CALLAHAN CONSULTING *for the arts*

Choreography in the United States
A Comparative Study of Training and Support Systems

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[3] suggests that **there may be as many as 9,000 undergraduate dance majors attending all 132 colleges.**[4] 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.**[5] 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.[6] 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.[7] 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][8]

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

involve 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.[9] 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 Nagrin, 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 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.[10] 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.[11] 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 *sensiblization* (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.[12] 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.[13] 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,[14] 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 practiceocess, 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.[16]

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.

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.