

Why didn't George Balanchine succeed financially?

Or Martha Graham? Or Merce Cunningham?

Why has Joffrey Ballet been a business and financial success?

Along with hundreds of other dance organizations  
whose names you may not know?

At least not yet.

But all that is about to change.

**NPAFE's Dance Entrepreneurship Success Study (DESS)** is focusing on American choreographers and dancers, their so-far undocumented but rich 75-year plus record of hard-fought, hard won entrepreneurial survival and success, and the lessons they have learned along the way that can help any entrepreneur do anything ... especially women, minorities, and the underserved.

There has never been a careful analysis of the creative and entrepreneurial success that generation after generation of U.S. performing artists have achieved when freelancing or forming their own performing arts companies.

Lost to the business world as a result: how valuable their entrepreneurial "lessons learned" are to other enterprising entrepreneurs whose businesses may have little to do with the performing arts world but, like performing arts enterprises, are steeped in creating new ways to meet market demand.

## Successful Business Leadership.

The DESS initiative will quantitatively and qualitatively document for the first time how these performing arts dance communities, so often led by women and minorities in every state, have transformed themselves into successful leaders of business units micro, small, medium, and even international in size, market, and reputation.

Identifying where their achievements are readily at play as entrepreneurial "lessons learned" in ballet and modern dance means providing solutions that all entrepreneurs everywhere can put to good use.

## Why Dance but Not Music or Theater?

Alone among the performing arts, modern dance and ballet in all their forms involve creativity, challenge and risk almost never faced by theater and orchestral music, the two other major performing arts forms.

Choreographers and dancers must organize smoothly-functioning creative teams for the majority of new works or repertoire performances, more often than not drawing new people together for the first time. Usually these workgroups are self-directed: they must adapt quickly, learn how to collaborate with one another physically, mentally, and technologically, oftentimes literally holding one another aloft just to learn what will work.

Or won't.



The DESS initiative will:

- Document how these performing artists have transformed themselves into skilled founder-business leaders by overcoming funding, marketing, production, and team-building obstacles to achieve measurable qualitative and quantitative results,
- Present these findings succinctly and attractively as web based resources that increase the potential for talented self-starters to become successful entrepreneurs, leaders, and guarantors of community and national prosperity, and
- Document the best practices discovered by these performing arts entrepreneurs from their actual on-the-ground, real-life, close-to-home experience.

What Resources Will Be Tapped?

Among others:

- National, regional, and local choreographers, dance companies, and dancers throughout the United States
- Arts Service Organizations (e.g. Dance USA)
- Key venues (e.g. Kennedy Center, NYC City Center, equivalents in Houston, Chicago, Miami, Boston, Oklahoma City, San Francisco, other cities)
- Educational organizations and individual faculties at recognized university performing arts schools offering degree programs
- The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts (Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Center)
- Three or more internationally-respected US-based business schools

Timeline.

- End June 2020: Final report released and circulated using website and social media
- End July 2020: Web platform launched for sharing knowledge and networking between performing arts' entrepreneurs and entrepreneur community established by September 2020

About NPAFE.

The National Performing Arts Funding Exchange — NPAFE — is the United States' only nonprofit focused solely on arranging direct corporate sponsorships to expand funding available to the nation's exceptional community of entrepreneur-performing artists.

Creators who lead rather than follow, these artist-entrepreneurs are especially talented people because they create new works and because they make great effort to pass their skills and knowledge to future generations. They have proven time and again how to make corporate funders respected by people across America and beyond. Our reason for being is to assure that these artists and their corporate sponsors succeed at earning and growing that respect.

How Can I Be Involved?

Talk to a real human being at NPAFE: Clifford Brody at [cbrody@npafe.org](mailto:cbrody@npafe.org); 202.213.3076, or visit the NPAFE website at [https://www.npafe.org/dess\\_02/](https://www.npafe.org/dess_02/) password: [dessa6561#](#)