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EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS IN CONTEMPORARY
CONCERT DANCE COMPANIES

A Capstone Experience/Thesis Project Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree Bachelor of Arts

with Mahurin Honors College Graduate Distinction

at Western Kentucky University

By

Emily Caldwell

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CE/T Committee:

Prof. Amanda Clark, Chair

Prof. Meghan McKinley

Dr. Keri Esslinger

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ABSTRACT

Arts education is extremely important yet underrated and underfunded in our country today. Some professional dance companies provide educational opportunities in dance and other areas of the arts for youth and others within the community as a means to combat this problem. This project is a compilation and synthesis of my research on how to most effectively create and implement children's outreach programs in contemporary modern concert dance companies. The purpose of this research is to study how professional dance companies give back to their communities through engagement with children via classes, performances, workshops, etc. and to determine the most effective methods to create, advertise and execute these various programs.

I dedicate this thesis to my family, Tia, Bernie, and Caroline Caldwell, because they are my biggest fans, and I would not be anywhere near where I am today without them.

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VITA

EDUCATION

Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, KY May 2021
B.S. in Elementary Education, B.A. in Dance
Mahurin Honors College Graduate
Honors CE/T: *Effective Community Engagement Programs Within Contemporary Concert Dance Companies*

Trinity Christian Academy, Lexington, KY May 2017

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Mindy's Jessamine School of Classical Dance Camp Summer 2019
Teacher

Babysitting 2013 - present

KUMON Tutoring Center Summer 2018

AWARDS & HONORS

Outstanding B.A. in Dance Student, Department of Theatre and Dance, WKU, 2021
Elected Committee Chair of WKU Potter College Dean's Council of Students, 2020-2021
Academic Merit Scholarship, WKU, 2017-2021

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Kentucky Education Association (KEA)
National Dance Education Organization WKU Student Chapter (NDEO)
National Honors Society for Dance Arts (NHSDA)

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

Historically, arts education in America has been underappreciated and underfunded, despite the enormous benefits that studying the arts provides students. This lack of funding leads professional dance companies and any other organizations trying to reach students with the arts to look for the most impactful ways to conduct classes and programming. The purpose of this research is to determine the most effective ways to run a community education program within a concert dance company. A concert dance company is a company that pays dancers to perform in front of an audience (usually in a theater setting). To conduct this research, the author chose three concert dance companies with community education programs to study. The three companies chosen were the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Mark Morris Dance Group, and RIOULT Dance New York. Although all of the companies are located in New York City, each was chosen for a different reason that would provide an alternate viewpoint for the research. After the companies were selected, the author interviewed directors of each company's community programming to find out more about the programs offered and what makes them run smoothly. The three specific aspects that the author focused on in the interviews were the company's programming strategies, curriculum choices, and administrative strategies. Each of these categories were deemed important because, together, they encompassed both the logistical aspects required to create an arts education program (funding, marketing, etc.) and the pedagogical aspects (what is taught, how it is taught, etc.).

This research is important, not just to the arts community, but to education in general. Arts education (specifically dance education) has been proven to have numerous benefits on students, positively affecting them academically as well as personally. When discussing education reform, Bruce Marlowe, author of *School Reform with a Brain: The Neuropsychological Foundations for Arts Integration*, posits that “Reformers who view the arts as unnecessary, or peripheral at best, ignore the empirical evidence regarding how vital creativity and artistic expression are to the developing human brain and how important they are for learning and development.”¹ The arts should not be optional for students, and viewing them as such puts our students at a dangerous disadvantage.

The arts positively affect students cognitively, behaviorally, and socially. In a study conducted by Kenneth Elpus of the University of Maryland, arts students were 20% less likely to be suspended, less likely to be involved in delinquent behavior, and significantly more optimistic about their ability to attend college. As adults, former arts students were 55.38% more likely to have received ongoing education after high school than non-arts students, and dance students in general were 62.13% less likely to have ever tried cocaine.² Along with all of these benefits, arts education also improves student academic performance. In a study done by professors at Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, “Child girls who participated in dance had significantly higher scores in all academic indicators than those who did not participate in dance after adjustment for age,

¹ Kelly Schofield. “Building Creative Capacity Transforms Schools.” *Principal*, September 2, 2017, 6–8. <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eft&AN=125497587&site=ehost-live>.

² Kenneth Elpus. Rep. *Arts Education and Positive Youth Development: Cognitive, Behavioral, and Social Outcomes of Adolescents Who Study the Arts*. Research: Artworks. Artworks.arts.gov, n.d.

maternal education and BMI.” This study encompassed information about math, language, and GPA, and in every category, arts students performed higher.³ Another benefit of dance education is that it builds self-esteem and confidence in students. *The Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance* describes the importance of dance for children by saying that

What is expected is that all students will experience the joy of creating and the self-confidence that comes from the development of skills and performance, that they will come to know the importance of discipline, practice, persistence, and self-criticism, and that they will apply these lessons to other aspects of their lives.⁴

These are just a few examples of why arts education is so beneficial for students cognitively, behaviorally, and socially.

The first company chosen for this research was the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. This company was chosen because of its prominence in the dance community and its reputation. Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater is the preeminent modern dance company in America today, with a rich history in performance, activism, and community engagement. Alvin Ailey, the founder of the company, believed that dancers should give back to their community through arts education, and this is exactly what he did with the Arts in Education portion of his company.

The second company, Mark Morris Dance Group, was chosen because of its very unique view on community engagement. They have very limited set curriculum, but

³ Sara Higuera-Fresnillo. “Dance Participation and Academic Performance in Youth Girls.” *Nutrición Hospitalaria* 33, no. 3 (2016). <https://doi.org/10.20960/nh.288>.

⁴ “Special Report: National Assessment of Educational Progress in the Arts (NAEP).” 1998. *JOPERD: The Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance* 69 (8): 28. doi:10.1080/07303084.1998.10605608.

instead, they conference with each community partner individually to determine how to best meet the needs of their specific student population. This offers contrast to the approach of the other companies, that set preplanned programming on community partners, who only have a few options to choose from. Another reason this company was chosen was because of its size in comparison to the other companies researched. It does not quite have the size or reputation as Ailey, but it is definitely more of a household name in the dance community than the next company that will be discussed. This difference in size and scope allows the research to be more well-rounded and encompass a variety of different types of companies to see what works best.

The third company chosen was RIOULT Dance New York. This company was chosen for its relatively small size and limited community engagement program. Although the company does not have the resources or the renown of the two companies previously mentioned, they have done a tremendous job working within their means to create a specific, targeted program that serves students well. Their program is different from the others researched because it is one program with three parts that the community partners can choose from. This is just another possible way to run arts education programs that adds to the diversity of the research.

This thesis discusses effective strategies for designing and implementing community engagement programs within contemporary concert dance companies. Chapters 2 through 4 explore the programs of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Mark Morris Dance Group, and RIOULT Dance New York, highlighting their strengths and noting the areas in which they are highly effective as community dance programs. Chapter 5 compiles the findings into a list of the five most effective practices to reach

children in this context. These results will be helpful for anyone wishing to reach students with the arts in an efficient, reliable manner.

CHAPTER TWO: ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater is a modern dance company formed by Alvin Ailey in 1958. Before creating the company that shares his name, Ailey studied under several prominent American dancers, such as Lester Horton, Martha Graham, Charles Weidman, and Hanya Holm. In 1958, he formed a group comprised of entirely African American dancers. This group, which would eventually become known as Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, joined the New York City Center in 1972 and became the first predominately black dance group to perform at the Metropolitan Opera House.⁵ Today, the organization has added a second company for younger dancers (Ailey II), a dance school for aspiring professional dancers (The Ailey School), and dance classes for the public through the Ailey Extension. In addition to all of this, the company has created and maintained one of the most intricate arts in education and community engagement programs in existence. Ailey's mission was to gain the recognition for black dancers that had previously been denied, and he did this in part by giving back to the community.

The mission of the Alvin Ailey Arts in Education program is “to cultivate and energize youth and adults to take, make, and see dance.”⁶ In an interview, Cathryn Williams, the director of Arts in Education and Community Programs at Ailey, describes

⁵ “Ailey, Alvin.” *Funk & Wagnalls New World Encyclopedia*, January 1, 2018, 1; <https://search-ebshost-com.libsrv.wku.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=funk&AN=ai043300&site=ehost-live>.

⁶ “Arts in Education & Community Programs.” Accessed April 2, 2021. <https://www.alvinailey.org/about/arts-education-community-programs>.

what the mission statement means to the company and why their community engagement programming is so important and integral to the mission of the company as a whole.

Alvin Ailey believed that dance came from the people and must be delivered back to the people. This belief is what has propelled The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre into the forefront of arts-in-education programming.

The company's programs are all based on the three ideas of taking, making, and seeing dance. Students involved in both their in-school and after-school programs get the opportunity to experience dance at all of these three levels. To "take" dance, they attend classes taught by professional dancers from the company, often accompanied by live musicians. To "make" dance, students are encouraged to create their own movement and express their ideas through movement in different classes throughout the curriculum. They also get to "see" dance through the various opportunities that the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater provides for students to see the company perform. For example, every fall, 1400 students are bused in from local elementary schools to see Ailey II (the secondary company) perform *Revelations* in their matinee school performances. There are also matinee programs in the spring where 500 students are invited to see the company's professional dancers on stage.⁷

The Ailey Arts in Education program has multiple facets to its programming. The first is AileyDance Kids, which is a K-12 school residency program that can take many forms depending on what the particular community partner wants and needs. The second is AileyCamp, which is a six-week summer camp for students ages 11-14 that provides intensive, fun-filled training in dance, creative development, and personal

⁷ Cathryn Williams (Director, Arts in Education & Community Programs), in discussion with the author, October 2020.

communication. There are two primary curricula for AileyDance Kids. The first is their grades 3-5 curriculum called *Night Creature: An Imaginative Journey Through Dance*. The second is their curriculum for grades 6-9 called *Revelations: An Interdisciplinary Approach*. Since they are taught in schools, they align with the New York state arts standards and the New York City Blueprint for Teaching and Learning Dance. The classes are taught by professionals or past professionals in the company, and the teachers are required to take workshops in lesson planning prior to their teaching engagements. Since these programs are designed based on specific repertory of the company, the purpose of both is to connect with the contextual surroundings of the works and their historical context. The *Revelations* curriculum was designed 20 years ago by individuals who worked with and knew Ailey well. Students learning this curriculum will study music, English poetry, and even African spirituals that are connected to the works they are studying, along with dance technique and choreographic elements. The students also get a chance to see Ailey II perform the piece at some point during the workshop. The *Night Creature* workshop is newer, and was piloted in 2017. Since it is geared primarily towards younger students, there is a large focus on imagination and creativity. Ailey said, “Imagination costs you nothing, but can cost you everything if you don’t use it.” This quote is one of the driving forces behind this innovative curriculum. Like the *Revelations* programming, it was created by former company members who danced the piece and worked closely with Ailey himself. The primary focuses of this workshop are musicality, history of jazz dance (including curriculum about the fathers of jazz dance, what jazz dance is, what jazz music is, etc.), and using imagination to create.⁸

⁸ Cathryn Williams (Director, Arts in Education & Community Programs), in discussion with the author, October 2020.

With both of these amazing, innovative programs for students of all ages, it is not hard to see why Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater has one of the most well-known community engagement programs in all of concert dance. But how are they so successful, and what marketing strategies do they use to remain at the forefront? According to Ms. Williams, “Ailey has a reputation of excellence, and so people want to work with us...the reviews from schools and community partners are very strong.”⁹ It is their reputation that keeps Ailey relevant. Along with the occasional press release, and of course their website, which has all of their programming information, word of mouth is their primary marketing strategy. Social media is not used, as one might expect, because not all of the students who attend the workshops and classes have signed a photo release form. This, however, does not keep AileyDance Kids from continuing to serve schools in Westchester, Long Island, Newark, and New Jersey, and serving 9000 students in 2019 alone.

When scheduling programming, the company pays specific attention to students who would likely not otherwise be able to take dance because they could not afford tuition or would not be able to get to dance class, etc. This requires them to require substantial amounts of external funding because they need to keep the cost of program attendance minimal. Funding for the actual company at Ailey comes primarily from touring, ticket sales, galas and charitable events, income from renting out their building, and tuition from the Ailey extension and school. Since they want to keep the prices of their residencies down for the schools, they rely primarily on grants and fundraising for community engagement programming. This allows students to experience quality dance

⁹ Cathryn Williams (Director, Arts in Education & Community Programs), in discussion with the author, October 2020.

education in a K-12 school setting without having to pay for it or be transported to another location.

One of the main reasons that AileyDance Kids is so effective is because of the program's feedback system. They routinely and systematically assess their effectiveness within schools by having the teachers and administrators fill out evaluation forms on the successes and areas of improvement within the residency. The teaching artists are also encouraged to not only give feedback, but to email anecdotal stories from classes so that they have records of actual progress and student feedback. This feedback is what allows the program directors to assess what is being done well and what needs to improve, especially based on the individual population and demographics of each school. Being able to cater programs to different populations of students is so important, and it is something that the company does well. Ms. Williams said, "It's so important for students to find joy and use their own voices to create and know their voices are being heard."¹⁰ One testimonial from Lindsay Lederman, a school administrator at St. Luke's CARES, shows that they take feedback seriously. She said, "I know the students enjoyed the AileyDance Kids residency because after every class there were ear to ear smiles. I saw a change in many of them – an increase in self-esteem, confidence, and worthiness...it was amazing."¹¹ This also shows that dance education is about so much more than teaching steps and choreographic methods, it is about helping students figure out who they are and helping them be successful humans, and although this can be hard to quantitatively measure, testimonials like this show that AileyDance Kids does it well.

¹⁰ Cathryn Williams (Director, Arts in Education & Community Programs), in discussion with the author, October 2020.

¹¹ "Arts in Education & Community Programs."

Overall, The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre offers successful community engagement programs for three reasons: they set very specific mission statements for their programs and teach curriculum based on what is valued by the company and what works practically, they use curriculum that is specifically designed by experts in both Ailey's repertoire and educational standards, and they are constantly assessing their performance and adjusting as needed. The specific mission statements allow for a streamlined way of thinking that all of the teaching artists can buy into to keep consistency throughout their programming and allow their community partners to know exactly what to expect. Their thoughtful curriculum helps make their programs effective because it keeps the experience consistent for all students and ensures that the students are getting well-rounded, standards-based arts education that extends past a basic knowledge of technique and choreography. One could argue that it is primarily their curriculum that makes AileyDance Kids so sought after because it truly provides everything that the students are required to know, taught by an expert in the field of dance who has experience performing with one of the greatest modern dance companies in the world. Basically, this curriculum is able to transport students from the classroom to a place of imagination and creativity, and that is so special. Finally, the company's intense evaluation process is one of the hallmarks of their programming because it keeps the company and their teaching artists accountable for the education that they are providing students. This allows the company to maintain the level of prestige that they have a reputation for and even improve upon that reputation.

CHAPTER THREE: MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP

Before Mark Morris founded his namesake company, The Mark Morris Dance Group (MMDG), in 1980, he performed with several modern dance companies. Once he founded the company, he created 150 works on his own company and countless ballets for companies around the world. The company's website says that "Live music and community engagement are vital components of the Dance Group."¹² For MMDG, community engagement is not an addition to the company, it is at the core of their identity. This is the main reason why they were chosen as part of this research.

According to their website, MMDG believes that their arts in education programs are "defined by both accessibility and integrity."¹³ In an interview, Calvin Rollings II (Community Education Liaison) and Alexandra Cook (Youth and Family Programs Director) explain why this is the case and how this is achieved through their programming. They emphasize the core values of MMDG, which are community, access, creativity, and artistic expression. They believe that their community programming embodies all of these values and that they endeavor to put the community first in every aspect of the partnership. Cook said, "I think there has been a tradition of going into a community and saying 'look at us, we're an arts institution and we can bring you all of

¹² "Arts In Schools." Mark Morris Dance Group. Accessed April 2, 2021. <https://markmorrisdancegroup.org/community/arts-in-schools/>.

¹³ "Arts In Schools."

this wonderful information,’ and what that negates is that there’s already a lot of wonderful information in that community.”¹⁴ This quote embodies the company’s view on community programming and demonstrates what makes them different from a lot of other dance companies.

The main programs that MMDG offers for children are their in-school residencies, however, they do work with other kinds of community partners as well, such as community centers, nursing homes, etc. The curriculum used is entirely based on the needs of the community partner and tailored to their population and interests. Alexandra Cook says that some partners have a hard time believing that the company actually wants to tailor their programming to their needs. The partner wants to know what they offer, and when they tell the partner that they want to actually meet and talk about the needs their community has, they are surprised. The genres that are available for partners to choose from are all of the genres that are taught at the Mark Morris Dance School, which include hip-hop, tap, African diaspora, ballet, modern, jazz, and adaptive dance. They do not usually offer tap in community settings because of the need for the specialized shoes, but there have been instances where they have worked around that. They also have a “Dance, Music, and Literacy” program that has a more stringent curriculum based on company repertoire. In addition, company offers a program called “American Dance Project” that looks at forms of American vernacular dance and how they led to different dance genres, such as tap, jazz, swing and hip-hop. These two programs are clearly more conceptual and less technical, but can be adapted based on the needs of the community partner. According to Cook, “There is no specific directive from an administrative

¹⁴ Calvin Rollings II (Community Education Liaison) and Alexandra Cook (Youth and Family Programs Director), in discussion with the author, November 2020.

standpoint when we are teaching technique...we function more on a curriculum framework, and that really has to do with the way we are asking our teaching artists to set up their classrooms.” They have specific curriculum mapping and lesson planning structures that must be adhered to, but there is room for creative freedom by the individual teaching artists.

The classes that MMDG brings out into the community are taught by teaching artists that they hire specifically to teach their programming. Unlike a lot of dance companies, the classes are not simply taught by former MMDG performers. This makes the base of teachers broader and better equipped to adapt to different communities’ needs. The company holds teaching artist auditions to hire teachers for both their school and the community programs. The candidates are required to prepare lesson plans and teach mock classes to the other applicants to assess their pedagogical skill in addition to their knowledge of the technique. Cook summed this up well when she said, “While of course it’s important for someone to have an advanced understanding of the dance form they are teaching, it’s not necessarily important to us that they had some very fancy career. It’s much more important to us that they have an understanding of excellent teaching practice.”¹⁵ This means that MMDG teachers will have solid content knowledge, advanced pedagogical practices, and even skills such as culturally responsive teaching in order to cater to the different demographics of students that they will encounter.

MMDG has a geolocated focus, which means that their programming is primarily geared toward students in the immediate vicinity of the company. The dance center is in a neighborhood called Fort Green, and they ensure that that community and surrounding

¹⁵Calvin Rollings II (Community Education Liaison) and Alexandra Cook (Youth and Family Programs Director), in discussion with the author, November 2020.

communities have access to dance education. The population that they serve is very diverse, and they strive to ensure that the voices in the community are heard throughout the process and not trampled over. “What we try not to do is assume that because it’s a specific neighborhood that they want a specific thing.” The population in these communities are extremely diverse, and a lot of gentrification has occurred in these neighborhoods. This means that the company’s community engagement programs have to be equipped to teach a variety of students of varying ages, socio-economic statuses, family situations, and varied exposure to the arts.

To market their programming, the company uses primarily word of mouth and the popularity of the company. Since MMDG is a well-known name in New York City, it sticks out when communities are looking for artists to come and teach. Cook says that that they are lucky to be in New York City where the Department of Education has dance as a part of the curriculum. MMDG is a vendor of New York City Department of Education. This means that they are on a roster of organizations who offer in-school residencies so that when schools are looking for someone to teach, they can find the company as an option.¹⁶

The decisions about which partners pay for the programs and how much they pay are made on a case-to-case basis. If the school is bringing in money to offer programming to students, MMDG charges them a little bit more for those services. For example, if students are charged by the school to attend after school programming, the company will charge the school for that specific program. However, most of their programming costs very little for the community partners, and the prices are always negotiated with the

¹⁶ Calvin Rollings II (Community Education Liaison) and Alexandra Cook (Youth and Family Programs Director), in discussion with the author, November 2020.

partner. No one ever pays what the programming actually costs the company, so they rely on funding to cover the extraneous costs. Funding for the programs primarily comes from individual and institutional donors. They get some money from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA), which is money that comes from taxes from NYC and is distributed to different organizations. There are also foundations that give grants. Non-profits are audited every single year, and the money from taxes and grants is extremely well-tracked. They also get funding from students paying to take classes at the Mark Morris Dance School.¹⁷

The company has several methods to assess the effectiveness of their programs. One of these that is quite effective is their teaching artist observation forms. These observations allow the teachers to quantify the effectiveness of the programs and document what is actually going on. Specifically, for the in-school programming, the teachers, students, and partner organization all fill out feedback forms on the specific classes that were offered. The students are also interviewed and all of this information is put into a report. Before they even start the class, they gather the community partner's goals for the class and try to accomplish those and see if they line up with the company's goals. Then, at the end of the residency, they write up a report on how the goals were met or not met and compile this information with the evaluation forms and interviews to see if the way the class was taught was effective for both the company and the partner.

There are two main reasons that the Mark Morris Dance Group's community engagement programs are so effective. The first reason is the way that they cater the programs to the needs of the community partner and work with them throughout every

¹⁷ Calvin Rollings II (Community Education Liaison) and Alexandra Cook (Youth and Family Programs Director), in discussion with the author, November 2020.

step of the process. This is one of the main factors that sets them apart from other companies, and it is so extremely important for community programming. This allows the students to receive a dance education that will be receptive to them and their culture, but also teach them techniques and information about other cultures or communities that they might not know much about. Cook put this concept well when she said, “We’re not trying to be in one place and go out to that community. We want to be a part of that community. They’re a part of our community as well.” This comment genuinely shows the heart behind the company’s mission and their dedication to the students they serve.

The second distinguishing factor of the MMDG community engagement programs is their dedication to hiring teaching artists that have strong pedagogical and content knowledge. The company realizes that knowing about something and being able to teach well are two extremely different things. Everyone has had a teacher at some point in their lives that was a genius. They could do the content so well, they were the best dancer on the stage, etc. These people are not always the best choice to teach that content if they do not also have the ability to teach well. MMDG specifically looks for teachers who can handle a classroom, write lesson plans, and attend professional development on educational concepts that will enhance the content and delivery that they are able to provide the students. This makes their programs effective because it ensures that the students are in a classroom with teaching artists who understand what steps need to be taken for them to get the best education possible as well as having a strong knowledge of the technique or content area they are teaching.

CHAPTER FOUR: RIOULT DANCE NEW YORK

RIOULT Dance New York is a modern dance company based around the work of Pascal Rioult. Rioult was born and raised in France, but came to America in 1981 to study modern dance. He performed with several companies, but the most notable was his role as a principal dancer with the Martha Graham Dance Company. He is known as one of the leaders in “neo-modern dance.” In 1994, as a means of perfecting his own choreographic style, he founded his own company (RIOULT). The DanceREACH residency program began around the same time. It was originally created by Pascal and Joyce Rioult as part of their mission for the company. The company believes that dance helps “students develop inventive minds, strong bodies, and an understanding of self-expression.”¹⁸ The creation of the DanceREACH program provided a performance opportunity for the company and a way to reach the community with dance. However, the program has undergone significant change in the past five years after coming under the control of a new director, Anastasia Sorozcynski. Sorozcynski danced with the company for years before taking on her current role as administrative director of youth programs. Although their company is relatively small in the scope of New York City concert dance companies, they have managed to create a community engagement program that is enriching for students and broadens their knowledge of dance and the arts.

¹⁸ Anastasia Sorozcynski (Administrative Director of Youth Programs), in discussion with the author, November 2020.

In an interview, Sorozcynski explains that their programming is movement-focused, but it is primarily based on Rioult's choreography. This means that they do have the students dance and take more technical classes, but they learn about specific company repertory in a more content-focused way as well. Their overarching program, DanceREACH, is three-fold. There are three elements of the program that community partners can choose to have their students participate in. The first portion is a lecture demonstration that is free to anyone who attends. These interactive lectures show students from various schools what it is like to be a professional dancer. The company members break down and explain a piece that they are working on for the students and then perform it live. This program is always free for students so that they get an opportunity to experience dance.¹⁹

These lectures are then usually connected to the second portion of the program, which is an 8–10-week residency program within the schools. The purpose of the residencies is to give the students the opportunity to dive deeper into learning about the choreographic process and different content-connected lessons taught through the lens of Rioult's works. Throughout the process, the students also learn how to warm-up and prepare their bodies for movement and how to use their creativity to choreograph their own version of the company repertoire they have studied. In order to accomplish this, the students are taught the choreographic methods of Rioult, and they get to use those tools along with their own creativity to form their projects. The students then perform these creative projects for parents and other guests at the end of the residency. The third option that DanceREACH offers as part of its programming is masterclasses, which can take a

¹⁹Anastasia Sorozcynski (Administrative Director of Youth Programs), in discussion with the author, November 2020.

variety of forms. Schools can request these instead of a full residency to enhance their students' art education without having to make a full commitment to RIOULT's curriculum.

The specific curriculum used in the dance residency programs can be catered to different levels of students, but it is all based on company repertory. Different pieces of repertory work better for different age groups. *The Greek Trilogy* is a piece Rioult was working on with Duke University based on three different female characters from Greek mythology, and this is a more mature work that would be focused towards high schoolers or college students. However, there are different pieces that can be used for elementary school all the way to college. For example, Rioult's *Valero* is used to teach geometry and patterns in the movement and the music, which works well for third and fourth graders. The classes in these programs are taught primarily by senior dancers in the company, with a few outside teachers that understand the technique and style of Rioult's work.²⁰

For all of these programs to be able to function as they do, the company must pay heavy consideration to funding. Although neither the students nor the schools pay for the first section of the programming, the company has to fund their programs somehow. The schools do pay for the residencies, but a lot of them do not have enough money to pay for the full program, so RIOULT works within their budget. For the majority of their funding, the company applies for grants. The company's primary sources for grants are the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA), The Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA), and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). However, even with the funding they do receive, RIOULT's marketing budget is extremely small. While

²⁰ Anastasia Sorozcynski (Administrative Director of Youth Programs), in discussion with the author, November 2020.

DanceReach does not have resources dedicated to marketing, they have built their client base through emails and by using the United States Department of Education's website to research schools in need of arts programs. Attached to these emails is a brochure that RIOULT has created that contains information about their program. It details the programming options, including performance demonstrations, residencies, workshops, etc. However, even with these marketing efforts, the schools' word of mouth is the main factor in getting the word out about RIOULT's programs.

RIOULT recognizes the importance of assessment within their programs. One of the guiding goals that the company has for their community programming is to connect with the students and get on their level while maintaining control of the classes and what the students are learning. This means that they value their ability to meet the students at their current ability level and try to teach the whole child. To assess their program's effectiveness in meeting these goals, Sorozcynski created a weekly assessment for the teachers to fill out to document what is going on in their classes. This allows them to stay on track and make sure they are providing consistent education while making appropriate changes based on consistent feedback.²¹

One of the main reasons why DanceREACH is an effective outreach program is because of their three-pronged system. They do not offer a lot of extraneous programming because they are a small company, but the three programs they do offer are well-thought-out and consistent. This system also gives the schools flexibility to choose which programming would be best for their students. The lecture demonstration gives a free opportunity for students and schools to see what the company is all about while

²¹ Anastasia Sorozcynski (Administrative Director of Youth Programs), in discussion with the author, November 2020.

receiving comprehensive information about dance, and then the residencies and workshops build on this base knowledge to offer students outlets to explore art in new, creative ways. In this case, limiting the number of program options did not inhibit the effectiveness of the company's community engagement, but increased its effectiveness because of the streamlined system that they created.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

The three companies referenced in this paper excel in different ways, but they have all found exceptional strategies in programming, curriculum, and administrative planning that have allowed their community education programs to thrive. In particular, the programming is specific and targeted and caters to the needs of the community partner. The curriculum of each is geared towards creative works or classes that the company values and is adjusted for the students taking the class. The programs have a clear mission statement that is used as a guide for all aspects of their program and teachers who are well-versed not only in their content area, but in solid, research-based pedagogical practice. Finally, the program is regularly assessed for effectiveness, and changes are made accordingly. Of course, there are other small things that keep a program going, such as funding, the reputation of the company, etc., but overall, a program with these traits is most likely to be effective at reaching their target audience.

The first trait of an effective community engagement program is that it has a clear mission statement. Whether the mission focuses on helping students with self-expression (like RIOULT) or being accessible to all students (like Mark Morris), it needs to be the guiding factor in programmatic and curricular decisions. This was seen in all three of the companies researched, but the clearest example is the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. Their mission for students to “take, make, and see dance” can be easily seen in how their in-school residencies are run. They allow students opportunities to dive into all

three of these areas. The mission statement of the community education program should branch off of the organizational mission statement and keep with its overall ideals, but it should be specific to community engagement so that the values of the company are being continued into its community programs. Without a clear mission statement, there is no guiding factor to tell if the company is effectively accomplishing what it is setting out to do. Without a goal, no goal can be met, and this is the main idea behind clear, purposeful mission statements.

The second hallmark of an effective community education program is specific and targeted programming. This means that the programs offered by the company are targeted towards the needs of their community partner, and specific communication between the two parties informs programmatic decisions. This means that, even if the company offers specific curriculum, it should be versatile enough to provide what the community partner needs. For example, if the students at a school are desperately wanting a ballet class, but the company does not have a specific curriculum that includes ballet, there will need to be changes that provide what the partner needs while staying inside realm of what the company offers. The programs offered also need to be within the means of the organization providing them, meaning that a small company should not offer six major programs if they want to maintain excellence in all of them. A smaller number of targeted programs yields better results and allows the company to pour more resources into that company that they know is effective.

The next practice of an effective program is curriculum that is geared towards repertoire or content that the company values. This means that whatever the company is teaching needs to matter to them. For example, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater has

curriculum based on *Revelations* and *Night Creature*. These are pieces that were choreographed by their founder and that mean a lot to them as a company. A program's curriculum is what sets them apart from other companies looking to start arts-in-education programs, and it is what helps the company remain passionate about their programs, because it is a direct extension of the company itself.

The next practice for effective community education programs is employing carefully-chosen teaching artists. The company that demonstrates this practice most effectively is the Mark Morris Dance Group. By holding teaching artist interviews and requiring lesson plan submissions, they ensure that the teachers they hire for their programs are qualified pedagogically and technically. They hire individuals trained in the technique they will be teaching and in strategies for classroom management, lesson planning, and instruction. This element is important for effective programs because the students deserve quality instruction with experts in the dance field who are skilled at teaching their knowledge to students.

The final element of an effective community dance education program is regular assessment. Assessment can be completed in various ways, but the main goal of assessment is to help guide the company in making instructional decisions. This means that the assessment needs to be devised in a manner that will inform the company of whether or not the program is doing what it set out to do. This is where the goals and mission statement come in because they set the groundwork for what the programs were supposed to accomplish. One method for assessing the programs (used by all three companies interviewed) is a questionnaire. These should be filled out by teaching artists, school administrators, and students. This way, the data is more representative of class

outcomes and is unbiased. The questionnaire should include questions about student disposition, class participation, student formative assessment results, class structure, etc. All of these questions will help the company know if the class given has actually caused the students to grow in the areas they were hoping to target. Student interviews are another effective method of program assessment. This method is used by Mark Morris and is included in their assessment report used to show their sponsors what they are achieving. These interviews provide the student perspective on the class and show what individual students have gained from the process.

Although these are the five main findings demonstrated by this research, there are so many other facets of arts-in-education programs that help them run smoothly. These include their marketing strategies, funding, and even the demographic of students they choose to cater their programs towards. However, these five methods to effectively use programming, curriculum, and administrative practices should help create and maintain a community engagement program that will do what it sets out to do- reach students with dance. This research can also be applied in other organizations besides concert dance companies with slight adjustments.

Overall, the goal of this research was to find effective ways to reach students in the community with dance through the context of concert dance companies. The importance of this cause cannot be overstated, as these students are the future of their country and the world. Since arts education has so many positive impacts on students, being able to effectively deliver it is extremely necessary. Hopefully the findings of this paper will help more students get the arts education they deserve by providing practical strategies to maintain community education programs within arts organizations.

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