and this summary do justice to their expertise and strong opinions, as well as their dedication to supporting the development of new work in the best ways possible.

**US Colleges and Choreographic Instruction**

The initial phase of the research attempted to project the numbers of students studying choreography and composition in higher education. Data came from the Dance Magazine College Guide 2011/2012, with permission. The 628 dance departments for which Dance Magazine has contact information, along with additional information from the printed college guide, provide some overview of choreographic training within college programs. The states with the greatest numbers of dance departments, by far, are California, at 86, and New York at 60, followed by Texas, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Florida. It is unknown how many of them offer dance majors. A total of 132 colleges pay to list and self-report statistics about their programs; they offer these degrees: Bachelors (129); Masters (44); PhD (3); and Minor (70). Their top three course offerings are contemporary dance, choreography, and dance history. Their number of reported dance majors total 8,325, and 673 graduate students. Adjusting for unreported data suggests that there may be as many as 9,000 undergraduate dance majors attending all 132 colleges. Calculations appear in the full report.

Rough projections of the number of students studying choreography in the US at any given time will provide context for the remainder of this study. The number of dance majors at the remaining 496 schools would conservatively increase the number of undergraduate dance majors to nearly 14,000, if not more. Factoring in graduate students, who are more likely to study choreography, could increase the total to 15,000 or more. Regardless of the exact numbers, one can deduce that among the many thousands of dance majors, a large portion are studying choreography. The number of dance majors graduating with a choreographic focus easily reaches 1,500 per year, and is likely considerably higher. The fact that this high volume is graduating from US colleges each year, with some proportion of them joining the ranks of the professional dance field as choreographers, has implications for the amount of new choreography being made, as well as the level of competition for resources and opportunities. It also has implications, in turn, for the support structures that these emerging artists will need and for artists’ expectations of organizations that provide support.

**Literature Review**

Materials from three different types of sources are presented: academia, professional programs that serve the development of choreography, and choreographers themselves. The materials are disparate in their
viewpoints on the teaching of choreography and related support for choreographers, illustrating the sharp contrasts that exist within the dance field about the topic. The Review begins with major issues within the academy related to choreographic instruction, as expressed by academicians and professional artists. To illustrate some of the contrasting views, the Review moves to the accreditation standards for dance and choreography provided by the College Board for the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards (the College Board), in order to show the official measures that are used within the higher education curriculum. Following is the College Board’s review of some of the texts that might be used to teach choreography courses, as well as some additional curricular resources culled by the consultant. Moving outside of the academy, the Review describes programs that support the creation of work in the professional world, as described primarily by the artists who have benefitted from them and by the programs’ designers. The Literature Review ends with a sampling of books and essays that presents select viewpoints of artists on their own choreographic process.

Choreographic Training in Academia

It is important to begin this overview with some of the academy’s views about choreography and its teaching. This issue was a main topic within Artist-College Collaboration: Issues, Trends and Vision, a national report by Dance/USA, generated from a series of forums in 2003-05 that Dance/USA conducted to bring together 37 professional artists and dance professors. Although progress has been made, the tensions presented in this report and outlined below likely continue to ring true. At the time of the Forums, university dance departments were at a crucial point where “change seemed not only possible, but inevitable.”[3] There was growing pressure for academia to respond to larger changes in the national dance field, for “colleges to provide a place for practicing artists whose support structures have largely fallen away over the past decade.” [3]

These shifts in the academy were likely, in part, a delayed reaction to two fundamental changes at the national level that continue to influence the creation of new work today. First, since the mid 1990s, the traditional infrastructure of support for the professional dance field, particularly for independent artists and small companies, had largely been dismantled. The report quotes dance historian Sally Sommer’s observation in the 2000 report Comparative Study of Dance Communities: “Eventually artists suffered a huge blow with the elimination of the NEA’s Individual Artist Fellowships, one that attacked the core of the creative process. Attention was diverted from the artists and their work, and towards the effect of their projects on the community.”[4] Second, universities were one of the remaining sources of support for new work. The report addressed what appeared to be a growing and related trend that has implications for the creation of choreography: professional artists were now on campus in stints that range from short-term residencies, to adjunct contracts, to visiting professorships, to tenure track positions. While artists were attracted by the relative stability of academic jobs, including a steady salary and health care benefits, the reality of the university system presented new challenges and limitations. Time and studio space are limited and jobs come with many administrative requirements. Adjuncts can bring fresh and varied aesthetic perspectives, but their contracts are often temporary and without benefits. [6]

Foremost among the concerns of the Dance/USA report, and most relevant to this study’s research, was the dilemma of how to educate the next generation of dancers for their future, rather than for the world of dance that had passed. The Forums and the resulting report looked at choreography and its teaching as “the topic that sparked the most controversy.” Participants shunned the “top-down method of teaching craft that encourages emulation over original expression, and product over process, and instead called for new ways to encourage students to find their own voice.” [8] Moving forward from that time, and partly in response to the Forums, Dance/USA produced the book From the Campus to the Real World (And Back Again): A Resource Guide for Artists, Faculty and Students (2005). The chapter “Residencies 101” guides artists and faculty in planning and implementing projects, most of which
involves restaging or creating choreography. “Universities 101” orients artists to the lay of the land on campuses and guides those who are considering faculty positions on what to expect during the hiring process. “Real World 101” orients young dancers to life after graduation from college, as they begin a career. Throughout the book, essays from artists provide individual perspectives on navigating academic requirements while maintaining careers as working artists.

In the years surrounding the release of these reports, scores of professional artists flocked from running their own companies, full time, to holding positions in universities. This exodus from the larger cities, and to some degree from the 501(c)3 structure as a way of life, to a lifestyle in which artists were forced to split their time and attention between their company activities and full-time professorships meant two things. One, these artists’ focus on creating work had been subsumed to some degree by their need to stabilize their income as they grew older. Two, the arrival of so many working artists on campus brought new thinking about choreography and related curriculum, offering students connections to new work and some perspective on the realities of working as professionals in the field.” This begs the question of if or how choreographic curriculum within universities has changed since these publications came out.

The full report then surveys college standards and textbooks. *College Learning in the Arts: A Summary and Analysis of Recommendations and Expectations for Arts Instruction at the College Level*, by the College Board, *covers the national standards and textbooks that have been recommended for teaching choreography*. The standards related to choreography and performance, which are excerpted in the full report, require a minimum of two years of coursework. The Review of College Arts Textbooks includes 24 sources in technique, history, and criticism and analysis. The content in the dance creation category varies widely, ranging from dance technique instruction to memoirs and essays. Its summary states that production and choreography “might not lend themselves especially well to text-based instruction.” [27-28] The consultants identified other texts and resources in circulation that might be used or consulted in the teaching of choreography. Among the authors are: Anna Halprin, Louis Horst, Doris Humphrey, Liz Lerman, Daniel Namrin, and Twyla Tharp.

**Spaces and Programs that Serve the Art of Choreography**

Moving into the professional world, the following publications and reports, written or commissioned by program staff, describe programs that support choreography.

A report on CHIME, or the Choreographers in Mentorship Exchange, outlines the development of this program from 2003 to 2006, and gives an overview of its value, as viewed by ten pairs of mentors-mentees during the first years of its operation. CHIME encourages “emerging choreographers by fostering an exchange among artists of different generations, reducing artists’ sense of working in isolation, and creating mechanisms for professional dialogue about and improvement of choreography.” [4] The report extensively quotes artists, who speak at length about the nature of the relationships that they developed as mentor-mentees, the ways in which the mentees learned to process feedback, and the value of having rehearsal space over a long time period. The 2006 Position Paper on Maggie Allesee National Center for Choreography (MANCC) identifies MANCC’s goals and values as: serving as a research center; being risk-taking and innovative in its programs; responding quickly to changes in the field; focusing on support for professional choreography; and remaining artist-centered. [2] Through its programs, MANCC strives to: 1) be a model of support for professional choreographic creativity within a Research One university; 2) provide choreographers access to a stimulating environment where experimentation, exploration, and life-long learning are valued and encouraged; and 3) provide opportunities for the students, staff and faculty, the community of Tallahassee, and the national dance field at large to engage with the creative process in dance. [2] The Carlisle Project issued a final report titled *A Mirror and a Window: The Carlisle Project 1984-1996*, in which staff and others look back on the running of this
service organization designed to serve the ballet field. In Carlisle’s design, the question arose as to whether choreography can be taught. Founder Barbara Weisberger recounts her conversations about this question with some of the most prominent ballet and contemporary choreographers, including George Balanchine and Paul Taylor. Weisberger explains Carlisle’s goals for choreographic training, which asked artists “to stretch, take risks, and not be afraid to fail. … [creating] an atmosphere of personal warmth but professional rigor, of camaraderie but undiminished competitiveness, of freedom from commercial burdens but intensely pressured work schedules.” [20]

Choreographers’ Writings on Their Craft

Perhaps most relevant to this study are the words and viewpoints of artists as they describe their choreographic process and what has helped them to create work. Growing Place: Interviews with Artists, 25 Years at the Bates Dance Festival (2007) compiled interviews with artists about being in residence and making work at this summer festival on the campus of Bates College. Fifteen artists, including Doug Varone and Bebe Miller, share their approach to making work. In his essay “Poetic Science” (2005), Tere O’Connor explains his views on the teaching of choreography in the academy, and how his teaching informs his own choreography. Speaking of Dance: Twelve Contemporary Choreographers on Their Craft (2004) is a collection of essays exploring the creative practices of a group of highly prominent artists: Merce Cunningham, Anna Halprin, David Gordon, Trisha Brown, Lucinda Childs, Meredith Monk, Elizabeth Streb, Eiko Otake, Bill T. Jones, Ann Carlson, Mark Morris, and John Jasperse. Artists tell poignant stories about their process of creating work, pursuing experiments, asking questions, and taking risks—including their successes and failures. The volume conveys how artists create from their own conscious choices about process. These artists’ creative processes tend to begin with some turning point or revelation that leads them to explore a question or pursue an aesthetic challenge. Artists explicate the ways that they move from process to structure. They share a commitment to taking artistic risk, and seem comfortable with not knowing exactly where their creative process would lead, or how the final work would develop.

This overview scans the literature and opinions of numerous artists, academicians, writers, and consultants who all have in common the goal of high quality choreography—both creating and teaching it. Yet there is not agreement among them about how to approach the formidable task of choreographic training. Within the training-related materials, there is a stated or assumed set of standards and methods, with recommendations for how it is done best. In contrast were the reports and essays generated by the Dance/USA Forums in which artists and professors question the effectiveness of the existing curriculum, which many find lacking. The professional artists stressed the uniqueness of each choreographer’s working process. As to texts, the general sense is that most of them are not used; as soon as one is written, perhaps it begins to seem proscriptive, or perhaps it is simply impossible to capture in writing the elusive nature of creating a dance.

When considered as a whole, this body of literature presents a paradox: Many say or imply that choreography cannot be taught or that the existing methods are not working. Yet no one said to stop teaching it. With the influx of professional artists into universities in recent years, the intermingling of ideas and methods of how to choreograph may be causing a shift in the approaches to teaching it. This brings to mind the nature of how contemporary dance has developed over the past century. As stated in the report on the Forums cited above: “College programs live with the conflicting priorities to honor and preserve the past, as well as embrace the new, which is often expressed by reaction against that past.” [3]

Decades earlier, in Terpsichore in Sneakers: Post Modern Dance (1980), Sally Banes described this same trend, which may echo the built-in tension that has historically existed in contemporary dance, and is perhaps even reflected in this Literature Review: “Revolution and institution, revolution and institution. The choices for each [modern dance] generation have been either to enter the new academy (but
inevitably to dilute and trivialize it in doing so) or to create a new establishment.” [5] This notion of institution and revolution—or namely, of how choreography has been taught and supported now and what may work better in the future—will be taken up in the next section with the US interviews.

Interviews with US Artists and Leaders

The 25 US-based interviewees include a host of professional artists, presenters, professors, funders, and arts administrators from service organizations, colleges, national and local arts associations, and funding organizations. Interviewees spoke on the condition of confidentiality, in order to encourage candor and elicit the true range of opinions about the questions asked. As is typical in studies of this kind, the interviewees voiced opinions that often converged and sometimes diverged. Interviewees began by talking about choreographic training, including any formal programs in which they had participated both inside and outside of the academy. Following that were fascinating discussions about choreographers’ creative processes: their daily practice, the manner in which they train and prepare themselves to create, and the ways in which their practice evolves over their careers. Discussions then explored factors within the larger working environment that support choreographers, such as collaborations, habitats, and support structures, including mentorships. Then, interviewees carefully considered the issue of funding—the ways in which it can support or hamper quality.

Nearly all interviewees had studied dance at some point in their lives; nearly two-thirds had been professional dancers and/or choreographers. Over half have choreographed professionally, worked as presenters and/or founded or run programs that serve the artistic development of other artists. Most have taught dance in university settings; ten have ongoing college faculty positions. Most chose to spend significant time in large dance centers, including New York and the Bay Area.

The Question of Choreographic Training

The collective impressions gleaned from interviewees convey their extensive knowledge of and opinions about teaching choreography in college settings. Of those who commented on the topic, there was an even split between those who credited academic training and those who discounted it. Those who valued their dance training in a university setting regarded this early exposure as important. Most interviewees expressed reservations, however, about the effectiveness of choreographic training in the academy, and the outcomes for students of taking such courses. They felt that composition would not necessarily lead to better work, but instead to similar work. Students may need to unlearn what they have studied, are not encouraged to develop a unique artistic voice, or the they make work that is superficial. Interviewees created a picture of academia as being behind the times in its viewpoints about choreographic instruction and in its awareness of new work. One academic with extensive teaching experience rationalized: “Whatever is absolutely current, being done right now, has yet to reach the academy, as it has to be proven before academia will pick it up. That’s just the nature of the beast, not a criticism.” A long-term presenter agreed that artists can be “held back by the restrictions that were placed on their thinking.” Classes in choreography and composition may help to inform students’ artistic development but do not necessarily lead them to become good choreographers—nor, said some, is that their ultimate purpose.

Many of the artists (along with a few others) went on to discuss at length the attributes that went into developing their choreographic voices. Among conversations with the senior artists, it was striking that most had tried and abandoned choreography and composition courses, instead following their own strong impulses to ask different questions about movement and art. While a few established artists had completed and acknowledged the value of these courses, most found that the curriculum provided too rigid a structure, which they reacted against. Interviewees spoke of the degree to which
Choreographers are self-taught, with many referring to Merce Cunningham. To satiate their curiosity, artists establish their own practice and cultivate instincts about, if not an obsession with, what they would like to explore. Each artist had spent considerable time alone, hashing out ideas and questions. In contrast, the current funding and producing climate, according to one senior artist, rewards an “agreed-upon cogency” that values universality over experimentation. Nearly all interviewees referenced how important it is for choreographers to pursue knowledge and training outside of dance. Interviewees stressed that a key part of how choreographers develop artistically is to be pushed beyond their comfort zones into some new artistic terrain. Interviewees of all types spoke of these artistic breakthroughs, which could occur while choreographers were participating in residency programs that grant them time and space to develop work.

The Professional Work Environment

Interviewees—both artists and others—stressed that a key ingredient of enhancing quality is collaborating with high-caliber artists from other disciplines. Positive examples were given of artists who were constantly challenged by their collaborators. An artist who stood out to several interviewees in this regard was Ralph Lemon. Artists described how they were pushed “past our own patterns and expectations” to create better work by dancers who give feedback and creative input. Another pointed out that this type of in-studio learning is simply “the way dance is—it is handed down from person to person,” with the academic approach being a “relatively new phenomenon.” Learning choreography through dancing for a respected artist is particularly common in ballet where, one interviewee stated, mentorship is rare. Finally, for some artists, teaching choreography provides opportunities to observe new perspectives from their students.

To nearly all interviewees, a factor that enhances work is for choreographers to make and see work within a larger community of their peers. There was a widespread belief among interviewees that artists’ geographic location fed their sense of community. Most stressed the strong advantages of working in New York: artists move there to be exposed to all that it offers artistically. Several interviewees, both artists and others, were quick to point out, however, that regular interactions with a set community is not guaranteed to improve quality; such insularity can limit artists’ worldview. Interviewees warned that artists who do not regularly see the work of other artists hinder the quality of their own work. Comparisons were made to Europe, where artists would not think of missing others’ performances. An educator summed up how learning to choreograph is enhanced by “a vibrant community of peers where there is some structure … a place where people can live fairly cheaply, where they are bouncing off each other.” However, “it is complicated, as it has to do with real estate and cost of living. And it has to do with systems of support that in this country came through government and foundations that [at an earlier time] made this more possible.”

Support Structures

Interviewees touched on some of the structures that are designed to support dance artists in the US. No one structure stood apart as being the key to producing high quality work. Rather, each artist credited a unique combination of support from different structures as having influenced their artistic development.

While most interviewees acknowledged the role that presenters play in the development of an artist’s career, they distinguished the ways in which presenters’ support plays out for artists and the degree to which it may, or may not, enhance artistic quality. In their comments, artists tended to offer presenters nothing but praise, acknowledging their role as advocates and guides, and appreciating those who maintain ongoing relationships and continually see work. (Just as important for some were managers and producers.) Praise aside, the general tone of the discussions about presenters raised questions about
their sometimes inflated control and about curating around “projects that sound sellable,” which can pressure artists to create work to please presenters. There was concern that presenters hold too much decision-making power.

**Interviewees generally felt positive about the range of formal training programs within the professional field.** A few artists raved about summer programs they had attended earlier in their careers and found value in revisiting multiple programs. Summer programs provide uninterrupted time, a safe place to experiment and fail, and the opportunity to build relationships with peers and professional artists who are addressing the questions at the forefront of the field. Experiences at such programs lead artists to have choreographic breakthroughs, which several described in detail and with enthusiasm. A few interviewees also praised other programs, including peer workshops, composition workshops, and year-round opportunities affiliated with academic institutions. A few interviewees offered opposing opinions of whether choreographic centers could help develop an artist’s craft and work. One positively described the long-term residency environments abroad, wherein “the first five to six years of [an artist’s] career [they] are going from one residency to the next,” and listed artists who have gone abroad to access better support there. In contrast, another strongly opposed choreographic centers, believing they can support a “monolithic aesthetic.”

While interviewees in general tended to regard space as merely another resource, artists tended to describe having access to space in visceral terms. As one artist said, “If you get one space and know you will have it for five months, it is like having another ventricle put in your heart.” Another artist raved about a space residency at MANCC, which came with around-the-clock access to facilities, plus tech and production support. Though they recognized space could influence the development of work, some of the non-artists differed in their opinions about the degree of its impact on the quality of choreography. One interviewee longed for multifunctional spaces that can serve as a “nexus that is not genre specific [where] dance is happening, colleagues gather, classes are taught, workshops are held, and artists are in residence.” Though these types of spaces are important, they are not the solution; numerous interviewees expressed concern that “all the space in the world won’t make brilliance” in choreography.

**Interviewees discussed at some length their conflicting opinions about how the dance field does, or should, talk about choreography and its quality.** Areas debated included mentorship programs, dramaturges, and feedback from presenters and others. While interviewees acknowledged the potential usefulness of mentorship in developing young choreographers’ artistic voices, **those who had participated in programs through which they were matched with a mentor reported both positive and negative experiences.** CHIME was valued for the span of time granted to young artists to cultivate relationships with mentors they carefully selected. Many mentioned Bessie Schonberg and Phyllis Lamhut, who played leading roles as mentors. Artists can lead by example; one senior artist said that “I mythologize [Steve Paxton and Deborah Hay] who started out with incredible technique and exploded it. ... Now they are dancing like gods in their 70s. There are no better prototypes to a path.”

Interviewees were asked to comment on the role of critique in choreographers’ development. As the comment above implies, **although critique is rarely given to artists, interviewees strongly endorsed its need.** Interviewees, particularly those who are not artists, acknowledged that critiquing was a “delicate process” and are careful about how they give comments. Yet others felt that giving artists feedback, and having the permission to offer it, would be a welcome change. Interviewees gave examples of when, and how, feedback might be used to give artists constructive information about a work — provided that artists would be open to receiving this feedback, which remains an open question. **Many of the non-artists wished that this feedback could be used constructively to help an artist rework a piece, implying that that this step would ultimately improve the quality of choreography.** The effectiveness of critique, commented non-artists, lies in the timing, the person who delivers it, and the method of delivery.
The few interviewees who spoke to the Liz Lerman Critical Response questioned the effectiveness of this method that, as one said, “minimizes criticism and maximizes reinforcement.” Criticality is an area where college composition classes may provide useful training to students. Regardless of the method, the point was that the field would be better served if it could give, accept, and use feedback.

**About a third of the interviewees questioned the use of dramaturges.** Those who had positive comments cited examples of artists who purposefully selected and used a dramaturge to fulfill a specific role similar to that in theater. Artists who have worked in this manner include Bebe Miller, Ralph Lemon, Bill T. Jones, Reggie Wilson, and Donald Byrd. The definition and role of dramaturge, however, as it pertains to dance, is unclear and inconsistent. This murkiness was particularly true for programs that have been engineered to assist choreographers in making better work by adding a dramaturge; the match between dramaturge and choreographer may feel “top-down” or forced.

### Funding

**The conversation on funding was particularly nuanced and passionate.** Most of the interviewees brought extensive experience with funding trends and shifts in the dance field and voiced strong opinions about how these shifts affected the development of choreographers and their work. They spoke about the effectiveness of funding structures, including projects, commissions, and fellowships; what the presence or absence of funding has done for the field; and what types of funding would help to enhance the quality of choreography.

**Funding that is structured in just the right way and comes at the right moment can make a big difference.** Yet the predominant shift to project-based support has imposed upon artists a level of uncertainty that hinders their creative process. Commissions can be important in the funding mix, but bring with them a distinct set of challenges. Receiving a well-timed commission can lend a vote of confidence and be pivotal in the development of an artists’ career, but it can also encourage artists to focus more on the product and deadline than on the process and work. Funding is ideal, interviewees felt, when given in a manner that sustains artists’ creative practice. What funding makes possible, at best, is as one said, “sustainability, the capacity to keep going without too much interruption.” The crucial variable has been the ability to pay dancers, which in turn makes it possible to set a rehearsal schedule and keep works in repertory. Several funders and presenters commented that some form of sustainable funding would also provide the luxury of revisiting work.

**The most repeated theme in the discussion about funding centered on fellowships.** Interviewees saw a strong connection between providing unstructured funding as the best way, in the end, to support and encourage quality. Fellowships give artists the ineffable boost of confidence that propels their creative processes. One administrator who is in contact with many artists describes how they “always talk about the amazing gift of getting a fellowship. It is really about [exploration]—it is money that gives artists the capacity to spend time in the studio and not be worrying about producing.” Another in a university setting supported this notion of creative fellowships as “money given to you as you have a track record and we want you to go work on your art.” **The most passionate moments in numerous interviews occurred when the speakers recounted the importance of the NEA Choreographers Fellowships.** An accomplished senior artist recalled their first NEA fellowship which was “small but extraordinarily helpful. Money was one thing but the courage it engendered was more important. If someone believes that you might have some talent, it is pretty wonderful.” Some interviewees strongly questioned the usefulness of the current funding structures, implying that a simpler alternative would be more effective. One with an intimate knowledge of funding and other areas of the field offered a simple yet bold solution: “Get rid of all the programs and just give artists the money. … All those attempts at engineering have diminished the funding streams that might make a difference.”
One interviewee with a national perspective offered a frank criticism of the connection between funding programs and artistic quality by saying: “The condition of bad work will always be the case. A lot of work will be made and most of it will not be good. Is it the goal [of funding programs] to make quality? Or is it to recognize and reward the quality that is already there?” Particularly at a time of an oversaturated market, the point was to direct funding toward the quality that is present, rather than to “create machinations that might make mediocre work better.” Another adds to this point: “Paying more people to make more dances is not really the answer.”

Interviewees ended with ideas of how developing artists should be supported in order to improve their choreography. In the end, these discussions boil down to a few things: financial support in a form that truly supports choreographers, mechanisms to provide feedback, and strengthening the sense of community around space. A strong comment from a dance leader represents many interviewees’ sense of what artists can and must do for themselves: “I believe in letting artists understand themselves well enough to know where their curiosity lies … rather than trying to engineer programs externally … and [later seeing] how that is supposed to resonate.”

Across all types of interviewees there was a consistent and resounding cry to build a national program of fellowships for choreographers. This was the most passionate part of interviews, nearly across the board. Just a few from the scores of comments convey interviewees’ urgent and emphatic tone. One deeply regretted the demise of the NEA’s Choreographers’ Fellowships, which was “how the national perspective was gained and stimulated around quality.” Another fervently called for a return to this form of support that was not tied to a product but instead is “encouragement to go deeper, to get beyond something you already know. … Fellowships are there for research.” Another simply stated that “NEA Fellowships validated everything.” This consistent call for national fellowships, at its core, was about establishing a workable system on a national level for identifying, reviewing, and supporting artists and their work, for the benefit of the field at large. As one explained, “It is not that we don’t have the artists [of quality]. We can’t find the artists. There is no system in place [to find them].” One who had a particularly broad national perspective referenced past research on NEA fellowships that provides crucial direction for what the dance field needs now:

[Fellowships] remain as a benchmark in some ways. [Research found that] quality existed, and the best thing [the NEA] could do is invest in it. … [In contrast] what this study seems to be talking about is not investing in quality but stimulating it. A better way would be to invest in existing and emerging quality rather than trying to stimulate it. Trying to stimulate it will not necessarily do so … whereas when you already see it shimmering somewhere, then [support it].”

Models from Europe for Training and Support

In order to place the US support system in better context, the study takes a limited look at how artists are supported elsewhere. This section begins with a comparative review of choreographic centers in France, a country that is wellknown for its support of artists. It moves to overviews of Performing Arts Research and Training Studios in Belgium, and Netherlands Dance Theater, both of which have strong track records of developing high-quality choreographers.

Centre National de Danse Contemporaine Structure in France

This overview is based on site visits and interviews with five of the Centres Chorégraphiques Nationaux (National Choreographic Centers or CCNs). Additional interviews with those familiar with the structure and function of CCNs in France provided introductions and context. The responses here are based on the opinions of those interviewed and do not present a comprehensive overview of all CCNs. They do
provide, however, an illustrative context for the differences and commonalities within this substantial structure of support for artists.

CCNs were founded in the 1980s by François Mitterrand’s cultural staff, specifically Minister of Culture Jack Lang. In 1984, the government wished to mitigate the differences between artistic practices in the fields of dance and music and to encourage decentralization of dance throughout the country. Centers were set up around the country, with an artist appointed to head each one. The three missions at the time of their founding were _creation_ (of work), _diffusion_ (or touring), and _sensibilization_ (or outreach). The mission expanded in 1998 to include the notion of _accueil studio_ (welcome studio), whereby the CCNs are responsible for hosting companies in their studios as a way of supporting their projects and production.

It is important to note that the CCNs are only one component, albeit a large one, in a fairly comprehensive system of support for artists in France—a system that, it must be stressed, is markedly different from that in the US. Though the CCN facilities differ dramatically, they share the following elements, in varying amounts: studios, black box and other theaters, restaurants, apartments, multidisciplinary facilities, and/or classrooms. The 2010 budgets for the 19 CCNs ranged from €1-7.3 million. The majority of the budgets for all CCNs come from four government sources: the country, region, state, and city, plus some earned income from touring or classes. Regarding staff size, all 19 CCNs range from 10 to 58 permanent positions (including artistic staff) or 12-80 total staff if temporary and contract positions are included. Decisions about funding and key hires seem to be influenced by the government: representatives can sit on the organizations’ boards, attend meetings, and examine budgets and plans.

**As of 1998, a cornerstone of all of the CCNs, in line with their expanded mission, is to support both emerging and established artists through residencies.** All offer residencies through a tiered system, with increased amounts of support for artists and work at all levels of development. Some CCNs were forthcoming about their efforts to establish strong relationships with artists through multiple residencies over an extended time period. All spoke of artist selection processes that seemed similar to that of US presenters. The CCN leaders see work as much as possible and ask peers for their opinions about artists. Most CCNs begin with offering artists a research residency and then provide more support as they get to know the artists. All expressed concern about two things: the steadily increasing number of requests for residencies coupled with decreasing budgets. Most seem to be able to fund about 10-20% of the requests.

In order to understand the support structure for artists, it is crucial to understand France’s unique but complicated government system of _intermittent_ pay, or unemployment compensation. The intermittent pay scale for workers in arts and culture (called _intermittent du spectacle_) varies according to the type of work performed, with media/TV at the highest level, and dance lower on the scale.

**There was a general sense among the leaders of the CCNs that choreographers are not trained per se.** As one CCN leader said, “The good thing is that we do not have any objective way to become a choreographer. The bad thing is that everyone is inventing themselves as a choreographer.” Notably, there are few dance majors within French colleges and universities. Students may get degrees in programs called Art Culture or Art Knowledge. Moreover, there seems to be no tradition of offering dance degrees with concentrations in choreography in France. Select educational opportunities exist within only a few of the CCNs. CCN-Angers offers formal training in “research,” which is their term for the creative process used to develop choreography, accepting 25 students per year for study as either “choreographic artists” (their term for dancers) aged 18-24 or “authors” (their term for choreographers) who are typically aged 24-30.
Feedback provided to artists is more extensive and regular, coming from both audiences and the CCN leaders. Because most CCNs are located in small towns, the familiarity between the audience and the artists is conducive to discussion and feedback. CCN programs range in the numbers of audiences who participate and give feedback, formats used, and the degree of success. All staff at the CCNs provide feedback directly to artists, feeling that it is crucial for artists who get repeat support.

Performing Arts Research and Training Studios (PARTS)

Performing Arts Research and Training Studios (PARTS) was launched in September 1995 as a joint initiative of the dance company Rosas and the Belgian National Opera De Munt / La Monnaie. PARTS is included in this study due to its renown as a center for choreographic training; the text here is excerpted from the PARTS website. Choreographer Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker designed the artistic and pedagogical curriculum. PARTS offers training to dancers/choreographers and helps them develop into independent and creative artists. PARTS bases much of its curriculum on De Keersmaeker's and other choreographers’ extensive artistic practice, but is also a “laboratory for the future.” The approximately 50 artists and lecturers who teach at the school come from Belgium, other European countries and the United States. Curriculum is divided in two cycles of two years: the basic Training cycle and the advanced Research cycle. In Training, students gain an insight into the technical foundation of contemporary dance and are introduced to the PARTS approach, characterized by body awareness, theatre and musical training, and theoretical reflection. In Research, students gain more in-depth knowledge and apply it to their personal creative work. An essential aspect of the PARTS training is the daily combination of classical dance and contemporary techniques, including ballet, contemporary dance, and improvisation. PARTS also requires its students to practice the repertory of a small group of artists, which exposes them to “first-rate dance vocabulary, helps them gain better insight into composition methods and provides them with the physical experience of interpretation.” Believing that dance is not an isolated art form, PARTS provides constant interaction with music and theatre, which figure prominently in the curriculum, as well as theory. The students’ personal work is the Leitmotiv in all the workshops. In the Research Cycle, students also develop their own physical practice, discovering methods of generating and structuring movement material. Through the program DEPARTS, students have opportunities to share their work in other European cities.

Netherlands Dance Theater

Netherlands Dance Theater (NDT) is an internationally renowned company that has commissioned and fostered relationships with numerous choreographers. As a contemporary dance company based in The Hague, NDT works with choreographers and a company of 46 dancers from 24 countries. NDT is well-supported, receiving 50% from federal funds and 15% from the city. NDT is intent on using its capacity, including its facilities and 8-10 annual commissions, to support choreographers. NDT offers two programs: *Up and Coming* is for choreographers with limited experience, and *Switch* is for dancers who may never have choreographed. The choreographers with whom NDT works tend to be dancers who are self-trained and find their own way into choreography, and who have not had academic training in choreography per se. NDT has a growing relationship with Korzo, in order to support several generations of up-and-coming choreographers. A smaller company/studio in The Hague, Korzo has relationships with younger artists and smaller companies from as far away as Africa and Asia. The building has four studios and two performance spaces. In working with Korzo, NDT helps address the lack of intermediate-level presenters in the Dutch system of support, and provides spaces and opportunity with presenters elsewhere.
Assimilation and Recommendations

This study has examined and gathered a wide range of information, including data from 132 colleges, 37 written sources, 43 interviews/consultations, and four site visits. The individuals consulted work both in the US and abroad, both in the academy and the professional world. While there are no immediate or clear answers, some ideas and recommendations have emerged. Additionally, perhaps the tendency of US interviewees to begin their discussion of solutions by declaring the kinds of support that would not help can instruct the field in what to avoid. In the end, the discussion boils down to a few things: direct funding to choreographers in ways that support them across the arc of their careers; strengthening the sense of community for artists and supporters of their work; and rigorous dialogue about the work and its quality. To that, the consultant adds suggestions generated by the research process.

1. A system of unencumbered financial support should be provided for choreographers in the US. This was interviewees’ strongest and most consistent recommendation in the entire study—thought to be the most instrumental strategy to increase the quality of choreography.

Among the US interviewees who brought extensive experience with funding trends and shifts, opinions were particularly strong about the topic of how to support artists in developing work. They spoke about the effectiveness of funding structures, including projects, commissions, and fellowships; what the presence or absence of funding has done for the field; and what types of funding would help enhance the quality of choreography. The major shift to project support has introduced a level of uncertainty that can hinder the creative process: the need for artists to complete a “deliverable” within a time period can limit the ways in which they think about making work. Interviewees brought up that artists’ need to maintain a creative practice—essentially, which is in conflict with the product-oriented nature of most funding programs and structures. Additionally, questions were raised about the effectiveness of designing funding programs that would in turn improve quality—that somehow constructs could be engineered to make work better.

Interviewees saw unstructured funding as the best way, in the end, to support and encourage quality and sustain artists’ creative practice. Paradoxically, it may be the relative freedom from pressure to produce deliverables that propels artists in their development.

Additional information about the NEA Choreographers Fellowships program, to which interviewees referred, will reveal how that national system provided support and addressed five of the main issues that emerged within this study; it might be used as a basis for consideration.

- Fellowships provided direct yet unencumbered support for artists for creating work. Grant recipients typically used fellowships to pay dancers and cover production costs, and/or to pay themselves, relieving them, at least for a time, from their day jobs so they could focus on choreography. Whether creating work or supporting performances or tours, the net result was somewhat the same—no deliverable was due and the artists could use the support as they needed. This parallels the concern and recommendation within this study to avoid creating complicated funding programs in an attempt to engineer quality.
- Fellowships provided the vital yet ineffable benefit of confidence. Artists within this study spoke in strong terms about how peer endorsement bolstered their confidence in creating work. Such encouragement motivated these artists to take greater artistic risks.
- Perhaps just as important, the Fellowship system provided an intensive, national feedback loop about choreographers, new work, and quality. Each year, peer panels of about 12 people would review 400-500 applications on the basis of the criterion of artistic quality, through a process that was informed by scores of site visitors from around the country. As they reviewed work samples, site visits, and applications, these panels, which were comprised of artists, presenters, writers, and
administrators, learned about the national scope of choreography and artists. Their deliberations included debates about dance forms and trends in dance making. Having had this crash course on choreography, new work, artists, and dance forms, they then returned to their communities, talked about and sometimes presented the artists they had discussed, and influenced others to do so. This need for peers to learn about artists, new work, and the subsequent effect of that learning on the ways in which they support artists was implied within numerous sections of this study.

- **Artists had the opportunity to receive feedback, and about half of them opted to hear it.** Artists would receive a composite of comments from the site visit(s), panel remarks that were based upon seeing work live within a three-year period, and/or videos, as well as the application itself. That practice of giving feedback echoes the emphatic comments above, within this study, about the need for critique.

- **Each year, outside of the panel itself, the system provided the national field—including presenters, service organizations, funders, and others—with a heightened awareness of the artists and work being made and a sense of artists to watch for.** The dance field assumed that artists who had received grants through this highly competitive and rigorous process, conducted by national peer review, were artists who should be watched. It created a de facto seal of approval and promotional system for the 40-50 artists who were funded annually. This was indeed a service to the field as a whole. This continual, cyclical feedback system generated dialogue about artists and work, and an increased awareness of dance that was happening down the street and across the country. This responds to a comment made by one national leader within this study: “It’s not that we don’t have the artists [who are worthy of support and who have potential]. It’s that we can’t find the artists.”

Organizations in the dance field and/or the appropriate funding bodies might hold discussions about how such a system might work, what would be needed to support it, and where and how it might be housed. If it were pursued, and if technology were used effectively, the administration of such a program would not be overly difficult or costly.\(^{15}\)

### 2. The dance field should consider the ways in which choreographic training might be improved, either within the college system or outside of it.

From the college data and related correspondence, it was found that choreography as a course of study is offered at the majority of colleges with dance departments and that both contemporary dance and choreography are the most frequently offered courses. From the information that does exist about the number of departments and majors, it seems reasonable to assume that the number of young people majoring in choreography at any given moment easily totals in the thousands with, conservatively speaking, 1,500 or more of them graduating per year.

The literature survey scanned the materials and opinions of numerous artists, academicians, writers, and consultants who create and teach choreography. There was not agreement among them about how to approach the formidable task of choreographic training or even whether it could be done at all. While academic standards posit a set of measures for teaching choreography, the comments and writings of artists and some professors question whether the curriculum is effective; the texts on the topic appear to go largely unused.

The collective impressions gleaned from US interviewees convey their extensive knowledge of and opinions about teaching choreography in a college setting. The majority expressed strong reservations about the effectiveness of choreographic training in the academy and questioned the outcomes for students taking such courses. Many of the artists, along with a few other interviewees, went on to discuss at length the elements most important to developing their daily practice. They possess a strong sense of curiosity and an insatiable inner drive to create work. One observation remains, however, at the end of
this information-gathering process: While many in the US or abroad have said or implied that choreography cannot be taught or that the existing methods are not working, no one in the US said to stop teaching it. The models from Europe present a contrasting set of circumstances. Notably, there seem to be few dance majors offered within French colleges and universities, nor is there a tradition of offering dance degrees with concentrations in choreography in that country. Limited choreographic training is offered within the CCNs.

Additional research might be conducted to clarify the numbers related to dance in higher education in the US. Additionally, colleges and universities might look at the number of choreography majors they are graduating relative to the limited resources and opportunities that are available in the professional field.

3. **Consider the ways to build a stronger sense of community around dance making.**

Across nearly all of the interviews, a factor consistently deemed important to the development of choreographers is the degree of interaction they have with other artists. Interviewees expressed frustration that many artists do not see the work of other choreographers, noting the strong limitations that this lack of exposure places on these artists’ view of the world, notions of quality, and sense of community. There was a widespread belief among interviewees that an artist’s location fed their sense of community; most saw strong advantages to being in New York or other dance centers (though they also noted a few artists who create best in rural or different settings). In contrast, a small number pointed out that working in a community is not guaranteed to improve quality but instead can reinforce weaknesses if artists tend to stay within a small circle that does not challenge their views.

In Europe, the CCNs are intentionally decentralized, located throughout France, and provide artists a place to “research” or create work. Organizations that support artists might explore some of the following questions: Could multifunctional spaces like the CCNs be developed in the US? Could such a space exist in New York City without requiring such large overhead costs that its support to artists would be limited? Is an entirely new entity needed? Or are existing spaces and organizations already offering these services, such that they could be better coordinated or more fully supported? Or is the French system, with its intermittent pay, sufficiently different that this would never translate to the US?

4. **The dance field should develop better ways to provide feedback to its artists, with the goal of enhancing the quality of work.**

US interviewees discussed at length their mixed feelings and conflicting opinions around talking about work. Areas that they considered included mentorship programs, dramaturges, and ad hoc feedback offered to artists. There are limits to the degree to which this kind of exchange happens at all in the US, and strong feelings were expressed about the need for such critical exchanges. Many of the non-artists wished that this feedback could be used constructively to help an artist think through or even rework a piece, implying that that this step would, ultimately, improve the quality of choreography. The situation is different in Europe. The founding goal for CCNs in France was to support the vision of artists, and since 1998, has included fostering interactions with audiences. Feedback provided to artists is more extensive and regular, coming from both audiences and the CCN leaders.

New models of offering feedback might involve interactions with audiences and other artists, going beyond the standard Q&A format.

5. **The ideas in this study could be used to develop new initiatives or enhance existing programs.**
While not the direct intention of the research, findings may be instructive to the dance field in designing programs that support artists. The US interviewees acknowledged the role that presenters play in the development of an artist’s career but raised questions about their sometimes inflated control within the current dance field.

US Interviewees were also generally positive about the formal training programs within the professional field, which worked better for some artists than others. Summer programs were valued for offering: multiple options for support; a chance to return to the same program over time; an intensive work environment of uninterrupted time; and a safe place to experiment. Interviewees also valued these programs for providing the opportunity to build relationships with professional artists and peers. The literature review covered the role of key organizations such as MANCC and Bates Dance Festival in supporting choreographers’ development. European support structures for choreographers may contain valuable lessons. In France, a component of all CCNs is their residency structure for both emerging and established artists. One interviewee summed up succinctly: “Buy-time residencies, with no pressure for product! The through-line is direct: time, space and money.”

Presenters might opt to explore some of the program ideas (or aspects of them) in the full report. Tiered residencies that are largely time-based and deadline-free could support a range of artists. International residencies could allow artists the time to work or study abroad for several months.

6. The research in this report would likely be useful to the field.

The Joyce Theater Foundation and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation have invested in gathering this extensive information on a topic of concern to the dance field. Findings might be a topic for further research, writing, or meetings within universities and national service organizations such as Dance/USA, National Dance Education Organization (NDEO), Congress on Research in Dance (CORD), or National Association of Schools of Dance (NASD). Findings may be of interest to funders, such as Grantmakers in the Arts or the NY Dance Funders Group.

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Company Profile

Founded in 1996, Callahan Consulting for the Arts helps artists, arts organizations, and funders realize their vision through services that include strategic planning, resource development, evaluation, and philanthropic counsel. The firm manages Dance/USA’s Engaging Dance Audiences program, with the support of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, and ran the National College Choreography Initiative, also for Dance/USA. The firm has conducted evaluations in the areas that include the creative process, arts service delivery, art and social justice, arts education, philanthropy, and arts in healthcare; it analyzed data for a national study entitled Technology and the Arts Field for The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. A former dance teacher, Suzanne Callahan was Senior Specialist at the NEA Dance Program and is an educator, panelist, and speaker. Published by the Association of Performing Arts Presenters, her book entitled Singing Our Praises was awarded Outstanding Publication of the Year from the American Evaluation Association for its contribution to the theory and practice of evaluation. She conceived of and produced the book Dance from the Campus to the Real World: A Resource Guide for Faculty, Artists and Students, published by Dance/USA. Both books are used as college texts.
End Notes

1 The Joyce has considered this research in shaping the services it offers to artists. As of late 2014, among the ways in which The Joyce used the findings herein was to structure its Artist in Residence program, which includes providing full salary and health insurance to an artist for a two-year period, along with access to studio space and related services.

2 Interviewees consented to sharing their viewpoints in this public version. See Methodology section.

3 Of these 132 colleges, 12 did not report the number of dance majors.

4 Because there was no available measure of the number of choreography majors, the consultants considered as a proxy colleges that offer contemporary dance and choreographic instruction. A total of 119 schools offer both subjects and a bachelor’s degree in dance.

5 Refer to full report for calculations.

6 Refer to full report for the bibliography of these sources.

7 The Forums involved a total of 37 faculty and artists from almost as many colleges in 18 states across the country; their names and affiliations are available under separate cover.

8 Since the time of that report, the pressure has only grown, according to informal conversations with several leading faculty members. The size of enrollment is used as a performance measure within universities, and dance faculty feel acute pressure to maintain and even increase the student numbers.

9 Near to the completion of this report, Dance/USA completed a series of articles called Safe House; Dancing in the Ivory Tower about mid-career artists who had taken jobs in universities but continued to choreograph. See http://danceusa.org/ejournal/post.cfm?entry=safe-house-dancing-in-the-ivory-tower.

10 Throughout the interviews, Cunningham was cited as an exception to all of the assumptions and rules about how one becomes a choreographer.

11 From publications of the Centre National de Dance Contemporaine, and other sources.

12 This description of the intermittent du spectacle pay system is by no means all-inclusive. The specifics here, though, should be accurate and shed light on the important point—the ways in which it undergirds support for artists in the country. Recipients of intermittent pay must meet certain requirements. Artists must work 510 hours within their profession (which works out to about quarter-time), or get paid for 56 contracts (of any length). If these requirements are maintained, the artist can get paid while not working for up to 10 months per year (at a rate of 50-60% of their wages, it seems).

13 Refer to www.parts.be and specific pages on Presentation, Curriculum, and DEPARTS.

14 Korzo productions, in The Hague, is one of the largest Dutch houses for modern dance and serves young and leading choreographers in the Dutch dance scene. Korzo produces the biennial CaDance festival for modern dance. Korzo productions go on tour, to theaters in the Netherlands, and abroad.

15 The consultant can provide further background on the structure and budget if desired.

16 An interviewee was interested in helping shape such a program. Contact the consultant for this referral.
Choreography in the United States
A Comparative Study of Training and Support Systems
Submitted to
The Joyce Theater Foundation

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The 25 interviewees in the United States are acknowledged for their contributions of time, information, and insight. Their input was crucial to creating this picture of choreography and its training.

DanceMedia, LLC, gave permission to use the data from Dance Magazine College Guide 2011/2012, which were instrumental to completing the quantitative analysis of dance departments and choreographic instruction in academia.

Special thanks are extended to staff at the choreographic centers in France and Belgium for graciously taking the time to sit for interviews and provide tours of their facilities. All of their names are in the appendices, but a few, in particular, should be singled out: in France, Monique Barbaroux, Aymar Crosnier, and Bruno Joly; and in Brussels, Theo Van Rompay. Additional thanks go to individuals who provided clarity and context for the role of these institutions; assistance with setting up appointments; and a better understanding of support systems overseas. Among them are Sophie Claudel, Cultural Attaché at the French Embassy in the US, as well as Elisabeth Hayes, Executive Director of the French American Cultural Exchange. Finally, consultant Laurie Uprichard was particularly helpful in providing insight and guidance throughout the research in Europe.

Further acknowledgements go to staff and consultants at Callahan Consulting for the Arts who were involved in this project. Research assistants were Shannon Elizabeth O’Brien and Micheline Heal. Further assistance was provided by Laurel George.

Special thanks goes to advisor and editor Suzanne Carbonneau.

-Suzanne Callahan
Introduction

Callahan Consulting for the Arts (Callahan Consulting or the consultant) is pleased to submit the final report to The Joyce Theater Foundation (The Joyce) on the research process conducted between October 2011 and April 2012.

Background

This study was conducted in conjunction with a larger project that was shaped by The Joyce and funded by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to determine how The Joyce might better support choreographers in developing work of the highest artistic quality. Many of today’s choreographers are self-taught, building on their careers as accomplished dancers. But The Joyce wondered whether choreographers need more or different opportunities for training or related services.

The study addresses broad questions about whether artists decide to choreograph and establish careers as choreographers without specific training. The study explores if there is a need for early-career training, programs to complement what is available through college programs, and/or substitute programs for those not taking the academic route. While choreographic training might not be enough to establish a compelling artistic voice, might it potentially offer a strong foundation and framework for creating dances? The Joyce hired Callahan Consulting to begin this research. Callahan Consulting was responsible for collecting and compiling information about how choreographers learn their craft, and for analyzing and reporting on the findings.

The Joyce has used this research to inform the services it offers to artists. Initially intended as an internal study, The Joyce and The Mellon Foundation are sharing this research with the dance field so that its findings might be used to inform or improve other programs.

Goals and Research Questions

The goal of this study was to focus initial research in the following areas:

- The professional choreographic training opportunities currently available in the United States through college programs and from other organizations and individuals.
- The training backgrounds of select choreographers working in the United States (or if they have success without formal training) and the factors that contributed to the development of their choreographic voices.
- Select training methods in Europe.

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1 As of late 2014, among the ways in which The Joyce used the findings herein was to structure its Artist in Residence program, which includes providing full salary and health insurance to an artist for a two-year period, along with access to studio space and related services.

2 Interviewees consented to share their viewpoints in this public version. See Methodology section.
Methodology

The scope of work below was completed over eight months.

1. Review of Literature and Background Materials

The consultant began by reviewing background materials and related research on choreographic training and quality that have been completed in the past by other leaders in the dance field. A total of about 50 items were considered for the Literature Review and other aspects of this study. They include reports, essays, textbooks in choreography, other books about artists’ creative process, and evaluations of successful programs designed to serve artists in developing choreography. From these sources, 37 were chosen for their relevance and application to this study. The Literature Review reports on a subset of 28 of these items in three areas: choreographic training in academia, programs and services that support the development of choreography, and perspectives from choreographers about their own artistic process and the teaching of choreography. A bibliography appears in Appendix A.

New Research. The design for new research was informed by the background and literature review, along with conversations with leaders in the field, and combines quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data provide a glimpse of statistics about college dance programs and choreographic training on a national level. But the qualitative data from the literature and new interviews explored complex and subjective impressions about the quality of work, as well as what did, or could, improve it. Three components of new research were conducted.

2. Overview of Choreographic Training in Colleges in the US

The consultant reviewed statistics on 132 colleges with dance departments and additional limited information on a larger set of 628 colleges. A list of the 132 colleges appears in Appendix B.

3. Interviews with US Artists and Field Leaders

A series of interviews was conducted with national leaders, artists, and college faculty within the US dance field. A total of 25 interviews were done in the US, and two additional professionals in the field were contacted for contextual information. Most of the interviews took place in early March 2012 and lasted 35-80 minutes each. Several provided follow up information via email.

Regarding selection, a purposeful sample of artists and others with longtime expertise in the field was key to the intention of the study. The final list, which was selected by The Joyce and the consultant, includes: choreographers who have a track record of producing work of high quality or have exceptional promise; dance educators, both in higher education and other types of institutions; national leaders with extensive experience in many areas of the field, including presenting, funding, writing, and dance history; and administrators of service organizations and associations. Broad criteria for inclusion were their: range of experience in the dance field; level
of expertise in running dance-related programs and working with artists; awareness of funding trends; and level of frankness and insight in answering complex questions and positing solutions. This mix of both artists and those dedicated to serving the dance field would provide the range of viewpoints needed to understand the complexity of the issues and what might help. Interviewees spoke on condition of confidentiality, and were told that the report would be shared internally with The Joyce staff and its funders; these assumptions may have encouraged a greater degree of openness in the responses.\(^3\) The list of interviewees appears in Appendix C. Documentation in the form of near-transcriptions was analyzed.

A set of interview materials was created and included instruments, protocols, and letters of invitation. The instruments were customized for the type of interviewee—i.e., artist, academician, or national leader/supporter. Questions cover formal choreographic training programs; other factors that support the development of choreography; and ideas about what would enhance the quality of choreography in the US. These instruments for the US appear in Appendix D.

### 4. Site Visits to Choreographic Centers in Europe

A goal of the research was to compare services and facilities offered to choreographers in the US to what is offered abroad. Four site visits were conducted in Europe, and information was gathered on two additional centers, as well as on Netherlands Dance Theater, a European dance company that provides services to artists. These four sites included three national choreographic centers in France, in the cities of Paris, Angers, and Caen, as well as to the Performing Arts Research and Training Studios (PARTS), a choreographic training center in Brussels, Belgium.

Finally, additional field leaders provided valuable context and information on the systems in France and at PARTS. Some of these interviews were done after the site visits in order to glean additional information, explore observations that were made during the site visits, or check facts. Seventeen cultural leaders were interviewed or consulted for the European portion of the project. The list of their names appears in Appendix E.

Each site visit lasted about four hours, with additional time spent observing the surrounding area in each town. The visits included interviews with the directors, tours of the space, and photo documentation. Research incorporated a review of websites in advance, and a scan of the institutions’ publications afterward. The heads of these organizations were forthcoming in providing information about their own organizations as well as the general system of support in their countries. Questions were similar to the US interviews, to allow for comparison. The interview instrument appears in Appendix F.

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\(^3\) All interviewees subsequently granted permission to include their viewpoints in this public version of the report.
About this Report

The report begins with US Colleges and Choreographic Instruction, a quantitative look at the major source of choreographic training in this country, to give a broad view of the prevalence of opportunities to pursue choreography—namely within undergraduate and graduate degree programs. This report makes some broad projections of the numbers of students who may be entering the professional dance field with hopes of being choreographers. The Literature Review moves from the numbers into the ways in which choreographic training is offered within colleges, including how it is taught, curricular standards, and the issues and debates that surround choreographic pedagogy. The review then shifts outside of academia, to the professional field, and the programs and opportunities for artists to learn and develop their craft, as well as the writings of artists on how they choose to make work. The Interviews with US Artists and Leaders (US Interviews) section distills the viewpoints of some of the leading artists and supporters of dance and choreography in the country, regarding if and how choreography can be taught; the best ways to support choreographers; and the factors that enhance the quality of choreography. The Models from Europe for Training and Support (European Models) section explores some of the structures and formats that are used abroad for training and supporting choreographers as they develop, for potential application here in the US. Finally, the Assimilation and Recommendations section highlights key points and recommendations from the research and adds some suggestions for new strategies. Appendices include, as described above, the bibliography, interview lists and instruments, along with other items, such as a list of all 19 Choreographic Centers in France.4

The topic of choreographic training and development is a conundrum—one that is not easily solved nor lightly addressed. Moreover, the dance field would not agree on a sole definition of artistic quality; this highly subjective measure of excellence depends on the viewer and the context. The multiplicity of viewpoints, as well as the methods and supports that have been developed both in the US and abroad, bring home this point. This study and report would not have been possible without the involvement of 43 people—choreographers, scholars, presenters, and other experts—who have spoken, taught, and/or written about this topic over the past 50-plus years; some have dedicated a significant portion of their professional lives to its pursuit. It is hoped that the report does justice to their hard work and strong opinions, as well as their dedication to supporting the development of new work in the best way possible.

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4The data on colleges allowed for analysis and comparison of select measures that were relevant for use in this study. That comparison is contained in the US Colleges and Choreographic Instruction section. For the US interviews, the content analysis for the interviews was done using an electronic qualitative coding system. All responses to all questions were reviewed closely for their themes, nuance, intensity, and context. Data were also analyzed for any contrasts in opinions based on the type of interviewee—namely, if artists had different views than did other types of respondents. Electronic content analysis was used to increase researchers’ objectivity, consolidate findings, and enable the search of data to respond more easily to queries. For the site visits in Europe, field and interview notes were completed and analyzed for themes and observations that would be pertinent to the study, as well as for similarities and differences with the systems of support in the US. The institutions’ publications augmented the findings.
US Colleges and Choreographic Instruction

The initial phase of the research attempted to project the numbers of students studying choreography and composition in higher education. The following data are from *Dance Magazine College Guide 2011/2012*, with permission:

- Statistics from 132 select colleges, which also appear within their online database.
- The 628 dance departments for which *Dance Magazine* has contact information.

An analysis of this information, along with additional information from the printed College Guide, provides some overview of choreographic training within college programs. Three tiers of information are provided within the hard copy of the guide and the data below. There are limits to the data available for each tier, which will be pointed out below. Nonetheless, this combined data source provides a reasonable picture of the choreography-related course offerings and enrollment at the prominent dance departments, and some sense of its prevalence at other colleges across the country.
1. College Dance Departments Across the US: A Broad Look (n=628)

**Dance Departments by State.**

The consultant reviewed DanceMedia, LLC’s list of contact information for the 628 colleges with dance departments.

Of the 628, 594 are in the US. The states with the greatest numbers of dance departments, by far, are CA at 86 and NY at 60, followed by TX (32), MA (26), PA (28), and FL (24).

The remaining 35 schools are international, located in Canada, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, UK, Greece, Hungary, Italy, India, the Netherlands, and Spain. Note that France and Belgium are not included (for reasons that likely will become clear later in this report).
The data in Sections 2 and 3 cover a subset of dance programs, which are featured within the Dance Program Finder section of the College Guide.

2. Dance Program Information (n=257)

*Dance Magazine College Guide* is a paid editorial opportunity—a total of 257 colleges pay to list their undergraduate program offerings. Of those 257, 13 mention choreography in the titles of the degrees specifically as a concentration within a major. They are: Butler University, Coker College, Dance Center of Columbia College Chicago, Five College Dance Department, Florida State University, Kent State University, Mercyhurst College, Missouri State, University of North Carolina-Greensboro, Ohio University-Athens, Virginia Commonwealth University, University of Wisconsin-Madison and University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Additionally, 15 colleges have features on their graduate program offerings, and four of them highlight choreography by name either within the titles of the degrees, or as a concentration. They are: Smith College, University of Arizona, University of North Carolina-Greensboro, and University of Oklahoma.

3. Featured Colleges With Statistics (n=132)

Of those 257 colleges, 132 chose to submit statistics about their programs, which have been further analyzed below. These data are self-reported by the colleges. Both the data and the advertisements are accessible by prospective students via a free online searchable database provided by *Dance Magazine*. (Visit [http://www.dancemagazine.com/collegesearch](http://www.dancemagazine.com/collegesearch))

**Degrees offered.** The 132 colleges offer these degrees:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BA</th>
<th>BFA</th>
<th>BS</th>
<th>MA/MS/MEd</th>
<th>MFA</th>
<th>PhD</th>
<th>Minor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>count</strong></td>
<td>80</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Dance Subjects and Forms.** At the right is an overview of the types of dance courses and styles offered by the 132 colleges. The top three offerings are contemporary dance, choreography, and dance history.
**Number of Dance Students.** The number of dance majors totaled 8,325, with only 120 of the colleges reporting this data (meaning that 12 are excluded). Note that this reflects dance majors overall, not those who are majoring in or emphasizing choreography. There are 673 reported graduate students in dance (with all but three institutions who offered these degrees reporting). Additionally there are 2,600 dance minors reported (with 42 schools either not reporting or not offering minors). Finally, a total of 31,187 students participate in dance classes but do not major or minor in dance, with 33 colleges not reporting this data.

**Audition Requirements.** The 132 colleges require auditions as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For Admission</th>
<th>For Placement</th>
<th>For Scholarship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**A Closer Look at Choreography and Contemporary Dance Offerings.** Because there was no available measure of the total number of choreography majors, the graph below shows colleges that offer contemporary dance and choreographic instruction. A total of 124 schools offer training in contemporary dance and choreography/composition. Of them, a total of 119 offer both subjects and a bachelor’s degree in dance. All but two offer either undergraduate or graduate degrees. A total of 29 offer masters degrees. Only three offer PhDs. Their geographic distribution appears in the chart below and a full listing of their names and majors appears in Appendix B. Here, 15 of the colleges are in NY, with 10 in CA and 9 in both MA and PA.
Implications for This Study

These data provide only a broad view of choreographic instruction in colleges. When considered alongside other assumptions, however, the data suggest a number of findings related to the topics in this study. Those assumptions, which come from the observations of other dance professionals who were consulted during this project, are as follows:

a) Choreographic training is offered at the majority of colleges with dance departments.
b) Contemporary dance and choreography are offered at more of the 132 schools than any other dance-related subject. Per Dance Magazine staff, “because choreography is such an integral part of modern dance, it would be difficult to separate it out as a concentration, per se. It could be said that to major in modern dance is automatically a concentration in choreography.”
c) Per a report from the College Board (covered in the next section of this study), choreography is an area of study that, if not required, is encouraged within dance departments.
d) Dance Magazine believes that the remaining programs that are not reporting above are likely to be somewhat smaller in size.
e) While Dance Magazine staff do not have specific numbers for concentrations within majors, their impression is that the graduate degrees are more likely to be specifically choreography-focused, whereas undergraduate degrees are usually performance-based, or dual performance and choreography.

The data show that 120 schools report a total of 8,325 undergraduate dance majors (meaning with 120 of 132 reporting) and 673 graduate majors (with all but 3 reporting). Adding an average of 60 majors per college for the 12 that did not report this figure suggests that there may be as many as 9,000 undergraduate dance majors attending all 132 colleges. This raises the question of what the total numbers of majors at all 628 colleges might be—if indeed these programs have majors, which is unknown.

Nonetheless, rough projections of the number of students studying choreography in the US at any given time will provide context for the remainder of this study. The number of dance majors at the remaining 496 schools, even if estimated at an average of only 10 per school, would conservatively add 4,960 to the figure above and thus increase the number of undergraduate dance majors to nearly 14,000, if not more. If one factors in graduate students, who are more likely to study choreography, the total could increase by 700-1,000, to total 15,000 or more.

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5 Items a, b, d, and e come from correspondence with Dance Magazine, which offers the following caveat: it relies on self-reported data from the 132 colleges and does not have detailed information on the 628 on the contact list.
6 See the coverage of the College Board’s report College Learning in the Arts, in the Literature Review.
7 Several of the larger schools may inflate this number, including University of the Arts and University of Utah.
8 Dance Magazine does not know how many of the 628 have dance majors. They assume that a good number of them have a “smaller dance presence” but there are some, such as Brigham Young University, which “do not need this advertising to fill their programs.” Taking that example, Brigham Young’s dance department, per an email from its faculty, has 154 dance majors. Per its website, seniors are encouraged to complete a capstone course in research or choreography. The graduate program was suspended at the time of this study.
Regardless of the exact numbers, one can deduce that among the many thousands of dance majors, a large portion are studying choreography, even if they are not concentrating in it. Moreover, it seems safe to conclude that the number of students majoring in choreography in any given year is easily several thousand. A rough number is projected as follows: Assuming that one-fourth (or around 3,500) undergraduates plus one-half (or 350) graduate students, complete their degrees each year, one can deduce that a total of 3,850 majors are graduating per year. If one assumes that roughly one-third of these undergraduate majors, plus most of the graduate students, are concentrating in choreography, the number of dance majors with a choreographic focus easily reaches 1,500 per year, and likely more.

The fact that this high volume of dance students are graduating from US colleges each year, with some proportion of them joining the ranks of the professional dance field as choreographers, has implications for the amount of new choreography being made, as well as the level of competition for resources and opportunities. It also has implications, in turn, for the support structures that these emerging artists will need and for artists’ expectations of organizations that provide support.

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9 The data in this section were compared to the accredited dance departments listed on the website of the National Association of Schools of Dance (NASD). Most of them are included in this analysis. Additional information on that comparison is available separately.
Literature Review

Introduction

Below is an overview of the written materials that were selected and reviewed for this project. This is not an exhaustive look at all literature related to choreographic training but is instead a survey of what seemed to be most pertinent to this study. Items selected had to be relevant to the teaching of choreography or related support systems for choreographers’ development. A full bibliography of materials can be found in Appendix A. Materials from three different types of sources will be presented:

Choreographic Training in Academia. This includes reports that address academic training in choreography; the national standards for teaching choreography, as developed by the College Board; and an overview of textbooks for teaching choreography.

Programs and Spaces that Serve the Development of Choreography. Included are reports about the intent and design of programs dedicated to dance making, including Bates Dance Festival, Carlisle Project, Choreographers in Mentorship Exchange (CHIME), and the Maggie Allee National Center for Choreography (MANCC).

Choreographers’ Writings on their Craft. A limited sampling of writings from choreographers is presented, as examples of the ways in which dance makers articulate their own creative process and/or give advice on choreographing.

The materials are quite disparate in their tone and format as well as in their viewpoints on the teaching of choreography and related support for choreographers. As such, they illustrate the sharp contrasts that exist within the dance field about the topic. This overview begins by presenting some of the major issues within academia related to choreographic instruction, as expressed by academicians and professional artists. To illustrate some of the contrasting views, the overview moves on to the accreditation standards provided by the College Board for the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards (the College Board), for dance and choreography, in order to show the official measures that are used within the higher education curriculum. This section is followed by the College Board’s review of some of the texts that might be used to teach choreography courses, as well as some additional curricular resources culled by the consultant. Then, moving outside of the academy, this overview presents some of the existing programs that support the creation of work in the professional world, as described primarily by the artists who have benefitted from them, and by the programs’ designers. The literature review ends with a sampling of books and essays that present select viewpoints of artists on their own choreographic process.

Choreographic Training in Academia

It is important to begin with an overview of some of the circumstances in academia that affect views about choreography and its teaching. This issue was a main topic within Artist-College Collaboration: Issues, Trends and Vision, a national report by Dance/USA, generated from a series of forums in 2003-05 that Dance/USA conducted to bring together professional
artists and dance professors. Although progress has been made, the tensions presented in this report and outlined below likely continue to ring true today. At the time of the Forums, university dance departments were at a crucial point where “change seemed not only possible, but inevitable.” [3] Shifts in ways of thinking and working were beginning to reverberate throughout the field as universities strove to “strike a balance between the traditional and the progressive, the established and the cutting edge—or, more specifically, the decisions about which artists and aesthetics are selected and what gets taught.” [3] What’s more, there was growing pressure for academia to respond to larger changes in the national dance field, for “colleges to provide a place for practicing artists whose support structures have largely fallen away over the past decade.” The sum total was an “academic landscape that may be unsure of its priorities and future directions.” [3]

These shifts in the academy were likely, in part, a delayed reaction to two fundamental changes at the national level that continue to influence the creation of new work today. First, since the mid-1990s, the traditional infrastructure of support for the professional dance field, particularly for independent artists and small companies, had largely been dismantled. The report quotes dance historian Sally Sommer’s observation in the 2000 report *Comparative Study of Dance Communities*: “Eventually artists suffered a huge blow with the elimination of the NEA’s Individual Artist Fellowships, one that attacked the core of the creative process. Attention was diverted from the artists and their work, and towards the effect of their projects on the community.” [4] Second, universities were one of the remaining sources of support for new work. The leaders of some performing arts facilities on campus felt a sense of obligation to support the arts, especially in an economy where other financial resources were disappearing. The report also notes that bringing artists into university bureaucracy proved to be complicated, given the pressures on artists to fulfill so many roles, from creator, to teacher, to community organizer. [5] Colleges may long for national visibility and recognition as among the “best” in the field, but “the extent to which the administrators and university deans understand the national field, and what best serves it, can vary,” said one forum participant. [6] Unclear roles can be exacerbated by the divide in expectations between the university’s performing arts center, which focuses on generating audiences, and the department, which focuses on student outcomes.

The report addressed what appeared to be a growing and related trend that has implications for the creation of choreography: Professional artists were now on campus in stints that range from short-term residencies, to adjunct contracts, to visiting professorships, to tenure track positions. While artists were attracted by the relative stability of academic jobs, including a steady salary and health care benefits, the reality of the university system presented new challenges and limitations. Paradoxically, artists reported, the university structure often hinders their ability to use its resources: the artist’s academic time is overbooked; studio space is reserved for classes; and artists who want to tour or guest teach elsewhere are required to find pay for a substitute teacher. While university employment does offer certain securities, non-tenured positions such as adjuncts have benefits but also drawbacks. Adjuncts can bring fresh and varied aesthetic

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10 The Forums involved a total of 37 faculty and artists from almost as many colleges in 18 states across the country; their names and affiliations are available under separate cover.
perspectives and are not encumbered by the responsibilities that consume much of full-time faculty’s energy. Their contracts are often temporary, however, and without benefits. [6][11]

Foremost among the concerns of the Dance/USA report, and most relevant to this study’s research, was the dilemma of how to educate the next generation of dancers for their future, rather than for the world of dance that had passed. Over the past few decades, with the advent of postmodernism and multiculturalism, the influx of diverse dance forms and influences has complicated the choices about which artists and approaches should be included in dance studies, and sometimes sparked controversy. The report notes that trying to prepare students for the many roles they will need to play as artists (and the resulting pressures on course offerings) “have left the resources of departments stretched to their limits as they try to expose their students to every facet of the field.” Layered on top of this all-encompassing curricula are influences by outside areas “as diverse as semiotics, literary theory, popular culture, anthropology, and cultural studies.” Throughout the report, faculty lamented this curricular overload. As one exclaimed, “We are cowering from the monster of redoing curriculum. We keep adding things on, and it is an unbelievable load for faculty.” There was a strong sense in discussions that new models for educating dancers in the university system were needed and may be emerging. [6]

Finally, the Forums and the resulting report looked at choreography and its teaching with particular scrutiny. The report states:

*The topic that sparked the most controversy was the teaching of composition and choreography. Participants shunned the top-down method of teaching craft that encourages emulation over original expression, and product over process and instead called for new ways to encourage students to find their own voice. Decisions about curriculum have led to debate about what the mission of dance departments should be, and made visible the lack of clarity under which faculty regularly operate. … A curriculum renovation of this magnitude requires a degree of creative thinking that may be threatening to at least some members of faculty and administration.* [8]

Moving forward from that time, and partly in response to the Forums, the book *From the Campus to the Real World (And Back Again): A Resource Guide for Artists, Faculty and Students* (2005) was produced by Dance/USA in response to the issues and problems cited above. The book was designed to benefit faculty, administrators, and emerging and professional artists, as well as the next generation of dancers throughout the country. It responded to the trend of colleges once again becoming primary sites for the dance field’s development. “Mid-career artists are returning to colleges through residencies and permanent positions and students are entering an increasingly challenging professional world with diminished funding and fewer employment options,” notes the book, which draws from the wisdom of 20 experts, including faculty and professional artists. In the section on campuses, “Residencies 101,” Jacqui Davis of SUNY Brockport guides artists and faculty in planning and implementing projects, most of

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[11] Since the time of that report, the pressure has only grown, according to informal conversations with several leading faculty members. The size of enrollment is used as a performance measure within universities, and dance faculty feel acute pressure to maintain and even increase the student numbers.
which involve restaging or creating choreography. “Universities 101” by Tricia Young of Florida State University orients artists to the lay of the land on campus and guides those who are considering faculty positions on what to expect during the hiring process. Essays on a broad range of topics that arise in working on campus include: Tere O’Connor on re-envisioning composition and choreography (see below) and Linda Tomko on making the case on campus for choreography as research.\(^\text{12}\) The chapter “Real World 101” orients young dancers (and faculty) to life after graduation from college, as they begin a career. Authors Steve Gross and Diane Vivona of The Field in New York provide the tools for students to think through decisions they will make before or immediately after graduation, including assessing goals and skills, deciding where to live and work, and getting started in choreographing, performing, and fundraising.

**Writer’s Note: Current Thoughts on the Artist-University Relationship**

In looking back at these written resources and meetings, it bears repeating that in the years surrounding the release of these reports, scores of professional artists flocked from running their own companies, full time, to holding positions in universities. This exodus from the larger cities, and to some degree from the 501(c)3 structure as a way of life, to a lifestyle in which artists were forced to split their time and attention between their company activities and full-time professorships meant two things. One, the focus on the creation of new work had been subsumed to some degree by the need to stabilize their incomes as they grew older. Two, the arrival of so many working artists on campus brought an influx of new approaches to choreography and related curriculum, and provided students connections to new work and a better sense of the realities of working as a professional in the field.\(^\text{13}\) This begs the question of if or how choreographic curriculum within universities has been updated since these publications came out. This topic is broached below in this Literature Review and will be discussed in detail in the next section on US Interviews.

**The National Standards and Textbooks**

This section departs from the issues expressed above to visit the standards and texts that have been recommended for teaching choreography.

The report *College Learning in the Arts: A Summary and Analysis of Recommendations and Expectations for Arts Instruction at the College Level*, was prepared by the College Board in September 2011. It compares four disciplines of music, theater, dance,\(^\text{14}\) and visual arts. The standards that related to choreography and performance are excerpted here: 1) Summary of

\(^\text{12}\) See pages 38-42 of the book. The essay is not included in this review, as it does not address quality of choreography, per se. One might, however, draw an interesting parallel between this essay and the European notion of choreography as research, which will be presented later in this report.

\(^\text{13}\) Near to the completion of this report, Dance/USA published a series of articles called Safe House; Dancing in the Ivory Tower about mid-career artists who had taken jobs in universities but continued to choreograph. See http://danceusa.org/ejournal/post.cfm?entry=safe-house-dancing-in-the-ivory-tower.

\(^\text{14}\) The dance portion is based on the standards of the National Association of Schools of Dance (NASD).
Accreditation Standards and 2) College Textbooks in the Arts. Each set of standards for each of the four disciplines “applied similar importance to the study of history, theory, and analysis of works of art in each discipline. … rigorous study of the arts necessarily involves far more than production of one’s own works of art.” [4] The specificity of these standards varies according to discipline.

1) Summary of Accreditation Standards, Related Course Content, and Instruction at Schools Offering Arts Degrees. The portion most relevant to choreography appears within the area entitled Performance/Production/Studio, which states that courses are to be structured and sequenced to build skill progressively in one major area, beginning at the freshman level and steadily progressing in intensity. [6] The standards for theater and dance are initially somewhat general in their language, recommending that students have “opportunities … to become familiar with every major aspect, technique, and direction in their major field” and gain “fundamental, comprehensive understanding of the various elements and basic interrelated processes of creation, interpretation, performance, and production.” In addition to these more general recommendations, however, the dance standards offer guidelines related to choreography in a section separate from performance, requiring a minimum of two years of coursework. The Dance Standards go on to mention the types of courses that will help students meet these goals. It is the only discipline of those surveyed to make recommendations related to courses in teaching. The exact language used for the Choreography standard is merely as follows:

**Choreography.** Students must develop basic knowledge and skills in choreography and have opportunities to develop their choreographic potential in studies that include traditional and/or experimental approaches. A minimum of two years of coursework in choreography is required.

Interestingly, the accreditation standards for all disciples except dance have a separate category devoted to synthesis, stating that students should “eventually be able to work independently, drawing on their knowledge of performance, technique, analysis, and history to inform their process.” [7] The standard of Results gives more specificity about what students are expected to have accomplished:

**Results.** Upon completion of any specific professional undergraduate degree program:
1. Students must demonstrate achievement of professional, entry-level competence in the major area, including significant technical mastery, capability to produce work and solve professional problems independently, and a coherent set of artistic/intellectual goals that are evident in their work.
2. Students must demonstrate their competence by developing a body of work for evaluation in the major area of study. A senior project or presentation in the major area is strongly recommended.
3. Students must have the ability to form and defend analyses and critiques of dance and to communicate dance ideas, concepts, and requirements to professionals and laypersons related to the practice.

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15 The report also reviewed Advanced Placement courses in the four arts disciplines, but no such dance courses were analyzed.
16 Notably the US interviews imply quite the opposite—that synthesis is a significant skill that a dance artist needs in order to create work. The topic is covered in the US Interviews section of this report.
The report’s dance-specific recommendations (with emphasis added for areas that might relate to choreography) are as follows:

**Recommendations.** Other goals for the professional undergraduate degree are strongly recommended:

1. Student orientation to the **nature of professional work in their major field.** Examples are organizational structures and working patterns; artistic, intellectual, educational, economic, technological, and political contexts; development potential; and career development.
2. Student experience with **broadly based examples of excellence** in various dance professions.
3. Opportunities for students to **explore areas of individual interest related to dance in general or to the major.** A few examples are dance bibliography, notations, aesthetics, performance practices, pedagogy, and specialized topics in history and analysis.
4. Opportunities for students to **explore multi-disciplinary issues** that include dance.
5. Opportunities for students to **practice synthesis of a broad range of dance knowledge and skills,** particularly through independent study that involves a minimum of faculty guidance, where the emphasis is on evaluation at completion (see Section III.G.).

2) **A Review of College Arts Textbooks.** This review of texts found that across disciplines, courses in the history of the arts seem to be the most widely available strand of study in the arts [4] and that these texts “all emphasize the importance of being able to put works into historical and social contexts.” On pages 16 and 17, the review included an analysis of a total of 24 textbooks, which were identified through two sources: recommendations of members of the National Dance Education Organization (NDEO) who teach dance at the college level, and web-based review of bestselling dance textbooks. Upon an initial examination, the textbook reviewers determined that most titles would fit into one or more of the following categories:

- **Technique** – including basic concepts/fundamentals, dance creation and performance, and teaching
- **History** – including survey/appreciation, Western, and non-Western content
- **Criticism and Analysis**

Of the 24 recommended textbooks, 10 aligned with one or more of the technique categories. Of these, three covered concepts/fundamentals, **six addressed dance creation and performance,** and two included teaching. **There were three results in the criticism and analysis category.** The content of these books is not geared towards teaching students strategies for analyzing dance performance; rather, they are collections of essays and analyses written by dance professionals. **In particular, the content in the dance creation category varies widely,** ranging from straightforward dance technique instruction (including choreography, improvisation, and ballet and modern techniques) to memoirs and essays by well-known dancers and choreographers. Overall, there was an even divide between books that fell into technique and history categories. There were no instances of overlap between the two; books related to dance technique did not appear to cover historical content, and vice versa. [17] Dance was the only discipline to include books on teaching in its review (and as stated above, likewise, it was the only art form whose accreditation standards require courses in teaching). Its summary states the following:

In all disciplines, there are markedly more textbook resources for the history categories than for any other, suggesting that these courses are the most widely available and accessible branch of arts study for college students. In contrast, the **fewest textual resources were in the areas of artistic production**—acting, or directing, or choreography, or painting, for example. **This finding does not necessarily suggest that technique courses are also not widely available to students, only that these types of content might not lend themselves especially well to text-based instruction.** [27-28]
The list of the books included in the “creation and performance” section was limited to the following:

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<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publisher/Year</th>
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**Additional Dance Texts**

In addition to the College Board’s review of curricular material, the consultant identified other texts that are in circulation and that might be used or consulted in the teaching of choreography. This list is by no means comprehensive, and merely outlines the texts that were mentioned by dance professionals with whom the consultant spoke.17

- **Anna Halprin.** This artist has written a range of books addressing composition and choreography. They include *Returning to Health with Dance, Movement and Imagery* (2002), *Moving Toward Life: Five Decades of Transformational Dance* (1995), and *The RSVP Cycles: Creative Processes in the Human Environment* (1969), written by her husband Lawrence Halprin.
- **Louis Horst.** *Pre-Classic Dance Forms* (1937) and *Modern Dance Forms* (1960).
- **Liz Lerman Dance Exchange Online Toolbox.** A website designed for “anyone seeking concrete techniques for choreography, community building, and constructive human interaction.” Practitioners might include “artists, educators, students, social service professionals, and practically anyone seeking creative ways to do their work.”18
- **Performer and Choreographer Daniel Nagrin produced two books that have been used as texts in the teaching of choreography and improvisation.** *Dance and the Specific Image* (1994) is a volume on improvisation and the history of the Workgroup, his company dedicated to the practice and performance of improvisation. It includes over 100 improvisational structures that Nagrin created for his company and taught in dance classes and workshops across the country. It draws from his work with Helen Tamiris, and reflects on both his discoveries and mistakes. While geared more toward performance, *The Six Questions: Acting Technique for Dance Performance* (1997) provides theory and exercises based on acting methods by theater artist Constantin

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17 In fact, as will be discussed in the US Interviews section, interviewees in academia do not tend to use textbooks to teach choreography. Nonetheless, as part of a literature review, it seemed that they should be included.

18 According to its website, the Toolbox includes practice, theory and history. More information is available at [http://danceexchange.org/toolbox/](http://danceexchange.org/toolbox/).
Stanislavski, as well as on Nagrin’s experience with Helen Tamiris. These exercises are meant to lead dancers to better understand their role and the contexts in which they perform, and thus to perform with stronger intent, conviction, integrity, and artistry.

- Twyla Tharp’s *The Creative Habit* (2003) is a self-help book aimed at encouraging creativity in all kinds of people, including artists. Rather than being a guide to choreography, the book focuses on the personality traits, attitudes, and habits of an artist. Each chapter starts with an exercise designed to foster creativity in general. As the title implies, Tharp presents the notion of creativity as involving daily practices: “I’ve learned that being creative is a full time job with its own daily patterns. … The routine is as much part of the process as the lightning bolt of inspiration.” [9] Tharp tells stories of how she created numerous dances, recounting their choreographic intent and editing process, as well as the need to take risks when making dances.

**Programs and Spaces that Serve the Art of Choreography**

Moving into the professional world, the following publications and reports, written or commissioned by program staff, describe programs that support choreography.

A report on **CHIME, or the Choreographers in Mentorship Exchange**, outlines the development of this program from 2003 to 2006, and gives an overview of its value, as expressed by 10 pairs of mentor-mentees during the first years of its operation. CHIME encourages “emerging choreographers by fostering an exchange among artists of different generations, reducing artists’ sense of working in isolation, and creating mechanisms for professional dialogue about and improvement of choreography.” During each year of the two-year pilot phase, five pairs of mentor-mentees were selected by a review panel to receive stipends and cost-free studio time over a period of a full year. Two choreographers identify each other for a mentoring relationship and apply jointly to CHIME, with participants describing how best to achieve mentorship goals. CHIME’s administration is responsible for organizing and overseeing the group meetings and activities, monitoring progress of the relationships, and documenting the process. Among other documenting procedures, participants were videotaped in interviews at the beginning and end of their year working together. [4]

The report finds that the program had been successful in meeting its stated goals, namely that each mentor-mentee pair developed an individualized plan of work and that each pair devised encounters to foster trust and to allow for exchange on matters related to the improvement of choreography. Artists followed their approved plans for their year, yet also found unexpected methods of exchange within the time period. The participating artists detected changes in how they made work, including new choreographic methods and new modes of presentation. The availability of paid studio time seemed an enormous benefit to mentees’ experimentation and learning. Artists valued the group activities, which included meetings, showings, and social functions. Public viewings were helpful for artists, giving them a way to establish and to review all elements of presentation while in conversation with another professional. As stated in the report, “Mentors and mentees alike felt the year of CHIME activities enriched them personally as well as professionally” and all participating artists wanted to see CHIME continue, hoping that the time period might even be expanded. [4-5]
A follow-up report on CHIME in Southern California was done in 2009, after the program had been expanded to serve the greater Los Angeles area. The questions and challenges raised by Southern California choreographers, and integrated in the program’s modified design, may prove instructive in designing any program with similar goals. These issues include: the eligibility requirements of the mentees (five years of choreographing versus a shorter history); the designation of space for mentorship work (one central program space versus artist-selected spaces); the reimbursement of rehearsal spaces (stipends paid to spaces versus paid to artists); the geography of participants (limited to one area versus inclusive of the entire region); and the geography of activities (activities scheduled in one space versus geographically distributed activities and meetings). Additionally, the report expressed a need to build community among artists. In 2007, a panel selected three pairs of artists from over 50 total applicants to participate in the pilot program. Mentors received $7,000 and mentees were given $3,000 and reimbursed up to $2,500 for studio rental costs. [3]

Both reports extensively quote artists, who speak at length about the nature of the relationships that they developed as mentor-mentees, the ways in which they learned to process feedback, and the value of having sustained rehearsal space. Findings within both of these reports were self-reported by the program recipients whose comments were attributed to them by name, with the intention that the report would be shared publicly.

The Maggie Allesee National Center for Choreography (MANCC), housed in Florida State University’s Department of Dance, is a process-based research center for dance. Its Position Paper (2006) is included in the literature survey for two reasons: first, this organization was designed to provide artists with creative time and other support for the exploration and development of choreography; second, there are some similarities between its programs and what will be presented in the Models from Europe section of this report.

The Position Paper includes an overview of MANCC’s programs, and identifies its goals and values as: serving as a research center; being risk-taking and innovative in its programs; responding quickly to changes in the field; focusing on support for professional choreography; and remaining artist-centered. [2] Through its programs, MANCC strives to: 1) be a model of support for professional choreographic creativity within a Research I university; 2) provide choreographers access to a stimulating environment where experimentation, exploration, and life-long learning are valued and encouraged; and 3) provide opportunities for the students, staff and faculty, the community of Tallahassee, and the national dance field at large to engage with the creative process in dance. [2] Its values highlight four attributes of its programs:

1) A Focus on Experimentation. MANCC responds to artists’ need for research by providing them creative resources. Artists are valued for their willingness to take risks in the creative process. Envisioned as a program that would fill a critical void in the dance field, MANCC builds on the philosophy that:

- Providing unencumbered time for research in the creative process leads to high-quality work.
• Opportunities for true engagement in the research process, unimpinged upon by other requirements of the artist’s time, are practically nonexistent in the dance field.

• Providing a structure would not only benefit artists but eventually presenters and audiences as well.

2) Entry Points to Creativity. MANCC encourages artists and the general public to interact with, discuss, and invest personally in the creative process. Artists are encouraged to provide multiple entry points for audiences to view and learn about their work. These entry points are innovative and go beyond performance and the historical menu of master class, lecture demonstration, workshop, and setting of repertory. Although MANCC recognizes the value of these approaches, it supports artists in redefining the language and structure of how work is made and shared with others in the dance field as well as with the general public.

3) Technology. MANCC provides multiple options for artists to integrate state-of-the-art technology into the creative process. MANCC is one of a few organizations in this country with advanced technological facilities created with the intention of supporting dance and choreography. While artists frequently drive technological innovation, many US choreographers have limited access to equipment, let alone technical support. Access to high-end facilities was intended to both inform and transform visiting artists’ creative process.

4) FSU Academic Network as Resource. In their creative pursuits, artists can access and work with a full range of academic resources including faculty, students, and research facilities.

The Carlisle Project issued a final report titled *A Mirror and a Window: The Carlisle Project 1984-1996* when it faced closing its doors for good. In the report, Carlisle staff and others look back at the running of this service organization designed to serve the ballet field. During its 12-year tenure, the organization served 156 choreographers, 257 dancers, and scores of composers and teachers, among others. By the end of 1993, the challenges of the economic and cultural climate and the fact that “funding guidelines and priorities, especially in regard to support for individual artists and their creative processes, were changing rapidly,” and influenced the organization’s decision to close. [7] As one of the few choreography programs focused on ballet, Carlisle had four components: workshops, residencies, showcases, and collaborations with composers, “all of which were designed to provide time, information, resource, and mentorship to the artists who were invited to participate.” [11] Interestingly, soon after it began, Carlisle shifted its program toward choreography and using professional dancers. Tarin Chaplin, co-author of *The Intimate Act of Choreography*, was on staff from 1987 until the organization’s closing. Carlisle was designed to fill a void; unlike modern dance, “ballet did not seem to produce the conditions which would aid the development of new works, except for a handful of truly brilliant choreographers,” such as George Balanchine and Jerome Robbins. [13] The concern, according to Carlisle founder and director Barbara Weisberger, was that ballet dancers “within an intensely competitive field were becoming more and more technically proficient and less and less expressive.” Commenting on attitudes about and support for “programs that promoted new repertoire ballet and belied its relevance and creative potential,” Weisberger says, “There was little if any hope that a ballet company, in the face of growing economic and social pressures, could … support the risk taking and stimulation of individual artists. …” [17]
In Carlisle’s design, the question arose as to whether choreography can be taught. In this report, Weisberger recounts her conversations about this question with some of the most prominent ballet and contemporary choreographers:

Balanchine … saw choreography as the act of translating divine communication into a moral language. … [Tudor exclaimed,] “Nurture choreographers? I don’t know any other way than to throw them in the water and let them sink or swim.” Jerome Robbins, kinder and more quizzical, suggested that when I found out how to stir up new choreography for the ballet I should let him know. Paul Taylor was warm and gracious … [but] confessed he hadn’t a clue about how to face my formidable task. [19]

Weisberger explains Carlisle’s goals for choreographic training:

We asked the artists who came to us to stretch, take risks, and not be afraid to fail. In many cases, it was very hard to assess the impact we had on their work, immediately or even later. Although there were many gratifying visible results of the Project’s teachings and career-advancing opportunities, it was the less tangible aspects that, in essence, overrode specific successes. Our program rarely failed to create an atmosphere of personal warmth but professional rigor, of camaraderie but undiminished competitiveness, of freedom from commercial burdens but intensely pressured work schedules and deadlines. [20]

Choreographers’ Writings on Their Craft

Perhaps most relevant to this study are the words and viewpoints of artists as they describe their choreographic process and what has helped them to create work. These views, which come directly from choreographers and are often written in the first person, provide a tone and specificity about the creative process distinct from that of the other sources.

Growing Place: Interviews with Artists, 25 Years at the Bates Dance Festival (2007) compiled interviews with artists about being in residence and making work at this summer festival on the campus of Bates College. In this retrospective report, 11 choreographers share their approach to making work, the specific dances that were created while they had access to the resources and performing opportunities at Bates, and how the festival provided an environment conducive to dance making. Doug Varone, for example, looks back on his time at Bates, saying, “It is always wonderful to be able to go somewhere and just focus on the creation of work … what a rare gift it is to have creative time away from New York, a chance to disappear together and play, build and make mistakes. Most importantly feeling completely safe within that process allows the freedom to explore choices.” He recalls the time he and dancer Gwen Welliver “improvised the night away in a dark studio with a video camera” resulting in the duet Polonaise: “It was the first time that I tried structuring a work in this way and it opened the door to new creative possibilities.” [35-36] Bebe Miller reflects that “making work at BDF felt like being on hand for the good, spontaneous stuff that pours out when you’re exhausted, but not too exhausted to be inspired.” She, too, talks about staying up all night to listen to music and work: “The ‘making’
was determined less by the piece of the moment than the opportunity to live in a choreographic head space on all available levels.” [39]

_Speaking of Dance: Twelve Contemporary Choreographers on Their Craft_ (2004) is a collection of essays exploring the creative practices of a group of highly prominent artists (presumably in the order of their age): Merce Cunningham, Anna Halprin, David Gordon, Trisha Brown, Lucinda Childs, Meredith Monk, Elizabeth Streb, Eiko Otake, Bill T. Jones, Ann Carlson, Mark Morris, and John Jasperse. Editor Joyce Morgenroth, Associate Professor of Dance at Cornell University, asked these artists about how they got started as dancers and choreographers, their daily routines, what collaborations had been important to them, the emotional ups and downs of their experience in making new work, whether they start a new piece by moving or by thinking, and how much they revise. She also asked about why they choreograph. [2] After a brief introduction of life history, the first-person essays are based on transcribed interviews with the artists, who revised and approved resulting texts. The ways that these artists’ voices are portrayed seems authentic. Artists tell poignant stories about their process of creating work, pursuing experiments, asking questions, and taking risks—including their successes and failures. They also discuss their relationships to dancers and other collaborators (such as Merce Cunningham with John Cage and Robert Rauschenberg) and the influence of these other artists on their creative process and final works. Several artists will be cited below as examples of the excellent themes and content presented in this book.

**Although these artists’ creative processes are vastly different from one another, the volume successfully conveys how artists create from their own conscious choices about their process, and how they articulate the nature of these choices.** The artists’ creative processes tended to begin with some turning point or revelation that led to them to explore a question or pursue an aesthetic challenge. For Merce Cunningham it was learning of Albert Einstein’s statement that “there were no fixed points in space, that everything in the universe is moving all of the time, [which] … gave rise to the idea that in choreographing a dance you didn’t have to have some sort of central point being more important than any other.” [15] The use of chance opened his way of working beyond what would be habitual, and allowed his dancers to “find new ways to move and to put movements together that wouldn’t otherwise have been available to us. It revealed possibilities that were always there except that my mind hadn’t seen them.” [16] For Meredith Monk, it was her early study of music and Dalcroze eurhythmics, followed by an early conscious effort to subvert the directions she was given at college (presumably in choreography), and the realization that she “didn’t want to be an interpreter” of others’ music. After experimenting with movement, and quick shifts in energy, mood, and image, she reflected, “I really missed singing so I sat at the piano and started vocalizing and suddenly had a revelation: I could develop a vocabulary for my own voice in the same way that I had with my body. The voice could be gender, and age, and landscape. It could also be kinetic.” This discovery led Monk to ask herself: “What would a spiral be for the voice? Or jumping? Or falling? … I have always been grateful that I had the choreography background in school because I could apply some of the same principles to working with the voice.” [89]

This book seems quite instructive about a range of approaches to choreography, and could offer students a clear sense of the similarities and differences in artists’ creative processes. Artists explicate the ways that they move from process to structure. They shared a commitment
to taking artistic risk, and seemed comfortable with not knowing exactly where their creative process would lead, or how the final work would develop. Yet perhaps because they were established artists, there was a certain confidence that their process would lead somewhere. Some did feel the pressure of looming deadlines before premieres, but they did not seem concerned about critical review or other forms of rejection.

**William Forsythe’s essay “Choreographic Objects”** asks deep questions about the nature of choreography and its relationship to the body. The essays and a website frame the project Synchronous Objects, which he is pursuing with Ohio State University (and collaborators Maria Palazzi and Norah Zuniga Shaw) to explore the idea of “visualizing choreographic information in new ways, or visualizing its structure from dance to data to objects.” Using the dance *One Flat Thing*, the project employs technology to reveal the “interlocking systems of organization in the choreography,” transforming these systems into a series of “synchronous objects that work in harmony to explore those choreographic structures, reveal their patterns, and re-imagine what else they might look like” if they exist outside of the physical body. In Forsythe’s words:

> Choreography is the term that presides over a class of ideas: an idea is perhaps in this case a thought or suggestion as to a possible course of action. … Choreography and dancing are two distinct and very different practices. In the case that choreography and dance coincide, choreography often serves as a channel for the desire to dance. … But is it possible for choreography to generate autonomous expressions of its principles, a choreographic object, without the body? … Could it be conceivable that the ideas now seen as bound to a sentient expression are indeed able to exist in another durable intelligible state? A choreographic object is not a substitute for the body, but rather an alternate site for the understanding of potential instigation and organization of action to reside.

In his essay “Poetic Science” (2005), Tere O’Connor explains his views on the teaching of choreography in the academy, and how his teaching informs his own choreography. He emphasizes, “[I]t is invaluable for a student to watch a working artist ask questions and dab at his or her creation. Witnessing the actual creative process—the myriad of questions posed and their subsequent elimination from or inclusion in the work—creates an unparalleled learning environment.” As he teaches, he creates new work in order to “willfully use this time as research,” and tries to remain transparent, talking as he works and “tracking for [students] the trajectory of each choice I make. I try to elucidate the origin of ideas, their development down different avenues and the reasons for the final edits of the movement material.” In teaching, he does so “as a facilitator assisting young artists in the development of tools born of their own questions. I help them turn these [questions] into process.” He attempts, within reason, to keep his own taste removed so that “students can locate their own creative voices and unearth structures intrinsic to their own lives. I attempt to move them toward a radical use of their

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19 Visit the website at OSU about this project, which includes descriptions and samples of the dance and its data elements: [http://synchronousobjects.osu.edu/content.html](http://synchronousobjects.osu.edu/content.html). The interactive visuals on the website may be clearer than the written description here.

20 This description is from an article on Synchronous Objects featured on the website Visual Complexity: [http://www.visualcomplexity.com/vc/project.cfm?id=667](http://www.visualcomplexity.com/vc/project.cfm?id=667)

21 The essay can be found at: [http://www.williamforsythe.de/essay.html](http://www.williamforsythe.de/essay.html)
imagination and into rigorous investigation of this.” He goes on to explain what not to do: “It is my experience that students harbor, in their heads, the voices of endless imagined authorities, voices they need to expel in order to become artists. I feel we should guide them toward this while they are in school.” [48-50]

**Conclusion**

This survey scans the literature and opinions of numerous artists, academicians, writers, and consultants who all have in common the goal of high quality choreography—both creating and teaching it. Yet there is not agreement among them about how to approach the formidable task of choreographic training. Within the training-related materials, there is a stated or assumed set standards and methods, with recommendations for how it is done best. In contrast were the reports and essays generated by the Dance/USA Forums in which artists and professors question the effectiveness of the existing curriculum, with many finding it lacking. The professional artists stressed the uniqueness of each choreographer’s working process; these artists’ comments are not wholesale criticisms of training per se, but merely their views of the creative process and how choreography is developed in reality. As to texts, the general sense is that most of them are not used; as soon as one is written, perhaps it begins to seem proscriptive, or perhaps it is simply impossible to capture in writing the elusive nature of creating a dance.

When considered as a whole, this body of literature presents a paradox: many say or imply that choreography cannot be taught or that the existing methods are not working. Yet no one said to stop teaching it. In recent years, with the influx of professional artists into universities, the intermingling of ideas and methods of how to choreograph may be c shift the approaches to teaching it. This brings to mind the nature of how contemporary dance has developed over the past century. As stated in the report on the Forums cited above, “College programs live with the conflicting priorities to honor and preserve the past, as well as embrace the new, which is often expressed by reaction against that past.” [3]

Decades earlier, in Terpsichore in Sneakers: Post Modern Dance (1980), Sally Banes described this same trend, which may echo the built-in tension that has historically existed in contemporary dance, and perhaps even reflected in this literature review: “Revolution and institution, revolution and institution. The choices for each [modern dance] generation have been either to enter the new academy (but inevitably to dilute and trivialize it in doing so) or to create a new establishment.” [5]

This notion of institution and revolution—or namely, of how choreography has been taught and supported now and what will work better in the future—will be taken up in the next section with the US interviews.
Interviews with US Artists and Leaders

Introduction

The study now shifts from the numbers and the literature to the conversations with US artists and other leaders in the field. The 25 US-based interviewees include a host of professional artists, presenters, professors, funders, and arts administrators from service organizations, colleges, national and local arts associations, and funding organizations. Interviewees spoke on the condition of confidentiality, in order to encourage candor and elicit the range of opinions about the questions asked. As is typical in studies of this kind, the interviewees voiced opinions that often converged and sometimes disagreed.

Interviewees began by talking about choreographic training, including any formal programs in which they had participated both inside and outside of the academy. Following that were fascinating discussions about choreographers’ creative processes: their daily practice, the manner in which they train and prepare themselves to create, and the ways in which their practice evolves over their careers. Discussions then explored factors within the larger working environment that support choreographers, such as collaborations, habitats, and support structures, including mentorships and critiques. Then, interviewees carefully considered the issue of funding—the ways in which it can support or hamper quality. A few of the interviewees ended by sharing ideas for what might enhance the quality of choreography in the US in the future.

Background

Nearly all of the interviewees had studied dance at some point in their lives. While the pool of interviewees predominately specializes in contemporary forms, about one-quarter mentioned studying ballet. Just a few of the teachers and mentors they studied with include John Cage, Merce Cunningham, Joe Goode, Louis Horst, Margaret Jenkins, Daniel Nagrin, Steve Paxton, and Mary Wigman. Their areas of artistic study beyond dance (both inside and outside of the academy) were most frequently music and visual arts. They had attended a range of colleges around the country in large and small cities. Two mentioned having PhDs, several others have advanced degrees, and a few mentioned choosing to leave college before graduating.

Nearly two-thirds had worked as professional dancers and/or choreographers for some portion of their career. Over half have or continue to choreograph professionally; most of the practicing artists were at a later point in their career but a few were younger. As was expected, numerous interviewees had significant experience dancing for other choreographers. Among the artists for whom they mentioned dancing were Matthew Diamond, Bill Evans, Joe Goode, Margaret Jenkins, Phyllis Lamhut, Jack Moore, Rosalind Newman, Steve Paxton, and Anna Sokolow, and more recently Doug Elkins, Jane Comfort, John Jasperse, and David Rousseve. Some began their study of dance quite early, while others began in college; about a third had direct experience with summer dance festivals and other programs. Most have taught dance in university settings; ten have ongoing college faculty positions, and a few have chaired dance

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22 Interviewees consented to share their viewpoints in this public version. See Methodology section.
departments. Several are historians and writers. Most chose to spend significant time in large dance centers, including New York and the Bay Area. The older among them had been in the field for over 50 years (the longest was 52 years) and the youngest was aged 40.

Most of the interviewees who are not currently professional choreographers are working in presenting and academia. In fact, the initial moments of the interviews revealed a degree of experience that may not be obvious: over half of the interviewees had worked as presenters and/or had founded or run programs that serve the artistic development of other artists. Organizations and programs mentioned were Dance Theater Workshop (DTW), American Dance Asylum, Danspace Project, Oberlin Dance Collective Commons, and CHIME, in addition to other dance companies. When considered together, this pool of interviewees have held numerous leading positions within the dance field during their long careers; their current job titles convey only a fraction of their true range of experience and the level of insight that they have about the topic of choreography.

The Question of Training

Choreographic Instruction in Universities

The collective impressions gleaned from interviewees convey their extensive knowledge of and opinions about teaching choreography in college settings. The majority have some if not extensive experience teaching dance or related courses in colleges. About half voluntarily recounted stories from their own composition training in academia. Of those who commented on the topic, there was an even split between those who credited academic training and those who discounted it. Those who valued their dance training in a university setting regarded this early exposure as important. “It was my way into dance,” said one of the interviewees who used to perform professionally, “Without it, I don’t know if I would [have] become a dancer.” One artist who also started dancing in college added: “Beginners need anything and everything. I absorbed a ton of information from different trainings. It came from being a part of and witnessing different approaches and trying to find my own way.” A younger artist benefitted from an open-ended curriculum, through which “You were encouraged to find your own voice and opinions [rather than] download the rules.”

Discussions shifted to the provocative and complex question of choreography—whether and how to teach it. This comment, from someone who has worked in many aspects of the field, aptly illustrates the conundrum of if or how to offer choreographic training in a university setting:

*It is such a hard question to answer because it raises more questions. It is important to develop that aspect of [students’] imagination, which is why I believe in including it in any curriculum aimed at preparing someone for a life in dance. [But] I do not believe that it is essential [nor is it] the only gateway to being a good choreographer. I have watched dance-making classes serve as a stimulus for opening up the imagination and inviting people to see and think about their work in fresh ways that challenge them. But I don’t value them above other ways of figuring out dance making.*
Though a few were enthusiastic, **most interviewees expressed reservations about the effectiveness of choreographic training in the academy, and the outcomes for students of taking such courses.** Interviewees felt that even if artists took composition it would not necessarily lead to their producing better work. Instead, it may lead to students creating similar work: “In the worst of all worlds, [choreographic training] ends up with people teaching people to make dances like their dances,” said an educator. Students may have to unlearn what they have studied, are not encouraged to develop a unique artistic voice, or make work that is superficial. As a presenter noted, “The majority of programs are not helping the field at all. It may be even causing a lag time, [because of the] need to un-train … It creates this sea of artists that don’t have their own voice. Academia is not encouraging them to dig deeper.” Within the curriculum, students aren’t being sufficiently educated in multidisciplinary approaches to making and interpreting work. According to a different presenter: “You have legions of undergrad students who can’t hold an intelligent conversation about other art forms and will be at a disadvantage in creating work. Or [being] open and curious about the world. Or [finding] their way into another aspect of the field.”

**Interviewees created a picture of academia as being behind the times in its viewpoints about choreographic instruction and in its awareness of new work.** One academic with extensive teaching experience stated why this condition exists: “Whatever is absolutely current, being done right now, has yet to reach the academy, as it has to be proven before academia will pick it up. That’s just the nature of the beast, not a criticism.” The rate of change in academia has to do with whom colleges select as artists: “These institutions can’t take someone who is untried, unknown, and not established. They won’t get hired, even as adjuncts. So [dance departments] are never on the cutting edge.” Some thought the relatively isolated environment of college dance departments led to lower or different measures of quality and/or more rigid teaching methods. As a senior artist observes, “You have these institutions that have ideas about how [choreographing] should be done.” One long-term presenter witnessed this trend in student choreography while running a performance series for emerging artists: “Colleges would track people who are not very good into teaching programs, [and they] would go on to run dance programs. Millions of their handiwork would pour into [auditions].” At these auditions, “They would bring in dissertations for you to read before watching their five-minute dance. I made a rule that you never read anything.” This mediocrity and homogeneity affects how professionals review the work of young artists coming from universities: “You could see the roots. [These young artists] could be held back by the restrictions that were placed on their thinking.”

**Two factors came up as most influential to the quality of choreographic instruction: the quality of the teacher and of the curriculum.** These factors must match the student’s needs at the time. One artist stated: “As one grows, you have to take all these different paths. That is just living. Every once in a while you run into the right teacher that galvanizes you.” Comparisons were made between more traditional and newer approaches to teaching choreography. Improvisation, several expressed, should be part of the mix, or else “the work tends to have less of an original voice.” On the positive end, a professor with particularly broad knowledge of the field credits the availability of online video footage with exposing students to choreography on the cutting edge, leaving them “way ahead of [what they see in] the studio.” This same professor adds that the new should have equal representation alongside the traditional, saying, “Ballet is
valuable. I believe in strict training and in the A-B-A form. But it needs equal representation with new ways of choreographing.” A few added that choreographic instruction could have the added benefit of enhancing dancers’ skills in technique and performance. One who used to dance expressed, “Even if you don’t want to be a choreographer it helps you … to own your own movement, to become a more individual performer.” But, taking this connection too far can have diminishing returns, stated another: when composition is tied up with technique, “everything is fed through a language,” which stifles creativity.

**Classes in choreography and composition may help to inform students’ artistic development, but do not necessarily lead them to become good choreographers—nor, said some, is that their ultimate purpose.** One interviewee cited the overall quality of work in college festivals as an indicator of homogeneous curriculum. Another expressed that college dance programs are about “helping people get their undergraduate degrees [rather than] trying to make choreographers. … I don’t think you can do that.” Several interviewees recounted the names of master choreographers who had never stepped foot in a composition class: “These [masters] are people with insatiable curiosity. Can anyone offer courses in that?” Another distinguished learning craft from dealing with ideas through movement, stating, “Craft gives you existing rules and conventions.” What matters, according to the same artist, is “being able to abandon it. … At the end of the day we cannot make artists. We can lead them to various kinds of opportunities that may or may not trigger their discovery.”

**Pursuing Their Own Paths**

*Artists spend a lifetime cultivating their own instincts about their work and themselves.*

*Most artists have a sense of what they need.*

---* A senior artist

Many of the artists (along with a few other interviewees) went on to discuss at length the attributes that went into developing their choreographic voices.

Among conversations with the senior artists, it was striking that **most had tried and abandoned choreography and composition courses, instead following their own strong impulses to ask different questions about movement and art.** While a few established artists had completed and acknowledged the value of these courses, most found that the curriculum provided too rigid a structure, which they reacted *against.* One artist who took only one course “ran into questions about the form itself and what could be done. I then created a list of [my own choreographic] questions.” Another artist explained the impulse to develop movement by examining other art forms: “I questioned what dance was at that time. I personally needed to integrate formal progression with very spontaneous interpretation. I realized that after years, I was riding the line between formal training and improvisation practices … with a choreographic sensibility and the freedom to play it.” Yet another senior artist was “questioning proscenium performance … with audience sitting quietly with arms folded, in the dark, when we were flooded with light. I wondered … how do we let them in … how do I respect the people in front of me?” A long-time leader pointed out that this impulse to react and question is at the core of the art form, that artists’ continually resist the notion that “this is the way you make dances.’ That is the history of modern dance—people question everything.”
Interviewees spoke of the degree to which choreographers are self-taught. To satiate their curiosity, artists cultivate instincts about, if not an obsession with, what they would like to explore. “Each piece would open up a new inquiry,” stated one artist. Another artist described the process: “I travel, think, wonder, and then go into the studio and make [work].” For some, these forays into new areas were, paradoxically, reactions against former training. One senior artist described trying to “unleash it from the other systems hoisted on me,” while another felt, “I wasted some time creatively as I was too fixed or too in love with this idea of technique as I understood it.” Each artist had spent considerable time alone, hashing out ideas and questions, and developing what became a practice for creating work. In contrast, the current funding and producing climate, according to one artist, does not facilitate this need to explore and satisfy curiosity: “There is a whole system that rewards some kind of agreed-upon cogency and that is not the goal for many artists. … So a lot of mediocre work becomes important work as it obeys a kind of forced universality.” Interviewees who were not practicing artists tended to view artists’ self-training as a journey to develop artistic voice or craft. They contended that there are no rules for helping artists develop their instincts but instead that artists “ultimately use what is important to them and throw everything else away.” Many brought up Merce Cunningham and, to a lesser degree, Mark Morris to illustrate that “many of the people we revere are self-taught,”23 as one interviewee said.

Nearly all interviewees referenced how important it is for choreographers to pursue knowledge and training outside of dance. Inspiration could come from any source. The most commonly mentioned areas were literature, philosophy, visual arts, and music. Among the many other areas mentioned were mathematics, architecture, and film. Also referenced was working with other types of artists and experts, such as art historians, designers, writers, and critics. For a younger artist it was church architecture. For a senior artist it was Aristotelian thought, and literature, with its use of the protagonist. Yet another artist studied music, “not as string quartets, but as Cage would say, organized sound.” One long-time artist’s fuller story described the degree and range of exploration involved in developing a choreographic voice. It began with studying music from a young age, without which: “I doubt I would have found my way toward movement. My sense of musicality informs the way I hear the phrasing of movement.” Living abroad allowed for this artist to study visual art, calligraphy, and Noh drama, which “cannot help but influence one deeply. Only years later did I realize how profound that is. … With the brush stroke on paper, the whole body is involved, not just the hand, to make the mark powerful and clear. I spent years drawing to try to get more force in movement.”

About one-third of the interviewees brought up artists’ inner drive to create work constantly. Artists and all categories of the people who support them used hyperbolic descriptors such as “constant,” “devoted,” and “obsessively working.” One artist felt that making choreography is “the thing that brings me closer to my spirituality” and another described choreographic practice as a “crazy oblivious daily-ness” where the “sense that you have to [choreograph] makes it more reasonable.” A senior artist felt that “the necessity to make work drives everything” and described sustaining this practice over time by being “incredibly flexible … and optimistic.” As one well-established artist described:

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23 Throughout the interviews Cunningham was cited as an exception to all of the assumptions and rules about how one becomes a choreographer.
I am always in my creative rhythm, even if I am not making [work]. I am looking at it, or thinking about it. It is really important that artists understand this … one goes about [art-making] for a lifetime of being in and out of systems of support.

Interviewees stressed that a key part of how choreographers develop artistically is to be pushed beyond their comfort zones into some new artistic terrain. Interviewees of all types spoke of these artistic breakthroughs, which could occur while choreographers were participating in residency programs that grant them time and space to develop work. Programs that have provided such support—the Bates Dance Festival, The Yard’s Residency programs, and DTW’s Fresh Tracks, among others—will be discussed below.

Interviewees spoke of this topic from different angles. Artists described how these programs ultimately, (whether planned or perchance), pushed them artistically such that breakthroughs, “came out of nowhere,” as one said. Other interviewees had created programs in order to foster such breakthroughs, seeing them as necessary for artists to grow. Regardless of when or where they happen, one interviewee with a particularly broad awareness of artists described these epiphanies as integral to the arc of an artist’s trajectory:

[Artistic growth] is like a Ziggurat, or a step pyramid. When artists are on their path, they are on a straight-up line. Then they codify their success and the line flattens out, as they work with a [movement] language that they now have created or adopted. … All artists reach that point, where you suddenly have to break out of your own codification. … They do regular concerts, and have well-known vocabularies, and then they say, “I need a way out of this.” … [You need to] undo or shatter what you’ve done and free up the inventive juice. Some [artists] never break those points. … It’s how artists … reach those cusp points and … break open their codified ideas … [so that they can] refresh and push the reset button.

Another presenter added, with emphasis, that if you are going to stimulate the quality of emerging artists, “get [artists] out of their own heads. … The reason why Merce used chance was to see things he could not think of on his own.” A younger artist expressed the continual need to search for “those places where you are not already an expert … [so that you do not] lose momentum. Artists … want to put themselves back in the dark.”

The Professional Work Environment

Interviewees spoke of the ways in which artists are supported through professional interactions as well as working environments.

Interactions Among Artists

Interviewees—both artists and others—stressed that a key ingredient of enhancing quality is collaborating with artists from other disciplines. Positive examples were given of artists who were constantly challenged by their collaborators, including Merce Cunningham with John
Cage. John Jasperse recently saw success with a visual artist who “shares his sense of humor and eccentricity.” One interviewee speculates about why artists avoid such contact: “In dance there is protectiveness and defensiveness, a sense [among artists] of ‘that’s not what I do.’ Connecting with artists in other disciplines creates a mirror that supports and promotes reflection.” A key factor, thought many, was that the collaborators be of a high caliber. An artist who stood out to several interviewees in this regard was Ralph Lemon:

Ralph is a great example of someone who walks in a different world. I will always go back to see what he is doing, in part because he is in dialogue with spiritual leaders and [explores] intellectual ideas. … [His work is] not about precious little step making. There is an inquiry going on. One of the ways you sharpen your inquiry is being around people with sharp inquiry.

— A presenter

**Artists talked about how collaborating with dancers pushes them to create better work.** Dancers were described as “a huge influence,” or the “most important” factor in collaboration. Dancers give feedback and creative input, and both directly and indirectly generate ideas and movement material, which, as one artist said, pushes [us] past “our own patterns and expectations.” For another artist, the choreography becomes more interesting when the dancers “stand out and look at the movement [and make] active suggestions.” Recalling the early moments of working with a new group of dancers, a senior artist states, “I could not stop them from giving feedback if I wanted. They were peers; they were educating me about choreography and … had experience working with other [choreographers]. So they formed my ethics, in terms of collaboration and respect.”

**Artists in different age brackets felt they learned considerably from choreographers for whom they danced, while other types of interviewees observed this transfer of knowledge.** Young artists observe how other choreographers run rehearsals: “You can go with or against that.” A senior artist described dancing with a famous artist as on-the-job training: “It was keeping my eyes and ears open and feeling the articulations in my body. I learned through my soma.” Another pointed out this type of in-studio learning is simply “the way dance is—it is handed down from person to person. The academic [approach] is a relatively new phenomenon.” Learning choreography through dancing for a respected artist is particularly common in ballet where, one interviewee stated, mentorship is rare.

**For some artists, teaching choreography provides opportunities to observe new perspectives from their students.** As a teaching tool, one artist asks students to define their own rules for choreographing and finds it “endlessly fascinating—everyone’s different ways of thinking and seeing and doing.” Another artist described being “infected” by the ideas of college-age students because “their whole point of view is completely different. They are in a moment of questioning.” Mentoring young artists can also provide an artist a rare glimpse into someone else’s creative process. One artist recounted facilitating an adjudication process that helped four young artists choreograph, only to be enlightened by these four fresh perspectives: “I had been in my own studio for so long … here I was, watching others work, seeing what came out of it.”
The Role of Community

Artists should be challenged out of their habits and safety zones. One of the best ways [is to be in] the same room together so they are rubbing up against each other’s interests and opinions. — An artist

To nearly all interviewees, a factor that seemed important to developing strong work is for choreographers to make and see work within a larger community of their peers. Most stressed the strong advantages of working in New York, both now and historically. Interviewees called the city “uber-important,” and “essential.” Artists move there to be exposed to all that the city offers artistically, because “you are valued more here” as an artist, said one interviewee.

There was a widespread belief among interviewees that artists’ geographic location fed their sense of community. Most of those interviewed who are over the age of 50 looked back fondly on the 1960s, in both the Bay Area and New York, reminiscing about the role of spaces like the Judson Dance Theater (Judson) and DTW, in the days when it was in artist Jeff Duncan’s living room: “We were all smashed in so close that we learned a lot.” Another adds that at Duncan’s place, “you were working all the time … and got frank feedback.” Artists spoke of how seeing work and being exposed to other artists’ creative process led them to acknowledge their own lineage and the role of other artists on their own development; those mentioned by name included Trisha Brown, Lucinda Childs, Merce Cunningham, Meredith Monk, Jack Moore, Jerome Robbins, and Anna Sokolow.

Several interviewees, both artists and others, were quick to point out, however, that regular interaction with a set community is not guaranteed to improve quality. Weaknesses can be reinforced for the artists who tend to work “hermetically in circles” with peers who will “not necessarily challenge them.” A long-time presenter strongly agrees: “When you are inside a love fest, you are inside a world of shared assumptions, but what happens when you put the work out in the world?” Another artist reinforces the thought: “With people who are honest, it can be great. With the mediocre, it becomes the friendship circle.”

Such insularity can limit artists’ worldview. If artists are not regularly exposed to the work of other artists, it tends to hinder the quality of their own work. Several commented on what seems to be a divide between artists who see everything and those who will see nothing. “One of the reasons why people think their work is interesting and complex,” said one former presenter, “is because they have not seen very much.” The Internet may be furnishing quick access to work, with positive results, but several interviewees with access to archives observed that students don’t use them. Comparisons were made to Europe, where artists would not think of missing others’ performances. A comment from someone who has played many roles in the field illustrates the degree of concern that was prevalent among most:

I have lived in five [US] cities. Something that astonished me in every one is the number of artists who do not go to see any other work. It is incomprehensible! If you are a writer who has grown up reading and thinking about how other people write and what they write about, you are going to have a wider range of intellectual and emotional and
spiritual resources than if you never read or were exposed to anything. In dance we work in these tiny pockets and don’t talk to each other.

A longtime dance leader summed up the drawbacks and benefits of working within a set group or even a set dance style, reiterating how important it is for artists to expand their experiences and worldview:

> When choreographers and dancers are not exposed to the broader world of the stage, they make dances in a vacuum … without any context. Balanchine worked for Hollywood, the circus, Broadway, and TV, which all influenced his work. Putting choreography in a separate sanctuary is not necessarily good … The value is that it can crystallize ideas and give someone like Paxton … the power to go off and do his own thing. But there needs to be both concentrated focus and also the breathing space around it … a circulation of ideas of all kinds.

An educator summed up the relationship of location to artists’ sense of community, and how both of those factors influence the quality of work:

> Learning choreography has to do with a vibrant community of peers where there is some structure … a place where people can live fairly cheaply, where they are bouncing off of each other. It is complicated, as it has to do with real estate and cost of living. And it has to do with systems of support that in this country came through government and foundations that [at an earlier time] made this more possible.

**Support Structures**

Interviewees touched on some of the structures that are designed to support dance artists in the US. No one structure stood apart as being the key to producing high quality work. Rather, each artist credited a unique combination of support as having influenced their artistic development.

**Presenters**

> One could argue that the questions you ask about dance development and training of artists could be asked of presenters. How do we nurture a next generation of artists, and show we are tuned into the creative process, and sensitive to working with artists?

— A presenter

While most interviewees acknowledged the role that presenters play in the development of an artist’s career, they distinguished the ways in which presenters’ support plays out for artists and the degree to which it may, or may not, enhance artistic quality.

In their comments, artists tended to offer presenters nothing but praise, citing examples of the role that presenters had played at key moments in their careers. Describing this support as “extremely helpful” or “huge,” artists acknowledged presenters’ role as advocates; one senior artist recounted a story of a presenter who generated interest in the work from a circle of
influential people including other presenters and funders. Presenters can provide guidance that, if offered at the right time, can help shape an artist’s work or career. A younger artist described a mentoring relationship while others described how presenters negotiated relationships with collaborators such as musicians. Finally, artists value ongoing relationships with presenters who stay in contact and continually see work. Crucial to these relationships is a sense of trust. Presenters “who have invested in [artists over] a long time period are the great warriors to whom we are all indebted,” said an artist. “Inherent is a trust that you are working on something interesting. … It may not have affected the choreography but it made it possible to continue.” Another long-time artist praised this trust as “magical, something really beautiful and human. … They believe in what I do, we really love each other. It’s not what I put on stage but how I think about what I put on stage, versus the product.”

Artists readily named presenters, producers, and managers who had played supportive roles in their careers, including Laura Faure, Laurie Uprichard, Joan Duddy, Sam Miller, Linda Shelton and Martin Wechsler, and, repeatedly, Philip Bither. Mentioned by name most frequently were DTW and David White, who “for better or worse gave people a lot of information.” White championed artists, and others on staff at DTW followed suit. Also referenced by several were The Joyce Theatre’s Joyce Soho program and Joan Duddy. Just as important for some were managers and producers such as Ann Rosenthal and Performing Arts Services. Other organizations referenced as being positively involved in the creation of work included The Kitchen, Danspace Project, PS122, and BAM, and abroad the Paris Festival and London Dance Umbrella.

Praise aside, the general tone of discussions about presenters raised questions about their inflated control within the current presenting field. When presenters’ commitment to artists wavers, artists are unsure of where they stand. One artist who has “a lot of validation” from some presenters described others who are “afraid to come on board. The product I make is always different and that is my style. I wish that presenters were better versed in choreography … I don’t look to them for depth of expression.” A different artist was disinterested in proscenium work and opted to abandon their company, against the wishes of presenters. Even the presenters themselves warned of curating too safely around “projects that sound sellable,” which can pressure artists to create work to please presenters. An educator agreed on this growing trend to curate too “carefully with no sense of adventure” which does not allow for taking risks on unknown artists who are “in the process of developing themselves.” Yet another complained about presenters’ influence on the format, such as requiring evening-length works or other “false constructs [when] everyone would prefer to see a brilliant 10 minutes.” There was concern that presenters hold too much of the decision-making power; as a senior educator said, “the system, post-NEA fellowships, is that the [funding] pyramid has been turned on its head,” with grant decisions being made by presenters and funders. One summed up the needs in the field for more progressive presenters: “In its time DTW … winnowed quantity to open up long term relationships to artists. That develops the curatorial eye.” Spaces become important because

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24 Referring to what used to be a pyramid of NEA funding for artists, through which 40-50 choreographers were given direct support in set amounts. If and when they established nonprofit status they could apply for organizational grants at higher amounts.
“there are histories and personalities attached to them,” as one interviewee said. “You develop an affinity for people, which is the root of a relationship.”

**Formal Training Programs Outside of Colleges**

Interviewees generally felt positive about the range of formal training programs within the professional field. About half of them mentioned summer residency programs; comments were split between the artists, who mentioned direct and positive experiences, and other interviewees, who spoke of hearing second-hand that these programs were helpful. A few artists, however, raved about summer programs they had attended at an earlier point in their career and found value in attending multiple programs and returning to the same one over time. Summer programs provide: an intensive work environment that buys “uninterrupted time” for young choreographers; a safe place to experiment and where it was “okay to fail”; the opportunity to build relationships with professional artists and with peers; and access to working artists who are addressing the questions at the forefront of the field. Experiences at such programs lead artists to have choreographic breakthroughs, which several described in detail and with enthusiasm. While participating in a summer residency program decades ago, one artist described creating “the first work that I would own.” Connecting a dancer’s spontaneous gesture in rehearsal to an interaction with a hospitalized family member resulted in a “gestural exchange” that grew into a new movement language, and ultimately a finished work that the choreographer considered to be highly original and successful.

A few interviewees also praised other programs, including peer workshops, and composition workshops, as well as year-round programs affiliated with academic institutions. One interviewee described a program at Florida State University that brings dance majors to New York City, connecting them to the professional dance world and showing them “how they fit into that system.” Another mentioned low-residency graduate programs that have helped some artists who want to get degrees.

Programs mentioned most frequently were the American Dance Festival (ADF), Bates Dance Festival, and The Yard. Other programs named once or twice were National Association of Regional Ballet, Maggie Allesee National Center for Choreography (MANCC), Movement Research, DTW’s Fresh Tracks, and Oberlin Dance Collective’s programs. The Carlisle project was briefly mentioned by two who knew of it but who had not studied there.

A few interviewees offered opposing opinions of whether choreographic centers could help develop an artist’s craft and work. Having attended a meeting of international artist residency organizations in Europe, one positively described the long-term residency environments abroad, where in “the first five to six years of [an artist’s] career [they] are going from one residency to the next … until they get good …” and went on to list artists who have gone abroad to access better support there. In contrast, another strongly opposed choreographic centers, believing they fund a “monolithic aesthetic,” and declared, “institutionalization kills art … [it is the] cacophony of aesthetics” that should continue to be supported.
Spaces

If you get one space and know you will have it for five months, it is like having another ventricle put in your heart. — A mid-career artist

While interviewees in general tended to regard space as merely another resource, artists tended to describe having access to space in emotional terms. Artists talked about both rehearsal spaces and performances spaces having a large impact on the work, using descriptors such as “absolutely key,” “fantastic,” “crucial,” “huge,” and “extraordinary.” One spoke of “making sacrifices” to pay for larger rehearsal studios while another felt the creation of a work that “broke new ground” could not have been done without time spent creating in the theater. Another artist raved about having a space residency at MANCC, which came with around-the-clock access to facilities, plus tech and production support.

Though they recognized space could influence the development of work, some of the non-artists differed in their opinions about the degree of its impact on the quality of choreography. A few mentioned how performance spaces relieve the burden of producing while providing opportunities to show work and gain exposure. Another presenter longed for multifunctional spaces that can serve as a “nexus that is not genre-specific [where] dance is happening, colleagues gather, classes are taught, workshops are held, and guest and artists are in residence.” Though these types of spaces are important, they are not the solution; more than one expressed concern that “all the space in the world won’t make brilliance” in choreography.

Dialogue about Choreography and its Quality

Interviewees discussed at some length their conflicting opinions about how the dance field does, or should, talk about choreography and its quality. Areas debated included mentorship programs, dramaturges, and feedback from presenters and others.

Mentorship

While interviewees acknowledged the potential usefulness of mentorship in developing young choreographers’ artistic voices, they stressed that the dynamics of the relationship between the mentor and artist are key to its success. Interviewees pointed to two factors that contributed to success: the individual match between artist and mentor as well as the duration of the mentorship. One artist was challenged to find a more experienced senior artist as a mentor who was not also “struggling to survive.” A few interviewees shunned matches that were based on popularity or advice given in the short term. Another artist equated critique with the very “generous” mentor relationship supported by The Joyce program when self-selecting a mentor but less supportive of programs in which the mentor was assigned. A presenter stressed that mentorship can take many forms as artists advance in their careers.

25 The only exception to this divide seemed to come from those interviewees who have run funding programs, who also praised its value.
Those who had participated in programs through which they were matched with a mentor reported both positive and negative experiences. Several programs were mentioned by name (including CHIME and The Joyce mentorship program), and a few interviewees had participated as mentors or mentees. CHIME was mentioned by almost a quarter and always with positive comments about the span of time granted to young artists to carefully select and cultivate a relationship with a mentor. The care in making the right matches was said by one to be “brilliant” and another referred to CHIME as a model that is “really evolving the field.” In contrast, matches that are imposed by the organization running the program can feel awkward or counterproductive; one interviewee, who has had positive experiences with mentorship in the past, felt that a more recent arrangement was not a good fit.

Many mentioned Bessie Schonberg, Phyllis Lamhut, and others who played a leading role as mentors. More than half of the interviewees appreciated Schonberg for her “visual, intellectual, and … formal tools [that helped] choreographers make choices.” One who knew her well credited her impact on formal training programs outside of academia, including Jacob’s Pillow and the Yard, and in founding The Field and Pineapple. Others alluded to some limitations of her mostly traditional methods, or their own direct experience in her workshops.

The importance of building trust in a mentor relationship was key for many, but interviewees used a broad definition of the word. For some, trust meant a willingness to “be vulnerable,” while for others, it was frankness with mentors “who will really tell [artists] the truth about what they think.” For one artist, it meant gaining confidence from an artistic director who was “willing to give me a lot of responsibility. [I served as] an editing advisor, and outside eye to him; he respected my opinion.” A few stressed that artists and mentors need to work together over time, beginning early on in the process and meeting weekly. As one said, “We need real enduring relationships.” Another added, “I don’t think a mentor makes a smart comment on Monday and then by Wednesday the work changes,” meaning it can take years for a mentor’s feedback to sink in.

Mentorship at its best is not just about receiving feedback about work, but can also include observation of the mentor’s own process or performance. One senior artist expressed that “I mythologize [Steve Paxton and Deborah Hay] who started out with incredible technique and exploded it. … Now they are dancing like gods in their 70s. There are no better prototypes to a path.”

**Other Forms of Constructive Feedback**

_How do we help choreographers seek and welcome feedback and critique? That is not a tradition in the field._

— An artist

 Interviewees were asked to comment on the factor of critique and its role in choreographers’ development. As the comment above implies, critique is rarely given to artists and interviewees strongly endorsed its need. A few artists lamented the recent decline in dance writing, and cited the names of outstanding critics no longer writing in major papers, including Burt Supree, Deborah Jowitt, and Alan M. Kriegsman, among others. One spoke of the value of post-show talks that elicit audience critique, saying, “I love the people who stay for the talk …
and try to engage with them as people.” In contrast, other types of interviewees interpreted the notion of criticism more broadly, as any act that offers feedback to artists on their work.

Interviewees, particularly those who are not artists, acknowledged that critiquing was a “delicate process” and are careful about how they give comments. Yet others felt that giving artists feedback, and having the permission to offer it, would be a welcome change. Interviewees gave examples of when, and how, feedback might be used to give artists constructive information about a work—provided that artists would be open to receiving this feedback, which remains a glaring question. One presenter felt that it was healthy for artistic directors to “get a diagnosis or a second opinion. … to step aside and get perspective.” Another leader who is dedicated to supporting artists wished that artists could take feedback less personally, so that the quality of work could improve: “Criticality is not negative! … The conversation can happen in many ways that we are not utilizing.” Many of the non-artists wished that this feedback could be used constructively to help an artist rework a piece, implying that this step would ultimately improve the quality of choreography. One interviewee credited a choreographer who, after creating a work for a regional ballet company, reworked it based on feedback from the artistic directors of other companies. What is key, however, is that artists would need to “be willing to change the work,” said one. Big questions were raised about if or how artists process the feedback and revisit work; otherwise, the feedback seems wasted.

The effectiveness of critique, commented non-artists, lies in the timing, the person who delivers it, and the method of delivery. One presenter is extremely careful about giving feedback and only did so if the artist asked for it, and never before a premiere. Another felt that artists are nervous about showing their work to others at early stages but that “it is good to get over that and not be too precious about what you have done.” Several felt that artists would be more open to feedback depending on who provided it: “If it’s someone they trust and whose opinion they value.” Several wished that artists would seek feedback from presenters in particular, who are “overlooked as valuable resources [and in some cases] know repertory better than choreographers.” The few interviewees who spoke to Liz Lerman’s Critical Response Process question its effectiveness. One stated that, regardless of the quality of the work being discussed, it “minimizes criticism and maximizes reinforcement,” while another was harsher in response: “It is all about couching everything in this 70s pop psychology, ‘I’m okay you’re okay’ … This idea that you have to negotiate a relationship of comfort. … Work is not made from that soft place.” In contrast, the same interviewee referred to a senior artist, who “feels you have to be brutally candid. … He speaks the truth to artists.” Criticality is an area where college composition classes may provide useful training to students that is, said one, “really important when they go off on their own.” Indeed, another who is active on the college circuit felt that it is actually easier to give and receive feedback while in college. Regardless of the method, the point was that the field would be better served if it could give, accept, and use feedback. As one interviewee said, “This is still an idea whose time has not yet entirely come.”

Dramaturges

About a third of the interviewees (only one of whom was an artist) brought up questions about dramaturges and whether they were effective. Those who had positive comments cited examples of artists who purposefully selected and used a dramaturge to fulfill a specific role
similar to that in theater, in which dramaturges serve as the “advocate for the audience.” Artists who have worked in this manner include Bebe Miller, Ralph Lemon, Bill T. Jones, Reggie Wilson, and Donald Byrd. In contrast, most questioned the role and effectiveness of dramaturges. The definition and role of dramaturge, as it pertains to dance, is unclear and inconsistent. This murkiness was particularly true for programs that have been engineered to assist choreographers in making better work by adding a dramaturge; the match between dramaturge and choreographer may feel “top-down” or forced. One interviewee with particularly strong opinions felt that “it is the choreographer’s job to figure out the narrative line and the narrative ambience. We are adopting [the use of a dramaturge] from theater, where it has a definitive and different role. … It is as if we’ve added in another middle man. If the choreographer does not know what the theme [of the piece] is, they should not be doing the piece. Any time you start making art by committee, you are in trouble.”

**Funding**

*Funding can allow for research or experimentation that could really enhance the work. Having money is crucial. At the same time, you are still going to push forward without it.*

— A senior artist

The conversation on funding was particularly nuanced and passionate. Most of the interviewees brought extensive experience with funding trends and shifts in the dance field over time and voiced strong opinions about how these shifts affected the development of choreographers and their work. They spoke about the effectiveness of funding structures, including: projects, commissions and fellowships; what the presence or absence of funding has done for the field; and what types of funding would help enhance the quality of choreography.

**Funding that is structured in just the right way and comes at the right moment can make a big difference.** One artist spoke of receiving a capacity-building grant that allowed for the hire of an executive director, resulting in being able to spend more time in the studio. A few mentioned the value of tiered support to meet artists’ needs at different points in their careers, and thought that it is the presenters’ job to offer such a range of support.

**Yet the major shift to project-based support has introduced a level of uncertainty that affects the creative process.** This theme was prevalent among many of the interviewees, including artists, presenters, and others. Even non-artists realized that project support can “limit thinking about how an artist wants to make a work.” Having to deliver a piece on a particular timeline or within an imposed structure can truncate the creative process for artists, some of whom create quickly and some of whom operate on a longer trajectory.

**Commissions can be important in the funding mix but bring with them a distinct set of challenges.** Those who spoke most directly to commissions were the younger artists and a few presenters and funders. Receiving a commission can lend a vote of confidence, and the timing of when it is given can be pivotal in the development of an artist’s career. For one artist, a commission from a presenter came at a “terribly important moment that gave me a season and a concentrated residency … [that] really brought my company together.” For another, the idea of
having a “due date” of a performance instills structure that is useful. Even commissions from colleges that allow choreographers to work with students provide opportunities that some artists (both young and established) appreciate. Yet the **downsides of commissions have to do with how this imposed structure affects the work and the pace at which funding can arrive—and later abruptly disappear.** Commissions can encourage artists to focus more on the product and deadline than the process and work. Having co-commissioners can be a benefit and a drawback as it creates, as one long-time presenter and funder said, “This tremendous pressure, when there are so many partners involved, with everyone hanging onto a piece of the success of it. But I don’t know what the alternative is in this economy.”

**Funding is ideal, interviewees felt, when given in a manner that sustains artists’ creative practice.** What support from funding sources—individuals, foundations or commissioners—can make possible, at best, “is a kind of sustainability, the capacity to keep going without too much interruption.” Regardless of the form of funding, noted one senior-level artist, the crucial variable has been the ability to pay dancers, which in turn makes it possible to set a rehearsal schedule that frees dancers from relying on outside jobs. But the nature of how (and how regularly) dancers are paid has changed and has a direct bearing on the quality of work. One artist who has maintained a company for decades used to have dancers on a 44-week contract at a time when “I knew I could get the money.” Compare that to now when “I identify the money first and then get the people,” which means that works cannot stay in repertory, and the focus of creative time shifts to developing new work. Another senior artist strongly agreed, saying that the closest guarantee of a good dance is being able to pay dancers. Some form of sustainable funding would provide, commented several funders and presenters, the luxury of revisiting work.

**The most repeated and passionate theme in the discussion about funding centered on fellowships.** Interviewees saw a strong connection between providing unstructured funding as the best way, in the end, to support and encourage quality. **Fellowships give artists the ineffable boost of confidence that propels their creative process.** One who is in contact with many artists describes how “Artists always talk about the amazing gift of getting a fellowship. It is really about [exploration]—it is money that gives artists the capacity to spend time in the studio and not be worrying about producing.” The larger fellowships, such as MacArthur, one senior artist reflected, can play “a huge role in your psyche and in saying, ‘Keep going, you are on a good path.’ It’s a big deal and it never stops being big.” Another in a university setting supported this notion in differentiating between project support, or “Here’s the money you need to slap this thing up on a stage in a month,” and creative fellowships, or “money given to you as you have a track record and we want you to go work on your art.”

**The most passionate moments in numerous interviews occurred when the speakers recounted the importance of the Choreographers Fellowships at the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA).** One senior artist called them “wonderful … a gift … extraordinary … being able to follow up so you don’t have to produce two pieces [and] maybe you would work on something for three years.” Another who is closely familiar with that program strongly agreed with their value: “There were no strings attached.” An accomplished senior artist recalled their first NEA fellowship which was “small but extraordinarily helpful. Money was one thing but the courage it engendered was more important. If someone believes that you might have some talent, it is pretty wonderful.”
Among interviewees, particularly the artists, there was a sharp sentiment that the quality of work is not necessarily proportional to the amount of resources available alone. Those interviewees of all stripes who were old enough to have experienced the ebbs and flows of funding waves since the 1970s had a different perspective on how complicated this subject is. They recalled earlier times when funding was not available, and when “there would be a commitment to working regardless” because “dancers didn’t leave to get a better salary.” A well-established artist cautioned against using cost of work to assess its quality: “The economy is the new ‘sacred.’ We are so ensconced and attached to what things cost, and the value of work that is so related to whatever it is getting supported financially. It confuses the issue.”

Even an artist earlier in their career supported this idea in a different way: “Inspiration is a huge factor in quality. I am not sure if inspiration happens from a resource. We have to produce, produce, produce, but the inspired moments are few and far between.”

Some interviewees strongly questioned the usefulness of the current funding structures, implying that a simpler alternative would be more effective. One with an intimate knowledge of funding and other areas of the field offered a simple yet bold solution:

*If it were up to me I would get rid of all the programs and just give artists the money. People find their way into mentorship and learning opportunities. All those attempts at engineering have diminished the funding streams that might make a difference.*

In considering the landscape in the dance field, one offered this frank assessment and a question about the focus of some of the funding programs: “The condition of bad work will always be the case. A lot of work will be made and most if it will not be good. Is it the goal [of these programs] to make quality or is it to recognize and reward the quality that is already there?” Particularly at a time of an oversaturated market, the point was to direct funding toward the quality that is present, rather than to “create machinations that might make mediocre work better,” as this interviewee continued. Another adds to this point: “Paying more people to make more dances is not really the answer.” Specific ideas for funding will be presented below.

Interviewees ended with ideas of how developing artists should be supported in order to improve their choreography: if the goal of this study is to support and enhance the artistic quality of choreography in the US, what is currently lacking and what would help?

In the end, these discussions boil down to a few things: financial support in a form that truly supports choreographers, and the development of a sense of community around space. The strong comment below from a dance leader represents many interviewees’ sense of what artists can and must do for themselves.

*I believe in letting artists understand themselves well enough to know where their curiosity lies and what might slap themselves in the face, rather than trying to engineer programs externally … and [later seeing] how that is supposed to resonate.*

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26 It may be assumed that some proportion of young dancers must leave their companies in search of better salaries to repay mounting student loan debt that did not exist in these earlier times.
Interestingly, before offering their suggestions, interviewees tended to first declare the kinds of support that would not help or is not needed. Numerous interviewees reiterated that choreography cannot be taught and that great artists are exceptions to the rules. (Throughout the interviews, almost regardless of what was asked, that theme was repeated.) One national leader concluded that “[no one can] tell you how a great choreographer is going to be made … no one could create a formula out of Paul [Taylor] or Merce [Cunningham] or anyone else.” Another agreed when referencing ballet: “A lot of it is life experience and you have to have a gift. Mediocre talent does not become a great choreographer.” Finally, one said, “You cannot train talent, but you can cultivate it.” The ways that interviewees believe that talent might be cultivated are detailed below.

A Desire for Community

_We are all in such a competitive climate that it is difficult for us to put down our defenses and trust each other. … We are all in a growth process, rather than needing to be better than each other. [As an artist] I feel too isolated and am hungry for connection. Everyone wishes for more community._ — A young artist

Almost all artists as well as several non-artists hoped that, in an ideal world, a better sense of community could be formed to not only encourage the development of work but also the sharing of viewpoints. Together they felt that these elements—a community, financial support for artistic development, and exchange—would ultimately take the work and the dialogue about the work to a higher level. A well-established artist strongly endorsed this point, but acknowledged that it is “really hard to try to create community. A community creates itself.” A senior artist gave a hypothetical example of what might form community: select a “small group of artists who are interested in learning from each other, place them together in a rotation within the same space,” and augment it with meetings and check-ins about the process, all within in an environment where there was “not too much pressure to share with the public.” The value would lie in “getting new tools or new perspectives, or freshening their own ideas against the ideas and thoughts of peers; it is really useful in clarifying your own thinking.” Yet another well-established artist asked for a “network of interested mentors or people to give feedback on work engaged in a focused way … a way to share critique but [also a way] to amplify the discussion.”

Related to this topic of community were other suggestions about providing space. As one artist explained, “artists will do anything to get into a studio;” they will take assignments with any company to “just get a chance to work and reorganize things. It’s that desire to organize, direct, and experiment. You can figure out a way to do it on limited time.” Space can naturally allow for the development of mentorship that is “not age-based, but community-based,” said one interviewee, citing as examples both The Field and Arthur Aviles’s creation of the Bronx Academy of Arts and Dance (BAAD), a “safe space” in the Bronx. Both of these entities “set rules for how work can be shared and judged.” Such programs and spaces bring “a place of hope that you can get work seen, an expectation that you can do it again, which is the real currency for an artist to then settle down to trusting yourself.” Another similarly suggested a performance space that is busy all day with performances, so that artists can view work of all quality levels,
from artists at all stages in their career. Such space would need to be affordable for the artists and “cheap enough for the audiences to come.”

Just a few called for more effective audience engagement. The few who spoke to this area hoped for higher quality methods that “help foster the connection between the artist and audience in ways that have more potency than historically what is the case. A lot of work has been done but I don’t know how much progress [has been made].” Another agreed that a big question is whether the audience understands the artist’s intent.

**Funding: for Time, Consistency, and Daily Practice**

> At the end of the day, artists really need long-term love and support. Every once in a while the field will produce a Merce [Cunningham], or Deborah [Hay], or [Steve] Paxton, or Mark Morris. But that is rare. Not everyone will be that emphatic and brilliant. It is kind of a crapshoot. [The basic needs are] long-term support and you can’t support everyone.  

— A senior artist

Across all the interviewees, including artists, academicians, and presenters, there was a consistent and resounding cry to build a national program of fellowships for choreographers. This was the most passionate part of interviews, nearly across the board. Just a few from the scores of comments convey interviewees’ urgent and emphatic tone:

> I regret deeply the demise of the Choreographers Fellowships at the NEA, as it was how the national perspective was gained and stimulated around quality. There is nothing else like it anywhere. The fact is, those fellowships were the single most disastrous loss. It was truly national. How amazing it would be if something like that, at that scale, could recur!  

— An educator

> It would be enormously helpful if fellowships would return. Because a fellowship is not tied to a project, it is an encouragement to go deeper, to get beyond something you already know. Projects happen, and that support is great. But when you are scratching your head and don’t know which way to go, trying out things that are iffy and tricky, it’s the way. Then you put it in public when you are ready. … Fellowships are there for research.  

— A senior artist

> [A fellowship program would] automatically start the feeder system. That was the smartest system in the whole world. Pool the money and go back to this. [The funding program] US Artists has not met that need [though] all of [the other programs are] done with the best of intentions.  

— A writer

> NEA Fellowships validated everything.  

— A senior artist

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27 Fall for Dance, a dance festival in New York that is committed to “[making] dance more accessible to everyone,” was cited by an interviewee as a model program because it enables audiences to see five dance companies at once. More info can be found at:  
The consistent call for national fellowships, at its core, was about establishing a workable system on a national level for identifying, reviewing, and supporting artists and their work, for the benefit of the field at large. As one explained, “It is not that we don’t have the artists [of quality]. We can’t find the artists. There is no system in place [to find them].” Other interviewees were intimately familiar with the former NEA system. One of them, who had a particularly broad national perspective referenced past research on NEA fellowships that provides crucial direction for what the dance field needs now:

[Through this research] the NEA found that quality existed, and the best thing they could do is invest in it. … [In contrast, what this study] seems to be talking about is not investing in quality but stimulating it. A better way would be to invest in existing and emerging quality rather than trying to stimulate it. Trying to stimulate it will not necessarily do so … whereas when you already see it shimmering somewhere, then [support it].

Yet another declared, “Don’t set up artificial situations. Give the artist the money, go away, and let them work.” Several pointed to the link between funds and studios, with one asserting, “You need creative fellowships, engaging in critical dialogue with peers and mentors, but also the spaces. That is what artists need—the time to experiment without having to crank something out at the other end.”

Related to this discussion of fellowships, interviewees repeatedly emphasized the value of providing artists “time.” When artists spoke of being given time, they said they would do things such as take a writing course, invest in a home studio, or finance a consistent place to rehearse and work. Others referred to time as a means to an end, or as a way to continue programs such as CHIME that provide this consistency. Time could mean many other things, however, such as giving companies multiple weeks in a theater, or studio space to work out the “building blocks” and experiment with a new piece, said one administrator. Regardless of what artists choose, “It is such a gift to pay for people’s time.”

**Preliminary Suggestions for Programs**

A few suggestions were offered for programs that are not based on creative time. Note that each one was suggested by only one person. One interviewee with extensive connections to artists wondered if a few carefully selected artists might be supported for multiple years with “a package of resources” that might include cash and space, a mentor or dramaturge, and a presentation possibility, after which presenters could gather to see the work over a social situation. “But the work needs to be strong—that criterion is make or break.” Such a program would be delicate for The Joyce (and other presenters), due to “their physical space, and perceptions of the types of companies who are [seen] there.”

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28 In its 2008-09 season, and in honor of its 25th anniversary, The Joyce awarded 25 dance companies $25,000 each in commissioning grants to help fund the creation of new work. The program, called 25 Companies, 25 New Works, also provided space and performance opportunities.
A different interviewee brainstormed about an international residency over several months, hoping that it would spur creativity; artists would “explore someplace … the cross pollination is where people tend to do their most waking up … where they are forced to see work in a different way.” Examples were cited of artists who had pursued such a path: “It was about stimulation and seeing something else, pulling [them] out of [their] own context, … These things do reverberate for a long time.” Colleges might offer empty spaces to artists over the summer months, as a form of creative fellowship. An expansion of the Jacob’s Pillow’s choreography lab might give artists access to studio space, archives, guest lecturers, and critique sessions; they could be immersed in making work, but also learning editorial skills, with access to resources and experts who could provide feedback. An emphatic point was made that any such system or program developed be set up with artists as advisors. Another summed up simply: “Buy-time residencies, with no pressure for product! The through-line is direct: time, space, and money.”
Models from Europe for Training and Support

In order to place the US support system in better context, the study takes a limited look at how artists are supported elsewhere. This section begins with a comparative review of choreographic centers in France, a country that is well known for its support of artists. It moves to an overview of Performing Arts Research and Training Studios, or PARTS, in Belgium, one model for choreographic training that is respected and working well. It ends with a summary of Netherlands Dance Theater, a structure housed within companies elsewhere in Europe, both of which have a strong track record of developing high-quality choreographers.

Centre National de Danse Contemporaine Structure in France: A Comparison

This overview is based on site visits and interviews with five of the Centres Chorégraphiques Nationaux (National Choreographic Centers, or CCNs). The first three were visited in person, and the last two were discussed face-to-face or in telephone interviews. Additional interviews with those familiar with the structure and function of CCNs in France provided introductions and context. The responses here are based on the opinions of those interviewed and do not present a comprehensive overview of all of the CCNs. They do provide, however, an illustrative context for the differences and commonalities within this substantial structure of support for artists. The exact names of the centers appear below, along with their cities. Because the acronyms are so similar, each CCN will instead be referred to by the name of their city within this report.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Acronym</th>
<th>Formal Name</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>In this Report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CNDC</td>
<td>Centre National de Danse Contemporaine</td>
<td>Angers</td>
<td>CCN-Angers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNDNBN</td>
<td>Centre Chorégraphique National de Caen Basse-Normandie</td>
<td>Caen</td>
<td>CCN-Caen</td>
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<tr>
<td>CND</td>
<td>Centre National de la Danse</td>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>CCN-Paris</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCNFCB</td>
<td>Centre Chorégraphique National de Franche-Comté in Belfort</td>
<td>Belfort</td>
<td>CCN-Belfort</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ballet Preljocaj</td>
<td>Ballet Preljocaj - Centre Chorégraphique National (Pavillon Noir)</td>
<td>Aix-in-Provence</td>
<td>CCN-Preljocaj</td>
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Background and Mission

The CCNs were founded in the 1980s by François Mitterrand’s cultural staff and specifically Minister of Culture Jack Lang. In 1984, the government wished to mitigate the differences between artistic practices in the fields of dance and music, and encourage decentralization of dance throughout the country. Centers were set up around the country, with an artist appointed to head each one. The three missions at the time of their founding were creation (of work), diffusion (or touring), and sensibilization (or outreach). The mission expanded in 1998 to include the notion of accueil studio (welcome studio), whereby the CCNs are

29 The staffs of CCNs were generous with their time, providing interviews, tours of the spaces, observation of activities, publications, and follow-up time afterward. Most site visits lasted about four hours. In preparation for the site visits and interviews, web materials were viewed. Finally, some of the CCNs provided additional written materials during the visits. Photos of the facilities in Europe that were visited can be found at the end of this section.

30 From publications of the Centre National de Danse Contemporaine, and other sources.
responsible for hosting companies in their studios as a way of supporting their projects and production. To fulfill this goal, the Centers provide residencies and expose audiences to dance in the mostly small towns in which they are located. The CCN mission was expanded, in part, to respond to the needs of a younger generation of dancers who were performing with the original artistic directors of the CCNs and needed a place in which to begin creating their own work. Finally, a few of the CCNs have added école supérieure (pedagogy) to their list of offerings. It is important to note that the ways in which the CCNs fulfill these areas of the mission vary considerably.

Though two CCNs focus on neoclassic dance and two on hip-hop, most of the CCNS are based in contemporary dance, and have raised its visibility in France. The government has intentionally chosen different types of artistic directors, not just those who are well known. Angelin Preljocaj and Maguy Marin (a past director) are internationally renowned and probably the best known. In the case of Preljocaj, the company began in 1984, became a CCN in 1989, and moved to a large building that was designed for them in 2006. (Interestingly the founding artistic director of the CCN in Angers were Americans: Alwin Nikolais, followed by Viola Farber.) Over the years, 21 centers have been founded and currently there are 19. Of them, 18 belong to l’Association des Centres Chorégraphique Nationaux (Association of National Choreographic Centers, or ACCN), a small organization that provides some coordination and communication among the CCNs.

**Function and Degree of Contrast**

The Centers differ from one another in a range of ways that were apparent during the site visits. It is important to note that the CCNs are only one component, albeit a large one, in a fairly comprehensive system of support for artists in France—a system that, it must be stressed, is markedly different from that in the US. To give context, one might think of the three centers in Angers, Caen, and Belfort as a hybrid of a US presenting organization and a dance company. Two leaders seem to have equal footing: the deputy or administrative director and the artistic director. These CCNs resemble presenting organizations because the administrator manages and helps curate the whole space, oversees the budget, and seems to serve as the key liaison with the government regarding funding. The CCNs are similar to dance companies, however, in that they support an artistic director’s choreography, touring, and management. In Caen, the programs seem to be divided between support for the artistic team and some limited public programs. Its space could be compared to a mid-sized company. Ballet Preljocaj supports the work of choreographer Angelin Preljocaj. The structure, and to some degree function, of CCN-Paris was quite different; offers public classes, free rehearsal space, and daily professional technique class as well as educational resources such as a library and counseling center for young artists to learn about health and employment. Staff spoke of participation in Numeridanse.tv, an online video library, and traveling exhibitions about dance history.

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31 A full list of the CCNs, with budgets, staff size, and cities, can be found in Appendix G.
32 A percentage of the budget from 18 of the 19 CCNs supports one paid position at ACCN in Paris, which it primarily runs meetings and oversees communication. Several of the staff at CCN-Caen serve as its officers.
Choreographic Support: The Residency Structure

As of 1998, a cornerstone of all of the CCNs, in line with their expanded mission, is to support both emerging and established artists through residencies through a tiered system, with increasing amounts of support for artists and their work. In the interviews, all CCNs seemed to value this structure and described the specific tiers as: a) research alone, which includes space but no fee; b) research plus tech support, including a modest fee; or c) tech plus a premiere of a finished work, when artists are supported financially at greater levels, presumably for tech and production. Space and housing are provided typically for several weeks. CCNs can select any artist for these residencies, though they may be encouraged by the government to support French artists. The selection process is covered below. Some interviewees felt strongly that the small-town setting of the CCNs lends an advantage in offering these residencies, as it removes artist from the distractions of the larger city and the pressure of the work being seen before it is complete.

The number of residencies offered depends on the capacity of the space, including number of studios, access to housing, and the budget provided by the government for this purpose. For example, in addition to its other offerings, CCN-Angers, with its numerous spaces, usually hosts 10-15 companies throughout the year but could accommodate up to 20, whereas Paris opts to have one three-year residency for a single artist, plus 8-10 other short-term ones. Most of the CCNs researched take advantage of support offered by the French U.S. Exchange in Dance (FUSED) to support residencies. Residency budgets vary according to the resources provided for them by the state and regional government. This raises the question of how artists are paid to be in residence, which radically differs from the US. Because of France’s system of intermittent pay (see below), an artist may be able to receive a residency fee as well as some wages by the government, depending on the time period of the residency.

Selection of and Relationship to Artists

All spoke of artist selection processes that seemed similar to that of US presenters. The CCN leaders see work as much as possible and ask peers for their opinions about artists. Some CCNs were forthcoming about their efforts to establish strong relationships with artists through multiple residencies over an extended time period. Most CCNs begin with offering artists a research residency and then provide more support as they get to know the artists. CCN heads compare notes and can influence each other to support artists and upcoming projects. Artist selection is made jointly by the Artistic Director and, depending on the CCN, others on staff. Selection for residencies involves a review of far more applications than can be supported. The staff of CCN-Angers described a systematic process, whereby a committee of five staff, over two days, begins with 80-100 applications from artists and selects the number that they can support. All expressed concern about two things: the steadily increasing number of requests for residencies coupled with a decreasing budget. Most seem to be able to fund about 10-20% of the requests.

33 “Research” is the term commonly used in Europe to refer to the creative process that leads to the development of a choreographed work. Tech support refers to technical resources in the theater.
Physical Space

Though the CCN facilities differ dramatically, they share the following elements, in varying amounts:

- **Studios:** CCN-Caen has one studio and a black box theater, which doubles as a studio, whereas CCN-Angers has eight studios, and CCN-Paris has 11 studios.
- **Black box and other theaters:** CCN-Caen has one black box theater that seats 180. CCN-Paris has a black box theater seating 140. Notably, CCN-Angers has two black boxes that seat about 200, plus a larger theater for 400, with flexible seating. Its studios match the dimensions of all three of these black box spaces, which aid artists in rehearsing and spacing work. In addition, CCN-Angers has a full state-of-the-art theater, with orchestra pit and thrust, that can seat up to 1,000.
- **Café or restaurant:** All include a seated dining space. CCN-Angers has a particularly nice rooftop restaurant (see photo).
- **Apartments:** CCN-Caen and CCN-Belfort have two each, and CCN-Angers has four.
- **Multidisciplinary Facilities:** CCN-Angers shares its facility with two other disciplines, drama and circus, and CCN-Caen is shares its space with drama. CCN-Paris is dance only, but as described above, the range of services it provides at the present time is quite different from the other CCNs.
- **Classrooms:** Both CCN-Angers and CCN-Paris offer education and have classrooms and student lounge areas.
- **Additional space and other attributes:** Both CCN-Angers and CCN-Paris take up nearly a full city block and Preljocaj’s building appears quite large and new. CCN-Paris is located in a busy suburb, has three floors (above the lobby level), and is in the midst of building two additional floors. CCN-Belfort and CCN-Caen are smaller. CCN-Angers overlooks a river, the old city, and a castle, and its rooftop restaurant offers a scenic view of the castle.

Budget and Staff Size

The 2010 budgets for the 19 CCNs ranged from €1-7.3 million (note that CCN-Paris is excluded from the official list). The majority of the budgets for all CCNs come from four government sources: the country, region, state, and city, plus around 20% income from touring or classes and possibly local businesses. A look at the total budgets in Euros show the range in size: CCN-Caen is the smallest of those reviewed, at €1.4 million, CCN-Angers is €2.2 million, (remembering that the building is shared with two other disciplines), and Paris is €10 million, but that includes a program in Lyon. Residency budgets also vary and come from the state, region, or other funders such as FUSED. They can range from €45,000 to much more. Residency budgets can be divided among artists as the CCN desires.

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34 Based on the website and a description of it during the interview.
35 At the time of the visit the exchange rate was about $1.35 to €1.
Regarding staff size, all 19 CCNs range from 10 to 58 permanent positions (including artistic staff) or 12-80 total staff if temporary and contract positions are included. The largest considered in this study is in Paris, with 100 positions (including the Lyon staff) and smallest is CCN-Caen at 10 positions. The center in Angers has 17 full-time staff plus adjuncts.

**Government Funding**

**Decisions about funding, and key hires seem to be influenced by the government.** Governmental representatives sit on the organizations’ boards, attend meetings, and examine budgets, plans, and other aspects of management. In recent years, the regions have had increased funds and power within the CCNs; they appear to cover much of the residency support, which varies according to the arts budget of the region in which the CCN is located. Regardless, overall funding for the arts is dropping in France, and with the upcoming election at the time of this writing, there was a degree of uncertainty about its future.

**In order to understand the support structure for artists, it is crucial to understand France’s system of intermittent pay,** or government unemployment system that is “unique,” as one interviewee said\(^{36}\) or “complicated,” as another said. All involved in the CCNs are on wages as either permanent employees or as hired artists. All pay a percentage of their wages to support, in essence, this government unemployment service. When artists or arts administrators do not make a living from their art, the state pays artists so they have time to engage in choreographic research in whatever ways the artists see fit. Recipients of intermittent pay must meet certain requirements. Artists must work 510 hours within their profession (which works out to about quarter-time), or get paid for 56 contracts (of any length). If these requirements are maintained, the artist can get paid for up to 10 months per year, while not working (at a rate of 50-60% of their wages, it seems). The intermittent pay scale for workers in arts and culture (called intermittent du spectacle) varies according to the type of work performed, with media and television at the highest level, and dance lower on the scale.

The intermittent pay system has been questioned and a particular focus of the debate is the support for artists. Several factors exacerbate the situation. The public does not fully grasp that workers in media are paid at much higher levels than in dance (along with theater, music, and circus) and dance companies may get this support regardless of their quality level. The CCNs are aware of the value of the intermittent system for artists. Without it, the CCNs’ ability to support artists would be severely compromised, as costs would become prohibitive. Interviewees were aware that France is unlike the US, where “artists have to do so much [to survive].”

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\(^{36}\) This description of the intermittent du spectacle pay system is by no means all-inclusive. The specifics here, though, should be accurate and shed light on the important point—the ways in which it undergirds support for artists in the country.

\(^{37}\) This word was used by several interviewees throughout the discussion of this topic.
Education Programs

Notably, there are few dance majors within French colleges and universities. Students may get degrees in programs called Art Culture or Art Knowledge. The University of Paris houses the only university dance department in France and focuses on theory. Moreover, there seems to be no tradition of offering dance degrees with concentrations in choreography in France. Select educational opportunities exist within only a few of the CCNs; among the group researched, they exist in Angers and Paris.

CCN-Angers is the only one of the five that offers formal training in “research,” which is their term for the creative process used to develop choreography. They accept a total of 25 students per year for study as either “choreographic artists” (their term for dancers) aged 18-24 or “authors” (their term for choreographers) who are typically aged 24-30. Notably, this program can accept fine arts students, as they “understand the body,” according to one interviewee. Their dancers’ program is called Formation Artiste Chorégraphique (Formation of Choreographic Artists, or FAC). Additionally, CCN-Angers recently started Rencontres Internationales d'Écoles de Danse, or the Schools program, which brings dance students from 12 to 15 colleges in Europe to the Centre National de Danse Contemporaine (National Center for Contemporary Dance, or CNDC); one session also included Bennington College. In this exchange program, dance students present a dance that is representative of their own school or dance traditions and the groups view and comment on each other. There seemed to be great pride in this program.

CCN-Paris offers pedagogy diplomas to dance teachers and also has a relationship with the CCN in Lyon, in pedagogy. It is rare in France for dancers to be dance teachers, and a diploma is required in order to teach. CCN-Paris also offers weeklong workshops in choreography.

Choreographic Training

The good thing is that we do not have any objective way to become a choreographer. The bad thing is that everyone is inventing themselves as a choreographer.

— A CCN head

As implied by the comment, there was a general sense among the leaders of the CCNs that choreographers are not trained, per se. You can, as one CCN leader said, “open the window” for them by encouraging them to see other art forms. Staff at Angers agreed: “Even here we don’t teach you to choreograph; we just give you the tools. We do not say we create choreographers.” The “tools” provided are a structured framework of time with guest artists over three or four semesters, which begins with an artist in residence and other guest artists; a second semester within the school of fine arts; and a third “mobility” semester when the students travel elsewhere in Europe. Students complete essais, or tests, at each level, which are apparently like choreography projects or concerts. The focus, however, is on artistic exchange, not set curriculum. Learning content varies widely, depending on the guest artists that students happen to encounter during their study. Staff believe this approach parallels the real world, in that artists will be creating based on their inspiration and exposure to art and ideas.
Interactions with Audiences

From the beginning, part of the mission of the CCNs was to support the artistic vision of the artist running it. Feedback provided to artists (presumably both the artistic directors and the artists in residence) is more extensive and regular, coming from both audiences and the CCN leaders. Because most CCNs are located in small towns, there is a level of familiarity between the audience and the artists that is conducive to discussion and feedback about work. A hallmark is that their audiences are accustomed to seeing works in progress. Audiences offer opinions and comment honestly, such as when they do not understand a work. CCN programs range in the numbers of audiences who participate and give feedback, formats used, and the degree of success. A few examples illustrate programs and differences.

Connections between the audience and the community are crucial to CCN-Preljocaj. Located in a small town, the dancers are employed full time and can dedicate themselves to the company’s vision, free from the distractions of life in a large city. A new building on the campus allows for pedestrians to watch the company work. The building houses a theater where the company holds monthly open rehearsals, which draw a growing and loyal audience of local residents. This contact with audiences is valued highly. After observing the company work for one hour to perfect 15 seconds of choreography, the audience has a better understanding of what goes into creating a dance. This level of rapport with the audience is valued by the company and aids the creation process. CCN-Angers has a unique program, whereby the day after major performances, as many as 200 gather for up to three hours to discuss the art and see film either of the artists’ work or that inspired the artist. Even at the CCN-Caen, 50-80 people attend post-performance talks or work-in-progress showings.

Artistic Quality and Feedback

All staff at the CCNs provide feedback directly to artists. Several among the CCN leadership felt that giving feedback is crucial for artists who get repeat support. The timing, amount, or format of feedback may vary, according to what the artist prefers. Other CCN administrators might only give feedback if asked, though some routinely attend rehearsals.

Performing Arts Research and Training Studios (PARTS)

PARTS is included in this study due to its renown as a center for choreographic training. After a review of PARTS’ extensive website, a site visit was conducted and the book PARTS: Ten Years of Contemporary Dance Education, published by PARTS, was reviewed. The text below is excerpted from the PARTS website.38

Performing Arts Research and Training Studios (PARTS) was launched in September 1995 as a joint initiative of the dance company Rosas and the Belgian National Opera De Munt / La Monnaie. Its director is the choreographer Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, who designed the

38 Refer to www.parts.be and specific pages on Presentation, Curriculum, and DEPARTS.
artistic and pedagogical curriculum. PARTS offers training to dancers and choreographers and helps them develop into independent and creative artists. PARTS works towards the actual performance, “the moment when the artist engages in a dialogue with the audience – the dancer as a … thinking performer.” Over four years, students’ technical knowledge is built up constantly and consistently. Students are given enough time to learn by themselves, to discover their own body and its movement potential. PARTS shares its facilities with Rosas and the contemporary music ensemble Ictus. Facilities include 10 bright, spacious, professionally outfitted dance studios, five of which are dedicated to the school. Student performances take place in the Rosas Performance Space, seating up to 400.

Curriculum

PARTS bases much of its curriculum on De Keersmaeker’s and other choreographers’ extensive artistic practice, but is also a “laboratory for the future.” As PARTS says, “art is not something you can learn - but we certainly hope that the material offered confronts and provokes, that it stimulates students to form their own opinions, that it proves to be a productive basis for their future artistic practice.” The approximately 50 artists and lecturers who teach at the school come from Belgium, other European countries, and the United States.

Curriculum is divided in two cycles of two years: the basic Training cycle and the advanced Research cycle. Although many courses are offered in both cycles, and similar principles apply, their philosophies differ substantially. In Training, students gain an insight into the technical foundation of contemporary dance and are introduced to the PARTS approach, characterized by body awareness, theatre and musical training, and theoretical reflection. In Research, students gain more in-depth knowledge and apply it to their personal creative work. The final goal is to attain a point where technical mastery and a remarkable personality (for dancers) or a personal movement language (for choreographers) come together. This cycle is open and experimental; students can construct a large part of their study track by themselves. There are no specific pre-defined pathways for either dancers or choreographers.

An essential aspect of the PARTS Training cycle is the daily combination of classical dance and contemporary techniques. Ballet is a cornerstone of its approach, for its “architecture and consistency” as well as its “building blocks that remain important for contemporary dance.” Contemporary dance technique is generally based on release techniques. Another cornerstone is Central-European dance, with its own roots and its specific expressive and lyrical characteristics. Finally, contact improvisation helps dancers partner and work with groups. PARTS also requires its students to practice the repertory of a small group of artists, which exposes them to “first-rate dance vocabulary, helps them gain better insight into composition methods and provides them with the physical experience of interpretation.” Students learn productions that may include: Rosas’ Rosas danst Rosas (1983), Drumming (1998), and Rain (2001), among others; Trisha Brown’s Set and Reset (1983); and works by William Forsythe. In the Research cycle, guest choreographers complete an intensive creative process with the students, with or without the intention to create a piece.

Believing that dance is not an isolated art form, PARTS provides constant interaction with music and theatre, which figure prominently in the curriculum, as well as theory. Music
analysis lessons study different aspects and styles, to enable students to read and analyze a basic score. Dance composition workshops link these lessons to the students’ personal work. Study also includes lessons in rhythm and group singing. In the Research cycle, the relation with music is developed through specific creative projects such as the danceXmusic creations in collaboration with musicians from the orchestra of De Munt / La Monnaie. Theatre is taught through intensive five-week workshops, which help dancers discover and develop their abilities as performers. Theory courses cover two areas: the history of dance and theatre and the philosophical, sociological, and artistic foundations of the contemporary performing arts. General theory courses focus on sociology, philosophy, and political theory. Through extensive reading, the writing of essays, and excursions, theoretical information is put in a tangible and interpretable framework.

**The students’ personal work is the leitmotiv in all the workshops.** In the Research cycle, students also develop their own physical practice, discovering methods of generating and structuring movement material. Included are a variety of approaches to improvisation and composition such as that of William Forsythe, David Zambrano, and others. Students are continuously expected to provide a personal translation of the material they receive and to develop their own projects. At each level of the training course, several types of presentations of the students’ work are provided. Through the program DEPARTS, students have opportunities to share their work in other European cities.39

As for the application process, in a recent round, 180 candidates attended a final audition for the Training cycle, having come from 31 pre-selections held in Belgium, Europe and beyond. The six-day, intensive final audition included ballet and contemporary dance, improvisation, theatre, and Rosas repertory. Candidates also showed and created solo work and wrote an essay. From that, 53 were selected and include a nearly even mix of men and women from 32 different countries, with an average age of 20 years.

**Netherlands Dance Theater**

Netherlands Dance Theater (NDT) is an internationally renowned company that has commissioned and fostered relationships with numerous choreographers. This portion of the research looks at how, within its institutional structure, NDT has supported artists at various stages in their development and how it views its role as a nurturer of new talent. This description comes largely from an interview with managing director Robert Van Leer, plus a review of Internet sources.

NDT, a contemporary dance company based in The Hague, works with choreographers and a company of 46 dancers from 24 countries. Some of these artists are in the latter stage of their

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39 As of late 2014, PARTS engages in a new long-term collaboration project with 12 partners, supported by the European Commission called DEPARTURES AND ARRIVALS (DNA). An outgrowth of the earlier Departs project, DNA aims to contribute to the development of contemporary dance in Europe, building bridges between artistic education and the professional world. DNA offers training, research, creation, and presentation opportunities to a large group of young European dancers and choreographers. DNA is offered in conjunction with 12 European partners located in Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, the Netherlands, Portugal, Serbia, and Sweden.
careers, having stayed with NDT for as long as 20 years. The artists’ heavily international focus and wide age range inform how they approach choreography as well as the array of services they provide to support art making.

**NDT is intent on using its capacity, including facilities and 8-10 annual commissions, to support choreographers.** Having consistently heard from artists how hard it is to get started professionally, NDT has tried to establish a more structured process to help them on their way. NDT offers two programs for choreographers. The first, *Up & Coming*, is for choreographers with limited experience, meaning those who have created only one or two works. The second, *Switch*, is for dancers who may never have choreographed. Van Leer stated that while “you get some jewels in the rough,” this program has fostered success for emerging artists. The next challenge NDT hopes to address is the needs of mid-career artists, especially those who wish to work with larger groups of 16-30 dancers, or to move from shared or small houses to larger ones. NDT envisions possibly using its second company as a resource or referring these artists to spaces in other countries.

NDT is considering offering an MFA, but there are divergent opinions about this among the NDT staff and dancers, and educators. The choreographers with whom NDT works tend to be dancers who are self-trained and find their own way into choreography, and who have not had academic training in choreography, per se. Van Leer is concerned about those who spend a lifetime training as dancers, only to find late in life that they have a propensity and drive to become choreographers. He wonders “if there is an intervention that would have helped you discover that quicker.”

**The focus of much of the interview was NDT’s growing relationship with Korzo,** which it views as a way to support several generations of up-and-coming choreographers. A smaller company/studio in The Hague, Korzo has relationships with younger artists and smaller companies that come from, in addition to NDT, as far away as Africa and Asia. The building has four studios, two performance spaces, and focuses on talent development. Artists at Korzo can receive modest funds to make a series of works throughout the year, though they would need more money to live. In some ways, NDT, in working with Korzo, is attempting to compensate for lack of intermediate-level presenters, which are missing from the Dutch system of support. The hope is to create more fluidity so artists can move through a range of possibilities of commission and scale, rather than to graduate automatically to a larger space, which can be important but can be a trap. Van Leer credits NDT’s success to its proximity with Korzo, and the Festival, and to being a half-hour from Amsterdam.

**Although there is competition for government funds, NDT is well-supported.** It receives 50% from federal funds and 15% from city coffers, which brings a different set of complexities, politics, and challenges. It was noted, however, that the funding climate is now changing radically and that there is competition to find ways to support rising talent.

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40 Korzo productions, in The Hague, is one of the largest Dutch houses for modern dance and serves young and leading choreographers in the Dutch dance scene. Korzo produces the biennial CaDance festival for modern dance. Korzo productions go on tour, to theaters in the Netherlands and abroad.
When asked about the factors that might improve choreography, Van Leer felt there was no formula, that artists have different needs. He firmly believes that many things can improve choreography, including, for example, spirituality, and the connection between West and East worlds. Quoting choreographer Hofesh Shechter, he says, “The creative process is not just about steps, but about the visual and aural world. We don’t want to just make steps on a black floor.” NDT has invested in training artists in other areas, to “get them to think and engage in a broader world,” including visual art and voice. On the topic of mentors, NDT has not landed on a singular arrangement, feeling that mentorship, too, depends on the artist being served: “Some artists are singular and inward-looking, and mentors don’t add much. Others are hugely expanded [by] vigor by mentors. It’s very personal.” His answer about giving feedback to artists was similar: that there were no formal ways to do so, and that it remains personal and informal.

In terms of what makes work better, it is “clarity of vision.” Van Leer felt that factors such as the company, venue, artists, leaders, and funders can make a profound difference. He was concerned that discussions about vision not be subsumed by consultants and governmental bodies, where there may be undue focus on mission statement. He adds two ingredients that help make work better: “One is bravery—to avoid being sucked into fashions or trends or what is popular or not, or what is important or not. And two is not to become too formalized, but instead to do things on a small scale, and incorporate that some may come to choreography at an age that is younger than we think.”
Caen - Centre Chorégraphique National de Caen Basse-Normandie

The façade of the center in Caen

The older studio, one of two

Angers - Centre National de Danse Contemporaine

The façade of the center in Angers

The lobby, which spans several floors

The student resource area in Angers

The restaurant on the roof, overlooking the old town

Paris - Centre National de la Danse
The façade of the building from behind

The front entrance

The front lobby, with the library in the background

The theater with 140 seats

Students warming up in a studio

The library
Brussels - Performing Arts Research & Training Studios (PARTS)

The façade of the building (a former factory)

Another studio with set designs or floor patterns taped out

Student lounge

The theater in Rosas’ building on the back of PARTS, tech-ing for a premiere of another company

One of the studios
Depictions of the Smaller Towns of Angers and Caen

The street where the CCN-Caen is located

The old city, across the street from CCN-Caen

The center of town in Caen

CCN-in Angers overlooks Chateau d'Angers, a castle that is just steps away, across the river. The small dots to the left of center are pedestrians.

The view from the front of CCN-Angers
Assimilation and Recommendations

Introduction

This study has examined and gathered a wide range of information, including data on 132 colleges, 37 written sources, 43 interviews/consultations, four site visits, and ancillary information. The individuals consulted work both in the US and abroad, both in the academy and the professional world. All of these people and resources are dedicated to assisting artists in making work of high quality. While there are no immediate or clear answers, some recommendations can be made. Perhaps the tendency of US interviewees to begin their discussion of solutions by declaring the kinds of support that would not help can instruct the field in what to avoid. Numerous interviewees asserted that great artists are exceptions to most of the standard rules about the training and cultivation of talent. In the end, the discussion boils down to a few things: direct funding to choreographers in ways that support them across the arc of their careers; strengthening the sense of community for artists and supporters of their work; rigorous dialogue about the work and its quality; and perhaps a few limited programs that would support these areas. To that, the consultant adds several suggestions.

Recommendations

1. **A system of unencumbered financial support should be provided for choreographers in the US.** This was the strongest and most consistent recommendation in the entire study—and thought to be the most instrumental strategy to increase the quality of choreography.

Background and Assimilation

Among the US interviewees who brought extensive experience with funding trends and shifts, opinions were particularly strong about the topic of how to support artists in developing work. They spoke about the effectiveness of funding structures, including projects, commissions, and fellowships; what the presence or absence of funding has done for the field; and what types of funding would help enhance the quality of choreography. The major shift to project support has introduced a level of uncertainty that can hinder the creative process; the need for artists to complete a “deliverable” within a time period can limit the ways in which they think about making work. Interviewees brought up artists’ constant need to create work, which is in conflict with the nature of most funding programs and structures. Additionally, questions were raised about the effectiveness of designing funding programs that would in turn improve quality—that somehow constructs could be engineered to make work better.

**Interviewees saw unstructured funding as the best way, in the end, to support and encourage quality.** Funding is ideal, interviewees felt, when given in a manner that sustains artists’ creative practice. Paradoxically, it may be the relative freedom, lack of accountability, and lack of deliverables that propels artists in their development, and thus supports quality. In line with this strong opinion and across the interviewees of all types there was a resounding cry
for a national system of fellowships for choreographers. This was the most repeated and passionate theme in the entire study.

While the entire support system from Europe could never be replicated in the US, its structure should be noted for comparison. The CCN model in France is one, albeit large, component in a national arts funding system that is extremely different from that of the US. The CCNs de facto give unencumbered support to artists. Government funding is provided through major support for the CCNs, which serve as spaces for both rehearsal and performance. The strong underpinning of government support through intermittent pay for artists provides, in essence, buy-time funds; artists are allowed, between contracts, to conduct research and explore their artistic pursuits.41 The tiered residencies through the CCNs provide unencumbered space; two of the three tiers do not lead to a performance, but all involve showings and feedback from the public and/or staff.

Additional information about the NEA Choreographers Fellowships program, to which interviewees referred, will reveal the value of this model of support. The benefits of that national system addressed five of the main issues that emerged within this study, and might be used as a basis for consideration.

• Fellowships provided direct yet unencumbered support for artists for creating work. Grant recipients typically used fellowships to pay dancers, themselves, and/or production costs, and/or to pay themselves, relieving them, at least for a time, from their day jobs so they could focus on choreography. Whether creating work or supporting performances or tours, the net result was somewhat the same—no deliverable was due and the artists could use the support as they needed. This parallels the concern and recommendation within this study, to avoid creating complicated funding programs in an attempt to engineer quality.

• Fellowships provided the vital yet ineffable benefit of confidence. Artists within this study spoke in strong terms about how peer endorsement bolstered their confidence in creating work. Such encouragement motivated these artists to take greater artistic risks.

• Perhaps just as important, the Fellowship system provided an intensive and national feedback loop about choreographers, new work, and quality. Each year, peer panels of about 12 people would review 400-500 applications on the basis of the criterion of artistic quality, through a process that was informed by scores of site visitors from around the country. As they reviewed work samples, site visits, and applications, these panels, (which were comprised of artists, presenters, writers, and administrators), learned about the national scope of choreography and artists. Their deliberations included debates about dance forms and trends in dance making. Having had this crash course on choreography, new work, artists, and dance forms, they then returned to their communities, talked about and sometimes presented the artists they had discussed, and influenced others to do so.

• Artists had the opportunity to receive feedback, and about half of them opted to hear it. Artists would receive a composite of comments from the site visit(s), panel remarks that were based upon seeing their work live within a three-year period, and/or videos, as well

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41 At the time of this report, this system of intermittent pay was under threat. More information can be found in this article by the Guardian: http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jul/30/review-threatens-french-creatives-benefits.
as the application itself. That practice of giving feedback echoes the emphatic comments above, within this study, about the need for critique.

- Each year, outside of the panel itself, the system provided the national field—including presenters, service organizations, funders, and others—with a heightened awareness of the artists and work being made, and a sense of artists to watch for. The dance field assumed that artists who had received grants out of the highly competitive and rigorous process, conducted by national peer review, were artists who should be watched. It created a de facto seal of approval and promotional system for the 40-50 artists who were funded annually. This was indeed a service to the field as a whole. This continual, cyclical feedback system generated dialogue about artists and work, and an increased awareness of dance that was happening down the street and across the country. This responds to a comment made by one national leader within this study: “It’s not that we don’t have the artists [who are worthy of support and who have potential]. It’s that we can’t find the artists.”

If it were pursued, and if technology were used effectively, the administration of such a program would not be overly difficult or costly.

**Strategies**

- Organizations in the dance field and/or the appropriate funding bodies might hold discussions about how such a system might work, what would be needed to support it, and where and how it might be housed.\(^{42}\)

2. **The dance field should consider the ways in which choreographic training might be improved, either within the college system or outside of it.**

**Background and Assimilation**

From the college data and related correspondence, it was found that choreography as a course of study is offered at the majority of colleges with dance departments and that both contemporary dance and choreography are the most frequently offered courses. From the information that does exist about the number of departments and majors, it seems reasonable to assume that the number of young people majoring in choreography at any given moment easily totals in the thousands with, conservatively speaking, 1,500 or more of them graduating per year.

The literature survey scanned the materials and opinions of numerous artists, academicians, writers, and consultants who create and teach choreography. There was not agreement among them about how to approach the formidable task of choreographic training, or if it could be done at all. While academic standards posit a set of measures for teaching choreography, the comments and writings of artists and some professors question whether the curriculum is effective and the texts on the topic appear to go largely unused.

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\(^{42}\) The consultant can provide further background on structure and budget if desired.
The collective impressions gleaned from US interviewees convey their extensive knowledge of and opinions about teaching choreography in a college setting. The majority expressed strong reservations about the effectiveness of choreographic training in the academy, and the outcomes for students of taking such courses. Many of the artists went on to discuss at length the elements most important to developing their choreographic voice. In the conversations with seasoned artists, it was striking to learn that most had tried and abandoned choreography and composition courses, instead following their strong impulses to ask different questions about movement and art. Finally, these artists revealed that though their working processes vary, most maintain a daily practice. They possess a strong sense of curiosity and an insatiable inner drive to create work.

The two factors that are most influential to the quality of choreographic instruction in the academy were the quality of the teacher and of the curriculum. In recent years, the influx of professional artists into universities may be changing the approaches to teaching choreography. Those who found much of the college system dated in its approach see this as a positive development. And, access to new work and ideas through the Internet has positively influenced choreographic instruction.

The models from Europe present a contrasting set of circumstances. Notably, there seem to be few dance majors offered within French colleges and universities nor is there a tradition of offering dance degrees with concentrations in choreography in that country. Limited choreographic training is offered within the CCNs through a structure to work and interact with guest artists over three or four semesters, both within the center and at a fine arts institution. In Belgium, the PARTS mission recognizes the paradox of the term “arts education” in that its leaders, too, don’t believe choreography can be taught, per se. Students complete a rigorous multidisciplinary curriculum (without choreographic texts) during an intense daily practice. While PARTS feels strongly about fostering quality, and encourages mentoring and peer feedback. Moreover, one of PARTS’ biggest strengths is the way in which it allows for cross-pollination among its young talented students. Graduating students go on a tour to show their work in numerous cities in Europe. A hallmark of PARTS’ choreographic training is the value of exposure to different professional artists and art forms.

One observation remains, however, at the end of this information-gathering process. While many in the US or abroad have said or implied that choreography cannot be taught or that the existing methods are not working, no one in the US said to stop teaching it.

Strategies

• Additional research might be conducted to clarify the numbers related to dance in higher education in the US. Research might document: the years in which dance departments were founded, to determine the pace at which they are being created; the numbers of choreography majors and concentrations (through sampling the 496 that were not among those statistics); and the curriculum used, if colleges are willing to share it, (such as syllabi and texts).
• Colleges and universities might look at the number of choreography majors they are graduating relative to the limited resources and opportunities that are available in the professional field. Perhaps there is some responsibility to better calibrate students’
expectations for success in the professional world, the reality of daily life, and the level of competition they will face. In contrast, organizations that support young artists might be validated by knowing the number of dance students who graduate each year. Such statistics might justify why they feel overwhelmed by the growing number of requests from artists.

3. Consider the ways to build a stronger sense of community around dance making.

Background and Assimilation

Across nearly all of the interviews, a factor consistently deemed important to the development of choreographers is the degree of interaction they have with other artists. All types of interviewees stressed the value of building connections with artists from other disciplines as a key ingredient of quality. Many interviewees expressed frustration that many artists do not see the work of other choreographers, noting the strong limitations that this lack of exposure places on these artists’ view of the world, notions of quality, and sense of community. There was a widespread belief among interviewees that an artist’s location fed their sense of community; most saw strong advantages to being in New York or other dance centers (though they noted artists who create best in rural or different settings). At the other end, a small number pointed out that that working in a community is not guaranteed to improve quality, but instead can reinforce weaknesses if artists tend to stay within a small circle that does not challenge their views.

Almost all artists, as well as several non-artists, hoped that a better sense of community could be formed not only to encourage the development of work but also the sharing of viewpoints. Together they felt that these elements—a community, financial support for artistic development and exchange—would ultimately take the work and the dialogue about the work to a higher level. Related to this topic of community were other suggestions about providing affordable or even free space in which work could be shown informally and almost constantly, outside of the pressures of formal performances.43

In Europe, the CCNs are intentionally decentralized, located throughout France, and provide artists a place to “research” or create work. Their structure, in some ways, is a hybrid of a US presenter and dance company, with both executive and artistic leaders, who are involved in selecting artists and making program decisions. They are highly multifunctional, offering education or classes, rehearsal space, performances, and cafés, with opportunities for audiences to see work in its developing and final forms. Other facilities and resources include libraries, conference spaces, or exhibits. Elements that make the CCNs successful do exist in the US, but appear among a range of organizations such as The Joyce, and other presenters; mentorship programs such as CHIME; studios such as Oberlin Dance Collective; centers that encourage exploration such as MANCC and Movement Research; programs that provide space and time, such as Bates Dance Festival; and those focused on pedagogy, which would include the hundreds of college dance departments. The difference is that CCNs combine multiple functions under the

43 To be clear, such opportunities do exist in the US, yet were still requested by interviewees; this may have implications for the number or type of interactions that are needed.
same roof, where artists of different levels and audiences interact, with some catering to students and guest teachers. (US organizations are multifunctional too, but not to the same degree.) In addition to the CCN model, US organizations might glean useful ideas about supporting choreographic innovation from the approaches of Netherlands Dance Theater. The focus of much of the interview with NDT was its growing relationship with Korzo in order to support multiple generations of emerging choreographers. With generous government funding, NDT offers a tiered system of opportunity for artists whom it cannot yet support directly.

**Strategies and Questions**

- Organizations that support artists might explore some of the following questions: Could multifunctional spaces like the CCNs be developed in the US? Could such a space exist in New York City without requiring such large overhead costs that its support to artists would be limited? Are existing spaces and organizations already offering these services, such that they could be better coordinated or more fully supported? Is an entirely new entity needed? Or is the French system, with its intermittent pay, sufficiently different that this would never translate to the US?

**4. The dance field should develop better ways to provide feedback to its artists, with the goal of enhancing the quality of work.**

**Background and Assimilation**

US interviewees discussed at length their mixed feelings and conflicting opinions around talking about work. Areas that they considered included mentorship programs, dramaturges, and ad hoc feedback offered to artists from presenters and others.

While interviewees acknowledged the potential usefulness of mentorship in developing young choreographers’ artistic voices, the dynamics of the relationship between the mentor and artist are key to its success. Those who had participated in mentorship programs in which they were matched with an artist or mentor reported both positive and negative experiences. CHIME was mentioned by name in many interviews and always with positive references about the span of time granted to young artists to cultivate a relationship with a mentor they had carefully selected.

US interviewees were asked to comment on the value of critique and its role in choreographers’ development. There are limits to the degree to which this kind of exchange happens at all in the US, and strong feelings about the need for it. Many of the non-artists wished that this feedback could be used constructively to help an artist think through or even rework a piece, implying that that this step would, ultimately, improve the quality of choreography. Several wished that artists would seek feedback from select presenters in particular, some of whom could be valuable resources. The effectiveness of critique, they commented, lies in the timing, the person who gives it, and the method of delivery; some cautioned against popular methods that overly protect artists. About a third of the interviewees spoke about the trend of using dramaturges in dance, with most expressing reservations about its effectiveness and the murkiness around how this role is defined.
US interviewees spoke of the ways in which artists and the quality of their work are enhanced by a range of professional interactions. Artists stressed that collaborating with dancers, who bring new creative ideas and feedback, can push choreographers to break out of their molds. Even dancing for each other can also result in informal mentoring and sharing of feedback; artists in different age brackets felt they learned considerably from choreographers for whom they had danced. For some choreographers, teaching choreography provides an opportunity to observe new viewpoints on making dances that come from their students.

The situation is different in Europe. The founding goal for CCNs in France was to support the vision of artists, and since 1998, has included fostering interactions with audiences. Feedback provided to artists is more extensive and regular, coming from both audiences and the CCN leaders. Since most of the CCNs are located in small towns, there is a level of familiarity between the audience and the artists, who are open to discussion and feedback. Audiences are accustomed to seeing works in progress; they comment honestly, indicate if they do not understand the dance, and offer opinions. A range of formats is used, and several examples were given. All staff at the CCNs claim to provide some degree of direct feedback to artists.

Strategies

- Perhaps new models of offering feedback could be tested with the field. New models might involve interactions with audiences and other artists but should go beyond the standard Q&A format. Artists who are more open to receiving feedback could be involved in testing them. The goal would be to shift the experience of giving feedback from precious and taboo to welcome and useful. Several national and regional funding programs are exploring such models, and could be examined further.44

5. The ideas in this study could be used to develop new initiatives or enhance existing programs.

Background and Assimilation

While not the direct intention of the research, findings may be instructive to the dance field in designing programs that support artists. Many components of the research suggested a range of possibilities for bolstering choreographic quality and training in the US by looking at existing channels of support. The literature review covered the role of key organizations such as MANCC and Bates Dance Festival in supporting choreographers’ development. The US interviewees acknowledged the role that presenters play in the development of an artist’s career, and distinguished the ways in which presenters’ support may, or may not, enhance artistic quality. In their comments, most artists praise presenters for the role they played as advocates, as well as for their ongoing relationships, guidance, and financial support that had, in turn, played pivotal roles in these artists’ careers. In contrast, other interviewees tended to identify the role that presenters do, or should, play in the development of choreography and raised questions about their

44 These include Dance/USA’s Engaging Dance Audiences, a regional program sponsored by the Cleveland Foundation, other national initiatives through the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, and possibly others through the James Irvine Foundation.
sometimes inflated control within the current presenting field. Some interviewees sensed that presenters’ commitment to artists and their art can waver over the years, leaving artists unsure of where they stand. Even these current and former presenters warned of curating too safely, imposing a specific format on a “product,” and playing a disproportionate role in decision-making related to work and funding.

Interviewees were generally positive about the formal training programs within the professional field, which worked better for some artists than others. Summer programs were valued for offering: multiple options for support; a chance to return to the same program over time; an intensive work environment of uninterrupted time; and a safe place to experiment. Interviewees also valued these programs for providing the opportunity to build relationships with professional artists and peers. Not surprisingly, artists talked about both rehearsal and performance spaces as beneficial to their work. About a quarter of the interviewees stressed that an important part of how choreographers develop artistically is to be pushed beyond their comfort zone into some new artistic terrain. One interviewee explained, “If you are going to identify emerging quality and you want to stimulate it into a higher level, get [artists] out of their own heads.”

European support structures for choreographers may contain valuable lessons. In France, a component of all CCNs, is their residency structure for both emerging and established artists. Some felt strongly that the fact that the CCNs are located in the smaller cities is an advantage of these residencies, as it removes the artist from the distractions of the larger city and the pressure of the work being exposed before it is ready. They generally offer 10-20 residencies per year, depending on the capacity of the space, including number of studios, access to housing, and budget provided by the government for this purpose. NDT’s program with Korzo provides a tiered structure that supports numerous artists including those who are just beginning to choreograph.

US interviewees made an emphatic point that any such system or program developed be set up with artists as advisors. As stated above, another summed up simply: “Buy-time residencies, with no pressure for product! The through-line is direct: time, space, and money.”

**Strategies**

- Presenters might opt to explore some of the suggested program ideas (or aspects of them), noting that each idea was suggested by only one or two interviewees. Tiered residencies, which are largely time-based and deadline-free, could support a range of artists. An international residency would allow an artist to go abroad for several months to work or study as they wish. More colleges might provide spaces for residencies during the summer months. A choreographers’ laboratory might provide studio space and access to other resources such as guest lectures, visiting artists and archives. The final suggestion was to create a program that, through a rigorous selection process, would choose only the number of artists of the highest quality that could be supported for multiple years, possibly offering them resources of funds, space, a mentor or dramaturge, and/or presentation.
6. **The research in this report would likely be useful to the field and perhaps could be shared.**

As indicated in the introduction to this section, The Joyce Theater Foundation and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation have invested in gathering this extensive information on a topic of concern to the dance field. The research explored questions and issues that are relevant and of interest to many segments of the field. These findings might be a topic for further research, writing, or meetings to practitioners who work within universities as well as national service organizations such as Dance/USA, National Dance Education Organization (NDEO), Congress on Research in Dance (CORD), and the National Association of Schools of Dance (NASD). Findings may be of interest to funders such as Grantmakers in the Arts or the NY Dance Funders Group.

**A Final Note on Quality**

This study does not make a statement about artistic quality itself. US interviewees, particularly artists, expressed a number of truisms about quality. There will always be variation in the quality of choreography, with very few artists working at the highest level of quality. The notion of quality itself is subjective and there does not exist a single, agreed-upon definition of this term. Several national leaders stressed that the sheer quantity of artists begets quality. At the same time, however, the structures and programs described here could encourage and support quality.
Company Profile and Bios

Callahan Consulting for the Arts helps artists, arts organizations, and funders realize their vision through services that include strategic planning, resource development, evaluation, and philanthropic counsel. Founded by Suzanne Callahan in 1996, the firm has expanded to include strategic partnerships with senior consultants as well as freelance writers and administrators. Among its philanthropic clients are the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Chicago Community Trust, and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Its national clients (most of which serve as re-grantors) includes Dance/USA, the Association of Performing Arts Presenters, the Society for Arts in Healthcare, and the National Performance Network. Artistic disciplines have included: dance of a wide variety of forms and styles, such as ballet, modern, tap, African, Latin-influenced, Middle Eastern, and swing/lindy; contemporary, experimental, and traditional theater; spoken word; orchestral, choral, chamber, gospel, and Latin music; hip-hop; and visual art.

The firm has run funding programs for over 15 years. It currently manages Dance/USA’s Engaging Dance Audiences, a re-grant program launched in 2008 with the support of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. It also ran a component of the NEA’s American Masterpieces program (formerly the National College Choreography Initiative) for Dance/USA, and documented 160 collaborations between colleges, professional choreographers, and students over six years, resulting in repeat funding from the NEA to continue the program. The firm has conducted evaluations in the areas of the creative process, arts service delivery, art and social justice, arts education, philanthropy, and arts in healthcare. The firm’s national study entitled Technology and the Arts Field assisted The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in understanding the arts field’s uses and needs in this area of growing importance to communications and operations. The firm is on the consultant roster for the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone. The firm also developed web-based evaluation tools for arts organizations to measure their impact.

Suzanne Callahan, CFRE, is a regular trainer, college educator, panelist, and guest speaker. Published by the Association of Performing Arts Presenters, Callahan’s book titled Singing Our Praises was awarded Outstanding Publication of the Year from the American Evaluation Association for its contribution to the theory and practice of evaluation. She conceived of and produced the book Dance from the Campus to the Real World: A Resource Guide for Faculty, Artists and Students, published by Dance/USA. Both books are used as college texts. She has also been published in the areas of fundraising, planning, and philanthropy and her writing on evaluation has been published in the Chronicle of Philanthropy as well as the journals of national arts service organizations. Callahan served as Senior Specialist for the Dance Program at the National Endowment for the Arts for nine years, where she was responsible for annual funding programs and technical assistance to artists and arts organizations. A former dancer and dance teacher, Callahan holds a Master’s Degree in Dance Education as well as a Certificate in Fundraising from the George Washington University, where she was awarded a graduate teaching fellowship. She received a Bachelor’s Degree in Social Policy from Northwestern University. She completed post-graduate study in program evaluation, research methods, and anthropology at the George Washington University.

Callahan Consulting for the Arts offers its clients a wealth of experience in national policy and philanthropy; professional certification and documented success in fundraising; graduate-level training and trend-setting expertise in evaluation; and a thorough and effective approach to assessment and strategic planning. Most importantly, the firm prides itself on its impressive track record of accomplishment and concrete results in its key service areas, and the strong and trusting relationships that it has developed with its clients.
Appendix A. Bibliography

College Data


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Appendix B. Select List of US Colleges That Offer Dance

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Appendix C. List of Interviewees in the United States

Titles denote only current positions at the time of interview and therefore do not convey the breadth of interviewees’ experience in the dance field.

Artists

1. Ralph Lemon, Independent Artist
2. Margaret Jenkins, Artistic Director, Margaret Jenkins Dance Company
3. Larry Keigwin, Artistic Director, Keigwin + Company
4. Kate Weare, Artistic Director, Kate Weare Company
5. Brenda Way, Founder & Artistic Director, Oberlin Dance Collective (ODC)

Artists who are also University Professors

7. Tere O’Connor, Artistic Director, Tere O’Connor Dance. Professor, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
8. Dana Reitz, Independent Artist. Associate Professor, Bennington College
9. Sarah Rudner, Independent Artist. Director, Program in Dance, Sarah Lawrence College

University Professors (some of whom were professional artists)

10. Kitty Daniels, Dance Department Chair, Cornish College of the Arts
11. Dianne Defries, Executive Director, American College Dance Festival Association. Adjunct Professor, University of Maryland
12. Linda Tarnay, Former Associate Arts Professor, NYU Tisch School of the Arts

National Leaders (some of whom were also professors)

13. Bonnie Brooks, Associate Professor, Dance Center of Columbia College Chicago
14. Ella Baff, Executive Director, Jacob’s Pillow
15. Bill Bissell, Director of Dance Advance, The Pew Center for Arts & Humanities
16. Philip Bither, Senior Curator of Performing Arts, Walker Art Center
17. Suzanne Carbonneau, Dance Critic & Historian, Professor, George Mason University School of Art
18. Wayne Hazzard, Executive Director, Dancer’s Group
19. Sali Ann Kriegsman, Dance Advocate & Historian, former Director of Dance Program, National Endowment for the Arts
20. Wendy Perron, Editor-In-Chief, Dance Magazine
21. Ellen Sorrin, Director of The George Balanchine Trust and Managing Director, New York Choreographic Institute
22. Sally Sommer, Dance Critic & Historian, Professor, Florida State University
23. Laurie Uprichard, Consultant, Artistic Director, Dublin Dance Festival
24. Lois Welk, Director, Dance/USA Philadelphia
25. David White, Executive and Artistic Director, The Yard

Additional Persons Consulted

1. Karen Hildebrand, Vice President – Editorial, Dance Magazine
2. Jennifer Roit, College Guide Editor, Dance Magazine
Appendix D. Instrument for the Interviews in the United States

Protocol for All Interviewees

• The Joyce is conducting some research to determine how it might better support choreographers in developing work of the highest artistic quality.

• The organization would like to better understand the ways in which choreographers develop their craft, so that it can make informed decisions about any support it might provide that would enhance quality.

• The answer cannot be to merely provide more funding. It would need to be specific to an artist’s needs or the needs of a community of artists.

• We are using the term “training” in the broadest possible sense. It might include self-training, mentorship, academic programs, and a host of other ways in which artists develop their choreographic voice.

• Comments will be presented in the aggregate and not attributed to any one person. I am talking to about 25 people and doing site visits as well as a literature review. You can help us most by being frank.

• There are three areas I would like to discuss today:
  o I will begin by asking about formal choreographic training.
  o I will then ask about other factors that support the development of choreography.
  o Finally, I will end by asking about your ideas about what would enhance the quality of choreography in the US.

• Do you have any questions so far?

There are three different interview instruments below: one for artists, one for national leaders, and one for college faculty. The instrument used depended on the type of person being interviewed.
Questions to be Asked of Artists

- As an artist with work of high quality, we want to know the story of how you developed your choreographic craft and the factors that supported you.
- I will begin with training and move onto other elements and circumstances that affected your craft.

Introduction

1. How long have you been in the dance field? How long have you been choreographing?

I. Training

2. Let’s begin with your own training in choreography. How important was each type of training? Remember that by training, we mean a broad range of areas—traditional and nontraditional, formal and informal. I will list a range of areas, beginning with the more formal programs and then go on to self-teaching.

   a. Did you obtain academic instruction? If yes:
      - What college did you attend?
      - Was your degree in dance? If yes, in choreography?
      - What was the type of degree? (BA, BFA, MA, MFA)
      - What courses did you take?
      - What courses were particularly helpful or not helpful?
      - What ancillary supports were present in your college?
      - Probes: performance opportunities, tech costs, free theater, dancers, etc.

   b. Did you attend any other formal training programs for choreography? If so, which programs did you attend? Please list them, describe what they covered, and how important you think they were in your artistic development.
      - Probes: Conservatories, dance companies with established training programs.
      - Probes: The Yard Fellowship, Carlisle Project, Movement Research workshops, ADF, and/or Bates.

   c. Did you work with mentors or anyone who helped develop your choreographic voice? If so, who, how, and for how long? What people were influential to you? How did they support you?

   d. What other instruction or study contributed to your training in choreography, including training in other art forms?
      - Probes: Training in music, study of specific dance forms, training in visual art, spirituality, the area in which you grew up, or dancing in a company.

   e. Were you self-taught? If so, in part or in full? How did you teach yourself?

3. Of all of these, what were the most important one or two?
II. Other Factors

4. **What factors, circumstances, and people improve the quality of choreography?** I will name a few and then you can add others.

   a. Critique by professionals, professors, or peers.

   b. **Interactions with other artists**, and a sense of collaboration within your artistic community, however you define it.

   c. **Spaces, along with the performance opportunities**, and related services that are designed to further artists’ training. Give examples such as: On the Board’s 12 Minutes Max, DTW’s Fresh Tracks, Judson Church, Movement Research, Dancers Group, The Joyce’s Altogether Different. For younger ones: Center for Performance Research, Abrons Arts Center, and others.

   d. **Being in a location/city with a high concentration of artists**, similar to b and c but referring specifically to the geographic location rather than a space or interacting with other artists alone.

   e. **Investors, such as presenters or producers**, and relationships with them, short term or long-term, and how important they were.

   f. **Funding**—what kinds, when, and its influence.

   g. **Commissioning programs**, similar to f but refers to formalized programs such as the National Dance Project, which not only provide dollars but increase credibility and visibility.

   h. Are there any other factors that I have left out?

III. Ideas for Enhancement

5. How should developing artists be supported in order to improve their choreography?

6. **What other factors, in the end, affect artistic quality?** If the goal is to support and enhance artistic quality of choreography in the US, then what is lacking and what would help?
Questions to be Asked of National Leaders and Other Supporters

- We want to understand your views on training, but in higher education and beyond.
- You offer a unique perspective because of the wide range of artists and organizations with which you have interacted over the decades in the field.

Introduction

1. How long have you been in the dance field? In what capacities?
2. What are the ways in which you interact with choreographers?

I. Training

3. **When you think of the term “choreographic training,” as it is used in the US, what comes to mind?** Remember that by training, we mean a broad range of areas, both traditional and nontraditional, formal and informal. I will list a range of areas, from being self-taught to academic instruction. I will start with the more formal programs and go on to self-teaching.

   a. How important is academic instruction?
      
      - What is the influence of college courses?
      - Do you think it is important to pursue a degree in dance and/or choreography?
      - What types of degrees do you think are important: BA, BFA, MA, MFA?
      - Of all that has been discussed which, including specific courses, do you feel are the most important.

   b. Do you feel that other formal training programs for choreography are important? If so, which programs? Please list them, describe what they cover, and how important you think they are in supporting artists’ development.
      Probes: Conservatories, dance companies with established training programs.
      Probes: Summer training programs such as The Yard Fellowship, Carlisle Project, Workshops such as Movement Research programs.

   c. How important are mentoring and other relationships that support the artistic process?
      Probes: Who specifically can you think of benefitted from such a relationship and how?
      What people influence artists most? For example, mentors such as Bessie Schonberg or Margaret Jenkins. What mentorship programs have been helpful (such as The Joyce Soho’s Artist Residency Program or CHIME)?

   d. What other kinds of training contribute to the development of a choreographer’s craft, including training in other art forms?
      Probes: Training in music, specific dance forms, visual art, spirituality, the area in which the artist grew up, or dancing for another choreographer.

   e. **Being self-taught.** How do artists teach themselves, as far as you know?

4. Of all these types of training, what are the most important one or two, in your opinion, and why?
II. Other Factors

5. **What factors, circumstances, and people** improve the quality of choreography? I will name a few and then you can add others

   a. **Critique by professionals, professors, or peers.**

   b. **Interactions with other artists**, and a sense of collaboration within the artistic community, however you define it.

   c. **Spaces, along with the performance opportunities**, and related services that are designed to further artists’ training.
   
   Give examples such as: On the Board’s 12 Minutes Max, DTW’s Fresh Tracks, Judson Church, Movement Research, Dancers Group, The Joyce’s Altogether Different. For younger ones: Center for Performance Research, Abrons Arts Center, and others.

   d. **Being in a location/city with a high concentration of artists**, similar to b and c but referring specifically to the geographic location rather than a space or interacting with other artists alone.

   e. **Investors, such as presenters or producers** (short term relationships, long-term relationships, and how important were they).

   f. **Funding**—what kinds, when, how much.

   g. **Commissioning programs**, similar to f but refers to formalized programs such as NDP, which not only provide dollars but increase credibility and visibility.

   h. **Any other factors** that I have left out?

III. Ideas for Enhancement

6. How **should developing artists be supported** in order to improve their choreography?

7. **What other factors, in the end, affect artistic quality?** If the goal is to support and enhance artistic quality of choreography in the US, then what is lacking and what would help?
Questions to be Asked of College Faculty and Administrators

• We are seeking information about your program, as well as programs at other institutions, to train students to enter the field of choreography and address the gap between graduating and becoming a choreographer.
• We want to understand your views on training, both in higher education and beyond.
• You offer a particularly useful perspective because of your familiarity with academic training.
• (If relevant add: as well as the fact that you are an established, working artist)

Introduction

1. How long have you been in the dance field? How long have you been in higher education? Prior to your current position, did you dance or choreograph professionally?

I. Training

2. What kinds of choreographic training does your institution offer now?
What degrees do you offer in dance as well as choreography?
What type of degree do you offer: BA, BFA, MA, MFA.
Do you offer courses in Composition or Choreography? If so how many courses do you offer and what levels are these courses?
How did you arrive at those offerings? How sufficient do you think they are to prepare students to choreograph professionally?

3. When you think of the term “choreographic training,” as it is used in the US, what comes to mind? Remember that by training, we mean a broad range of areas, both traditional and nontraditional. I will cover a range of areas, from being self-taught to academic instruction, starting with the formal programs and go on to self-teaching.

a. How important is academic instruction in training a choreographer?

b. What about other formal training programs for choreography? If so what programs?
Please list them, describe what they cover, and how important you think they are in supporting artists’ development.
Probes: Summer training programs such as The Yard Fellowship, Carlisle Project Workshops such as Movement Research programs


c. How do mentoring and other relationships support the artistic process?
Probes: Who can you think of having this kind of relationship and how has it helped?

d. What other methods or aids contributed to the development of a choreographer’s craft, including training in other art forms?
Probes: Training in music, specific dance forms, visual art, spirituality, dancing for choreographers, etc.

e. Being self-taught. How do artists teach themselves, as far as you know?

4. Of all these, what is most important, in your opinion? Why?
II. Other Factors

5. **What factors, circumstances and people** improve the quality of choreography? I will name a few and then you can add others.

   a. **Critique by professionals, professors, or peers** (Bessie Schonberg, for example)

   b. **Interactions with other artists**, and a sense of collaboration within your artistic community, however you define it.

   c. **Spaces, along with the performance opportunities**, and related services that are designed to further artists’ training.
      
      Give examples such as: On the Board’s 12 Minutes Max, DTW’s Fresh Tracks, Judson Church, Movement Research, Dancers Group, The Joyce’s Altogether Different. For younger ones: Center for Performance Research, Abrons Arts Center, and others.

   d. **Being in a location/city with a high concentration of artists**, similar to b and c but referring specifically to the geographic location rather than a space or interacting with other artists alone.

   e. **Investors, such as presenters or producers** (short term relationships, long-term relationships, and how important were they)

   f. **Funding**—what kinds, when, how much

   g. **Commissioning programs**, similar to f but refers to formalized programs such as NDP, which not only provide dollars but increase credibility and visibility.

   h. Any other factors that I have left out?

III. Ideas for Enhancement

6. How **should developing artists be supported** in order to improve their choreography?

7. **What other factors, in the end, affect artistic quality?** If the goal is to support and enhance artistic quality of choreography in the US, then what is lacking and what would help?
Appendix E. List of Interviewees in Europe

Titles denote only current positions at the time of interview and therefore do not convey the breadth of interviewees’ experience in the dance field.

Persons Interviewed about the National Choreographic Centers

1. Monique Barbaroux, Executive Director, Centre National de la Danse, Paris, France
2. Aymar Crosnier, Deputy Director, Centre National de Danse Contemporaine, Angers, France
4. Angelin Preljocaj, Choreographer & Artistic Director, Ballet Preljocaj, Aix-en-Provence, France
5. Robert Van Leer, Managing Director, Netherlands Dance Theater, The Hague, Netherlands
6. Theo Van Rompay, Deputy Director, PARTS, Brussels, Belgium
7. Laurent Vinauger, Director, Centre Chorégraphique National de Franche-Comté à Belfort, France

Additional Persons Consulted

1. Claire Verlet, Artistic Programme, Théâtre de la Ville, Paris, France
2. Nicole Birmann Bloom, Program Officer, Theater & Dance, Arts Department, French Embassy in the US
3. Sophie Claudel, Cultural Attaché, Head of the Arts Department, French Embassy in the US
4. Agnès da Costa, Administrative Assistant, Centre Chorégraphique National de Caen/Basse-Normandie
5. Elisabeth Hayes, Executive Director, French American Cultural Exchange (FACE)
6. Emmanuelle Huynh, Director, Centre National de Danse Contemporaine, Angers, France
7. John Jasperse, Artistic Director/Choreographer, John Jasperse Company
8. Pennie Ojeda, Director, International Activities, National Endowment for the Arts
9. Douglas Sonntag, Dance Director, Performing Arts Division Team Leader, National Endowment for the Arts
10. Laurie Uprichard, Artistic Director, Dublin Dance Festival
Appendix F: Instrument for Interviews in Europe

The talking points and questions below were customized for each interview.

- I am here on behalf of The Joyce Theater and The Mellon Foundation.
- The Joyce is conducting research to determine how it might better support choreographers in developing work of the highest artistic quality.
- I interviewed dance professionals in the US, including artists, about this topic.
- We also want to research the choreographic centers in France and Belgium that are of importance, and their role in the development of professional choreographers.
- [As an accomplished artist of the highest quality, or Center of the highest quality], we want to understand your views on support from choreographers as they develop.

1) I will first ask about the types of support that are the most useful to artists (or have been more useful to you as an artist).
2) I will then ask about the types of support that your national center chooses to offer artists.

- We will examine the “training” in the broadest sense possible, including self-training, mentoring, academic programs, and other forms of creative support to choreographers that support the development of their choreographic voice.

1. For artists: What **training** stands out as most important to your development as a choreographer? For example: school education, improvisation, formal training programs, other art forms, mentors, dancing with companies.

2. Do you consider yourself to be a **self-taught** choreographer? If this is the case, in part or in whole? How did you teach beyond the areas mentioned above?

3. For Administrators: **How are choreographers trained** in your country? Probes: Are they self-taught? Are there degrees in choreography?

4. If relevant: How is **choreographic training offered within your organization**? Probes: Courses offered, overall program elements, admission, numbers of students, evaluation.

5. Do you think **choreography can be taught**?

6. **What factors, circumstances, and people** influence the quality of choreography? I will name a few and then you can add others:
   a. **Criticism by professionals, teachers, or peers.**
   b. **Interaction with other artists**, which could be a sense of collaboration within your artistic community, but can be defined however you want.
c. **Being in a city with many artists**, or a town with a low concentration of artists as is the case at CCNs.
d. **Investors, such as presenters or producers.** If yes, were these relationships short-term or long-term?
e. **Funding, including programs of commissioning.** What types of support most help?
f. **Spaces**, as well as performance opportunities, and especially in France, the CCNs
g. What other factors that I have not mentioned do you feel are important?

7. Of these factors, which do you feel are the most important?

**Questions for the National Choreographic Centers Only**

1. What are the **residency structures** and options?
2. Do you tend to support artists over a **long time period** (even for years)?
3. What is the **artist selection process**? Who selects the artists and how?
4. **Do the artists who come here get paid to be in residence?** How do they otherwise support themselves?
5. Do artists have to provide any of their **own funding**?
6. How do artists who are not chosen develop and support themselves? Do they work full time as artists, or have other jobs to support themselves?
7. How extensive is the **feedback** that is given to artists by the local community, and by the heads of your center?
8. **Is your budget mostly from the government?** Describe the budget and relationships with the government.

Regarding the ACCN, or Association of National Choreographic Centers

1. Tell me more about why the CCNs were founded.
2. How do they differ from one another?
3. How many younger artists do they support each year?
4. What are the most important things that the offer?
5. Is the residency menu standard for all CCNs?
6. Do they all work with younger artists?
### Appendix G: The 19 National Choreographic Centers in France

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