

The Impact of COVID-19 on the United States
Concert Dance Industry

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Table of Contents

Introduction-----	3
I An Overview of Non-Profit Concert Dance Industry-----	5
COVID-19 and Dance-----	7
II Institutional Response to COVID-19-----	9
Dance Performance Adaptations in Covid Times-----	9
Virtual Live Dance Production-----	10
Live In-Person Dance Production-----	11
Online Dance Education-----	13
New Programs and Revenue Sources-----	15
III Dancers Response - Surviving Covid-19-----	18
Earned Income-----	18
Government and Industry Assistance for Dancers-----	19
IV The Post Pandemic Dance Industry-----	22
Resuming Live In-Person Dance:What to Expect-----	22
Key Takeaways-----	24
Conclusion-----	28
Citations-----	30
Appendix A-----	36

Introduction

The year 2020 was and will remain in history as a year of significant change and challenge for human existence and activity throughout the world. In December 2019, a new identified Coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, caused an outbreak of illness in Wuhan, China. In early 2020, the virus began to spread and ultimately caused a worldwide pandemic. Organizations and people were forced to live very differently due to rules enforcing minimal human contact in physical settings. While all industries dependent on some form of in person, human engagement were negatively impacted, the live arts industries, including dance, faced especially dire circumstances.

Pre-pandemic, most non-profit concert dance companies relied largely on income generated by ticket sales from live local performances, tours and education as well as contributed income including: donations from individual donors and corporate, foundation and government funding entities. The onset of the pandemic prevented dance companies from presenting live public performances which immediately eliminated much of their earned income.

To survive, dance industry leaders had to determine new ways to engage their dancers and audience members, ensuring new sources of income while sustaining visibility with key constituents. With live events largely no longer an option, dancers and dance companies increasingly began utilizing technology to help them maintain a connection with their audiences. Due to the global spread of the virus and the uncertainty of how long it will take for the vaccine to be available and fully effective for everyone, no one knows when dance companies can expect to resume their pre-pandemic operations, if ever. However, this unprecedented time has provided an opportunity for dance companies and other organizations dedicated to public performance to rethink models and practices that will support ongoing health and existence.

This research paper explores the initial response to Covid-19 by dance companies and dance entrepreneurs as a result of the pandemic and aims to summarize resources, knowledge and skills that will ensure the ongoing relevance and sustainability of live dance as the world further adapts to the “new normal.” In addition to publicly available industry reporting, an interview with Doug Varone, Director of Doug Varone and Dancers was conducted to provide important insights included in this project (see Addendum A for full transcript).

The report is divided into four sections.

1. Overview of pre-pandemic live concert dance industry and the impact of Coronavirus on dance
2. Industry responses to COVID-19
3. Available Resources for Dancers struggling to survive post pandemic
4. What will remain post pandemic and key takeaways

Given the many unknown variables, as well as generational shifts, that affect the support of the performing arts, managers, entrepreneurs and artists will need to 1) strive for inclusivity, 2) ensure the connection with the patrons and the community, and 3) build the ability to adapt to the variables to ensure their future and the health of the industry as a whole.

I

An Overview of the Non-Profit Live Concert Dance Industry

The dance industry consists of dance studios, dance companies, dance conservatories, individual dance artists (freelancers), dancers with companies, educators and choreographers. The non-profit concert dance industry serves organizations and audiences interested in classical ballet, contemporary ballet, contemporary dance and modern dance and other forms of movement-based work that are not easily sustained through market forces.

According to an article on the *DanceTeacher* website, the majority of dance companies are run as non-profit organizations because of the “economic realities of running a concert dance troupe” which are high expenses and low funding and revenue (Sims). First, the nature of this form of art requires being “seen” (visible to audiences) and the community tends to “cite exposure as the compensation to the artists,” according to an article in the *Dance Magazine* (Robinson). Society tends to undervalue the amount of money and time that a company or a dancer needs to contribute to produce a performance. Also, dance is abstract and not familiar to many. The audience for art-based dance is among the smallest for all types of live performing arts in America. This leads to dance being underfunded and not having enough audience in the seats if the event isn’t free. Secondly, producing a dance production is expensive. In an article from *Dance Magazine*, DeAnna Pellecchia, dancemaker of KAIROS Dance, recorded the breakdown of financial expenses for the company’s most recent full-length work - OBJECT. The production cost \$28,290.04 and this total did not include expenses that she had to pay out-of-pocket. However, the production only generated \$5,931 in ticket sales, cash bar and merchandise (Pellecchia).

Nonprofit organizations share the advantages of tax exemption, government grant eligibility, reduced rates for theater rentals, and special postal rates. They are also able to attract contributions from those who are altruistic (mission based) and/or can claim a deduction on charitable giving expenses. Therefore, almost all performing arts-based dance companies operate under the nonprofit model for the purpose of benefit eligibility.

Live concert dance companies and other nonprofit arts organizations generally depend on both earned income as well as contributed income. Earned income includes: ticket sales from live performances, tuition, and other fees from education-based programs, sales from merchandises, subscriptions for their annual seasons,ect. Public support or contributed income includes donations from individuals as well as grants and other forms of contributions from corporations, non profit foundations, and government sources, and revenue from fundraising events.

Dance companies generally depend on a mix of earned and contributed income in balancing their budgets. According to *American Ballet Theatre's* 2018 990 form, the company's earned income represents approximately 50% of the total income while their contributed income makes up around 46% of their total. Among the 46% of contributed income, fundraising events account for 5.8%, government grants for 0.46% and individual donations make up 40% of contributions. The average annual budget of contemporary dance company *Doug Varone and Dancers*, is comprised by 60% earned income and 40% contributed income . Since the pandemic, according to the company's founder, Doug Varone, there is limited earned income from workshops and the company has been sustained through funding from the government, the Paycheck Protection Plan and foundations supports(Varone).

COVID-19 and Dance

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease caused by SAR-COV-2, a new coronavirus identified in China in late 2019. “The virus is spread mainly from person to person through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks” (CDC). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the first reported case of SARS-CoV-2 in the United States was in February 2020. By mid-March, the coronavirus had spread throughout the entire country. Many states started to issue Stay-at-Home Orders requiring the majority of citizens who were “non-essential” workers to quarantine and avoid contact with one another. Restaurants were shut down or doing pick-up/delivery only, human contact was extremely restricted and many companies started to transition to work from home. The nature of the performing arts industry includes large public gatherings often in enclosed spaces either for performances or rehearsals. When Coronavirus spread throughout the world, it impacted all performing arts communities, including dance, as all shows and rehearsals were put on hold. The cancellation of performances led to a rapid and massive loss of revenues. For example, New York City Ballet had to cancel their 2020/21 annual Nutcracker performances¹, along with all other performances that were scheduled in 2020. This caused a loss of \$20 million dollars for the fall 2020 season alone (Kaufman). Chicago-based Joffrey Ballet was able to keep their dancers’ paychecks through April 3, 2020, but had to push the remaining contract until the summer (MacMillan). Joffrey Ballet went on to lose \$6.5 million in total for their fall season. Meanwhile, Deeply Rooted Dance Theater, a contemporary dance company also based in Chicago, with an annual budget of \$1.1 million, expected to take a 700,000 hit during COVID (MacMillan).

¹ A 2020/21 season for dance companies meaning the season starts from fall 2020 and ends in spring 2021

Due to the financial fall-out of this unprecedented worldwide pandemic, many dance companies have had to put their dancers' paychecks on hold because companies are not able to present their usual performance seasons. In accordance with the Office of New York, in 2019, the arts, entertainment and recreation sector employed approximately 93,500 people in New York. By December 2020, the employment in this sector had declined by 66 percent. A report released by the national arts service organization, Americans for the Arts, on March 8, 2021, noted that since the onset of Covid-19, U.S. nonprofit arts and cultural organizations have lost an estimated \$15.3 million to date(as on March 8,2021). This devastating and unplanned crisis demanded quick and creative responses to ensure short-term survival. A first step was the need to cut down expenses in order to match the decrease of revenue. As Doug Varone explained, "Everything that's not needed gets slashed away. It's like taking a look at the budget and seeing what we don't need (Varone)."

II

Institutional Responses to COVID-19

Despite hardships and closures, the dance industry continues to demonstrate resilience. Many dance companies have continued to provide services to the community during the pandemic. Managers and dancers have relied on their creative skills to adapt their work to keep connected with their communities during this difficult time. The increased utilization of digital technology has enabled new presence, reach, and revenue streams for dance and many other creative industries.. As the pandemic goes on, dance companies are generating a wide variety of adaptive and innovative strategies to survive while ensuring ongoing relationships with their audiences, donors, and the greater dance community.

Dance Performance Adaptations in Covid Times

In addition to eliminating non-essential expenses, dance companies put their initial focus on new ways to generate income and to replace income sources that had previously come from producing and presenting live performance and education-based programming. While core audience members and donors were, and continue to be, aware and sympathetic to the struggles impacting their favorite companies, they are also impacted by huge changes to their own work and home lives. This decreases the time and attention that donors and audiences have for the arts and other services that are not fulfilling basic needs of living. . Artists and organizations that have been most successful in these extremely challenging times are those who have been proactive in maintaining a consistent and engaging presence for their mission and their work. There are several creative and committed dance professionals who pointed the way in ensuring a

continued presence for their companies through successful adaptation of their work through digital presentation and other innovations. Their work is described here.

Virtual Live Dance Production

Ana Maria Alvarez, Artistic Director of Contra-Tiempo, said in an interview with the *Los Angeles Times*, “Pretty much 100% of our earned income is just gone for the next, basically, six months” (Easter). As a result, many companies are now offering zoom² events for audiences to join and make donations. Marc Kirschner, a founder of a paid performing arts streaming service called Marquee TV, stated in an interview with *Pointe Magazine*, “Whether or not companies can figure out how to incorporate digital into their strategy is going to decide which companies will fold” (Scher).

Starting with virtual productions, Hedi Duckler, a choreographer who creates space-based performances in non-traditional venues, managed to transition her work, [*Illuminating the Chandelier*](#), to the zoom online conference platform after the pandemic happened. The zoom production had a mix of pre-recorded dance sequences that featured “bedroom backdrops, layered with live music and enhanced with costume, set and video design” (Easter). The event was free, but gave the audience the opportunity to contribute funds to the artists. The event was fairly successful and had approximately 400 people tuning in.

Another example of a virtual dance production that helped with generating donations comes from Geoffrey Gonzalez, a dancer and resident choreographer of City Ballet of San Diego. Gonzalez created a new series of works called -[*The Dark Room Series*](#) during the pandemic. He created solos on company dancers and filmed them in a studio that he had

² An American communication technology company used for virtual conferences, virtual classes and etc.

transformed into a black box. He then edited the footage into a 15 minute video and made it appear that the dancers were dancing together at times. He offered the film for free, but received over \$10,000 in donations from donors. He said in an interview with *Pointe Magazine* that “if we ask for financial help, we need to show there's new things to support, in whatever form” (Scher).

Live In-Person Dance Production

Although having dance go digital has been crucial to retaining visibility during the pandemic, many creators in dance have also been experimenting successfully with techniques and formats for ensuring the continuation of dance production and performance in live settings. As Oliver Wevers, Artistic Director of Whim W’Him, a dance company based in Seattle, said in an interview with *Dance Magazine*, “We need to keep a presence in the community, to say that we are still here, to give back and to help with the healing” (Wonzy). Dance companies are not allowed to put on performances because performances often lead to a crowd gathering which increases the risk of spreading the virus. However, it is important for live performance to still play a big role in dance. Dr. Michael Bordieri, Professor of Psychology at Murray State University in Kentucky, said in an interview with the university’s NPR Station that, audiences who experience a live in-person performance have “different brainwave activity and different emotional experiences” than those who watch it digitally. He also stated that live performances “increase engagement, stronger emotional expression, and associated stronger brain activation” (Ross). People in general feel more connected and more easily engaged when they see live performance. Many people enjoy the beauty of a live dance performance and the event of going to the theater.

The [Hessian State Theater of Wiesbaden](#) in Germany managed to put on a successful in-person show in June of 2020. The choreography allowed dancers to maintain six feet distance at all times. Meanwhile, dancers whose hands would be touching floors were required to wear protective gloves. Crew members were required by law to wear masks and stayed more than six feet apart from each other. Audiences were also spread out during the performance. Audience members were placed four seats apart from each other and only every other row was occupied. It was not an ideal situation, however, it was a start. The Hessian State Theater of Wiesbaden was one of the first theaters in the world to put on live performances without spreading the virus.

Andee Scott, the Founder of DanceLinkages, and Amanda Sieradzki, Artistic Director of Poetica, produced a [six-episode outdoor series](#) in Florida's St. Petersburg and Tampa area (Wozny). The performance, different from traditional ways of live performance, did not have a stage or seats for the audience. The dancers were spread out across the open space and the audience did not need to stay at a fixed spot. Instead, they needed to move around the space to get a full picture of the production. It was a start toward bringing live performances back and it was a great way of reminding people that dancers are still dancing even under the current circumstances.

In Taiwan, a dance exhibition was launched in National Taichung Theater in April 2020. The exhibition utilized Augmented Reality (AR) technology to present the [HORSE company's latest work](#). Audience members used mobile devices to view 12 pre-recorded dance pieces at different locations throughout the venue. The locations were scattered and each location allowed two or three audience members at a time. Visitors moved around the venue as they watched the piece and the choreography was specific to the structure of the site. Even though this wasn't actually a live performance, the audience still had a chance to go to the theater and to enjoy the

space in a unique way that they've never experienced before. It was an innovative way of presenting a half-live, half-recorded dance performance. Not only did it benefit the dance company itself, but it was also a good advertisement for the theater.

As long as the virus exists, there will always be risk associated with live performances. However, "live performance is vital to the pulse of the company," said Oliver Wevers, Artistic Director of Whim W' Him, in *Pointe Magazine* (Wozy). It's important for the company, the dancers, and the public to have live performances due to their captivating nature. Not only is there great impact from being up close to the work itself in the actual space, but there is also the impact of sharing that work viscerally with others. Also, for those who do not have access to digital devices, it's necessary to include them. It's crucial to stay engaged and connected. As we can see from the previous examples, there are innovative ways to connect people in order that they can experience the impact of live performance, while also ensuring their personal safety.

Online Dance Education

Regular dance training is essential to both aspiring and professional dancers. It is a way to maintain their physical ability in order to perform difficult techniques during rehearsal and on stage. "Dancers need daily classes," stated Gia Kourlas in *The New York Times*. "(Dance) Class is a way to check in with the body and get it prepared for the day (Kourlas)." Due to the pandemic, many dancers have not been able to take their regular classes in their usual in-person studio settings. The pandemic eliminated in person performance and training opportunities in the short-term causing great concern among professional and aspiring dancers who depend on maintaining physical ability to ensure the level of excellence necessary to maintain their career prospects in dance. Fortunately, companies, studios and other educators responded with creative solutions

including offering online zoom classes for dancers. Recognizing the opportunity offered by virtual means to reach dancers of all levels no matter where they live, organizations also started offering online zoom classes that are open to the entire dance community, especially for aspiring dancers. Online education and training offered a new way to provide an opportunity service to aspiring dancers while ensuring new visibility and access to the dance community as a whole.

Hubbard Street Dance Chicago now offers virtual, live-streamed company ballet classes that are open to all and free of charge. Classes are offered live on both their Facebook and Instagram pages. They accept donations only from people who are able to contribute.

California's AXIS Dance Company also offers a variety of live-streamed classes that are open to all. Dancers can choose to give \$0, \$5, or \$10 depending on their ability to pay. Dutch National Ballet also offers free live online ballet classes. Dancers who join the class have the opportunity to both observe Dutch National Ballet's company dancers and to dance with them virtually. They also record their zoom classes and post them on Youtube for people who cannot attend the live-streamed classes. Gaga NYC also offers three live online classes every day that are open to all. A \$5 donation is highly suggested, and the donations go directly towards the teachers.

As the pandemic wore on, companies began running out of contributed funding sources that enabled offering productions and classes at low or no cost. Aided by new technologies facilitating Ecommerce, many have started offering classes and access to performances for a fee, rather than by suggested donation. Some platforms offer subscription based or paid classes for those who can afford to pay and who desire more in-depth training. An article from *Dance Magazine* by Jennifer Stahl gathered information about various virtual dance classes. For example, Universal Ballet Competition gathers world-class ballet stars every weekend for a live, interactive zoom class. The classes include 90 minutes of technique and a 15 minute Q&A with

ballet stars after class. The cost is \$25 per class. Veyette Virtual Ballet School, launched by Miami City Ballet Soloist Lauren Fadeley and former Pennsylvania Ballet principal dancer Francis Veyette, offers interactive personal ballet coaching. Their private lessons are \$100 per hour. Meanwhile, Dancio, a dance online training platform, has a \$15 per month subscription. People who pay for the subscription get unlimited streaming of all dance classes that are offered on the platform (Stahl).

It's extremely important for dancers to stay mentally and physically strong during the pandemic. The need for studio space and in-person interactions - which are two of the most important elements of being a dancer - are not available at the moment. By offering a variety of online classes, not only does it show support to the dance community, but it also engages dance audiences by providing a means to gain more understanding of what is needed to ensure excellence in the art form as well as for its practitioners. Although it's best and safer if one can practice in a studio with a proper dance space and floor, the online dance classes benefit the dance community during this time by providing more variety and flexible training opportunities to the community.

New Programs and Revenue Sources

In addition to adapting existing programming in response to the pandemic, many companies have created innovative new programming offerings and operational strategies to maintain and gain audiences. The Pacific Northwest Ballet offers Digital Season Subscriptions for their 20-21 season. In addition to live-streamed and recorded performance footage, the subscription also includes archived videos of past performances, conversations with dancers and artists, and an opportunity to virtually peek into the backstage to see how the artists, crew and

musicians prepare for the performances. These features can be very attractive for the audience because, most of the time, these are not accessible to them as attendees to a live performance. The subscription is \$190 per person for the entire season. It's a creative new way of offering subscriptions and helps Pacific Northwest Ballet keep their company alive and their community engaged during the pandemic.

The Joyce Theater in New York City created a page called *Bring Dance Home* on their official website. The page offers a list of online platforms for streaming dance performances, films, and talks. These platforms are usually websites of companies that have past or ongoing relationships with the Joyce. The majority of the information that is offered is free and open to all. Even though the Joyce is not able to put on performances due to the pandemic, by offering a page with a list of collective information, it keeps their audience engaged and ensures that they still follow the Joyce Theater's website on a regular basis. It also gives the companies a platform to advertise and keeps them in the loop to maintain their relationship with the Joyce Theater.

Doug Varone states that before the pandemic, his company did a lot of outreach to schools all around the country. In the midst of the pandemic, all educational outreach had to be canceled. The company then came up with a new program called *Virtual Varone*. It is a virtual workshop program that *Doug Varone and Dancers* "offer to colleges and high schools all across the country and builds virtual residency by selling master classes, selling showings and building small residencies with colleges". (Varone) There are many schools across the country that don't have the advantage of an existing affiliation with a professional dance company that could utilize the virtual experience that *Doug Varone and Dancers* offers. Doug Varone intends for the program to continue even after the pandemic. Not only is it a new source of income, but it is also a way to "reach out beyond the normal boundary of where we go and what we do and find

people in places to share our work with” (Varone). Online learning provides dance education without geographic limits which creates a broader audience for dance education and for dance companies.

III

Dancers Response - Surviving Covid-19

As detailed above, the Coronavirus has had an enormous impact on the operation and sustainability of dance companies. In addition, the pandemic has shifted the working environment and economic foundation for dancers. Dancers are currently dancing mostly at home with limited and unsafe floor space, restricted studio times, and limited or no rehearsal times. It's a difficult time for dancers both mentally and physically. As with dance managers and choreographers, dancers have depended on ingenuity and flexibility in developing a range of creative ways to attract the attention and support necessary to survive the pandemic.

Earned Income

Some dancers are now offering online classes on their social media for free or with suggested donation. Charlotte Landreau, a current company member of the Martha Graham Dance Company, offers Instagram live or recorded Graham classes for anyone to take and asks for people to donate if they can. Tiler Peck, a current company member with New York City Ballet, also offers Instagram live and recorded ballet classes for fellow artists. She sometimes collaborates with other dancers or musicians and splits the donations evenly. According to the examples mentioned above, most online classes are free and are a way to support peers in the dance world. With their large group of followers, some of these well-known performers were able to amass a sizable group of people to support them financially, but not enough to support their entire living expenses. To fill the gap, other dancers have started a second career and hope that people will show support. For example, Sam Coren, a former company member of Hofesh Shechter Company, started fixing and building bikes. Daisy West, a dancer with Mark Bruce

Company, started designing greeting cards (Winship). Nevertheless, dancers without large social media platforms are struggling to survive. For example, Bollywood backup dancer Qurnaliya Lovett said in an interview with the website *inshorts* that she is struggling to pay rent. She said, “We're in...the third month of being without work”(inshorts).

It's especially crucial now for artists to support artists, for artists to support companies and for companies to support artists. This is a difficult time for all dance artists and dance companies and the most they can do is to try to keep their community alive.

Government and Industry Assistance for Dancers

There are many funds available for companies to keep supporting their dancers during the pandemic. For example, the Paycheck Protection Plan Loan from the U.S Small Business Administration helps small non-profit companies keep their workers on payroll. Applicants need to meet the following requirements: be a non-profit small organization, with 500 or less employees, or meet SBA's size standard. Applicants can also be sole proprietors, independent contractors, or self-employed people. The loan is forgivable as long as “all the employee retention criteria are met, and the funds are used for eligible expenses” (Paycheck).

Many dance organizations and companies are starting their own [GOFUNDME](#) campaigns to support their dancers. The donations they receive become either direct money into dancers' pockets or funds that dancers can apply for. In addition to dancers in the companies, many artists who usually do project-based work are no longer getting jobs. One of the largest dancers' funds in New York during the pandemic, NYC Dancers Relief Fund, has a GoFundMe page organized by the Dance Union. J Bouey and Melanie Greene, co-hosts of the Dance Union, said in their GOFUNDME campaign that although many community leaders have taken actions to support

the dance companies, “these funds will not be available to undocumented folks or folks working the nightlife scene in our community (NYC)” (NYC Dancers). Therefore, the Dancers Relief Fund is open to all freelance dance artists who are struggling to work and to receive payment during the pandemic.

Another example of supporting dancers comes from Misty Copeland, principal dancer with American Ballet Theatre, along with dancer, Joseph Phillips. They collaborated with the non-for-profit Entertainment Foundation to launch an worldwide virtual ballet event called “Swans for Relief.” It was a fundraising event that included 32 ballet dancers from 22 companies in 14 countries, and the goal was to raise money for dancers whose income depends on performances. The donation was distributed to all of the participating dance companies’ coronavirus relief funds as well as other dance-based relief funds if their companies were not accepting donors (Elassar). From there, dancers could apply for the funds to help pay for rent, food, and other living expenses.

Although financial support is essential, dancers are also in need of mental support now more than ever. Most companies’ seasons are being put on hold or canceled for the rest of the 2020. Dancers fear being out of shape, not being able to connect, not being able to dance at all and being away from the stage for too long. One of the most common things that dance companies do now is to offer virtual company classes that their dancers can join a couple of days a week. This keeps the company together and offers a platform for dancers to see that they are not alone. However, this might not be enough for the long run. Geoffrey Gonzalez, dancer, and choreographer with City Ballet of San Diego, said in the *Pointe Magazine*, that dancers need to keep finding work to do. He said, “It was about fulfilling physical and spiritual needs as artists” (Scher). Some dancers might lack space at home to take a class which might cause a

potential injury. Therefore, some companies have managed to keep their dancers moving and onstage while broadening their audience. Norwegian National Ballet, a professional dance company based in Norway, for example, has split their dancers into very small groups during the pandemic in order to still perform in many different locations across the country. Performances have taken place both inside and outside and in all kinds of venues. The company has traveled to many places that they've never been before. They are keeping their dancers moving and engaged while also extending their audience (Scher).

IV

The Post Pandemic Dance Industry

On December 11th, 2020, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), released the first two vaccinations for the Coronavirus. According to the FDA's evaluation, the vaccines are 95% effective in preventing the Coronavirus and it's slowly opening to the community. With the vaccine becoming more and more available, it's now time to consider the future and assess the community post pandemic. This section focuses on the post-pandemic dance industry including immediate operational changes relating to live production and training and concludes with key lessons gained from the pandemic toward a sustainable future for dance.

Resuming Live In-Person Dance: What to Expect

After a long global lockdown, many dance companies, studios, and organizations slowly began to transition back to in person events starting in August 2020. Companies are hoping to resume normal activities and to allow for capacity audiences in their venues as soon as possible without exposing their employees and ticket holders to the dangers of Coronavirus. It's nearly impossible for dancers to work from home since being a dancer requires professional dance floors and in-person interactions. Companies are creating a new normal for returning to work and a new working environment to help reduce the risk of contagion. According to Dr. Benjamin Levine, Professor of Internal Medicine at UT Southwestern Medical Center and Texas Health Presbyterian Dallas, in an interview with *Dance Magazine*, "Dance is a high-risk activity" (Kramer). Dancers are used to close physical contact with other dancers, with floors and with props. Dancers also breathe very heavily when dancing which increases the risk of spreading the virus. It's strongly suggested by Dance USA, a national service organization for the dance

industry, that dancers and staff are only allowed to be back to the studio when they don't show any signs or symptoms of illness (Southwick). In addition, it's important that precautions are enforced and followed due to the nature of dance.

The U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention has stated that one of the most effective ways of preventing the Coronavirus is to keep the environment and all individuals sanitized. It's crucial to disinfect all spaces and anyone who would be sharing the same space. This needs to be done numerous times a day and seven days a week. Whenever there is an entrance and exit happening, the space and the people in it need to be disinfected by either using a spray or wipes. In addition, there should be ample disinfectant products set out in many different places around the space for people to use at all times. Hand washing and sanitizing are one of the best ways of preventing the virus and should be reinforced to all staff.

For the time being, or until the CDC says otherwise, it should be strictly enforced that everyone wears a mask when dancing. It's scientifically proven that masks are effective in terms of preventing the virus from spreading. It was stated in the Dance USA's guideline for returning to the studios that masks are required at all times when in the studio. However, it would only work if everyone in the space is wearing a mask since masks mainly prevent others from getting infected. The audience and the crew members are required to wear masks and stay at least 6 feet apart during performances to reduce the possibility of the spread of the virus.

Companies and studios need to make sure that their spaces are not overly crowded. It's most ideal to always have dancers staying six feet apart. As companies move toward normal working processes, there will likely be partnering necessary in order to perform most repertory. Therefore, it's crucial to keep the space open and to have the air circulate properly. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease's control and prevention, the Coronavirus can travel on liquid droplets that

are spread through breathing or coughing by infected people. The more crowded the space is, the more risk that someone would get infected because, as mentioned above, dance usually involves heavy breathing.

While it's important to keep the company moving, dancers' mental health also needs to be put as a priority. It's the company's obligation to make sure that dancers feel comfortable not coming into work if they are feeling sick. If dancers feel like there are consequences for not coming into work because they are sick, it's likely that they would come to work with a possibility of getting others sick.

For a company, it's essential to make sure that dancers have the resources they need both in the company and in their personal life. It's beneficial to constantly be checking in with the dancers and individuals who work for the company. For dancers and for all individuals, it's important to know and enforce the precautions. All precautions should be taken seriously all the time and not just during working hours. According to Dance USA's guidelines, the first thing companies need in order to be able to move forward and get back to normal is to have the company be a safe enough environment to work in. It's not a one-person job and everyone needs to be in the same boat for it to work (Southwick).

Key Takeaways

While the pandemic has been extremely challenging, it has also provided important lessons for dance companies. The dance community can learn from this experience in order to build stronger organizations for the future. During the pandemic, many dance companies and organizations had to rethink their programming and operations in order to adapt to new circumstances. Once the pandemic is over, some dance companies will decide to start over, or

resume where they were before the Spring of 2020. Other companies are taking the time to consider adapting or innovating their operations to ensure longer term strength and resilience. As mentioned previously in the paper, whether an organization relies on public offerings or not, it is essential for companies and artists to stay in touch with the audiences and donors as well as the larger industry to ensure sustainability and further the impact of their work. Furthermore, there are some specific business strategies that are important to emphasize to ensure dance and other non-profit arts organizations are sustainable in the long run.

The first key takeaway from the pandemic is the need for a flexible and easily implementable business continuity plan. It's crucial to know the strength and weakness of the organization and to always have a plan ready to go when a crisis hits unpredictably. The “first way to address a crisis is to be fully prepared in advance”, according to [Arts Consulting Group](#) (Douglas). Some important components of crisis planning include creating multiple operating financial scenarios, assessing organizational assets, seeking emergency support, engaging with broader issues, and identifying organizational values and limits.

Jan Newcomb, Executive Director of the National Coalition for Arts' Preparedness and Emergency Response, suggested in *Dance Magazine* that “everyone in the executive department should sit down and write down the **summary of their job duties**” (Henderson). This way, everyone has a clear idea of what their jobs entails and an opportunity to realize what can be done in a more efficient way. Therefore, when an emergency hits, everyone knows exactly what they need to do without panic.

In addition, establishing **clear internal and external communications** is also important. A good internal communication protocol and processes present a company as a united whole and shows the audience and donors that everyone is in the same boat and that it is worth

investing in the company (Henderson). Transparent external communications with the audience and donors ensures patrons that it is safe to keep financially supporting an organization even when the organization is not producing or is challenged by external financial circumstances. No one had time to prepare when the pandemic hit and no one expected it to go on for this long. Almost all dance companies around the world were forced to cancel their remaining 2020 seasons and some cancelled Fall 2021. The very first thing that companies and theaters had to face was the cancellation of ticket sales. Audiences will naturally ask for refunds and, if refunds are not available, then they will want to know when the shows will be put back on in the future. Dance companies might consider asking their audiences to donate the money toward helping the dance field go through the emergency, instead of accepting a refund. Some audience members are longtime supporters of certain companies and might be willing to help out, especially during a worldwide pandemic. “Funders know what’s going on, and they want to help,” said Jan Newcomb (Henderson). Dance companies could also offer discounts to future performances, subscriptions, or other meaningful gestures to show their appreciation. Either way, dance companies should always have a clear plan of external communication at all times. These details should be included on their official websites to keep their audiences and donors up to date.

It’s also important to have a **strong Board of Directors**. According to Erin Prange, the Executive Director of Big Muddy Dance Company, their board was strong and dedicated over the years which enabled the company to sustain themselves during the pandemic (Warnecke). The board plays an extremely crucial role especially now. During a pandemic, when there is minimal time to respond, the board needs to oversee the company and to make sure that the company has the big picture covered. According to Deloitte Global Center for Corporate Governance, a board usually consists of a variety of directors that have previous managerial

experience (Stepping). A board is more likely to come up with a plan that considers all aspects when there is a diversity of experiences. Furthermore, one of board members' strengths is to secure donors and to use their relationships to connect with those potential donors. Board members can also use their connections to make sure their major donors are being taken care of and are willing to continue to support the organization. A strong board is always a big support for dance companies and, if selected wisely, could assist in dealing with management crises.

Finally, it is important to keep in mind that investing in a relevant insurance could make an important difference. "Even if you think your insurance will not help, you should still put in a claim. The more data they have about the financial impact of this, the better off everyone is" (Henderson). Even though most insurance does not cover a pandemic outbreak, the more data they receive, the bigger chance that the government will intervene in the coverage process. Certainly, dance companies first need to have insurance. It might look like a big cost at first and small companies might not be able to afford it. One big thing that the pandemic has taught the community, however, is that things happen when they happen and that there is no anticipation of anything. It is better to be safe and to have as many backups as possible.

The pandemic has provided an unprecedented opportunity for Dance and other performing arts industries to rethink their value to their communities as well as to build more adaptive and resilient structures and strategies necessary for ongoing health and success. Overall, companies who survive the pandemic are advised to implement the recommendations here as well as to take other necessary steps based on their individual experience ensuring the foundation to build back stronger.

Conclusion

The year 2020 has been extremely difficult for the world. The Coronavirus forced a global shut down for many months and completely changed people's way of living. The Internet is a necessity now more than ever, working from home became a normality and human contact became something very precious. The pandemic was unexpected and completely out of everyone's control. As this research paper demonstrates, for the performing arts industry including dance companies and artists, which is financially vulnerable even in the best of times, it's been a particularly challenging time. Live performance seasons were canceled for dance companies and almost everything in a dancer's normal routine has been put on hold. In other words, there is no reliable source of income for both the companies and dancers for the foreseeable future.

The pandemic has also proven to be a time when the dance community has shown the most resilience and mutual support. "This time has given us breathing room. It gives us time as an organization to look administratively at where we want to go and creatively also," from the interview with Doug Varone (Varone). The government, foundations, and other organizations provided essential funds and resources when the virus hit including the Paycheck Protection Plans and the Dancers Relief Funds. Throughout the pandemic, professional dancers started offering online classes for other dancers to take - often for free. Dance artists were strongly encouraged to be creative in their work and how it was presented. This provided a rare chance to innovate the dance form while reaching new and more diverse audiences, many of whom had more leisure time and were looking for new and creative experience. The virus has played a significant role in awakening the dance industry to the importance of utilizing digital technology, of having a strong, well-structured organization that is supported by clear emergency response

planning. It's extremely important to learn from the lessons of the pandemic and to make sure that when audiences are finally fully welcomed back into theaters, the dance community as a whole is ready to move forward, functioning better than ever.

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Appendix A. Personal Interview with Doug Varone

What Will Remain?

An Interview with Doug Varone, Founder of Doug Varone and Dancers

1. **Question: What's the percentage of income that traditionally came from tickets sales/ workshops?**

“ It varies from different seasons depending on if we tour a lot. I would say that it's more of a 60% (earned) -4 0% (unearned) for us.”

2. **Question: Would you say that the donations are the main sources of income for maintaining the company now?**

“Yes, we have very little earned income. We have income from the virtual workshops, but not a tremendous amount. What has been sustaining us has been money from the government, PPP (paycheck protection plan), and foundations. Foundations who have been supporting us have stepped up and doubled their donations to us. I think a lot of foundations have really figured out that if they don't step in to save dance organizations, there are not going to be any dance organizations left to support.

3. **Question: What are the ways that the company has to adapt to due to the pandemic?**

“Everything that's not needed gets slashed away. It's like taking a look at the budget and seeing what we don't need. Obviously, you are going to see a line of budget disappearing, all the touring, all the income leaving, and you are left with a very small number. Then, you have expenses. How do we readjust what we know in order to only have what we need? And that's inclusive of the dancers as well. We are getting rid of work weeks

because we are no longer working. It's painful to do, but there has to be a lot of creative thinking and it has to be brutal."

4. Question: What do you think are the benefits of this difficult time?

"I think there are a couple different benefits. When you are in the mix of something, you don't really have the chance to reimagine, you don't have the time to breath because you are always thinking about how to move forward. This time has given us breathing room. It gives us time as an organization to look administratively at where we want to go and creatively also. For me artistically, it's allowed me to do things creatively that I haven't had the time to do. I feel like I've learned something about my own artistic integrity and my own craft in a very new light and I am looking forward to figuring out how to take that forward."

5. Question: What are the things that the company is doing now and will remain post pandemic?

"One of the things that we put together as a company was building a program called *Virtual Varone*. And, it's a program that we offer to colleges and high schools across the country and build virtual residencies by selling master classes, selling showings and building small residencies to colleges across the country. It's been a phenomenal learning experience because it's allowed us to believe that this is a program moving into the future which has fidelity to it. In other words, colleges that are affiliated with presenting organizations, like Purchase, when someone comes in to perform at the Performing Arts Center, there is a master class. And, most schools across the country don't have that benefit. So, they very often don't have the resources to bring a company in to set a piece or to have master classes and this kind of a virtual experience is being embraced by

colleges across the country and in areas where we normally could never go to. So, that's been our learning purpose because we have something to sell and we have something to share as a company. And, that would continue to be shared through a virtual platform even when we are back working. It's extra income for dancers, and also a way to reach out beyond the normal boundary of where we go and what we do and find people in places to share our work with. I also think the utilization of digital technology will continue, we've learned skills and I think that it makes the world smaller."