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## A New Funding Model for Dance?

The National Performing Arts Funding Exchange seeks to channel sponsors to artists.

Cliff Brody claims he can barely execute a box step. But he's looking to raise more than \$5 million for dance. The retired diplomat and businessman says, "I was struck by the extraordinary entrepreneurial efforts that these artists have: the creativity, the risk, including the physical risk. And the reality of learning that among the three areas of performing arts—music, theater and dance—dance is by far the least funded."

He founded the National Performing Arts Funding Exchange in 2016 to find more money for dance from nontraditional sources. NPAFE recently announced its three-year, \$5,750,000 campaign that will funnel funds straight to performing artists throughout the United States. There will be no "middle man," Brody says.

Using the sports marketing model, where major brands advertise to capture the sporting fan market, NPAFE will target corporate underwriters for various dance organizations. Brody is convinced that companies will jump on the bandwagon to put their names behind dance and other performing arts groups. He cites statistics he culled over the past year: More than half of performing-arts ticket buyers said they would "almost always" or "frequently" purchase from a sponsoring corporation, while only about one-third (36 percent) of National Football League fans would purchase products based on sponsorship.

NPAFE offers an online clearinghouse of independent and small dance companies and individuals. Independent artists can enter their information, marketing materials and video on

the website's Indie Performing Artists Gallery and Moving On Up Gallery to reach a larger audience—and potential funders.

Plans are in place for cataloging commissioning opportunities for corporate sponsors, plus sponsored stipends for performing arts graduate students. Thus far, the nonprofit has given away more than \$55,000 (in direct funding, financial planning and marketing support) to eight dance companies and artists, including Bowen-McCauley Dance, Christopher K. Morgan and Artists, and ClancyWorks. An early host sponsor, WeWork, which leases office space to entrepreneurs and small start-ups around the world, connected with Company Danzante. The young Arlington, Virginia, troupe received a \$1,500 stipend, plus free marketing and rehearsal space, for a site-specific piece set in the WeWork warren of contemporary workspaces in DC this past November.

Dance has had a history of appealing to high-end retailers, from Blackglama furs using Martha Graham and Rudolph Nureyev in its ads to clothing designer Rag & Bone featuring Mikhail Baryshnikov. Whether NPAFE can convince today's corporate ad agencies that their support of dance companies will reap greater sales remains to be seen. The key, Brody says, is, "We knock on doors and say, When you put your money behind these dancers and let them do their thing, you are going to be respected for supporting the performing arts." —Lisa Traiger

Visit [npafe.org](http://npafe.org) to join the clearinghouse.

# NPAFE

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