

Beyond Performance

BUILDING A BETTER
FUTURE FOR
DANCERS AND
THE ART OF DANCE

BY MINDY N. LEVINE



the
*an*ANCE
project

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ADVANCE
project



BY MINDY N. LEVINE

The past twenty-five years have brought tremendous change to the dance world. We have witnessed new developments in dance technique, the incorporation of sophisticated technologies into creative work and process, growth in the number and type of dance companies, and a tremendous expansion of the dance audience worldwide. But there has not been parallel growth and development in the working conditions for dancers. Dancers continue to face serious economic and other burdens related to job security, employment opportunities and transition out of active performing careers to the next stage of their lives.

Progress in this area is not merely a debt we owe to individual dancers in appreciation of their artistic contributions; it is also of critical importance to the dance field.

It is for this reason that **the aDvANCE Project** undertook the Research Project which has resulted in *Making Changes: Facilitating the Transition of Dancers to Post-Performance Careers* and this volume, *Beyond Performance: Building a Better Future for Dancers and the Art of Dance*. Indeed, this volume is the culmination of our work. It advocates specific actions for the various constituents of the dance field, for philanthropic organizations and for educational and governmental bodies, all of which will strengthen substantially the dancer career transition process. By so doing, they can help transform the social and economic plight of dancers world-wide.

We believe that now is an auspicious time for our project, especially as the swiftness of change today has made retraining a central concern throughout the world. Thus, we anticipate that our endeavor will be of general interest and use, as well as a necessary and informative tool for change within the dance community.

Philippe Braunschweig

Co-Chair, The aDvANCE Project

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About The aDvANCE Project

“For the first time the dance field has rigorous international research that sheds light on the issues of dancer transition world-wide.”

In the fall of 2004, The aDvANCE Project, an international coalition of distinguished dance professionals, released a ground-breaking three-year international study that examines the conditions and challenges that professional dancers face as they experience the inevitable transition out of active performing to the next stage of their lives. With the publication of *Making Changes: Facilitating the Transition of Dancers to Post-Performance Careers*, the field has, for the first time, rigorous data that shed light on the issue of dancer career transition world-wide.

The research—far ranging in scope and conducted by a team of leading international scholars—persuasively documents that across the globe dancers tend to be poorly compensated, not only in comparison to the general workforce, but in comparison to other arts disciplines. Early retirement, necessitated by the physical demands of the profession, further hinders the ability of dancers to accumulate savings that might facilitate their transition into new careers, as does the absence of many of the social welfare protections that are typically available to the general workforce.

The document that follows, commissioned by the aDvANCE Project, distills and builds upon the evidence provided in *Making Changes* and offers a template for action. Solutions are within the field's reach—if there is readiness and a commitment to take action.

Three quotes from *Making Changes*, the aDvANCE Project's Research Study, are presented here at the outset; they underscore what is at stake and why it is imperative to act.

For individuals: “We know of no other occupation that requires such extensive training, which is held in such esteem as a contribution to culture and pays so little.”

For the field: “In the long-run, the vitality of dance activity itself requires attention to the welfare of those engaged in it.”

For society: “The inadequacy of transition support not only creates significant challenges for individual dancers, but also imposes a social cost in the form of wasted human capital.”

Excerpted from:

Making Changes: Facilitating the Transition of Dancers to Post-Performance Career

By:

William Baumol (NYU, Princeton University, U.S.)

Joan Jeffri (Columbia University Teachers College, U.S.)

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Introduction:

OVERVIEW: THE DANCER AND THE DANCE

*O body swayed to music,
O brightening glance,
How can we know the dancer
from the dance?*

—W.B. Yeats

THE CULTURAL CENTRALITY OF DANCE:

In every culture and in every time period people have danced—to celebrate and to mourn, to entertain and to enlighten, to affirm the spirit and the body, and to create moments of transcendent beauty and transformation. Temporal and fleeting, dance communicates powerful messages that resonate across language and cultural barriers. Reaching beyond words, dancers embody powerful messages about the central dramas of human life—be they spiritual, intellectual, aesthetic, or political.

“Acrobats of God” is a phrase legendary modern dance choreographer Martha Graham used to invoke the rigor, passion, physical discipline, and extraordinary spiritual commitment that dancers bring to their chosen art. “I did not choose to be a dancer. I was chosen and with that you live your life,” she wrote, expressing a sentiment that reverberates throughout the autobiographical literature of the field.

In our current age—with its rapid technological advance, steady globalization, and growing embrace of consumerist culture—the dancing body, in its simplicity and purity, becomes an especially eloquent and potent channel of expression and communication. Now, more than ever, the dancer, speaking through the instrument of the body, has a unique capacity to inspire, entertain and enlighten us—both as individuals and as local and global communities.

“How can we know the dancer from the dance?” queried poet W.B. Yeats in the early decades of the last century. His poetic formulation provides a potent reminder that any inquiry into ways the art of dance can be nurtured and sustained into the 21st century must take as its starting

point its creative practitioners—the dancers themselves. How can they best be supported and sustained through every phase of their careers—not just during that narrow window when their career aspirations as performers are most fully realized? Can the field responsibly chart its future without considering the full dimensions of what it means to have a life in dance? Career transition is inevitable, and therefore an integral aspect of a dancer's life. So it must be asked: How do we ready dancers to live full lives in dance, both during and after their performing careers? How can dancers be fully nurtured at each stage of their life journey—preparation/training, performing/professional development, post performance/career transition

Speaking through the instrument of the human body, the dancer has a unique capacity to inspire, entertain, and enlighten.

BEHIND THE SCENES:

The Dancer's Dilemma: The life of the dancer—what happens before the curtain goes up and what happens when it goes down—has largely been hidden from public view. To some degree this is understandable. Dance is an art of illusion. Effort, by and large, is masked: the dancer soars, as if born to flight; the chorus line steps out in unison, as if synchronized movement were the most natural of actions; the pas de deux unfolds as naturally as casual conversation. Few audience members—whether watching a romantic story ballet, a cutting-edge contemporary dance piece, or a musical theatre production—have access to the behind-the-scenes processes that bring dance works to life—especially the challenging, albeit extremely rewarding, life journey that characterizes a professional career in dance.

Many would be stunned by the low levels of financial compensation that await even the most talented and renowned of performers; most would be surprised to discover that at a life juncture when most adults are hitting their professional stride, dancers must embark on second careers—and are often ill prepared to do so. Although dancers, during their career preparation phase, undergo a process that has some parallels with that of elite athletes, they do not receive the lucrative contracts and endorsement deals that typically await professional athletes; even the most basic health and welfare pension protections are usually not available to professional dancers, who, it has been noted (see *The Dancer's Destiny*), “invest more time in their professional education than almost any others with the exception perhaps of medical specialists.”

As they reach their late 20s and early 30s, many dancers discover that they often have neither sufficient formal educational background, nor psychological readiness, nor financial resources to build second careers. In a world where consumerist values hold substantial sway, dancers have chosen a different path and embraced a different set of values—sharing their artistic gifts, enriching the cultural life of citizens, and celebrating values of excellence, dedication, and creativity—all in the face of meager financial rewards and limited worker protections.

At a life juncture when most adults are hitting their professional stride, dancers must embark on second careers.

A CRITICAL CHALLENGE:

The issue of dancer career transition creates challenges on multiple levels—not just for individual dancers, who warrant assistance with the educational, emotional, and financial challenges they face at the end of their career, but also for the field and the culture at large.

- *For individual dancers* the issue of career transition places inequitable economic and other burdens on a sector of the workforce that has made extraordinary societal contributions through artistic service.
- *For the dance field* the issue of career transition connects to issues of dancer recruitment and retention. In an increasingly competitive workforce, aspiring dancers, and their families, may be reluctant to make or encourage commitments to a field where the long-term financial, educational, and psychological needs of dancers go unaddressed. Equally significant, mobilizing to address career transition issues offers the field a critical opportunity to recycle creative capital back into the sector, as dancers who so choose, are supported as they “transition” back into the field in an administrative and leadership capacity.
- *For the general population* the issue of career transition creates a lost economic opportunity to transfer valuable “human capital” to the global workplace, where ex-dancers can embark on valuable and satisfying new careers, and employers can reap the benefits of having highly-skilled, trainable workers who are so in demand. A growing body of literature indicates that through their training and professional performing careers, dancers develop a unique and valuable set of skills and abilities; where appropriate retraining is made available, dancers can and do make substantial contributions in diverse sectors of the economic marketplace and society.

A GROWING FIELD CONCERN:

Dancer Career Transition: For much of the 20th century the issue of career transition—the process through which dancers remain productive members of society when the natural life-cycle of their chosen performing career comes to an end—had gone largely unacknowledged and unaddressed. A “dance until you drop” mentality prevailed. Little thought was given to what next (when a performing career comes to an end) or what if (injury cuts one’s dancing years short).

INTRODUCTION

Opportunities to cultivate other skills and talents were few and far between for the young dancer in training. “You had to hide the fact that you were smart,” recalls a former dancer, about her own early years in the field. Interests in academics and “other things” were seen as signs of disloyalty. Training was often narrow in conception and focus. Little attention was paid to the skills and resources that dancers would need when their relatively short-lived careers reached an end, nor to the impact their exceptionally low compensation levels while dancing would have on their ability to finance the cost of retraining for a second career. “The dancer’s earnings are generally the lowest, the span of years during which he can find employment is typically the shortest and his employment is generally the most uncertain, his working conditions are often the worst among the performing arts,” wrote Baumol and Bowen in their influential study, *Performing Arts: The Economic Dilemma* (Twentieth Century Fund, 1966).

By the mid 1970s, however, the issues of dancer career transition began to come into sharper focus. The ethical, artistic and social imperatives of addressing transition could no longer be ignored. Across the globe, important first steps were being taken, fueled in many cases by former dancers who had struggled mightily during their own transition years and therefore felt determined to create better futures for the performers who would come after them. A field with such glorious commitment to human expression could no longer accept depression, unemployment, destitution, and inequitable treatment as an unavoidable and “natural” part of a dancer’s basic life cycle. Pressing financial needs had to be addressed, as did attendant psychological and educational ones.

A field with such glorious commitment to human expression could no longer accept depression, unemployment, destitution, and inequitable treatment as an inevitable and “natural” part of a dancer’s basic life cycle.

Between 1973 and 1986 four major career transition and retraining centers took root—in United Kingdom (1973), Canada (1985), the United States (1985), and The Netherlands (1986)—specifically to help dancers prepare psychologically and professionally for the career transition process. These organizations have been powerful agents of research, program development and advocacy. At the same time, some companies and training academies have taken important steps to improve the lot of dancers during the training and performing phases of their lives to make their future prospects more promising.

During this period too, important first-steps were being taken in the areas of international policy and advocacy. In 1980, for example, UNESCO issued recommendations concerning the Status of the Artist, which underlined the necessity of governmental adaptation of social security schemes to include artists and to recognize the special needs of dancers. That document asserted, in part, “It is the responsibility of governments...to support the reconversion of certain categories of artists such as professional dancer.” Canada followed suit some fifteen years later with the adoption of its own national legislation, the Status of the Artist Act, which established a legal framework to govern pro-

fessional relations between associations of self-employed artists and government institutions.

Advocacy, action, and information-sharing moved to a more global stage with the establishment in 1993 of the International Organization for the Transition of Professional Dancers (IOTPD) in Lausanne, Switzerland under the patronage of UNESCO. Initial projects included the convening of two major international symposia (Lausanne, 1995; The Hague, 1998); publication of the findings of these gatherings (*The Dancer's Destiny*, *The Dancer of the XXI Century*); and facilitation of information sharing among transition centers and others world-wide. By the mid 1990s a transition program had taken root in Switzerland, Australian arts agencies had begun publishing on the subject, and a number of dance companies had established in-house retraining funds.

Yet, as efforts progressed, it became clear that what the field lacked was rigorous comparative research that could document and illuminate the issue of dancer career transition on a global basis, providing a platform for analysis, action, and advocacy. And so, the aDvANCE Project was born.

The provisions of UNESCO's Status of the Artist Act have yet to be enacted by most nations; this leaves many dancers without the basic social and welfare protections available to the general workforce.

BREAKING NEW GROUND:

The aDvANCE Project: Spearhead by an international research team (see Appendix B), the aDvANCE Project began its investigative efforts in 2001. The publication of its report, *Making Changes: Facilitating the Transition of Dancers to Post-Performance Careers*, provides a watershed moment for the field. For the first time, a body of data exists that clearly documents the problem, identifies emerging best practices, and provides clear indicators concerning the ways stakeholders—including schools, companies, funders, government agencies, career transition and retraining centers and individual dancers—can move forward to build a better future for dance. Major components of *Making Changes* include:

- 11 country profiles (Australia, Canada, England, France, Germany, Hungary, Japan, Mexico, The Netherlands, Switzerland, United States);
- In-depth surveys of individual dancers in three countries (Australia, Switzerland, United States);
- Identification of promising practices for career transition worldwide; and
- hypothesis-testing concerning appropriate strategic interventions.

INTRODUCTION

The research findings detailed in *Making Changes* have provided members of the aDvANCE Project with an opportunity to assess the state-of-the-field, vigorously review the data, and clarify implications for action. Their work has been guided by aDvANCE Project co-chairs Philippe Braunschweig, founder and president emeritus of the International Organization for the Transition of Professional Dancers, and Harvey Lichtenstein, chairman, BAM Local Redevelopment Corporation and former president of the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

Five key observations, highlighted below and discussed in more detail in the pages that follow, provide a backdrop for understanding the implications of the work undertaken by the aDvANCE Project to date:

KEY OBSERVATIONS

OBSERVATION #1:

Professional dancers face unique career transition challenges, which diverge significantly from professionals in other arts disciplines and other physically demanding fields. These result from the nature of their training process, the financial infrastructure of the professional dance field, the limited duration of careers, and the lack of alignment between social welfare programs and the field's training and employment patterns. At the same time, changes in the global workforce—especially the rapid pace of technological advance and the growing cadre of self-employed workers—are making early retraining for second careers a somewhat more common employment scenario. Therefore, mobilizing to address this issue within the dance field provides a laboratory for examining general workforce issues that will draw increased societal attention in the near future.

OBSERVATION #2:

Career transition planning must start early and be integrated into every aspect of a dancer's life journey. Programs should target each major juncture in a dancer's life-cycle—preparation, performing career/ongoing professional development, beyond performance/transition. During each phase, efforts to ready dancers for career transition must focus both on changing values and attitudes (of the dancer, the dance community, and the culture at large) and on the delivery of a range of much-needed programs, services, and resources. There may be resistance among some administrators, artistic directors, and teachers to a process that, on the surface, may appear to divide focus. However, readiness to face transition is properly viewed as an organic process that detracts neither from dancers' commitment nor focus on their performing career. The broadening of a dancer's worldview, so necessary for effective career transition, can also serve artistic goals.

OBSERVATION #3:

Across countries and communities, dancers face similar career transition challenges in three major areas: psychological, educational, and financial. At each stage of a dancer's career, each of these areas will require different levels of resource deployment and focus. For example, in the early stages of a dancer's life, focus on psychological and educational issues will be especially important. As dancers move toward the implementation phase of their transition plans, the need for financial resources takes on growing importance. Retraining carries with it an unavoidable financial cost, but it is ultimately cost effective, for it frees dancers from extensive welfare dependency, while at the same time creating the possibility for another psychologically satisfying career. Retraining success rates for dancers far exceed those of the general population, with dancer career transition and retraining centers reporting retraining success rates ranging from 85 to 100 percent.

OBSERVATION #4:

Multiple strategies will be necessary to address the career transition needs of dancers on an international scale, because the broader context in which dancers carry out their work varies from country to country. Factors that come into play on a country-by-country basis include the degree to which the arts are publicly or privately supported, cultural attitudes towards the arts in general and dance in particular, the dominant dance genres in a particular country or region, and the nature of existing worker protections in the form of social benefit programs. Because of this variability, the global dance community has much to learn from shared information about "promising practices," which can be adapted and refined to meet local conditions.

OBSERVATION #5:

Issues of dancer transition are deeply linked to the long-term artistic vitality of the dance field and cultural arena. Finding solutions to the challenges of career transition will improve the status of dancers in society, giving them appropriate recognition as artists/citizens. As educational approaches shift, dancers will not only be better prepared for transition, but also for taking a more activist role in the shaping of the artistic future of a rapidly evolving field. Ultimately, issues of dancer career transition cannot be separated from embedded cultural attitudes about the role of the artist in society, which means that collaborative mobilization on this issue is warranted by all who are invested in the artistic and economic health of the dance field and its practitioners.

Voices from the aDvANCE Project

“I thought I would dance forever. It was a shock when I had to stop. No one encouraged me to go to school or learn a different trade.”

“An administrative assistant, which is a relatively low-skill job, pays much better than being a professional dancer.”

“There is a hierarchy of values that acts as a disincentive towards a curiosity to engage with the wider world that will allow dancers to easily segue into new careers.”

“Understanding that there are options helps us make rational, objective decisions about our future.”

“I feel it is important that dancers know they have a beautiful future even if it is not dancing on stage.”

—excerpted from the aDvANCE Project surveys of individual dancers: Australia, Switzerland, and the U.S.

GLOBAL TRENDS:

THE COUNTRY PROFILES

“It seems clear, looking at the problem of transition from a global perspective, that current assistance measures are both limited in scope and inadequate in coverage.”

—Baumol, Jeffri, and Throsby
*Making Changes:
Facilitating the Transition of Dancers
to Post-Performance Careers*

Dance is frequently referred to as an “international” and “universal” language because of its capacity to communicate across language and cultural barriers. Given the art form’s international reach, it was clear from the aDvANCE Project’s inception that the research agenda would need to look at the issue of career transition in countries with diverse social, political, economic, educational, and cultural conditions. A dual approach to data collection was therefore devised: the development of eleven country profiles to gain broad socio-economic understanding of the issues and individual dancer surveys, conducted in three countries, which could elucidate the experience of career transition from the perspective of the individual.

The countries profiled were: Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Hungary, Japan, Mexico, Switzerland, The Netherlands, United Kingdom, and the United States.

Information gathered included: educational and training systems, public and private funding, number of employed and unemployed professional dancers, numbers of companies and institutions involved in dance, institutional support structure, and methods of dancer support (pensions, benefits, etc.).

From these data a deeper understanding has emerged concerning the career transition dilemma worldwide and how the field can mobilize collectively to take action. Major themes that emerged from a comparative analysis of these profiles are highlighted below:

WORKFORCE GENDER COMPOSITION:

The vast majority of dancers in all countries profiled are female. For example, female dancers comprise 65% of the total in The Netherlands; 60% in Germany; 80% in Mexico; 77% in the U.S; and 77% in Japan. While these statistics confirm intuitive understandings about the nature of the global dance workforce, they are of particular note given ongoing gender bias in the workplace and persistent cultural bias concerning the employment needs of the female population. In some countries, issues of post-career employment for dancers may therefore be greeted with less urgency in the policy-making arena, given workforce composition issues. The findings are also relevant for program planners, given that internal studies undertaken by some of the national dancer career transition and retraining centers, as well as independent researchers, suggest that the female and male populations encounter different economic and psychological challenges as they grapple with career transition issues; effective programs should be adapted to address the diverse needs of those undergoing transition.

LABOR MOBILITY:

Data from the country profiles bring out the increasingly international character of the dance community, with dancers moving from country to country as they seek rewarding professional opportunities. In The Netherlands and Switzerland, for example, a high proportion of dancers come from foreign countries: in The Netherlands, 50% of dancers come from foreign countries; in Switzerland, only 2 of the 128 dancers in the four largest dance companies are Swiss nationals. In France, 27% of permanent dancers and 18% of intermittent dancers are foreigners; 47% have found work abroad during their careers. Such labor mobility adds to the challenges for design of social welfare programs to assist the career transition process. The difficult financial obstacles dancers already face during career transition are often exacerbated if they have performed in multiple countries, since benefit programs are typically tied to years of employment with a specific company or within a country. In the absence of a coordinated international program design, it can be anticipated that an increasing number of dancers will “fall through the cracks,” lacking equitable access to programs available to other workers. Some of the dancer career transition and retraining centers have begun to address this reality in their guidelines; for example, where there are qualifying criteria related to the number of years worked as a professional, there may be allowances permitting a certain percentage of work time to have been outside the country offering the benefits, without jeopardizing eligibility (for example: Dancer Transition Resource Centre in Canada, and Dancers’ Career Development in the United Kingdom).

DANCE SECTOR GROWTH:

In almost all countries studied, the dance sector has undergone significant growth in the past decade, with substantial increases in the number of dancers and dance companies in most countries. For example, in Canada, there was a 48% growth in dance companies and a 67% growth in the number of dancers; in The Netherlands, structurally subsidized companies increased 86% in number (from 242 to 450 companies). In the U.S., the nonprofit sector saw a 93% growth in the number of dance companies from

1987 to 1997, while the number of dancers increased 34% from 1990 to 2001. While these statistical findings positively point toward overall field vitality, they underscore the need for urgent action on transition issues, as sector growth will likely increase the population pool in need of assistance. Further, while the data point to growth in terms of the number of dancers and companies, there is also some evidence that salaries are not keeping pace, a development that may likewise have an impact on the ability of dancers to address career transition. In Canada, for example, wages and salaries for dance companies showed only very modest increases during the 1990s, prompting authors of a study by the Canada Council for the Arts to note, “One of the alarming statistics as far as dance artists are concerned in the finances of dance companies relates to wage and salary trends...When financial problems occur, payments to artists tend to be one of the first areas affected in dance.”

DANCER COMPENSATION:

The collective international data provide a distressing view of dancer compensation worldwide. “Dancers are not well remunerated when compared with other occupations requiring similar amounts of training,” the authors of *Making Changes* observe, and “are the most poorly paid artists.” For example, in Canada, dancers’ annual income, CA\$14,600 (U.S. \$11,000) in 2001, was less than half the annual average income for the entire labor force. In Australia, “the income of dancers is skewed toward the lower income groups with 33% earning less than AU \$10,000 (U.S. \$7,900) in 2000-2001.” In France, “dancers incomes are generally low, especially those not permanently employed with a company; one in five intermittent dancers earned less than 7,622 (U.S. \$9,600) in 2001, while 64% of dancers with permanent companies earned between 15,250 and 30,500 (U.S. \$19,397-\$39,187) in 2001. In Japan, dancers “earn less than other performers” and “in some case they even pay for their costumes, ticket quotas, and appearance fees.” In the U.S., the 1999 median annual wage for dancers was \$8,500 (NEA 2001).

A TIERED-ECOLOGY:

Although *Making Changes* reveals that there is considerable variability among countries in the ways dance activity is structured and supported, a basic tiered pattern is evident among ballet/modern dance companies, with important implications for the design and implementation of transition programs. Typically there are a limited number of large, stable, well-financed companies. These tend to attract the largest audiences, garner the most public and private support, generate the highest levels of earned income, provide the greatest number of work weeks for their dancers, and offer the strongest contract protections to their dancers. It is within some of these larger organizations that many of the most noteworthy company-based career transition practices are emerging. This is in part because of the size of their dancer population and their resource base, and in part a response to union advocacy and negotiation at the bargaining table. In some countries (England and The Netherlands, for example) government funding agencies mandate contributions by some companies into retraining funds as a condition of their government arts subsidy.

Complementing these more institutionalized organizations are smaller companies—equally vital artistically, but less well positioned to offer their members full-time, full-year contracts, not to mention pension protection and other benefits. Their dancers must often supplement dance wages with both arts and non-arts related employment—a trend noted in the majority of the country profiles. The criteria and structure of the grant programs of dancer career transition and retraining centers (discussed later in this document) include significant steps to address this tiered system, and to provide both employees and independent dancers with access to retraining and other resources.

Within the commercial dance arena there are likewise variations in the nature of employment opportunities: some dancers benefit from long-term ongoing employment with a single production or producing entity, while others work on a more intermittent basis with multiple employers.

SOCIAL WELFARE PROTECTIONS:

The country profiles indicate that there is tremendous variability in the access offered dancers to health care, unemployment insurance, disability, pension plans, and worker retraining. They range from public systems regulated by law to private plans. A number of general observations have been made about such programs. As noted in *The Dancer's Destiny*, in countries with state-regulated health care and unemployment systems, dancers who are steadily employed are in principle treated as other employees, but dancers often fail to fulfill strict eligibility requirements for unemployment insurance; in many countries, health care and social security are reserved for employees, and because many dancers in these countries work as freelancers, they are not eligible for insurance; national retraining schemes for the unemployed are rarely suitable for dancers who often need initial schooling to enter a new job market. While noting the limitations of many systems, *Making Changes* also identifies a number of promising practices, which entail flexible or specially-designed governmental programs that address the needs of artists (see Case Study #7).

Understanding The Terrain:

THE INDIVIDUAL DANCER SURVEYS

While the country profiles contained in *Making Changes* provide opportunities to compare and contrast socio-economic conditions across countries as they relate to transition, the aDvANCE Project's individual dancer surveys allow for the examination of career transition issues from the vantage point of the individual. A key component of the aDvANCE Project research was the dissemination of 3,000 dancer survey questionnaires to current and former dancers in three countries—U.S., Switzerland, and Australia. These three countries were selected for the survey because they represent diverse countries from three continents and because of their volume and variety of dance activity; the accessibility of desired information; and the availability of qualified local researchers. The survey targeted dancers in diverse genres: classical/ballet, modern/contemporary dance, organized indigenous or folk dance, musical theatre/commercial dance, and “other” (dancers working in other industries such as television, cinema, and corporate events).

The compilation and analysis of these surveys has produced a revealing statistical profile of the career challenges that individual dancers face as they undergo transition into activities and careers beyond active performing. Among the factors the research team looked at were employment patterns, population characteristics, career transition awareness, income data, and retraining efforts.

More specifically, the individual dancer surveys provide answers to such questions as: When do dancers begin training? How long does it last? How well do they feel they are being prepared for transition? What organizations and entities are perceived as being helpful? Do dancers have realistic expectations concerning career

transition challenges? What impact does retraining have on future income and job satisfaction?

TOWARDS A NEW CONCEPT OF TRANSITION

The results of the dancer surveys will be discussed below, along with related literature. It is useful to consider the research in terms of the three major phases of a dancer's life-journey. These major phases, as noted earlier, are:

KEY STAGES OF A DANCER'S LIFE JOURNEY

STAGE I: PREPARATION/TRAINING

STAGE II: PERFORMING/ PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

STAGE III: BEYOND PERFORMANCE/ TRANSITION

Too often transition is narrowly conceived to entail only the third phase of a dancer's life journey—that period when, by necessity or choice, the dancer finds that a performing career is coming to an end. This concept tends to marginalize the issue of dancer career transition. It relegates career transition issues to matters of secondary import—to be dealt with when and if resources allow. However, transition is organic and ongoing. At every phase of a dancer's life there are conditions and practices that combine to make the career transition process more difficult than need be. At every phase too, there are steps that can be taken to minimize the psychological, financial, and educational burdens of career transition and help dancers build a better future.

Likewise, a dancer's career is generally thought of as encompassing only Stage I and Stage II; but a shift toward seeing Stage III as part of the career process is merited. With this broadened concept comes new ways of looking at almost every aspect of a dancer's life—from what constitutes adequate preparation to what constitutes equitable contract negotiation.

Stage I: PREPARATION/TRAINING

“Schools should be places of transition for everyone in them, teaching that a dancer’s life will and should be ongoing change or transition, where each change, or death is an opportunity for rebirth.”

—Ross McKim,
Artistic Director,
Rambert School, London
excerpted from *The Dancer’s Destiny*

The first stage of a dancer’s life involves the preparation of the body—but also the mind and the spirit. Because preparation starts at such an early age, dance educators have a special responsibility to consider both what they are teaching and how they are teaching. Lessons learned in the dance studio do not just affect how a dancer points a foot, stretches a muscle, leaps through space, or ultimately interprets a role. On a daily basis, values are imparted—by the chosen scope of the curriculum, by the ways teachers talk to and respond to students, and by what is and is not actively discussed about practical aspects of a life in dance.

“What is required is a transition in our values,” affirmed a member of the aDvANCE project board in reflecting on the implications of the research. “Students need to be taught that they can have passion, drive, commitment and focus and still develop a broader understanding of the world. We need a larger view, so that from the earliest stages of their training students understand that they can grow as they grow older. Humanism and maturity can enhance and deepen what dancers can contribute to the field.” Parents too, need to be assured—in word and by deed—that early investments of time and money in dance training will yield a rich and rewarding life through all stages of a dancer’s career.

There are six aspects of a dancer’s preparation process that have special relevance in understanding the relationship between early preparation and career transition, and in understanding the implications of the findings from the aDvANCE Project’s individual dancer surveys. While the nature of training patterns differ from dance genre to dance genre (with ballet training generally being the most intensive), the following aspects of the training process at its most intensive are worthy of note, and surface to varying degrees in most forms of training:

ASPECTS OF DANCE TRAINING THAT INFLUENCE TRANSITION READINESS

Early Commencement

Intensity and Specificity of Focus

Identity Formation/Self-Confidence

Student-Teacher Dynamics

Curriculum Scope

Skills Transfer

Early Commencement: The aDvANCE Report confirms that dancers begin their careers at a relatively young age; have an intense and focused training period, which is followed by transition to a professional career approximately a decade later. Statistical findings were fairly consistent across the three surveyed countries:

- Mean age at which training begins: 10 years (U.S.), 10 years (Switzerland), 9 years (Australia)
- Mean age for first professional engagement: 18 years (U.S.), 20 years (Switzerland), 18 years (Australia)
- Mean age for career commencement: 19 years (U.S.), 21 years (Switzerland), 20 years (Australia)
- First Earned Income: 19 years (U.S.), 21 years (Switzerland), 20 years (Australia)

What is especially pertinent about these statistics is that they underscore that training unfolds in the formative pre-teen and teen years. The training academy takes on the role of surrogate family. At a time when most adolescents are just beginning to contemplate future plans, dancers have made their career commitments; they are actualizing plans and realizing dreams. This is a rewarding experience, but one that can take its toll in later years because of the degree to which professional and psychological development are so deeply intertwined at an early age.

Intensity and Specificity of Focus: As dancers move through the training process, they must increase their daily time commitment to their chosen art—typically from three to five hours per day of studio instruction alone when a dancer is on the cusp of entering the profession, plus time devoted to related conditioning activities (swimming, stretching, yoga) and pre-professional performing activities. Their world becomes more insular as dancers find they must give up “other things”—pursuit of a traditional academic education, socialization with peers with broad and differing backgrounds and interests; opportunities to develop other skills and interests, especially basic “life skills” from driving a car to managing a check book. In the aDvANCE

Project's individual dancer surveys, respondents frequently chose to comment on this aspect of their training in open-ended questions.

- *Dancers expressed a desire for educators to inform students more fully about career realities:* Typical of such comments was the following: “The outside interests of dancers should be fostered and cultivated early in their careers. This helps to avoid the ‘trapped by dance—all I can do’—that causes desperation later in many dancers.”

- *Dancers indicated that the narrow focus of the early preparation process did not serve them well in later years.* Typical of their comments was the following by a survey respondent: “My feeling is it is unfair for parents and/or dance educators to allow a young dancer to stop exploring other interests and talents, seriously, all through their dance career. I was faced with having no clue about alternatives. I was a dancer, period.”

Identity Formation/Self-Confidence: In an insular culture where little else is valued beyond dance, dancers can internalize a very limiting self concept about who they are and who they have the capacity to become. “The danger in the development of the young dancer is that if the child’s identity as a dancer is reinforced almost exclusively, then the child’s sense of self-esteem will be contingent on her/his success or failure as a dancer,” notes a 1989 study on dancer transition (*A Report Investigating the Needs of Professional Dancers Making Career Transitions*, Australia Arts Council). For this reason, those who work with dancers in transition—psychiatrists, career counselors, and independent career transition and retraining agencies—have called upon dance educators to help dancers broaden their self concept—from “I am a dancer” to “I am a creative artist who dances.” This reformulation—with its more positive, accurate and productive resonance—can enhance psychological readiness to deal with transition in later years. Given the links the aDvANCE Project’s research identified between preparedness and second-career job satisfaction, this is especially important.

- A mean of 84% of dancers who identified themselves as “fully prepared” for transition indicated job satisfaction with their post-transition career, whereas of those who identified themselves as being “not fully prepared” for transition only 51% reported being satisfied or somewhat satisfied with their post-transition career.

A related psychological issue is that career commitment in dance, from the earliest stages, is often fueled by passion, rather than an analytic assessment of the field’s economic reward system. Over time, dancers may experience a gap between what is validated and supported in the culture at large and the values that fueled their initial career choice. This may pose challenges to their sense of self-confidence as they initiate the process of exploring second career choices.

Student-Teacher Dynamics: Traditionally, dance has been authority-directed, and this aspect of the preparation process has come under increasing scrutiny, both by those committed to dancer career transition issues and those seeking to develop artists who will be more self-empowered and creative. “One outcome of their training is that they are accustomed to being instructed, directed and corrected,” notes Stanley Greben, Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry at the University of Toronto. “They ...often do not feel autonomously competent, but depend too much on the leadership and opinions of others.” A growing body of research within general education circles has prompted a movement away from teaching approaches with authority completely vested in the teacher (often dubbed the “chalk and talk” approach) to one where students play a more active role in the learning process. “Life-long learning starts with teaching students how to ask questions,” noted a representative of the Theatre Academy of Finland at a recent conference of the International Organization for the Transition of Professional Dancers.

This pedagogical shift is only beginning to make itself felt within some dance studio and training environments, but with important and positive consequences for the psychological development of dancers and the cultivation of readiness to face later career challenges. Here, professional development opportunities for teachers are especially warranted, so teachers have opportunities to examine, rather than simply replicate, the teaching methods with which they grew up.

Curriculum Scope: As noted, until recently what constituted sound preparation for a dance career tended to be quite narrowly conceived. Academic subjects were given short shrift, the development of practical career-building skills went unaddressed, and efforts to deal with career transition issues in the early stages of training were largely absent. There has been notable attitudinal and programmatic change in this area, especially with regard to academic instruction. Also, in countries where career transition and retraining centers for dancers are in place there has been increased collaborative programming between centers and schools to address curriculum gaps related to transition.

Dancers across all three surveyed countries called for curriculum adjustments that would allow dancers to develop a greater awareness of transition and fuller readiness to meet its challenges.

- Curriculum Considerations:* 80.5% of surveyed current and former dancers agree/strongly agree that information about transition should be integrated into dance training, with the following breakdowns: 85.1 % (Australia), 83.1% (Switzerland), and 73.2% (U.S.).

- Transition Awareness:* On average, 66% of current and former dancers agree/strongly agree that dancers are unaware of the challenges of transition, with the following breakdowns: 65.6% (Australia), 56.1% (Switzerland), 75% (U.S.).

•*Adequacy of Preparation:* Over 75% of surveyed current and former dancers agreed/strongly agreed that most dancers are not adequately prepared to meet the challenges: 76.6% (Australia), 79.8% (Switzerland) and 82.9% (U.S.).

Skills Transfer: While a number of attributes of a dancer’s preparation process can undermine transition readiness in later years, there are also many ways in which a first career in dance is ideal preparation of the world of work. Dance training—as has been pointed out in many research studies—leaves dancers with an extraordinary array of skills that are highly valued in the workplace, but often too little understood—both by the dancers themselves and by potential employers. Psychologists and career counselors have identified the following dancer attributes as especially valuable for a dancer’s workplace marketability.

SKILLS DEVELOPED BY DANCERS THROUGH THEIR TRAINING PROCESS

Communication Skills
Competitiveness
Cooperation
Leadership
Personal Presentation
Physical Self-Confidence
Mental and Physical Dexterity
Self Discipline
Stamina/Persistence
Creative Problem-Solving
Time Management

Yet, “dancers commonly see themselves as much less talented and able to learn in areas other than dancing than they in fact are,” according to the psychological literature of the field. This insecurity stands in the face of hard evidence; studies show that dancers often excel in academic settings, and, on average, rank in the top 15% of the population on intelligence tests.

•Survey respondents agreed/strongly agreed that many dancers do not realize that skills are transferable to other occupations: 53.3% (Australia), 68.4% (Switzerland), 83.3% (U.S.).

•The skill dancers are most likely to recognize as being useful to them in later years is self-discipline; 81% of survey respondents in all three surveyed countries indicated they believed this would be useful to them, far out-ranking such skills as communication and leadership. The highest percentage of dancers also identified this as the “most important” skill: 47% (Australia), 32.3% (Switzerland), and 55.7% (U.S.).

THE DANCE FIELD RESPONDS: PROMISING PRACTICES/STAGE I: PREPARATION

The research from the aDvANCE Project suggests that long before dancers approach active career transition—even long before they step onto the stage for their first professional engagement—the seeds for an effective transition should be planted. Training academies have special roles and responsibilities here: if dancers enter the dance marketplace with myopia about what is in store for their careers, they will have been ill-served by their training process; if the preparation process champions insularity over a more expansive world view, opportunities to prepare students responsibly for 21st century careers on the stage and 21st century lives off the stage will have been neglected. While it is true that dancers may be reluctant to hear about transition when they have yet even to achieve their primary dance-related career goal, this does not obviate the need for dance educators to address this issue in a focused and committed way.

What is needed is a shift in the way the entire preparation process is conceptualized—from a *training* model, somewhat narrowly conceived, to an *education* model, far more expansive in its pedagogic aspirations.

The aDvANCE Project's research study, *Making Changes*, cites many ways this is being achieved, including:

- **training institutions partnering with public and private schools** to strengthen academic instruction. This trend is much in evidence in certain academies affiliated with classical ballet companies in Austria, Belgium, France, Sweden, and the United Kingdom; likewise many U.S.-based classical ballet schools have taken steps to address the academic needs of students during their high-school years, and sometimes on the middle-school level (among them, Miami City Ballet School, School of American Ballet, Ballet Tech Foundation, Harid Conservatory, and The Rock School);
- **dual-track instruction**, whereby dancers are simultaneously prepared for careers as dancers and as teachers (for example, those programs previously in place in Mexico at Escuela del Ballet Folklorico de Mexico de Amalia Hernandez and Escuela Nacional de Danza Clasica y Contemporanea); this approach readies dancers for a fluid transition to a second career in dance education without need for extensive retraining;
- **classical training institutions that offer an “enriched curriculum,”** which includes studies in other dance genres; course work in music, dance history, and related arts; health and wellness courses; and marketplace readiness skills (for example: Institute for Ballet in Belgium, Pacific Northwest Ballet in the United States, National Ballet School, Canada); the success rates of graduates from such schools in finding professional employment suggest that enrichment can enhance rather than compromise the artistic quality of instruction;

- **joint-degree programs between training institutions and universities** (for example: Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre/Fordham University), which provide opportunities to combine one's final years of advanced dance training with a college degree program—this approach is typically better suited to modern dance training where dancers can sometimes enter the professional arena at a somewhat later age. Such efforts also enhance recruitment efforts, as parents may be more ready to support their child's ongoing study if a “back-up” plan (that is, academic readiness to pursue alternative careers) is an integral aspect of the training process;

- **mentorship programs** (for example: Arts Educational School, Tring Park, Hertfordshire, United Kingdom), which bring students into contact with former dancers who have successfully undergone transition to other fields. Such real-world encounters help break down the mythology and misinformation about transferable skills and can provide inspiring role models; and

- **curriculum extensions** through partnership with career transition and retraining centers, which prepare students for their first major “transition”—from student life to professional careers (for example, in Canada, Dancer Transition Resource Centre (DTRC) conducts “On the MOVE” conferences that target students across the country as they transition from the world of student life to their professional careers; in the U.S., Career Transition For Dancers (CTFD) has developed and implemented a two-day intensive program for university-based dance majors, which it plans to replicate at colleges and universities across the country).

Two examples of such programs in action follow; they are suggestive of the kinds of programs that are being put in place in many training environments across the globe. Many more examples can be found in *Making Changes*, as well as in publications issued by the International Organization for the Transition of Professional Dancers.

In their call for a shift toward a more holistic approach to dancer preparation, career transition advocates are not alone. Some artistic directors are sounding the same urgent call for a broader and more empowering education on the theory that it fosters artistry and helps cultivate that creative spark that sets apart the ordinary from the extraordinary dancer. In short, effective preparation for career transition is closely aligned with emerging thinking about what constitutes effective preparation for a performing career.

CASE STUDY #1**Reading Students for a Life Journey in Dance:
Canada's National Ballet School**

Canada's National Ballet School characterizes its primary goal as follows: "to educate healthy, critically thoughtful artists who will expand the parameters of classical ballet as an art form." The statement is revealing, with its up-front reference to "healthy" and "critically thoughtful artists" and its stated commitment to preparing artists not simply to fit into a pre-existing mold but to in some ways shape and "expand" the very art form for which they are training. The curriculum is broad-based and includes both artistic and academic training (grades 6-12). By integrating academic studies and dance education, the school's leadership believes it can "make a difference in whether they [dancers] see themselves as technicians or as artists who have something to contribute to the art form." Critical components of the curriculum, in addition to academics and technique classes, include classes in historical dance, drama and expression, composition, music, art history, nutrition, neuromuscular understanding and emotional counseling.

To provide critically important life-skills training, a team of psychiatrists meets with students in a class setting on a regular basis and makes itself available to students upon request. This not only gives students an opportunity to address psychological issues, it also empowers them to be more verbally assertive and confident about articulating needs and viewpoints—skills that will serve them well in later life, whatever their chosen career path.

In addition, through a formalized career planning program, each student, in consultation with the program manager, formulates a plan that outlines the type of job search he/she plans to undertake and the steps that will be taken to achieve career goals. At an early age, students are given tools and provided with active encouragement to take charge of their own lives. Teachers meet on a regular basis to discuss student progress and teaching approaches collaboratively. Another important component of the school is its Teacher Training Program, available to adults 18 years and older. Partnership programs with York University in Toronto and Simon Fraser University in Vancouver provide opportunities for students to obtain an advanced academic degree.

CASE STUDY #2**Early Planning for Post-Performance Careers****Arts Educational School, Tring Park, Hertfordshire, United Kingdom**

The Arts Educational School recognizes that a professional dance career, no matter how successful or long-running, will eventually come to an end. In preparation for this inevitability, there is a career planning process in place that all students pass through before they graduate the school. Once a student reaches age 16, focused planning begins; in consultation with faculty, students choose a field for advanced academic “A” level studies. For example, students with interest in and aptitude for science may be directed toward the field of dance medicine; those with strength in the visual arts may be introduced to stage, costume and lighting design; those with business aptitude may be made aware of career opportunities in arts management. Once academic choices are made, the faculty meets three times a year with students for two years to monitor progress, to encourage students to pursue work experiences that match their interests, and to explore opportunities for further study at the university level. “Parents are very appreciative of the future planning,” notes the school’s Director of Dance. An informal mentorship program also helps ready students for their future in and outside the field. “We bring back older students,” says the Director. “These students describe how they have survived in the first five years out in the real world and the reality of the future.”

Reflecting of the value of the program the school’s leadership notes, “I would say that it is really worth it. ...It helps to attract students and to maintain relationships with alumni. Eventually our alumni come back and speak to students and provide jobs for current graduates. It is a long-term investment and it is simply good practice.”

Stage II: PERFORMING CAREER/PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

“Dancers do not fully explore career options whilst dancing for fear that it will jeopardize their career.”

—aDvANCE survey respondent, Australia

“All arts professionals need to learn how to be as financially disciplined as we are in our craft.”

—aDvANCE survey respondent, U.S.

“Professional reorientation is a hard and long challenge. A challenge which in any case demands personal reevaluation, lots of patience, and, unfortunately, too much money.”

—aDvANCE survey respondent, Switzerland

As a career, dance offers extraordinary creative rewards to its practitioners—the joys of having one’s life work center around something for which one feels great passion; the sense of fulfillment and inspiration that comes from carrying forth and contributing to an art form that has such deep cultural and historical roots; and the emotional and psychological rewards that arise from knowing that you are enriching the lives of fellow citizens. “We come to dance for many different reasons and in so many ways,” the co-founder of Royal Winnipeg Ballet has written. “For the drama, the athletics, the beauty . . . But it is the art that counts for everything in the end.”

Yet, broad cultural respect and validation—especially in the form of financial compensation and worker protection—tend to be absent. “Dancers are seen as romantic figures by some and as people who play rather than work by many others,” notes Stanley Greben, Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry at the University of Toronto. “Considering the years of sustained effort that are required to build their careers, dancers too often are insufficiently respected.”

Five aspects of the professional phase of a dancer’s life are especially pertinent when considering transition issues:

CAREER COMPONENTS THAT AFFECT READINESS FOR TRANSITION

Low Compensation Levels
Short Career Duration
Unstable Employment Patterns
Management Support/Understanding
Absence of Contractual Protections
Insularity/Information Gaps

Low Compensation Levels: As has been noted, dancers are poorly compensated in comparison to other arts disciplines and to the general workforce. The individual dancer surveys echoed the economic data related to salaries that emerged from the country profiles:

- The median income of current dancers in U.S. dollars for creative work as a dancer ranges from \$10,668 in Australia (\$AU 15,000), to \$12,000 in the U.S., to \$23,416 in Switzerland (\$30,500 Swiss francs). The mean income of current dancer in U.S. dollars for work as dancer is \$15,011 in Australia (\$AU 21,110), \$24,584 in Switzerland (\$32,002 Swiss francs), and \$20,251 in the U.S.
- Given these low compensation levels, dancers frequently must supplement their income with other paid work—either in an arts-related or non arts-related field. In the three countries surveyed, current dancers' income from other sources ranged from 25% (Switzerland), to 36% (Australia), to 42% (U.S.) of their mean total income. This places extraordinary demands on dancers, since the daily time commitment dancers must make to their art includes performance, rehearsal, technique class, and physical conditioning.
- A significant percentage of current dancers anticipated that they would either be making more as a dancer than they actually were or were uncertain about compensated levels before they entered the field: For current dancers: 39% (Australia), 43% (Switzerland), and 38% (U.S.). This suggests that many dancers are unprepared for the harsh financial realities of their field.

Short Career Duration: On average, according to the individual surveys, a dancer's career will last approximately 13.5 years. This compounds the problem of low income, because dancers have a relatively short span of time during which they are able to accumulate savings that might cushion them during the inevitable time when they will move to another field of endeavor. Another troubling sign is the apparent decline in the average age of dancer retirement, according to research by the four dancer career transition and retraining centers, a trend which further limits the ability of dancers to prepare financially for their third major life stage.

- Surveyed dancers underestimated their number of productive work years by 6 to 15 years. Comparisons of projected mean age of retirement by current dancers, versus actual years of dancing by former dancers were as follows:

Australia: expected—46.6 years; actual—32.2 years

Switzerland: expected—40.9 years; actual—34.6 years

U.S.: expected—40.9 years; actual—33.9 years

Unstable Employment Patterns: Dancers' employment patterns tend to be unstable. They are often self-employed, or can be self-employed and employees at the same time. Many experience fluctuations in income levels from year to year or season to season. Full-year contracts, providing security for the duration of a career up to a fixed pension age of 40 to 45 are scarce, available only to dancers of the major, generally classical, state-subsidized companies in countries such as France, The Netherlands, and Italy.

An increasingly common career pattern of employment is one where dancers audition regularly for short-term contracts or single productions. An insufficient amount of working time per year often limits or blocks access to health insurance, workers' compensation, unemployment benefits, and pension coverage. International mobility of the dancer workforce further complicates the ability of dancers to qualify for government-supported benefits.

- The average percentage of work time that dancers are able to devote to their creative work (performing, rehearsing, class) ranges from 51.4% (Australia) to 76.9% (Switzerland) to 60.4% (U.S.).

- The mean number of compensated weekly hours of dance employment of surveyed dancers ranges from 19.9 hours (Australia), to 30 hours (Switzerland), to 23.1 hours (U.S.).

- A significant percentage of the survey sample report 20 hours or less of weekly paid work from dance as follows: 59% (Australia), 31% (Switzerland), and 43% (U.S.).

Management Support/Understanding: An important finding in *Making Changes* is that in all three surveyed countries dancers indicated that within the company environment they generally did not feel well supported by company managers or artistic directors with regard to the career transition process, especially in comparison to the support they received from outside sources.

- Among former dancers, 12–30% identified artistic directors and company management as being supportive, while 66–88% of former dancers indicated that friends, family, and partner/spouse were supportive.

STAGE II.

The findings indicate that alternative support networks—such as family, friends, spouse and “other sources”—typically provide the backbone of dancers’ support system during career transition. But they also point to an area that merits attention and action on the part of dance community. How can a more supportive environment be developed within the company structure?

One answer can be found in the ongoing work of the existing career transition and retraining centers: their efforts to raise awareness of the issue within the company environment are yielding important changes in this area. Knowledge and awareness of the challenge is a first step in developing appropriate programs and services.

Although the data suggest that current dancers do not have especially high expectations concerning the level of internal company support they will receive, reality tends to fall short of their expectations.

Given that post-career planning may not be met with support within the internal company environment, it is crucial that dancers have a “safe-haven” where they can seek confidential support, advice, and assistance. Independent career transition and retraining centers can and do play this important role, but currently exist in only four countries.

Absence of Contractual Protections: As has been noted, dancers are disadvantaged when it comes to government-sponsored pension schemes, health insurance, and access to unemployment insurance. In some countries dancers, like other self-employed workers, can elect to contribute to pension plans but their required contributions far exceed those of workers with employee status. Because of their comparatively low salaries and the part-time nature of their work, eventual pensions will be very low. Further, professional dancers who are forced to retire in their 30s because of age or injury can be left waiting for many years to qualify for their pension benefits. In a few national companies (those of Austria, France, and the Scandinavian countries, for example) there are contract provisions whereby dancers can receive an early partial pension.

Providing dancers with early access to pension, however, should be considered a stop-gap measure at best. It can cannibalize a needed benefit (pension for old age) to address another entirely different, specialized, and legitimate need. To satisfy a career transition need, a dancer should not need to exhaust a pension, which is intended to support the worker when he/she is fully retired from the workforce. Such use of pension undermines the dignity of the dancer’s career, which like any other profession, should afford the worker security in his/her old age. Exit pay clauses, which in the U.S. began to make their appearance in some contracts starting in the late 1980s (and then only in the contracts of the largest companies), are a step in the right direction, but the benefit provided is generally not of sufficient size to cover transition and subsistence needs adequately after retirement from dancing.

Insularity/Information Gaps: Overall, the research suggests that dancers are not well informed about the career challenges they will face once they leave the field. There is a kind of “career myopia” that begins in the earliest stages of training and is reinforced during the years of professional performance—except where there is direct intervention to address this. The authors of *Making Changes* make the following observation concerning how well informed dancers are about transition:

- “Most current dancers claim to be aware of the challenges that will face them when transition occurs. However this awareness may be more imagined than real. With the benefit of hindsight, former dancers acknowledge that they were not well prepared.”

THE DANCE FIELD RESPONDS: PROMISING PRACTICES/STAGE II: PERFORMING/ONGOING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Dance companies have an especially important role to play in the ecology of developing career transition-related support structures. Companies provide dancers with an “artistic home”—whether the company affords its dancers full-year, long-term contracts or work on a more seasonal and intermittent basis. Between performances, rehearsals, ongoing training, and other daily dance-related activities, dancers have very limited time available to devote to retraining or pursuit of academic studies.

The aDvANCE data suggest that companies have many potential roles to play in this arena, with action especially warranted in the form of: programs and services to facilitate early retraining; contractual support in the form of exit pay provisions (as separate from pension provisions), retraining savings accounts (with employee matching components, a benefit that may need to be enacted through government legislation); and more equitable compensation, which recognizes that a dancer’s professional career in dance includes a retraining period and accordingly, that wages will need to be amortized over a period that extends beyond the performance period. For approximately 60% of former dancers surveyed, this retraining period lasted from one to four years; more than 20% required more than four years to complete their retraining.

Making Changes takes note of many important ways companies are beginning to take a more activist role in addressing transition. These include:

- **Financial support for retraining:** Companies have established retraining funds that company members can make use of to help cover the costs of early retraining in the form of grants for academic study or skills development (among those cited in *Making Changes* are Australia Ballet, Houston Ballet, Royal Ballet, Radio City Rockettes, Birmingham Royal Ballet, New York City Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, and Pacific Northwest Ballet). Some funds are structured to address the retraining of dancers while they are still performing with the company; others are also available to dancers for a designated time period after they leave.

STAGE II.

These funds are financed in a number of ways: start-up grants from the company, independent fundraising by the board from public and private sources, contributions by dancers in the form of proceeds from benefit performances, and penalty payments by management as mandated by contractual negotiation when there are work-rule violations. Because audiences often develop special loyalties toward a particular company and its dancers, there may be unique opportunities to cultivate individual donor support programs for company-based career transition programs.

• **Logistical and material support for retraining:** Companies have worked collaboratively with nearby colleges and universities to address scheduling issues (courses are typically held on days that do not conflict with performance schedules and are sometimes conducted on-site at the company's facilities). Companies sometimes also negotiate tuition discounts for their members.

• **Collaborative efforts:** Companies have contributed to pooled streams of money that their collective members can tap to finance retraining. For example, in the United Kingdom, nine companies make mandated contributions into a Fund that supports retraining and is operated by the national dancer retraining center. In The Netherlands, state-subsidized companies and their dancers make mandated contributions into a fund, which supports the training and subsistence needs of dancers who perform in those companies upon retirement from performing. In Canada, companies match the individual dancer's membership contribution to the career transition centre. (See Case Study #8 for more details.)

Dance companies have a powerful role to play in advancing the cause of career transition beyond implementing much-needed programs, services, and contract provisions. Because of their public visibility they can become powerful advocates for the importance of addressing the transition challenges dancers will face during *all* stages of their career.

Two case studies that follow illustrate company-based programs in action.

CASE STUDY #3:**Dance Company-Based Support for Retraining
New York City Ballet's *Dance On* Program**

New York City Ballet is dedicated to making education affordable for active dancers and to providing them with opportunities to explore alternative careers during their off season. The “Dance On” program was developed in 1992 with critical financial and planning support from a company board member and his wife, stemming from their love of dance and their admiration for the company. Working directly with nearby Fordham University, a program was developed that provided company members with the opportunity to take classes on Monday night, generally a non-performance evening for the company. Dance On covers up to 80 percent of tuition costs, not exceeding \$1,750 per term. The fund also covers opportunities for retraining at other academic institutions, vocational facilities, or with accredited private instructors. Awards, provided during dancers’ working careers, are based on financial need, which is determined by an independent committee and are paid directly to the school attended. Dancers may pursue courses of their own choice and each scholarship award is renewable, contingent upon the individual dancer’s plans and availability of funds.

The program gives dancers a head-start on their transition plans, helping them accumulate credits toward a college degree before retirement and/or exposing them to new areas of potential career endeavor. “It would have been very difficult to pursue a career in law without the head-start this program provided,” commented a former New York City Ballet dancer who participated. There is an “opportunity cost” that comes with pursuing a dance career; and dancers in transition, because they are older, often come to their second career with family or other obligations. Opportunities to accelerate the retraining process are therefore especially important.

Many U.S. and U.K. companies have followed suit, developing similarly structured programs: these tend to be a “win-win” situation for the collaborators. Companies gain an opportunity to offer a desirable benefit to their members, while the collaborating academic institution is able to diversify its student body, attract high-performing students, and reap considerable public relations benefits in the local community for a relatively modest financial investment.

CASE STUDY #4:
Preparing for a Second Career
Australian Ballet

The Australian Ballet's Retraining Assistance Fund was established by the Australian Ballet in the early 1990s and made its first grant to a dancer in 1995. The Fund assists employees of the Australian Ballet with payment of fees for courses intended to prepare them for new careers—particularly dancers who wish to retire from full-time dancing.

The Fund is managed by an Advisory Committee, appointed by the Board of the Australian Ballet, and is made up of company board members, a current and former employee of the Australian Ballet, and an independent convener. The company administers the Advisory Committee.

The fund received an initial contribution of \$10,000 from the Australian Ballet, and has subsequently raised additional money from individuals, corporations, and trust funds; grants from the government; special events; and a performance (no more than one per year) added to the company's normal schedule to raise income for the Fund. The Fund is administered as a capital endowment, whose earnings provide the money for its operation.

Any employee of the Australian Ballet who has at least eight years of service (of which at least five years are continuous) is eligible to apply for assistance from the Fund. The application must be submitted while the dancer is still an employee of the company or within one year of leaving the company. The applicant proposes a bona fide course of study. If satisfied with the application, the Committee can make a grant not exceeding AU\$4,750 (U.S. \$3,436). Each applicant is entitled to only one grant from the Fund. The grant is paid directly to the institution offering the course, covering no more than 60 percent of total fees (defined as tuition, accommodation, and other course-related fees).

Stage III: BEYOND PERFORMANCE/TRANSITION

“The heart of the issue of transition for dancers is inextricably linked to the place of the artist in society. The arts, and dance in particular, defy all commonly held beliefs regarding success. In the dance world it is perfectly possible to be at the top of your profession and not be earning a living wage.”

—Joysanne Sidimus,
executive director and founder,
Dancer Transition Resource Centre,
Canada

By choice or necessity there comes a point in a dancer’s life where difficult choices about “next steps” will need to be made and implemented. Some will be “pushed out” of dancing—by injury or dwindling employment opportunities; others will be “pulled out”—by growing desire for new and different experiences. The field literature suggests that dancers who are “pulled out” tend to weather the transition more successfully. Regardless of what triggers a dancer’s exit from performing to the next career stage, certain critical factors will come into play, including the following:

IMPLEMENTING TRANSITION PLANS

Timeline Considerations

The “Triad of Needs”

(Financial, Psychological, and Educational)

Retraining Avenues

Career Transition Options

Advocacy Essentials

Timeline Considerations: Formal transition is not something that unfolds according to a set scenario. Dancers may move in and out of the dance field over a period of years before they make a total break with performing. “Shifts in focus occur and it is possible to move between periods of dance-oriented work and other work,” wrote a survey respondent in Australia, echoing an observation made by many current and former dancers. “One is in a constant state of transition,” indicated another. “Projects are short, work in between difficult to negotiate in terms of time and knowing who will get funding and when, [which] leads to an inability to plan an aspect of your life.”

Research suggests that some dancers—by temperament and circumstance—will be served by pursuing early retraining while still performing. This can help build self-confidence for the transition process and helps dispel myths about academic competence (for example, New York City Ballet students consistently achieved grade point averages above the 90th percentile when pursuing academic training during their performing careers). Especially for dancers who choose second careers that require post-graduate training, an early start on the transition process is important, reducing the number of years between gainful employment in one’s first and second career. In some cases, early retraining (especially getting a head-start on obtaining one’s undergraduate degree), can make the difference in whether a dancer can even consider certain career paths that necessitate post-graduate training.

The “Triad of Needs” (Financial, Psychological, and Educational): The period when a dancer ceases to perform can be one of tremendous psychological vulnerability, as well financial uncertainty. It is one thing to have contemplated change in the abstract, it is another to find oneself suddenly outside the world that has shaped one’s values and provided a social support structure from a young age. The dancer surveys reveal that dancers fully expect that they will face multiple needs—financial, psychological, and educational—when they embark upon career transition, but data also suggest that dancers tend especially to underestimate the role psychological issues will play.

Specifically, surveyed former dancers indicated the following about the major challenges they faced.

- U.S. former dancers identified loss of income as the single greatest problem (22.1%) followed by physical problems (16.2%), deciding what to do next (16.2%), and emotional emptiness (16.2%).
- Former dancers from Australia similarly singled out these four challenges as being especially significant, ranking them as follows: income loss (16.5%), physical problems (16.5%), decisions about next steps (21.5%), emotional emptiness (11.6%), and “other challenges” (15.7%).
- Former dancers in Switzerland encountered a somewhat different hierarchy of needs, with income concerns being somewhat less pressing than the other countries. The major challenges singled out were physical problems (26.3%), emotional problems (19.3%), “other challenges” (16.7%), and loss of income (11.4%).

The research also indicates significant concerns about health problems. In this regard, it is worth noting that a number of companies have introduced “healthy dancer” conditioning programs for their company members—an important and beneficial trend—and that Canada’s transition center recently conceived and help open a health and wellness center for members of the entire artistic community to address the holistic needs of artists more effectively.

Retraining Avenues: The authors of *Making Changes* looked closely at the relative merits of various approaches to retraining, as measured by whether dancers were able to equal or exceed their income from dance, and over what time period. They concluded that there is “no one size fits all” approach, noting the following:

- Early retraining is by no means the only answer, since a majority of dancers who did not undergo such training nevertheless finished up with a higher income than when they were dancing.
- Post-transition retraining entails a serious financial penalty soon after transition, in part because of the cost of retraining. However, this disadvantage disappears in the longer term as the benefit of higher incomes due to retraining takes effect. (When dancers have access to retraining and subsistence funds this penalty can be minimized.)
- The financial resources available for retraining in the countries surveyed are generally inadequate. The mean cost of retraining in Australia was AU\$11,000 (U.S. \$8,800), CHF18,000 (U.S.\$14,000) in Switzerland, and \$27,000 in the U.S. The majority of former dancers in all three countries financed their further education with their own funds (51% in Australia, 49% in Switzerland, and 52% in the U.S). In countries such as Canada, The Netherlands and the U.K., the availability of significant retraining and subsistence grants can minimize the need for large personal financial investments by dancers.
- A greater percentage of the dancers who said they were aware of career transition challenges also reported greater increases in income than did those not very aware of them.

The surveys also indicate that most dancers will turn to family and friends for help in financing their retraining, a finding that points toward the need for more programs and services that provide retraining and subsistence assistance—whatever the time frame during which it is undertaken.

Career Transition Options: Data from the three-surveyed countries indicate that the majority of dancers in the survey sample who had undergone transition tended to gravitate toward dance-related fields—especially teaching. These findings stand in contrast to the research that is beginning to emerge from studies conducted by the independent career transition and retraining centers in Canada, the U.S., the U.K., and The Netherlands.

Where transition centers and programs are present, dancers appear more likely to choose non-dance related careers. For example, the career transition center in the U.S. reports that only 7.3% of dancers awarded education grants and scholarship between 1997 and 2003 pursued dance-related fields. In Canada, the transition center reports that currently only 8% of grant recipients use their grant awards for study in dance-related fields.

STAGE III.

As the authors of *Making Changes* note, “their programs [those of career transition and retraining centers] have freed dancers from pressures to seek a new career primarily in a dance-related field and have made it possible for dancers to find rewarding second careers in other respected professions.”

Advocacy Essentials: One of the major hurdles dancers face is the inflexibility of government programs that might assist them with their retraining efforts. For example, in Switzerland, there are governmental programs to retrain unemployed workers and help move them into more viable second careers. However, dancers often find it difficult to qualify because the fund supports training only for a “second career.” Dance, however, is often not recognized as a first career because it is not a pursuit for which dancers receive an official diploma and the retraining program does not pay for a “first education.” Extensive advocacy before government officials has therefore been necessary to help dancers obtain program benefits. “Equity of treatment requires differential treatment,” explains an advocate of dancer rights in Switzerland.

In other fields, it has been recognized that the demands of a specific job necessitate adjustments in federal support systems, but this kind of understanding has yet to be applied to the problems of dancers: in Canada, for example, there are provisions that give self-employed fishers access to unemployment insurance and there are income stabilization programs for farmers in the form of specialized savings funds. Although dancers share these workers’ patterns of self-employment and unstable income, such worker protections have yet to be extended to the field.

THE DANCE FIELD RESPONDS: PROMISING PRACTICES/ STAGE III: BEYOND PERFORMING/TRANSITION

As has been noted, moving “beyond performance” is something that needs to be dealt with as an ongoing, organic process that begins early, continues throughout a lifetime, and is addressed at all stages of a dancer’s life journey. Still, as dancers enter the most active phase of their transition, they more directly confront the challenges of finding employment, identifying ways to finance retraining, and addressing issues of subsistence while they are in retraining. Here agencies and organizations outside the places where dancers have been nurtured as artists begin to take on an increasingly important role. The aDvANCE Project has identified four avenues of support as especially significant during this stage of a dancer’s life journey.

- **Independent Career Transition and Retraining Centers**, which are uniquely positioned to address dancer transition because they can develop programs and services targeting multiple stages of a dancer’s career in a coordinated and confidential manner. In their respective locales, dancer career transition and retraining centers have the capacity to monitor and assess program efficacy in a focused way and undertake localized research that can form the basis of advocacy efforts. The important and influential roles of these independent centers are discussed beginning on page 41 of this document.

• **Flexible College and University Degree Programs**, which target the needs of “non-traditional” students and provide credits for “life-experience.” Such programs allow dancers to obtain advanced academic credentials at an accelerated and more affordable rate. Dancers seeking arts-related second careers—especially teaching in university settings where degrees are often a condition for employment—have found such programs to be especially well suited to their needs, as have dancers in transition who seek professional employment that will require a graduate degree (although not all post-graduate programs recognize life-experience credits). The growing presence of on-line learning options has also opened opportunities for dancers to pursue retraining in a more flexible and accelerated manner (examples of colleges that have designed flexible degree programs include: St. Mary’s College of California, U.S. Middlesex University, U.K., Cornish School of the Arts, U.S., and Empire State College, U.S.).

• **On-the-Job Arts Management and Leadership Training Programs**, which offer dancers time-limited, paid work fellowships at cultural organizations, where they can gain the necessary skills to build careers in arts administration. Since for many dancers career transition occurs at an age or a stage of life at which they cannot afford to go back to school (they may have obligations to support a family, for example), such programs can provide critical field entry points. In a number of countries studied by the aDvANCE Project, there is escalating concern about the “crisis” in administrative leadership, especially the cultivation of a next generation of people who will select arts administration as their career. Here the field’s need to strengthen its leadership capacity fortuitously overlaps with the needs of dancers who seek second careers in arts administration. (Examples of such programs are those developed by the U.S.-based Ford Foundation and U.K.-based Clore Duffield Foundation; see Case Study #6.)

• **Government Supported Health, Welfare, Pension, and Unemployment Programs.** As noted, many dancers have difficulty qualifying for such programs and extensive advocacy is necessary to secure adaptation of the programs to address the legitimate needs of dancers. Career transition and retraining centers, service organizations, and other stakeholders have a role to play in lobbying for change and helping dancers navigate their way through existing regulations so they can access existing programs. In France, for example, the *épartement des Métiers* in the Centre National de la Danse (National Center for Dance) has provided information and advice to dancers on their rights to continuous training as legislated by the national Labor Code. Because regulations in the legislation are quite complex, it is important that dancers be informed and made aware of the ways to qualify for these provisions so they will not miss out on rights to training benefits that can pave the way to toward establishing second careers. In Switzerland, the Swiss Stage Artists Guild (SBKV) created an internal foundation, in association with the Swiss Performing Artists Foundation, to address the needs of dancers in transition; one of its roles is to help former dancers gain access to official government programs for which they may be qualified.

CASE STUDY #5:**The College as Collaborator****St. Mary's College of California, School of Extended Education, U.S.**

“LEAP” (Liberal Education for Arts Professionals) is an innovative Bachelor of Arts program in the Performing Arts designed for current and former professional dancers. The program is offered through the School of Extended Education at Saint Mary's College of California and can be completed in two to four years of part-time study. LEAP'S flexibility encourages dancers to pursue individual interests and explore different disciplines while obtaining a comprehensive liberal arts education from a nationally recognized college.

An important feature of the program is that LEAP students earn college credit for professional dance experience as well as prior learning in other subject areas, and the program can accommodate dancers who enter with different levels of experience. Its literature articulates the program philosophy as follows: “Recognizing the high level of skill and artistry that professional dancers have attained through years of hard work and dedication, the program provides options to earn credit for that experience.” Classes meet once a week and courses are 8-10 weeks in length. The program's director consults with students to arrange class times to accommodate dancers' work, touring and rehearsal calendars, as well as the professional schedules of former dancers. (Where post-graduate study is contemplated, dancers should be aware that policies related to life-experience credits may vary across graduate schools, depending on the chosen area of post-graduate study.) Financial aid is available and a strong support system offers encouragement and guidance. Dancers from San Francisco Ballet, New York City Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, Joffrey Ballet, Dance Theatre of Harlem, Oakland Ballet and SMUIN Ballets/SF have participated in LEAP, as well as dancers from a variety of modern, jazz, ethnic dance, and musical theatre backgrounds. The program has recently expanded from the San Francisco Bay Area to include Los Angeles.

“LEAP ascribes value to an artist's career—something that happens nowhere else,” says a former Joffrey Ballet dancer who took part in the program. “Unlike other degree programs it understands the exigencies of a dancer's life.”

CASE STUDY #6:**Transition Into the Field****Foundation-Supported Arts Management Fellowship Programs**

During the 1960s, the U.S.-based Ford Foundation conducted an arts management fellowship program that fostered the emergence of a generation of cultural leaders. The program was not conceived as a dancer career transition program per se, but it had the effect of bringing former dancers into the field of arts management. The resumes of some of the country's most distinguished cultural leaders suggest what a significant impact a year-long funded fellowship opportunity can have on the course of an individual career and on the field more broadly. "I left dance in my late 20s. I had a family to support, I couldn't afford to be in graduate or professional school," recalls an influential field leader who benefited from the program. Without an opportunity for on-the-job training in arts management, his talents might have led toward a different career path.

More recently, in 2004, the Clore Duffield Foundation in England launched an initiative to prepare a new generation of leaders for the cultural sector. Like the former Ford Foundation Program, it is not specifically targeted towards dancers in transition, but it provides a suggestive model of the ways the field can nurture and support its own home-grown talent base through a cross-disciplinary initiative that is national in reach. Each year a designated number of Clore Fellows undertake an individual program of funded work, research, training and mentorship, designed to develop their leadership skills and experience. The program was created in response to the difficulties many organizations have experienced in recruiting and retaining management and cultivating leadership. As foundation representatives note, "We believe ...that our proposal for an intensive, individually molded, flexible and modular program will...[help] exceptional individuals to make step-change in their skills and career potential."

CASE STUDY #7**Some Promising Practices Related to Government-Sponsored Worker Protection Programs that Address Artists' Needs**

• In the *United Kingdom*, there is an early retirement fund available to dancers employed by the larger companies (the Royal Ballet, English National Ballet, Northern Ballet Theatre, Birmingham Royal Ballet, Scottish Ballet, Rambert Dance Company, Adzido Pan African Dance Company, and Siobhan Davies Dance Company). The company makes a contribution of about 5.5% and the dancer contributes about 4% of salary. The fund allows dancers to retire starting at 35 years of age, and they can continue paying into the scheme if they become freelance performers, although they no longer receive an employers' contribution. Although not a government-run program, the Arts Council of England makes it a condition of funding that these larger companies offer the scheme to their dancers.

• In *Finland*, the Act on the Pension of Artist and Some Particular Group of Short-Term Workers allows self-employed artists to pay their pension contributions at a reduced rate, as if they were employees rather than self-employed, by matching the artists' contribution to the state pension fund. There is also an artists' supplementary pension system for artists over 60 years of age.

• In *Ireland*, prominent artists who have made an outstanding contribution to the culture of Ireland in the field of visual arts, literature or music can be inducted into the Aosdána program. This gives them the right to pay into a special pension fund, with their contributions matched by the Aosdána program.

• In *Germany*, self-employed artists have access to the Kunstlersozialkasse, or Artists Security program. The scheme was developed to enable self-employed artists to have the same degree of social protection as employees. The fund covers health insurance and old age pensions, but not unemployment benefits. The artist pays 17.7 percent of his or her income into the fund, an amount that is matched by the Artists' Social Security Department. Of this, part is invested in a pension fund, and part to a separate medical insurance program.

• In *The Netherlands*, the Income Provisions for Artists Act allows young artists to receive government subsistence support during the early stages of their careers; benefits are provided for a period of up to four years while artists are establishing themselves in their careers.

• In *Bulgaria*, the Transitional and Final Provisions of the Protection and Development of Culture Act gives artists access to unemployment insurance if they have worked four of the past twelve months as self-employed persons.

Stakeholders Respond

THE ROLE OF TRANSITION CENTERS

“Concern about the welfare of dancers should lead countries in which no career transition center now exists to assign high priority to the creation of such a center, and should lead the governments in the countries where the four transition centers are now located to give higher priority to their funding.”

—Baumol, Jeffri, and Throsby;
Making Changes: Facilitating the Transition of Dancers to Post-Performance Careers

As has been noted, dancer career transition and retraining centers are uniquely positioned to address career transition issues because they can deal with multiple stages of a dancer’s career in a coordinated and confidential fashion. Such confidentiality is especially important because many dancers continue to feel that their career aspirations may be jeopardized if the company’s artistic and administrative staff members are privy to their career transition planning efforts. Career transition and retraining centers provide a safe haven outside the structure of school and company life. “Dancers do not fully explore career options whilst dancing,” said an aDvANCE Project survey respondent, “for fear that it will jeopardize their career.”

The career transition and retraining centers have served as vital research and development agencies for the field. They have undertaken surveys to ascertain dancer needs, piloted programs and services and refined them on the basis of successes and challenges, and continually expanded the scope of their programs as they learned more about dancers’ needs and how these needs could best be addressed. They have also worked collaboratively to share best practices and develop strategies that extend the reach of their work.

For this reason, it is especially helpful to look closely at the ways they have mobilized to respond to dancer needs, both in terms of philosophy and practice. There are important lessons to be learned here—both for those who might follow suit and establish transition and retraining centers and for those affiliated with a wide range of organizations and agencies that are in search of guiding principles. All of the centers stress the importance of dancer empowerment, especially in

restoring a sense of autonomy to dancers who have not always been encouraged to be independent decision-makers during their performing years. The centers have also found it to be beneficial to include dance professionals on their staff and board because “the insularity of the profession determined that trust was most readily granted to one of their own.”

Although there is variation in the specific programs and services offered by the centers—especially in the level and nature of financial retraining support they are able to provide—all offer programs that have some important common features, most notably their programmatic commitment to the “triad of needs”—psychological, education, and financial:

Psychological Challenges: the centers provide confidential career, financial, and psychological counseling and work closely with dancers as they develop second-career plans; they also develop programs in collaboration with companies and schools so dancers can begin acquiring career transition awareness at a much younger age.

Educational Challenges: the centers pursue multiple strategies at each stage of a dancer’s career to address “information gaps” that are common in the field—these efforts include workshops and seminars, both onsite and on-the-road; publications, self-help and self-study manuals, conference documentation, and mentorship directories; websites; telephone hotlines; and advocacy efforts focused on generating increased understanding and action among policy-makers, funders, and other constituencies.

Financial Challenges: the centers provide financial assistance to dancers undergoing career transition in the form of grants for retraining, subsistence, and business start-ups. The ways these funds have been structured differ significantly, based on the local socio-economic circumstances in which the centers carry out their work; some have different funds for employees and independent dancers, some have differential funds for those who are in full-time retraining and those who are retraining while still performing, and some have structured their grant programming as “bridge financing” because of the resource base from which they are able to draw. Programs that have dedicated funding in place—either from required contributions by employers or sustained financial support from the government are able to support the financial needs of dancers more generously (see Case Study 8 for program details).

As the field mobilizes to tackle issues of dancer career transition more aggressively, it is useful to look at the collective developmental history of these centers, because it provides important lessons concerning the steps necessary to put advocacy and support programs in place, whatever the context.

STEPS TOWARD LAUNCHING A TRANSITION CENTER OR PROGRAM

Conduct Preliminary Research: Documenting the problem is key. Surveys of current and former dancers can be part of the early case-making and advocacy process. The research will also help define the mission and structure of the center or program. A major survey preceded the founding of Canada's Dancer Transition Resource Centre, for example. On the company level, a 2002 Paris National Opera study helped clarify issues, needs and priorities for action. Pacific Northwest Ballet redesigned and significantly strengthened its career transition program following a process that allowed for significant dance input into program design and operation.

Build a Diverse Coalition: Buy-in from diverse sectors of the dance community—dancers, managers, artistic directors, and educators—is essential, as is support from leaders in the business and political communities. The participation of well-known dancers still at the height of their performing careers brings an important level of visibility and validity to the project. In both Canada and the U.S., the founding of their centers was preceded by a major convening of dance field leaders.

Tap Multiple Funding Streams: The work of career transition and retraining centers often does not fit easily into established funding categories: it is part service to the field, part support to the individual artist, part educational, and part artistic. Creative and broad-based funding strategies are therefore essential. The financial histories of the centers indicate that government support levels can ebb and flow, so diversification of funding is essential.

Document Outcomes: By tracking program outcomes, especially the success rates of retraining efforts, career transition and retraining centers develop critical advocacy tools that can not only strengthen their own programs, but also serve the field more broadly.

A case study comparing the centers' varying approaches to retraining support follows.

CASE STUDY #8:

A comparison of the centers' differing approaches to the delivery of financial support for retraining suggests the different ways a similar commitment manifests itself in different political and socio-economic contexts.

Dancers' Career Development (DCD), United Kingdom, operates two divisions in an effort to guarantee maximum support to all dancers in the U.K., including those who belong to large established companies and those who work with smaller companies as independent dancers or in the commercial sector. DCD began in the 1970s with a program designed to provide retraining assistance to dancers employed in what were then the country's largest "revenue funded" dance companies. Funding from the Arts Council to these companies (numbering five at the time) was increased to provide an annual sum equivalent to five percent of the dancers' salary bill, which was paid into the Fund on an annual basis. The Company Fund Division is today supported by nine major dance companies (Adzido Pan African Dance Company, Birmingham Royal Ballet, English National Ballet, Northern Ballet Theatre, Rambert Dance Company, Richard Alston Dance Company, Phoenix Dance Company, Scottish Ballet, and The Royal Ballet). Financial support for dancers from the Company Fund Division is available to those dancers who have performed a minimum of five years out of eight with one or more of the contributing companies.

With the aim of reaching a wider circle of transitioning dancers in need, the Independent Trust Division was established in the late 1980s as a registered charity to provide support to independent dancers who fell outside the Company Fund scheme. Unlike the Company Division Fund, the Independent Trust Division has no regular funding, so it is entirely dependent on voluntary contributions from charities, foundations, and individuals. As a result, the Trust's ability to provide assistance has been limited and grants severely restricted. Independent dancers are eligible to apply for grant assistance if they have completed eight years as a professional freelance dancer, five of which have been performed in the UK, and worked at least four months in each of the last three years of employment as a dancer. There is no set sum for awards and applications are approved on an individual basis. DCD approves an average of 65 grant applications from the Independent and Company Division each year with courses lasting from several months to four years.

Canada's **Dancer Transition Resource Centre (DTRC)**, organized as a membership program for company-affiliated and independent dancers, as well as artistic staff members, has developed a financial grant program that addresses both

retraining and subsistence needs of dancers. Three major streams of support are provided: a) Grants for Retraining (up to CN\$4,000 for retraining in a second career which may be received while a dancer is still performing or following retirement); b) Grants for Subsistence While in Full-Time Retraining (up to CN\$18,000, at CN\$1,500 per month' the Retraining program must be completed within an 18 month consecutive period); and c) Grants for Subsistence While Still Performing (up to CN \$7,500, at CN\$1,250 per month, received during full- time retraining while still performing).

Funding is provided by a combination of government, corporate, foundation, and private funding sources as well as membership dues from dance companies and dancers. Dancers may join the DTRC by contributing 1% of their salaries, which are matched by their companies. Individual dancers and artistic staff join on an individual basis. Criteria for receiving financial support are tied to the numbers of years a dancer has been professionally employed (ranging from 7-10 years depending on the grant), or for independent dancers a specified number of months worked during the designated time period is required.

In the United States, **Career Transition For Dancers (CTFD)** provides educational scholarships to current and former professional dancers with grants that are meant to serve as a financial “bridge” to help dancers initiate an academic or retraining process toward the acquisition of a required degree or an important new skill. Grants of up to a total of \$2,000 may be awarded for educational scholarships, retaining programs and for seed money to support fledgling business endeavors. Since its inception in 1985, Career Transition For Dancers, with offices in New York City and Los Angeles, has awarded a total of over \$2 million in scholarships to dancers in 47 states and Canada. Eligibility criteria are tied to showing a designated number of paid weeks of employment over a seven-year period and proof of earning a designated yearly income from dance, arrived at by averaging annual gross income of the seven highest years of a performing dance career. Services such as one-on-one career counseling and themed seminars entitled “Career Conversations” are made available to U.S.–based dancers free-of-charge. Funding for all scholarships and programs is provided by a combination of government, corporate, foundation, and union support and by individuals through annual appeals and special events.

In The Netherlands, the **Dutch Retraining Program for Professional Dancers/Stichting Omscholingsregeling Dansers (SOD)** has been able to develop a retraining program for dancers that is tied to the state unemployment benefit program. With an initial grant from the Dutch Ministry of Culture, a retraining fund was established in 1986.

Specific arrangements made with the entity that administers the unemployment benefit enabled dancers to retrain while receiving benefits. The SOD reimbursed dancers for their study expenses and paid a supplement on top of the unemployment benefit. The average length of re-schooling was three and one-half years during which dancers received in total approximately 80% of their last earned salary. The fund is financed by obligatory contributions from employers and dancers working in state-subsidized companies, who respectively pay 2.5% and 1.5% of gross annual salaries to the fund. The total amount of 4% is considered a single premium. If it is paid independently, the dancer pays the total amount, or 4% of his or her gross salary. Major changes in the Social Security Legislation in 2000 had significant consequences for the administration of the SOD. The length of the benefit was cut back and the period one was allowed to study while having an unemployment benefit was reduced to one year, threatening the existence of SOD. Extensive lobbying on the part of the dance community (abetted by the SOD's ability to demonstrate its high success rates) helped secure additional subsidies to keep the basic elements of the program intact, although benefits have been redesigned in light of legislative changes. Now, dancers can apply for a supplement to an unemployment benefit, which decreases over time from 95% to 70% of their last earned salary. When a dancer submits a study plan within twelve months after the performing career has been terminated, a grant can be made available that includes the reimbursement of study costs and subsistence. The length of one's dancing career, the dancer's last earned salary and the contents of the study plan determine the size of the grant. The average amount available for full retraining of an individual dancer is 85,000 (U.S. \$103,000). This amount can be directed to study costs, subsistence, and even capital investment if a former dancer decides to start his or her own business. More than 80% of the retrained dancers have been able to find employment within one year of retraining.

All of these independent centers also offer extensive counseling, educational, publication, and advocacy programs.

In Switzerland, a more recently-established program operates as part of Swissperform (SIG), the organization for copyright and related rights for artists. The **NPT/RDP (Association Suisse pour la Reconversion des Danseurs Professionnels)** offers counseling toward social services in cooperation with the Swiss union for artists; provides guidance and assessment for new career orientations; and offers financial support that helps cover tuition-related retraining expenses for up to a three-year period. To be eligible to apply for financial support, a dancer must be at least 30 years old, a professional dancer, have given up dance no more than a year before applying, be a Swiss citizen or resident for at least 5 years, and be a member of NPT/RDP.

Towards a Better Future

AVENUES OF ACTION

“There is no magic bullet that can make the problems of transition vanish or even fundamentally ease the tasks they entail for those who are engaged in facilitating the transition process. Yet, improvements in current arrangements are distinctly possible. And, above all, the prime candidate for improvement is the elimination of the neglect of dancer’s problems, along with the creation of adequate resources for the purpose.”

—Baumol, Jeffri, Throsby,
*Making Changes: Facilitating the
Transition of Dancers to Post-
Performance Careers*

The central findings of the aDvANCE Project should serve as a wake-up call to the field. Can we continue to sustain an art form if we do not sustain its practitioners? Are we ethically comfortable with a training system that puts dancers unnecessarily at risk at later stages of their career development? Can we continue to marginalize and ignore the issue of career transition when it has such an obvious impact on the long-term health of the field? And what does it say about our culture and communities if we do not recognize, validate and support the artistry of our most talented citizens—who inspire us today and create our cultural legacy of tomorrow.

As the researchers for the aDvANCE Project conclude, there is indeed no “magic bullet” that will unilaterally and single-handedly solve the problem of transition. This is an arena for collaboration; diverse stakeholders all have important roles to play—schools, companies, unions, career transition and retraining centers, service organizations, foundations, government agencies, audiences, and potential employers of retrained dancers.

Enumerated below are key avenues of action by which the field can collectively begin the important task of building a better future for dancers and the art of dance.

ACTION STEP #1:

TRAINING INSTITUTIONS: Create readiness for dancers to grapple with career transition issues during the earliest phases of the preparation process. This is a process that will require teaching institutions to reconsider their role in the broader dance ecology: Are students being provided with the skills and knowledge that will adequately support their life-journey through dance? Are students empowered to function creatively within and outside the dance arena? What are the roles and responsibilities of schools given their formative influence on young bodies and minds? Steps that training institutions should consider undertaking include:

- Facilitate access to a complete secondary education.
- Provide a balanced approach to the teaching of dance, including a broad curriculum that goes beyond teaching technique.
- Utilize teaching strategies that encourage self-direction, self-assessment and autonomous decision-making.
- Foster a philosophical approach to teaching that respects alternative career choices within the dance field as well as career paths outside the dance field.
- Encourage students to recognize that a broadened curriculum and ongoing attention to long-term career issues can make for a richer artistic life while performing.
- Develop a pedagogic culture that champions the idea that artistry can manifest in diverse ways over the course of a lifetime.
- Cultivate an environment of trust and psychological safety so issues of career transition can openly be addressed.
- Provide information access concerning the financial realities of the professional dance arena and strategic guidance concerning ways to prepare for the inevitability of career transition.
- Offer workshops for teaching staff about ways to ready their students both for their professional careers and for their post-performance lives.
- Support and utilize programs and services developed by career transition and retraining centers.

ACTION STEP #2:

COMPANIES AND UNIONS: Develop programs, services, and contract provisions that recognize career transition as an integral aspect of a dancer’s career. Although dance companies operate in a resource limited environment, the field should consider whether it can responsibly sustain an approach to career transition that ignores the problem and externalizes the costs. Consideration should be given to undertaking the following:

- Collaborate with learning institutions that make it logistically and financially feasible for company members to pursue post-secondary education or other forms of retraining while still dancing.
- Cultivate an environment where career transition can be openly discussed and pursued.
- Develop contract provisions that deal equitably with the career transition needs of dancers through exit pay, pension provisions, educational savings plans with employee matching components, and compensation provisions tied to a dancer’s lifetime earning curve.
- Foster mentorship/internship opportunities for dancers seeking career transition into the field of dance administration.
- Encourage board investment in career transition issues through mentorship programs and financial support of retraining funds.
- Support and utilize programs developed by career transition and retraining centers.
- Develop and strengthen in-house dancer career transition programs and services.
- Participate in advocacy efforts to effect legislative change in government-sponsored worker protection programs.

ACTION STEP #3:

CAREER TRANSITION AND RETRAINING CENTERS AND SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS: Continue to develop and further expand programs and services that address the financial, educational and psychological needs of dancers.

- Expand the network of career transition and retraining centers by creating new centers in countries where they do not exist; further develop, expand and support programs and services offered by existing centers.
- Develop programs and services at dance service organizations that target the needs of dancers in career transition and create greater awareness of the issue within the field.

- Support international advocacy efforts of the International Organization for the Transition of Professional Dancers.
- Support ongoing research efforts that build upon the work of the aDvANCE Project.

ACTION STEP #4:

FUNDERS: Recognize that support for dancer career transition is critical for building a stronger dance field, and that chronic under-funding of the sector creates systemic problems related to transition. Foundations can assume a leadership role through sustained support of career transition-related activity. There already exists a body of knowledge indicating promising practices and ways that resources can efficaciously be deployed. Among the measures most urgently needed are the following:

- Continue and expand support for existing dancer career transition and retraining centers, as well as support the seeding of new centers.
- Support leadership initiatives that can channel the skills and passions of performers into the field through management training programs and other initiatives.
- Designate funds for retraining initiatives.
- Adjust funding guidelines so career transition funding does not “fall between the cracks” because it does not fit in obvious ways within existing guidelines.
- Support research initiatives and international information-sharing efforts that facilitate program development and advocacy.
- Elevate support to the dance field, giving it the capacity to deal effectively with the basic survival needs of its practitioners.

ACTION STEP #5:

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND POLICY MAKERS: Recognize that dancers should not be penalized by impeding their access to programs and services available to the general workforce and take steps to insure equity of treatment.

- Adjust guidelines of social welfare programs to align them with employment patterns of the dance field, allowing dancers to receive equitable protection and benefits from social security, health insurance, unemployment insurance, pension, retraining schemes, and other benefit programs.
- Develop benefit schemes that recognize the desirable international mobility of dance work force.

- Support educational reform initiatives that establish standards for arts learning during students' primary and secondary school years so all citizens develop a deeper understanding of the tools and processes of the creative arts.

ACTION STEP #6:

DANCERS: Dancers should seek out opportunities to prepare themselves fully for all stages of their life in dance.

- Seek out training environments where academic learning is encouraged along-side development of technical and artistic skills in dance.
- Cultivate and maintain relationships with friends and colleagues who work outside the dance field, both during the preparation and performing stages of one's career.
- Prepare long-term career plans that address life and career beyond performance.
- Stay informed and participate in programs and services developed by dancer career transition centers and dance service organizations that relate to career transition.
- Consult the Internet, including the websites of career transition and retraining centers, which include valuable self-study materials and resources.
- Seek out the help of skilled professional counselors in dealing with the psychological and practical aspects of career transition.
- Talk with former dancers about their experiences with career transition and career development.
- Take an active role in advocacy efforts to improve the terms and conditions of dancer contract protections.

Closing Reflections

The dance field, like its performers, is in constant transition: recent decades have seen an extraordinary flowering of dance genres, growing sophistication in behind-the-scenes managerial practice, and an invigorating internationalism, which is fueling intercultural understanding worldwide.

But it is now time for another major field transition. By reckoning with the realities of dancers' careers, the dance field—as both an art form and an industry—has the opportunity to create a bolder and more vigorous future. It can move to a new stage—where there is a truly reciprocal exchange between artists and society; one in which the artistic contributions of dancers are appropriately acknowledged, not just with rousing applause but with robust and equitable systems of support.

The research emerging from the aDvANCE Project provides persuasive documentation concerning the challenges of transition. Simply put, professional dancers train more intensively, have fewer opportunities to acquire broad-based education and credentials, are paid the least, have the shortest careers of all practicing artists, and lack access to basic worker protections that are afforded most citizens. Aspiring young dancers need assurances that dance is a legitimate career aspiration, and that it is possible to pursue a career in dance at the highest level without irrevocably sacrificing the quality of life or a subsequent career. Government agencies, funders, companies, schools, unions, transitions centers, audiences, and dancers all have a role to play in this process.

CLOSING REFLECTIONS

Beyond the facts and figures contained in the aDvANCE Report are the compelling stories of the dancers themselves: the lawyers, doctors, architects, massage therapists, business owners, filmmakers, teachers, artistic directors, designers, psychologists, computer programmers, producers, entrepreneurs—and members of almost every other profession—who are making contributions to society because they have had access to, or created for themselves, opportunities to navigate the challenges of career transition successfully.

It is time to face up to the issue of dancer transition—from the dance studio, to the company board room, to the labor negotiating table, to government agencies. With a sense of dedication, urgency and appropriate resource commitment it will be possible to build a better future for dancers and the art of dance. As the preceding pages have demonstrated, career transition support must start early and be integrated into every aspect of a dancer's life journey.

It is in the hands of all stakeholders to take action. All stand to benefit.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: THE aDvANCE PROJECT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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APPENDIX B: THE aDvANCE PROJECT RESEARCH TEAM

This document builds on the work of the aDvANCE Project's three-year research study, *Making Changes: Facilitating the Transition of Dancers to Post-Performance Careers*. The research team of that study including the following individuals:

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William Baumol

David Throsby

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APPENDIX C: THE aDvANCE PROJECT SUPPORTERS AND MANAGEMENT

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The aDvANCE Project Logo and book designs

Lost In Brooklyn Studio
www.lostinbrooklyn.com

APPENDIX D: CONTACT INFORMATION

For additional copies of *Beyond Performance*, and for more information about international efforts to address issues of dancer career transition and retraining world wide, please contact the International Organization for the Transition of Professional Dancers:

International Organization for the Transition of Professional Dancers (IOTPD)

P.O. Box 85806
Netherlands-2508 CM, The Hague
Email: iotpd@iotpd.org
Web: www.iotpd.org

The following national organizations and programs, dedicated to dancer career transition and retraining, are also important sources of information about programs and services that address dancer career transition needs.

United States:

Career Transition For Dancers
 165 West 46th Street, Suite 701
 New York, New York 10036
 TEL: 212-764-0172
 FAX: 212-264-0343
 WEB: www.careertransition.org

Canada

Dancer Transition Resource Centre
 250 The Esplanade, Suite 500
 Toronto, ON M5A 1J2
 TEL: 416-595-5655
 FAX: 416-595-0009
 WEB: www.dtrc.ca

United Kingdom

Dancers' Career Development
 Rooms 222-227 Africa House
 64 Kingsway
 London WC2 B6B6
 TEL: +44 207 404 6141
 FAX: +44 207 242 3331
 WEB: www.thedcd.org.uk

The Netherlands

Retraining Program for Dancers
 Stichting Omscholingsregeling Dansers
 P.O. Box 85806
 Netherlands -2508 CM The Hague
 TEL. +31 (0)70 306 56 78
 WEB: www.kunst-cultuur.nl

Switzerland (operates as part of Swissperform)

NPT/RDP

Rue du Grande-Pré

CH-10007 Lausanne, Switzerland

TEL: +41 (0)21621 8066

FAX: +41 (0)21 621 8069

WEB: www.dance-transition.ch

In other countries, where there are no formally established dancer career organizations or programs in place, existing national dance service organizations and artist associations may be able to provide information related to dancer career transition issues.