

INSIDE ARTS

SPRING 2020

THE MAGAZINE OF THE ASSOCIATION OF PERFORMING ARTS PROFESSIONALS

TRENDS IN DANCE

PING CHONG

FAREWELL, MARIO

IN PRAISE OF RISK AND RESILIENCE

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INSIDE ARTS

THE MAGAZINE OF THE ASSOCIATION OF PERFORMING ARTS PROFESSIONALS

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ADAM KEISICK/APAP



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January 8-12

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INSIDE ARTS

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APAP is a national service and advocacy organization with nearly 1,700 members worldwide dedicated to bringing artists and audiences together. Leading the field, APAP works to effect change through professional development, resource sharing and civic engagement.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT



Throughout my career, I have been inspired by my colleagues who are driven to serve others.

It's from helping others that they find their greatest motivation and joy. As I reflect on my time at APAP before I step down in April, it is the indelible impression they have made on me that has put service at the center of my daily work.

Because much of my work has been behind the scenes of the performing arts, I understand that our contributions to this broad and diverse field are critical – and often invisible. My role models are those who humbly recognize that it's a privilege to serve and that service is its own reward. Giving to others, often without the thanks or acknowledgment or applause that accompanies many arts professionals in their work, is a gift in itself. Service nourishes the soul. One mentor taught me that I should try to do at least two good turns each day, without recognition. I try to follow this advice.

ADAM KISS/CK/APAP

Another trait of those whom I admire is that they never lose sight that we are all part of achieving greater goals for the arts, and we are, each one of us, instrumental in that work. These individuals recognize that no matter what our role on a team, or whether we have been doing the work for many decades or are at the beginning of our career path, we all have value.

In my ideal world, I would exit my current position with grace and humility for having been given such a privileged leadership role in the arts. Also, in this world, I would have the opportunity to continue to serve and to share any knowledge and/or experience I have with future or current leaders. That's the dream.

I am so deeply grateful for all that has led me to this point. I have great colleagues, lifelong friends, and a loving partner of 29 years, all who have supported me in every step of my professional life. Most importantly, I've been guided along my career path by mentors who believed in me, which in turn allowed me to believe in myself. Many of them know who they are, and some will never know the impact they've had. If I can give back just a fraction of that, I would be very, very happy.

Thank you for this time at APAP.

Mario Garcia Durham, PRESIDENT & CEO

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

Our annual Knowledge Issue collects reports, excerpts and articles curated by experts in the field. Keep up to date on studies, trends and best practices. A great summer read for arts professionals!

Nitin Sawhney



DakhaBrakha



San Salvador



Manganiyar Seduction



- Aditya Prakash Ensemble
- Afro-Cuban All Stars
- Canzoniere Grecanico Salentino
- Dakh Daughters
- Hermeto Pascoal
- Huun Huur Tu
- Karsh Kale
- Lenine
- Oumou Sangare
- Paris Combo
- San Salvador
- Souad Massi



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VOICE

HALL TOGETHER NOW

Lincoln Center and the New York Philharmonic team up to reenvision performance space.

AFTER SEVERAL YEARS OF STOPS AND STARTS, plans for the reimagined David Geffen Hall at Lincoln Center are moving forward with a design focused on intimacy and community. Leaders from Lincoln Center and the New York Philharmonic have joined forces and resources in an initiative they're calling Working In Concert.

"We have three goals: To create one of the world's finest concert halls, dynamic community spaces, and a building that connects in innovative and bold ways with our outside world," Lincoln Center president and CEO Henry Timms and New York Philharmonic president and CEO Deborah Borda

said in a joint statement. "David Geffen Hall will now sound and feel intimate and connected. We are moving the stage forward, wrapping the audience around the orchestra, reducing the number of seats and improving sightlines in every part of the hall. The environment will be vibrant, warm and welcoming – with terrific acoustics. One of our big priorities for this project is a true sense of community. The concert hall will bring everyone closer to the music, but people also want to feel closer to one another."

With those goals in mind, Diamond Schmitt Architects will design the concert hall, while Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects | Partners will design the public spaces. They join acoustician Paul Scarbrough of Akustiks and theater designer Joshua Dachs of Fisher Dachs Associates. The new hall is slated to open in March 2024, with two short closures for construction, during which the New York Philharmonic will play in other venues in the city.



David Geffen Hall
at Lincoln Center

SPHINX OR SWIM

Swim with the sharks? How about the artists?

Many of today's most successful artists also have an entrepreneurial spirit and skill set. With that in mind, Sphinx Organization, which aims to diversify the world of classical music, introduced the Sphinx Tank competition in 2019 and has revived it for 2020. In the spirit of Shark Tank, the session showcases four emerging arts and cultural entrepreneurs of color as they pitch their projects to a panel of successful cultural entrepreneurs.

"Sphinx Tank is an exciting, innovative platform to select, showcase and empower the next generation of cultural entrepreneurs," says Afa Dworkin, president and CEO of The Sphinx Organization. "We feel that this effort is especially timely and compelling for our field as it relates to changing and diversifying its identity."

The 2020 competitors include Portia Dunkley for her Colorful Violin Method of music education for children between the ages of 2 and 5; Marielisa and Mariesther Alvarez's Boston String Academy, inspired by the Venezuelan El Sistema model; Joshua Leak's Art Explosion Unlimited, which seeks to bring together young up-and-coming musicians, poets, dancers and visual artists of significant



Gabrielle Molina



Joshua Leak



Marielisa and Mariesther Alvarez



Portia Dunkley

potential from all over the country to promote diversity and inclusion, inspire other young artists and give back to their respective communities through performance and creative opportunities; and Gabrielle Molina's Teaching Artists International, which creates artistic cultural exchanges that empower youth and support music education around the world. A panel of arts leaders, including Sphinx Organization founder and professor at the University of Michigan Aaron

P. Dworkin; PBS arts advisor and former NEA chair Jane Chu; Donald Hicks, the founder of LlamaSoft and owner of Blue Llama Jazz Club; Silk Road artist Cristina Pato; and Jade Simmons, a pianist and CEO of Jade Media Global. The panel evaluates the projects based on core entrepreneurship metrics and awards a \$25,000 Sphinx Tank Grant to the entrepreneur demonstrating the highest level of excellence in all these areas.

FORCES FOR GOOD

They've answered the call of duty. Now veterans in need can place a call for creative arts therapies.

Creative Forces: NEA Military Healing Arts Network recently announced plans to expand the telehealth component of its services to additional Veterans Affairs medical facilities. Creative Forces is an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with the



VOICE

U.S. Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs as well as state and local arts agencies. The initiative provides access to art, music and dance/movement therapies, as well as creative writing instruction for service members and veterans suffering from traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder. Through telehealth, creative arts therapists are able to work with patients in rural and remote

places via video conferencing platforms.

“This Creative Forces expansion is an important part of the National Endowment for the Arts’ efforts to increase access to the arts for all Americans, especially to our veterans and those in rural communities,” says Mary Anne Carter, chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts.

“Telehealth can be a hugely important tool in connecting

rural veterans with the care they need,” said Dr. Thomas Klobucar, executive director of the VA Office of Rural Health. “Our partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts adds an entirely new dimension of care to our Rural Veterans TeleRehabilitation Initiative, allowing us to treat the whole veteran regardless of where they live.”

For more information, visit arts.gov/creativeforces.

DANCING THROUGH THE DECADE


Ten years ago, Krannert Center and staff from Dance at Illinois, in partnership with the Unity Parkinson’s Disease Support Group and Carle Clinic, began offering a monthly dance program for local residents with Parkinson’s disease. The free series of dance-based classes was inspired by the center’s longtime artistic collaborators

Mark Morris Dance Group. A decade later, Krannert’s Dance for People with Parkinson’s program is going strong. The program aims to help participants preserve and improve their balance, flexibility and strength, while also building a community of people with Parkinson’s and their supporters. In the decade since its inception, there have been moments of discovery, respite, joy and commonality. That tradition continues, says Whitney

Havice, Krannert Center’s ticket services director and the staff liaison for the program: “The Dance for People with Parkinson’s program is an incredibly special demonstration of what happens when you are able to explore the creative empowerment of dance and the positive impact it can have on the mind, body and soul, as well as the connections and sense of family that it can create within communities.”



CULTURAL BANDWIDTH

Casita Maria Center for Arts & Education in the Bronx has received a donation of 10 computers from UnitedHealthcare to increase computer and internet access for the organization's after-school program participants. The donation is part of UnitedHealthcare's Community Computers program, which enables community organizations and nonprofits to provide computer and internet access to people in underserved communities. Casita Maria aims to enrich and help youth and families gain success through shared cultural, art and educational experiences and programs. Casita Maria leadership is seeking other funding for software or programs that can help children and teens create visual art and original musical compositions. For more information, visit casitamaria.org 



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Transitions



Bonnie Schock

BONNIE SCHOCK is the new executive director of Fox Tucson Theatre, a historic Southwestern Art Deco movie palace theater in Tucson, Arizona. She

succeeds longtime executive director Craig Sumberg. Schock comes to Tucson from Red Wing, Minnesota, where she served as executive director of the Sheldon Theatre of Performing Arts since 2015. She brings to the role three decades of experience in the theater arts and entertainment industry.



Martin Wechsler

MARTIN WECHSLER has been named senior adviser for TMC Arts Dance Presentations at The Music Center of Los Angeles. In his new role,

Wechsler will support the TMC Arts team in curating its dance seasons, developing relevant engagement projects for each dance presentation and expanding the dance series' student matinee program. A dance curator, producer, administrator and educator, Wechsler began his career with The Joyce Theater as an administrative assistant and grew to become the organization's director of programming, a role he held for more than 20 years before stepping down in 2017.

Skyline Artists Agency has expanded its performing arts center booking division and announced two promotions: veteran



Ben Rossman

agent **ANDREA SABATA**, who founded the division, has been promoted to vice president of performing arts, and **BEN ROSSMAN**, who has been serving as

Sabata's tour coordinator, has been promoted to full agent in the division with a focus on emerging artists.

The United Theatre of Westerly, Rhode Island, has hired **LISA UTMAN RANDALL**



Lisa Utman Randall

as executive director and **TONY NUNES** as artistic director. In Rhode Island, Randall was co-founder and executive director of Island Arts, director of

development for RiverzEdge Arts Project and founding executive director of the Jamestown Arts Center. Nunes has



Tony Nunes

worked with the United Theatre since 2013, first as a volunteer and then as an event and marketing consultant. He previously served as assistant

vice president of public relations for Washington Trust and was a member of the public relations team at Mohegan Sun.

The nonprofit New 42nd Street, which includes New Victory Theater and the New 42nd Street Studios, has announced

staffing changes and promotions after naming **RUSSELL GRANET** its president and CEO last summer. **MARY ROSE LLOYD**, who previously served as director of artistic programming for the New 42nd Street, is the new artistic director. **LISA LAWER POST** has been promoted to COO, and **LAUREN FITZGERALD** has been promoted to vice president of marketing and communications. In addition, **ELIZABETH HINES** has been hired as vice president of finance.

Agent **MATT MCCLUSKEY** has joined International Music Network and will oversee the booking of IMN's roster in Europe, Asia, Australia, South America and Africa. He brings 12 years of music industry experience to the role. Raised in Boston, he studied music business management at Berklee College of Music and English at University of Massachusetts Boston. In 2007, McCluskey was hired as the international contract manager at The Kurland Agency. He was promoted to domestic agent, then international



Diane Willcox

agent, eventually taking on all bookings outside of the U.S. and Canada.

Midland (Michigan) Center for

the Arts has hired **DIANE WILLCOX** as its vice president of marketing and communications. She comes to Midland from Broadway in Tucson, Arizona, where she served as general manager.

EMILY BORABABY has been named chief advancement officer of Celebrity Series of Boston. She previously served as director of development and external relations for From the Top, Inc., where she led the organization's fundraising, board relations and external relations. **///**

SRO

2020/21

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- Bruce In The USA
- Lennie Gallant
- Marco Mezquida
- On A Winter's Night
- Ones - The Beatles #1 Hits
- Purple Veins
- Quinteto Astor Piazzolla
- Ray On My Mind
The Ray Charles Story
- The Small Glories
- Small Island Big Song

ARTS ATTRACTIONS

- Bollywood Boulevard
- Bone Hill: The Concert
- Flying Karamazov Brothers
- Fourth Light Project
- Golden Dragon Acrobats
- Live From Laurel Canyon
- Surviving Twin

MUSIC

- Altan
- California Guitar Trio
- Get The Led Out
- Gonzalo Bergara
- Karla Bonoff
- Loudon Wainwright III
- Mariachi Reyna
- Mariachi Sol de Mexico
- Martha Redbone
- Niyaz featuring Azam Ali
- Patty Larkin
- Skerryvore
- The Sweet Remains
- Terry Riley
- Villalobos Brothers
- The Waifs
- Windham Hill's Winter Solstice

ONES

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GOLDEN DRAGON ACROBATS



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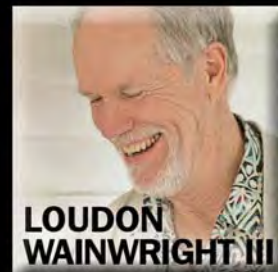
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ONLINE



APAP | NYC 2020 EMBRACED THE THEME OF **RISK AND RESILIENCE** DURING ITS ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

STORY BY LINDA L. NELSON, JAKE STEPANSKY AND MARIE-ANNE HARRIGAN
PHOTOS BY ADAM AND CHRISTY KISSICK



Renae Williams-Niles and Ben Folds

Musician, author and political activist Ben Folds is famous for improvising new songs on the spot. “It teaches me every single time I’m on tour,” he said of this practice, which the pop singer and multidisciplinary artist has been evolving in appearances with symphony orchestras around the nation. “Any musician can make up a song on the spot. The reason they don’t do it is they are afraid to fail. That’s where the risk comes in. So having the permission every night to have the space to fail, that’s what we all need.”

Folds was featured in conversation with APAP board member Renae Williams-Niles during the closing plenary session at APAP|NYC 2020, which had the theme of “Risk and Resilience” and took place January 10-14.

Days earlier, at the opening plenary, Kamilah Forbes, the executive producer at Harlem’s Apollo Theater, pointed out that the concept of risk “definitely involves ‘exposure to danger’

and that is how we typically understand it in the arts field. The invention of the corporate uses of the term – risk aversion, risk factor and risk management – date from the 1940s to the 1960s and have crept into the nonprofit and arts sectors as well.

Forbes then spun a vivid allegory that continued to reverberate throughout the days that followed. She described life as a tree: a thick trunk grounded in deep roots, with branches

thinning the higher they go. “The skinny branches,” Forbes said, “are the pinnacle. The height. The stretch. It is here where true creative freedom exists. Here where we feel the most unsteady. They can break ... but it is here where we must live.”

“Where do we as institutions mirror that behavior to take risks?” Forbes challenged the audience in concluding her comments. “Where are we standing on the skinny branches?” She called on the field’s “responsibility to be daring, to be bold – rather than risk managers.”

“We are all risk-takers: people who give their all to make the arts possible,” said Mario Garcia Durham, the nine-year president and CEO of APAP, at that same opening plenary session. Durham, who announced that he will be leaving the organization later this spring [see related story on page 20], is preparing to embrace his own risks. “It’s a tough time: socially, politically, economically,” he said, “but we are so resilient.”

Change, with its inherent risks, had other thematic expressions at the conference. New Orleans-based artist Nick Slie spoke about the intersection of resilience and climate change. He pointed out that NOLA is particularly hard hit by climate change not only in the reality of intense storms such as Katrina, but because its land is disappearing to the warming and rising waters faster than almost in any other place. “It was during that moment [Katrina] that we felt most alive,” Slie said. “They keep telling us that we are resilient. How do we turn this resilience into resistance?”

“You can’t know risk and resilience without joy and vice versa,” said performance artist Ty Defoe in conversation with arts administrator Aubrey Bergauer at Sunday’s long conversation plenary session. “I think joy, as an indigenous queer person, is what gets me up in the morning,” said Defoe. “To someone who is a survivor, who was handed down 500 years of genocide, joy is my hope to wake up to in the morning.” Resilience is finding this joy amid more failures than successes.

Triumphant tales marked the conference as well: Emily Prince’s award-winning 5 Minutes to Shine Awards Luncheon presentation on the thriving Stuart’s Opera House in the poorest county in Ohio and each APAP Leadership Fellows Program member’s vignettes, including the Tennessee Arts Commission’s achievement in mapping its rural arts assets at the Saturday plenary session.

The principles of community engagement and art-making were combined in *Free the Festival: A Blueprint for Community Building and Inclusion*. Presenters Kyle Homstead and Cassandra Holden described their work in Easthampton, Massachusetts, a mill town where tensions across age and cultural groups led to a multiyear investment in infrastructure and community through a bridge-building event called Millpond.live.

“We measured our success not by the numbers, but by who came,” explained Homstead – and to get those people to come, the festival organizers had to anticipate every possible problem and think holistically and with a policy of radical inclusivity.



**“THIS YEAR, WE
 WOULD LIKE
 TO ASK YOU
 ALL TO THINK
 OF APAP AS A
 NEIGHBORHOOD
 AND ALL OF THE
 PARTICIPANTS
 AS YOUR
 NEIGHBORS”**

– SHANTA THAKE

The solutions came in droves: better lighting at a park, a beer section that included families, outreach to overlooked audiences, free parking, food from a local co-op.

“There’s a kind of magic when you have little kids, their grandparents, and teenagers who are

finding a place for themselves at this festival,” explained Holden.

Another topic that addressed risk and resilience permeated the conference: race, equity, diversity and inclusion, or REDI. In a statement on REDI, APAP took a declarative stance: “We commit to the work of REDI with openness and deep institutional commitment, realizing that REDI is a sustained practice that rejects tokenism and instead embeds equity across the performing arts field.”

APAP committed to making REDI a top priority woven into all APAP work moving forward. How was this expressed at the conference? In a word: everywhere. This year’s conference included a whopping 26 sessions that were explicitly REDI-focused. Through the various workshops, forums, panels and affinity groups, intersections between the performing arts world and REDI were richly and deeply represented.



**FROM UPPER LEFT
CLOCKWISE:** Jen
Kober's Homegrown
Comedy Show, Jersey
Tenors, A Hunger Artist,
Creative Presenting
and Producing session,
YPCA participant
Hanzhi Wang

CENTER IMAGE:
Choreographer Antoine
Hunter

During many sessions, artists and arts leaders offered advice regarding the conference theme.

“You just have to keep going,” jazz drummer and composer Terri Lyne Carrington said during the conversational plenary session. “I didn’t record for 10 years because people kept saying no.” She persisted, and it led to one of her three Grammy Awards.

“Being resilient is just taking all the knocks of life and not letting them hurt you,” said attendee Karen Maberry, an actor, director and promoter from Britain via Florida. “You’ve got to bounce back and realize you are just here for this one,

short, crazy journey – and you can choose to be safe and not really live.”

The conference committee’s four co-chairs – Lynn Fisher, Shanta Thake, Beatrice Thomas and Martin Wollesen – were outspoken in their desires to exemplify and create a culture of generosity, listening, risk-taking, facilitation, humility and self-care. From the outset, they placed a high value on facilitative leadership, peer-to-peer learning and creating spaces that acknowledged that everyone has something to offer.

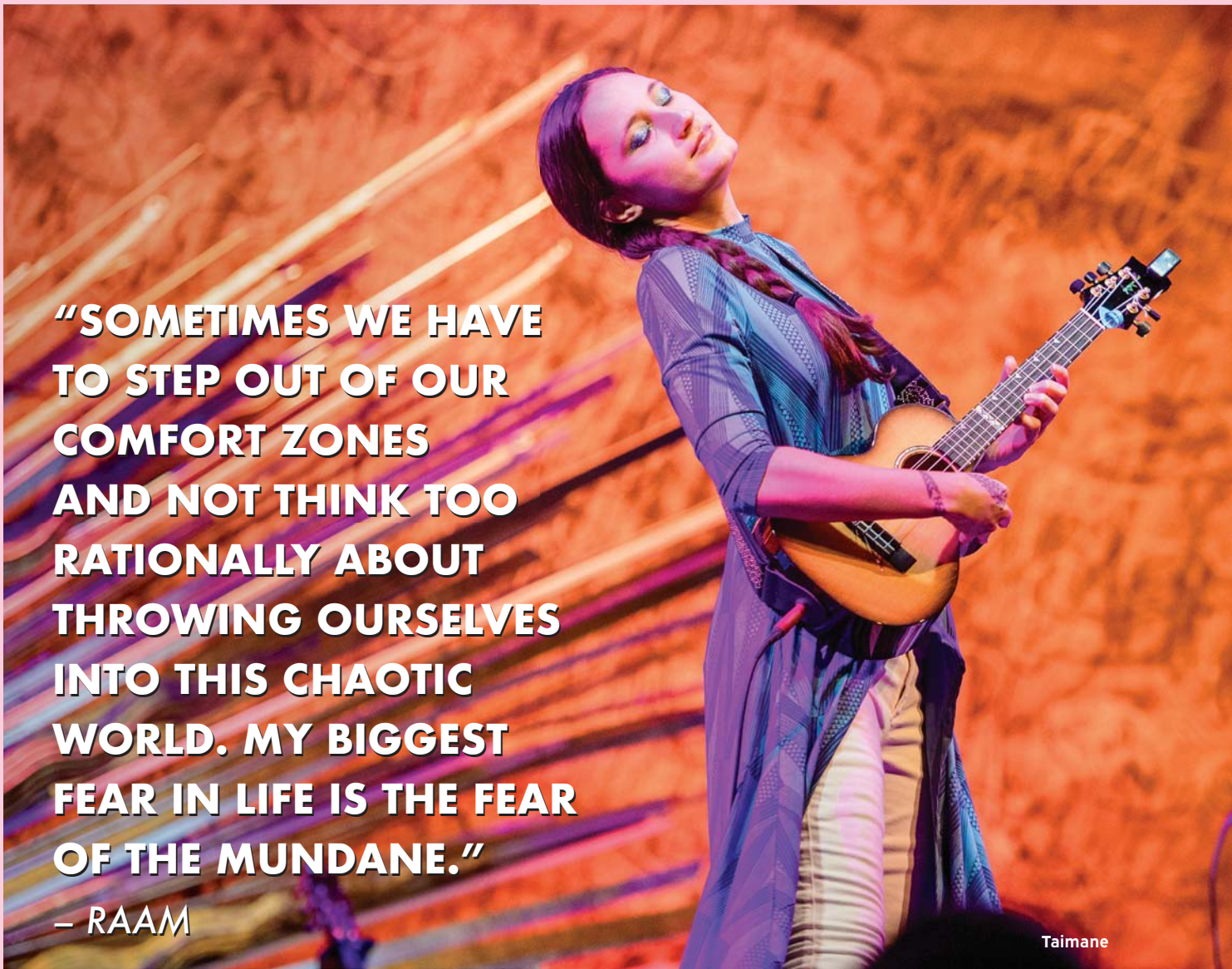
“This year, we would like to ask you all to think of APAP as a neighborhood and all of the

participants as your neighbors,” Thake said.

The result of this thinking was a schedule that to many, while still overwhelming, felt more forgiving. The intentional availability of self-care resources, such as yoga classes and a quiet room on the Hilton’s fourth floor, made a difference.

Jen Shyu, a multidiscipline performer and Artist Access Member, reported her most memorable conference moment as “hearing the other artists practice self-care, and the changes we need to make, that we hope to make, in sustainability. I realized I’m going to change my practice. That’s going to be my goal.”





“SOMETIMES WE HAVE TO STEP OUT OF OUR COMFORT ZONES AND NOT THINK TOO RATIONALLY ABOUT THROWING OURSELVES INTO THIS CHAOTIC WORLD. MY BIGGEST FEAR IN LIFE IS THE FEAR OF THE MUNDANE.”

– RAAM

Taimane

“This is a community celebration and get-together,” Wollesen said during a plenary session. “Risk the conversation,” he counseled attendees. “Be vulnerable to share who you are and to allow them to share who they are.”

“The universe is kind to those who are unfettered by logic and consequence,” said the musician Raam in relating to Defoe’s harrowing story of persecution, exile and immigration to Canada from his beloved Iranian homeland. “Sometimes we have to step out of our comfort zones and not think too rationally about throwing ourselves into this chaotic world. My biggest fear in life is the fear of the mundane.”

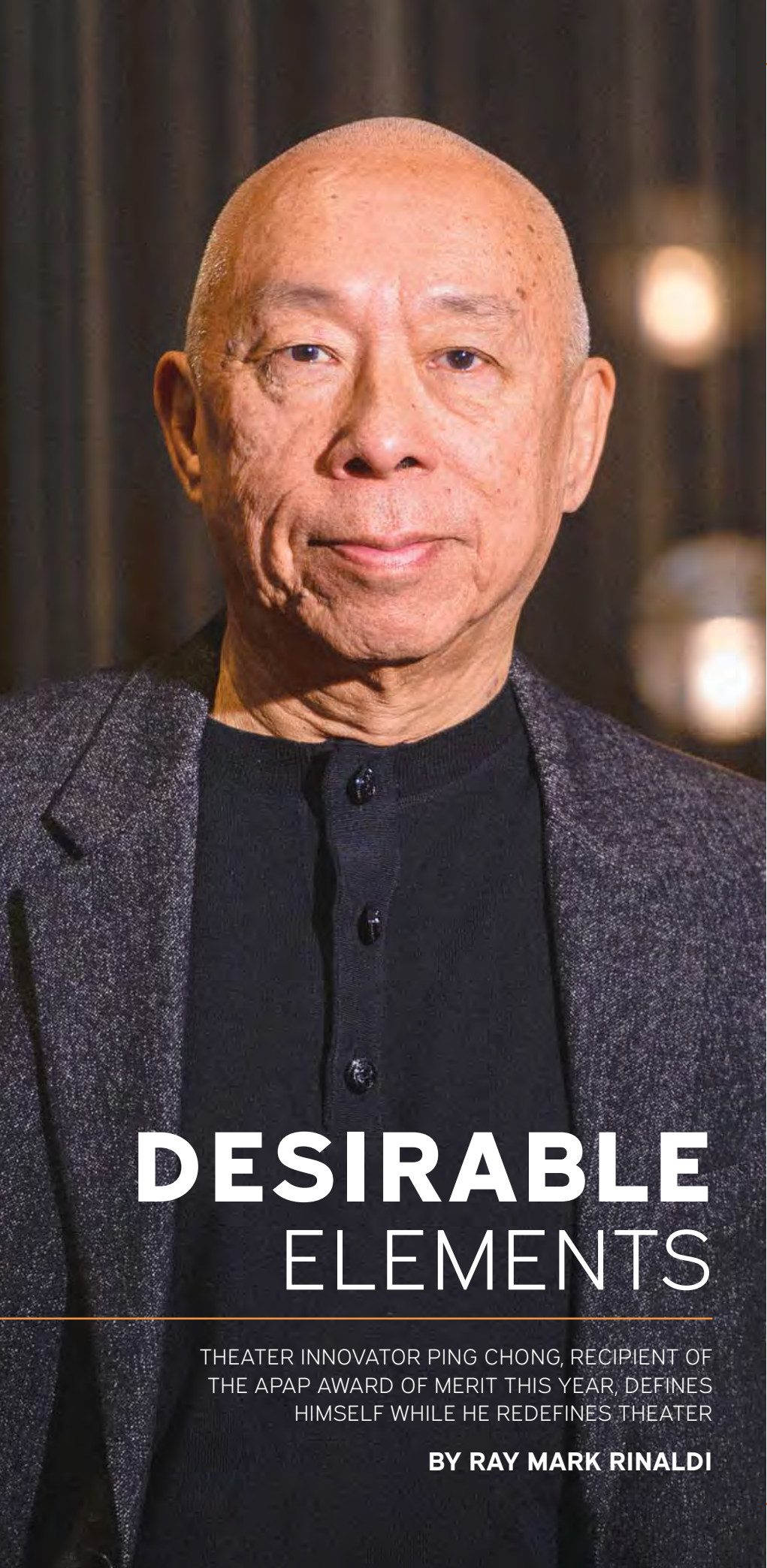
“We’re capable of anything, none of us are holy,” concluded Folds at the piano, segueing into his song of the same name and again referencing not only our goodness and successes but also our largest capacities for failure: to steal, lie, cheat, kill. “But the fact we decide to be civilized and not do all these things is kind of cool.”

But it was Renae Williams-Niles who memorably took the conference out by quoting Folds’ recent memoir *A Dream About Lightning Bugs: A Life of Music and Cheap Lessons*: “Remain just innocent enough to keep dreaming.” **I/A**

Linda L. Nelson is the deputy director for Portland Ovarations in Maine, after having founded and served as producing executive director for Opera House Arts in Stonington, Maine. Previously, she served as CIO for Village Voice Media in New York City and assistant director for the Maine Arts Commission.

Jake Stepansky is a theater-maker and arts administrator based in Portland, Maine. In addition to writing for *Inside Arts*, he has worked with Forklift Danceworks, the American Repertory Theater and London’s Gate Theatre.

Marie-Anne “Annie” Harrigan is a sophomore at Harvard University. She is a staff writer and the theater executive for the arts section of the *Harvard Crimson*, a reporter for Harvard Arts blog at the Office for the Arts and the president of Harvard College SHADE, a student organization for queer people of color.



DESIRABLE ELEMENTS

THEATER INNOVATOR PING CHONG, RECIPIENT OF
THE APAP AWARD OF MERIT THIS YEAR, DEFINES
HIMSELF WHILE HE REDEFINES THEATER

BY RAY MARK RINALDI

When Ping Chong reflects back on his decades-long career in theater, this stands out: how busy he's been.

"The amount of work I've produced is kind of staggering, just in terms of volume," he said in an interview last December. "No wonder I'm exhausted half the time."

Quantity isn't the only measure of success in the arts, of course, but it does say something about drive, an unrelenting desire to tell stories and wanting to entertain. For Chong, enthraling the people who show up to see the works he conceives, writes and directs is actually the core of his craft.

"Artists never forget that the world is miraculous. We are always astonished by it," he said. "That's what we try to do when we make our work. We try to astonish our audience."

Chong has done that more than most theater professionals. He has 90-plus productions listed on his resume in a work life that stretches back to 1971 via his early collaborations with Meredith Monk's legendary troupe, The House, and continuing through his own Ping Chong + Company, which he founded in 1975.

Along the way, there have been notable achievements in each decade: an Obie Award in 1977, Guggenheim Fellowship in 1985, Bessie Award in 1999, United States Artists fellowship in 2006 and the National Medal of Arts in 2014.

In January, he received the Association of Performing Arts Professionals Award of Merit, given to creatives "who have had significant influence in, not only their art form, but in how audience members approach and view life and our relationships to each other," according to Mario Garcia Durham, president and CEO of APAP.

"His ongoing work in the area of community and his individual sense of being an outsider or the 'other' continues with each new generation of audiences," said Durham.

The list of Merit Award winners past includes Martha Graham, Aaron Copeland, Alvin Ailey, Katherine Dunham, Sweet Honey in the Rock, Laurie Anderson and Philip Glass.

Like those other pioneers, Chong has reset the artistic expectations of his own era, in this case breaking down existing norms to make work that is multi-media, nonliterary, interdisciplinary, movement-inclusive and sharply focused on social justice issues.

than the language of film and television, he believes, where sets, locations and dialogue attempt to mimic the actual world. Theater can't be some "poor version of cinema."

Within that, however, anything is possible, including high-tech lighting, sound and projections. Chong was a pioneer of those now-common theatrical elements. Forgive him if he is somewhat suspicious about their overuse in live productions today.

coordinating everything "from the technical things to the publicity to the theaters you're working with." Having a professional company manager on staff has made that possible, he said. For Ping Chong + Company, that job has been filled by Bruce Allardice, the executive director since 1988.

Chong has also had to survive being defined by as an artist based on his ethnic background. Certainly, he has Chinese roots and was brought up in

"ARTISTS NEVER FORGET THAT THE WORLD IS MIRACULOUS. WE ARE ALWAYS ASTONISHED BY IT."

That was obvious in 1977, when Chong first received wide recognition for *Humboldt's Current*, which introduced his interest in tackling geopolitical topics as a matter of course. It remains certain in this century, notably through his documentary project, *Undesirable Elements*, which started in 1991 and has been reimaged 40 times since. For that evolving piece, Chong and his company spend time with varied communities across the globe, interviewing subjects and building a framework for a presentation of dramatic, personal narratives that has been described as a "seated opera for the spoken word."

All of Chong's work is connected through a similar desire to relate intimate stories about the underclasses to the larger world. The real thread, according to the playwright, is that it's all pure theater. By that, he means it relies on the audience's willingness to sit in a dark room for some time and suspend disbelief. "That's real theater," he said. "You have to use the imagination a lot more than trying to be literal about realism."

The "poetics of theater" are different

"I started in the generation that really brought media to the foreground," he said. "Now everyone is doing projections and sound. Even when they shouldn't be doing it, they're doing it."

Theater is best, he believes, when it puts the pre-tech connections between people first. "Simple, direct interaction between two human beings is very important, and we are in danger of losing that," he said.

Not that Chong is cynical at the age of 73. Just the opposite. He continues to make hopeful work, even in dark political times. And, he notes, he's more confident: He's been around the block, as they say, and overcome a few obstacles that give him the status of elder statesman in the arts.

He brought his own company together at the start of an era when independent, professional arts organizations were just figuring out how to operate as small businesses and prosper over the long haul.

"For the longest time, we were always: 'Are we gonna be here next year' — and we always were," he said.

But he's mastered the particular business that is theater, which requires

a family of Chinese opera performers.

"I didn't even see Western theater until I was 17," he said. That had a significant influence on his creativity. "My whole concept of theater is more imaginative, not a 19th-century, European one."

At the same time, "I've always felt like I didn't quite fit in the Asian American art world," he said. "I kind of went my own way."

Personal geography had a lot to do with that. Chong was born in Toronto and raised in Manhattan. His perspective is definitively New World, and the topics he makes work around are diverse. Being tagged as an Asian American artist hardly tells the whole story.

"I'm a real American artist," he said. "In the sense that my influences come from all over the place." ■

Ray Mark Rinaldi is a writer and critic who reports nationally and internationally on arts and culture, splitting his time between Denver and Mexico City. He is founder, editor and contributor at One Good Eye, a platform for a wide-ranging discussion about the visual arts, and a 2018 winner of the Rabkin Prize for arts writers. A former fellow with the National Arts Journalism Program at Columbia University, Rinaldi is a regular contributor to *Inside Arts*.



Final Act

AS HE PREPARES TO STEP DOWN AS PRESIDENT AND CEO OF APAP, MARIO GARCIA DURHAM REFLECTS ON THE ORGANIZATION, THE FIELD, JOY AND THE FUTURE.

EDITED BY ALICIA ANSTEAD

During APAP | NYC 2020, **Mario Garcia Durham**, the outgoing president and CEO of APAP, sat down to discuss his eight-year tenure with **Megan Pagado Wells**, associate director of programming of the Artist Partner Programs at The Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center; **Kyoung H. Park**, playwright, director and founder of Kyoung's Pacific Beat; and **Allen Moon**, director of touring and artist management of David Lieberman Artists' Representatives. The following is an edited and condensed version of their conversation.

MPW: *Why are you choosing to leave now?*

MGD: Some years ago when I was at the National Endowment for the Arts, there was a presenter – Toby Maddox. I'm from Houston originally, and there's a place called Jones Hall that I use to perform in as a dancer when I was a kid. Toby was retiring from there and wanted me to take over. It's a great place. But I had just started at the NEA, and I had a goal that no matter what the job is, I'm not leaving. At the beginning of my time at APAP, that's how I looked at it: When I was discouraged, I said no, I'm not leaving. What happens on the other end, when I think I get it and have done this, typically I am ready to move on. I have an internal guide. I never want to stay too long, and everyone knows when their too long is. My too long is usually eight years, when I feel like I'm not bringing what I brought in the beginning, and I don't want to hang on.



Kyoung H. Park, Megan Pagado Wells, Mario Garcia Durham, Alicia Anstead and Allen Moon

AM: *Was there anything you hoped to accomplish but didn't?*

MGD: When I first started, I was hoping presenting organizations would be able to use their organizations as a bully pulpit. What was disheartening for me from the NEA days was the fact that and also at APAP, whenever attacks would be made on funding for arts organizations, often the audiences sitting in the house would have zero idea of the connection between the funding that had to be cut off and the health of the organization. I feel like organizations don't share that. We have a lot of folks who are sitting in halls and who are voting for politicians who want to cut funding for the arts and arts education. And yet our organizations will put on a show with their last two dimes and make sure everyone has a fantastic time, but there's never ever any mention of: Hey, actually we need your help on this. I was hoping we would be able to message that a bit more. That's something I didn't accomplish at APAP.

“I think it’s important for other leaders to know about the value of vulnerability. It’s not: When you reach a position, vulnerability goes away. Vulnerability doesn’t go away. It can get harder, but we all can have it in common.”

– Mario Garcia Durham

KP: *How do we work within the field to acknowledge that the arts are part of public service and that the value of the arts should be a public concern?*

MGD: I'm a structural kind of guy. What happened a couple of years ago in this exact room is that right after Trump was elected in November, we had APAP in January, and the question was raised of whether President Trump wants to eliminate the endowment. Some of my national colleagues who run the other service organizations said that will never happen. It's never happened in the history of this country. Some of us believed we had to have a discussion about it regardless. So we met and talked about what would happen if he did eliminate the endowment – and sure enough he did. As soon as that happened, we were ready with our organizations to spread the word. Not on the artist level but on the level of large groups and organizations and individual level. Last year, the National Endowment for the first time in 10 years got an increase even though the administration keeps trying to eliminate it. I work best in that kind of structural system.

MPW: *The theme for APAP|NYC 2020 is risk and resilience. What does that mean for the field?*

MGD: It's about vulnerability. We do really hard jobs, and they're very precarious. I think it's important for other leaders to know about the value of vulnerability. It's not: When you reach a position, vulnerability goes away. Vulnerability doesn't go away. It can get harder, but we all can have it in common. If you believe in what you are doing, stick with it, because we all share some dread. It's important to realize that is a normal feeling. You can work through it.

AM: *What are the challenges for your successor?*

MGD: Running a service organization is a unique experience because you have to feel rewarded by the work you do, because it's not sexy and there's no big show. We do our conference and people are happy at



the conference, and that makes me happy. But it's unlike presenting, where you work with artists directly toward a culmination of a project where the curtain goes up and it's both a joy and a catharsis. With service organizations, the highest level satisfaction is more of a continuum. You have to have an inner sense of reward, because there are not a lot of curtain-raising moments. This is the kind of joy you get here: The Doris Duke Foundation is going to give us millions of dollars to continue a great program. It's funny, but it's also really true because that kind of work is hard and super diplomatic.

MPW: *What's next for you?*

MGD: I don't know what's next. Ultimately, I turn 65 this year, so I can retire, and my partner Craig and I have been in discussions about what the next steps will be. I can retire, but I just don't want to. I want to serve. **IA!**

ADAM AND CHRISTY KESICK/APAP

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Breathe Together

BY MARIN ORLOSKY RANDOW

Collaboration, curation and education are on the minds of dance makers, presenters, agents and funders who are navigating the tricky art of presenting dance. We surveyed stakeholders about the challenges, risks, practices and hope for the field.

The inherent risks and pressures of presenting dance were at the forefront of APAP|NYC 2020 – both the challenges and an undeniably hopeful sense of possibility. In the opening of the pre-conference dance forum, Kristopher McDowell, founder of KMP Artists, pointed out that “we’re all working harder” to bring vital dance works to audiences across North America.

THAT IS TO SAY

- Presenters are acutely aware of the precarious financial risk of presenting dance, especially new works or lesser-known choreographers and companies.
- Choreographers express the need to have their individual and communal identities substantively recognized and shared, yet often feel constrained by having an inherently “risky identity” as well as the risk of presenting new works or bringing certain dance genres and cultural forms to new audiences.
- Funders and artist representatives are taking on the risk of facilitating and commissioning brave new dance works, as well as changing what it means to effectively support dance artists and presenters.

“It’s an uncertain time,” says Nigel Campbell, co-director of Gibney Dance Company, “but there’s a lot of potential in uncertainty.”

Despite varying concerns, stakeholders across the dance field are navigating this uncertain, risk-filled moment in similar ways: by working more collaboratively and by seeking to have their priorities more fully understood by their collaborators. From logistical efforts, like educating emerging dance presenters and building presenting networks both regionally and nationally, to artistic partnerships for community

engagement or co-commissioning and touring ambitious new dance works, a collaborative spirit permeates the work of presenting dance – to the point where the traditional roles filled by artist, agent, presenter and funder have shifted, and in some cases, transformed entirely.

Stanford Makishi, vice president for programming at New York City Center, says that both presenters’ and artist representatives’ “jobs are getting bigger,” that agents’ working relationships ideally position them as advocates for presenters as well as artists, facilitating the connection between them with an actionable awareness of both of their priorities. Makishi believes that roles are blurring for presenters and more collaboration is in place, particularly when commissioning and presenting new work. He points to his organization’s past collaborations with Margaret Selby of Selby Artists Management to commission new works by choreographers Jessica Lang and Michelle Dorrance as successful case studies for this fluid, collaborative approach. “It’s amazing how much is needed to create new work,” says Selby, while also remarking on the career-transforming potential that this kind of larger-scale commissioned work has for dance artists.

The National Dance Presenter’s Forum – an APAP, New England Foundation for the Arts and Jacob’s Pillow partnership – educates early career dance presenters about the broad scope and curatorial possibilities within their role, and in the process seems to frequently highlight and validate presenting skills that dance artists have already developed through their own “scrappy” efforts prior to taking on a formal presenter role. [See related story on page 30.] Similar to Makishi’s vision of close collaboration between presenters and agents, NDPF seeks to

build collaborative networks of dance presenters and to educate presenters on how to bridge gaps in access within their local communities.

Meanwhile, Pentacle recently sought to blur its own role as artist representatives through FootPath, a two-year research project investigating the effectiveness of various forms of mentorship and administrative support in building artists’ capacity, income and public exposure. Based on the successful outcomes of that project, Pentacle plans to offer more administrative resources to assist dancemakers with marketing and publicity efforts, development of websites and other digital properties, and ongoing strategic planning, among other non-production-oriented work activities.

Pamela Tatge, executive and artistic director of Jacob’s Pillow, encourages presenters to view themselves as advocates, both for meaningful community engagement activities and for increasing the visibility of outsider artists. “How do we center more artists at the margins?” she asks, “And how do we do that without putting the burden on artists?” Several high-profile dancemakers with disabilities have a response to Tatge’s questions. They point out the value of simply slowing down to have clear, open communication with presenters about their logistical needs and artistic concerns. Antoine Hunter, deaf dancer and founder of Urban Jazz Dance Company, encourages presenters to view themselves as hosts taking the time to get to know their guest artists. Additionally, he encourages presenters to treat disability as a culture instead of a deficit, likening the experience of working with disabled artists to that of a diplomat training to respectfully enter a foreign culture: “Every individual from every culture wants you to meet them where they’re at.”

he says. Alice Sheppard, founder and director of Kinetic Light, echoes this sentiment by reframing logistical and psychological issues of access as “a welcoming process...not a checklist of things to be done.”

Indigenous artists, as well as artists coming from other cultures and communities, similarly advocate for allowing additional time for communication, so that presenters can understand how their cultural practices may inform their approach to entering a new venue and its

language and an awareness that the artists may prefer to be closely involved in the creation of promotional materials publicizing their performances.

Anna Glass, executive director of Dance Theatre of Harlem, wonders if the dance field as a whole has become too accustomed to operating within self-imposed constraints on resources such as time and should consider adopting strategies for creative collaboration from other forms of live performance. “I find the theater world

Anchorage Concert Association, draws a direct comparison between the programming priorities addressed by a presenter in booking a performance season and the community priorities that should be clearly identified before selecting artists and designing community engagement activities. He encourages both artists and presenters to proactively initiate those kinds of conversations with the communities they seek to connect with long before they create activities for engagement.

While agents have traditionally

A Taster of Ireland



Mamselle Ruiz



Hiplet Ballerinas



The UnKnown Dancer



RUBBERBANDance



Ariel Rivka Dance

community, as well as how they would like their identities and aesthetics to be described and perceived in marketing and publicity materials. Contemporary choreographer Christopher K. Morgan, executive director of Dance Place, also notes that describing or publicizing a contemporary fusion performance by indigenous artists that doesn’t “look indigenous,” or even simply attempting to characterize artists with intersectional identities, may require presenters to carry a particular sensitivity around descriptive

really invests more time in the early development process than we do,” she says. “We get used to being scrappy ... and then think that’s the way it’s supposed to be.”

Presenters of both large and small venues in many regions also raise the call to artists and artist representatives to gain a better understanding of their institutions’ priorities – to address not only their concerns for their financial bottom line, but also the needs and relevant issues facing the communities each presenter seeks to serve. Jason Hodges, executive director of the

served the role of facilitating a clear working relationship between presenters and artists, an ever-growing number of dance companies handle their bookings in-house, not because it’s any easier than working with an agent, but out of necessity. Alex Hyman, executive director of Seattle-based dance company Studio Kate Wallich, speaks of the labor-intensive efforts he and his company put forth to build their presenter network one word-of-mouth connection at a time, especially from a city that is geographically

isolated from larger networks of presenters. They also develop new audiences through a popular series of no-barrier-to-entry community dance classes under the brand Dance Church. Buglisi Dance Theater takes a distinctively different approach, becoming widely recognized in the press and social media for their *Table of Silence*, a striking, highly visible annual memorial to the victims of 9/11. Through social media and word-of-mouth, they have been invited to adapt *Table of Silence* to other locations around the country, where it is frequently performed in collaboration with local dancers as a memorial to victims of gun violence or other communal tragedies.

Despite these efforts to innovate, engage meaningfully with communities and work more collaboratively, the financial risk of presenting dance perpetually weighs on presenters. In financially risky times, presenters can feel pressured to book companies or works they already know are financially viable, or at least can reliably deliver a high-quality performance. Some mitigate this risk by programming a mix of highly commercial or well-known dance companies likely to produce robust box office sales with more experimental or unknown artists. Others rely on income from other types of live performances to subsidize the predicted losses of presenting dance works. Makishi feels that the festival structure of Fall for Dance gives him more freedom to take risks as a presenter, which he uses to create “opportunities for discovery” by pairing well-known dance companies with emerging choreographers, newer dance styles, traditional cultural dance forms or dancers with disabilities.

Dominic D’Andrea, director of community engagement at Queens Theatre in Queens, New York, sees

“HOW DO WE CENTER MORE ARTISTS AT THE MARGINS? AND HOW DO WE DO THAT WITHOUT PUTTING THE BURDEN ON ARTISTS?”

— PAMELA TATGE

Renegade Performance Group



many levels of financial risk inherent in presenting various genres of work involving dance. He finds it easier to engage audiences in new works based in cultural dance forms or spectacles involving contemporary circus arts than in modern or contemporary dance companies, even with comparable efforts toward audience development and community engagement with the artists.

Hope Muir, artistic director of Charlotte Ballet in North Carolina, feels a deep responsibility to expose both her company’s dancers and her community audience to a mix of traditional genres and cutting-edge dance works: “I don’t feel it’s risky,” she says, “I feel it’s necessary.” As a result, she thinks strategically about how and when to introduce new dance works instead of contemplating the risks of introducing them entirely. Her sense of urgency in educating and cultivating dance audiences is echoed by Kendra Whitlock Ingram, executive director of the Newman Center for the Performing Arts. She

works toward this goal through school matinees and community events geared towards nondancers and believes that partnering with schools is one of the quickest ways to have a broad impact on the potential dance enthusiasts of tomorrow. She also notes that livestreaming performances to schools, while not an equitable replacement for attending a live performance, can be a valuable tool in bringing dance to geographically isolated rural communities.

While both artists and presenters are increasingly interested in community engagement, both for audience development and a broader social impact, Ingram also notes that “what we think of as participation is changing.” She cites community engagement activities between artists she has presented and inmates at a local women’s correctional facility, as well as community master classes designed for nondancers. Indira Goodwine, program director for Dance at NEFA, says grants to dance presenters have been responsive to

the changing landscape of community engagement by broadening the definition of who is considered a dance presenter. This enables NEFA to provide support to dance artists and community partners who work outside the bounds of a traditional proscenium venue, improving equitable access to resources for both presenters and artists who may have the greatest impact through presenting dance performances and participatory events in nontraditional spaces such as community centers.

At the Pillow, Tatge is tackling the question of how community engagement activities will have a lasting impact on the communities she serves after the artists leave. This question of how to cultivate a sustained impact and how to measure it emerged throughout many conversations and panel discussions at the conference. The topics ranged from:

increased visibility and mutual understanding, capacity-building for local artists and changing the culture to foster a wider embrace of dance artists of diverse genres and identities.

And what is the role of technology in all of this? Many presenters mention using Instagram and other internet video platforms to familiarize themselves with newer dance works and choreographers as a tool to identify potential programming for their venues. Renae Williams Niles, chief operating officer at the USC Gloria Kaufman School of Dance, frequently asks artists to use their own social media following to fuel ticket sales at her venue.

But perhaps the biggest trend is urging audiences to let go of technology and embrace the analog nature of live performance. Margaret Selby advocates for a new

national campaign to “see it live,” encouraging audiences to have a “human experience” instead of a digital one. Ellen Chenoweth, director of the Dance Presenting Series at the Dance Center of Columbia College Chicago, centers this charge in the larger, conflict-ridden social context: “We need to be able to breathe together in a theater now more than ever.” And clearly the dance field is modeling that communal spirit, one behind-the-scenes step at a time. **///**

Marin Orlosky Randow is a choreographer, dancer, aerialist and administrator based in Boston. She coordinates Harvard University's annual ARTS FIRST festival, and has managed performing arts events in various roles for more than a decade. She teaches aerial dance at Boston University and has previously choreographed at Harvard University, the American Repertory Theater Institute and Berklee College of Music. Since 2011, she has also been the Assistant Artistic Director of DanceVisions, Inc., a Boston-based contemporary ballet company. This is her first story for *Inside Arts*.

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DANCE TOGETHER

A unique residency experience for dance presenters focuses on pressing issues in the field and opportunities for dancers, presenters, audiences and venues of all sizes.

BY CAMERON MCKINNEY

“Cohort learning is an important part of the APAP aesthetic,” said Krista Bradley, who serves as director of programming and resources at the Association of Performing Arts Professionals. She was speaking at APAP|NYC 2020 in January, and her words rang true to a packed room of dance presenters of all ages, backgrounds and experience levels during an information session about the National Dance Presenters’ Forum, a unique program and partnership of APAP, the New England Foundation for the Arts and Jacob’s Pillow, the international dance festival in the Berkshires of western

Massachusetts. NDPF ran from 1996 until 2006, and then was resurrected in 2018.

Built as an immersive residency experience – described by a past participant in the room as “more like an intensive” – the forum brings together a small number of emerging dance presenters from across the country for four days to discuss pressing issues in the dance field, share strategies for engaging audiences in their communities and strengthen curatorial practice and professional networks. While at the Pillow, the members of the cohort have access to the Pillow’s famed dance archives, seasoned presenters and leaders in the field

(who sometimes will stay at the Pillow beyond their scheduled seminars) and the high-quality dance performances presented by the festival.

A side note: If you have a venue to present dance – whether a small studio, community center or traditional theater – you are eligible to apply. It is a competitive selection process, and participants are required to pay \$175 to attend the entire forum.

Back at the APAP|NYC session, after representatives from the Pillow and NEFA answered questions on daily activities, they asked past participants of the last two cohorts to speak about their experiences. The most apparent and repeated takeaway is the same underlying

For the latest information on the National Dance Presenters' Forum, visit NDPF.apap365.org.

message from most of the sessions related to representation, presenting and agencies that this writer attended: We are in the "relationship business." After all, dances are built collaboratively, from working with the community partners enlisted into cosponsorship of a new commission, to host residency spaces that can lengthen and deepen a creative process, to collaborators for sound or set design, to the person who turns on the lights and heat in the space you have rented for rehearsal.

The Pillow, NEFA and APAP have taken the viewpoint that the presentation of dance can and should be strengthened by collaboration as well, and the National Dance Presenters' Forum is intended to harness the residency experience to build a solid foundation between presenters who will shape what we see in venues across the country. Presenters open their doors for dance artists to grow and evolve in their spaces – giving dance the visibility it deserves but oftentimes lacks is a collaborative process, too. As Bradley put it, "It's about the opportunity to forge those relationships" and to engage with a community of your peers.

When discussing the most beneficial aspects of the forum, one past participant noted that the opportunity to see dance live at the Pillow and integrate the questions and ideas from their daily think tanks into the discussions her cohort had immediately after was an invaluable resource.

In effect, the NDPF has become a presenter of dance presenters. Together with NEFA and APAP, the Pillow is rediscovering every year how to be a meaningful curator of a new cohort's experience. What is the role of a curator? I would argue that

it is, in part, to continue cultivating emerging artistic voices. Bradley suggested that a curator's role is "to open up both the audience's and a presenter's own world view." That is surely behind the Pillow's announcement of the upcoming year with a focus on a broader, international perspective. While the companies presented during the NDPF may be a challenge regarding dance presenters' price range, they will, at least in theory, do just what Bradley suggested: Open up the selected presenters' world view. That could then open up the doors of the venues behind this year's cohort for artists of all movement and personal backgrounds within their own communities.

The former cohort members who offered insight into their experiences ranged from owners of small ("scrappy", as the participant described it) studio spaces to those who had just taken the reins of a large institution from a veteran in the field. In my mind, the Pillow has had a long tradition of cultivating spaces where the scrappy are given space and equal voice to the established (see the Pillow's new program for choreographers, similar in intention to the NDPF). Forging new relationships is taking a risk, after all, and the forum seems ready to do that, in the hope that it encourages its cohorts to continue doing so as well. **///**

Cameron McKinney is a New York City-based choreographer and educator, and he is the artistic director of Kizuna Dance. He was selected as a 2019-20 U.S.-Japan Friendship Commission Creative Artist Fellow to present work in the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games showcases. McKinney has received fellowships from the Alvin Ailey Foundation and the Asian Cultural Council, and has presented work and taught in 15 states and four countries. His commissions include prestigious institutions such as Princeton University, the Joffrey Ballet School, the LDIF Festival, The Dance Gallery Festival and SUNY Brockport.

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OUTSTANDING!

The Association of Performing Arts Professionals honored artists, visionaries and advocates in the performing arts at its annual gathering APAP | NYC 2020, which took place at the New York Hilton Midtown in January. APAP hosted its Annual Awards Ceremony, in celebration of those individuals and organizations demonstrating a significant impact on the industry and communities they serve both in the U.S. and abroad. The National Endowment for the Arts honored Mario Garcia Durham, APAP president and CEO, with a proclamation commemorating his more than 20 years as a performing arts professional, leader and advocate for our field.

THE 2020 APAP AWARD RECIPIENTS:

THE SIDNEY R. YATES AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING ADVOCACY ON BEHALF OF THE PERFORMING ARTS

The League of American Orchestras (Jesse Rosen, President and CEO; Heather Noonan, Vice President for Advocacy)

THE WILLIAM DAWSON AWARD FOR PROGRAMMATIC EXCELLENCE AND SUSTAINED ACHIEVEMENT IN PROGRAMMING

Emil Kang, Executive and Artistic Director, UNC Chapel Hill

THE AWARD OF MERIT FOR ACHIEVEMENT IN THE PERFORMING ARTS

Ping Chong, internationally acclaimed artist and pioneer in the use of media in theater [See related story on page 18.]

FAN TAYLOR DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD FOR EXEMPLARY SERVICE TO THE FIELD OF PROFESSIONAL PRESENTING

Rena Shagan, President, Rena Shagan Arts, Inc.

This year's NAPAMA (North American Performing Arts Managers and Agents) award recipients, presented by Mike Green, president, NAPAMA, are:

NAPAMA PRESENTER OF THE YEAR:

Shane Fernando, Executive and Artistic Director, Wilson Center at Cape Fear Community College

NAPAMA LIZ SILVERSTEIN AWARD FOR AGENT-MANAGER OF THE YEAR:

Rachel Cohen, Executive Director, Cadence Arts Network, Inc.



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*A heartfelt thank you to all who have helped us
along the way for so many years.*