

Dance has encountered a resurgence of esteem in popular culture recently, just one example being the success of TV shows like the UK's "Strictly Come Dancing," which averaged 8-12 million viewers in one season (Arts Council England, 2009, p.191). Yet at such a globally interconnected time, with new technology providing unprecedented access to many forms of dance around the world (National Endowment for the Arts, 2010, p.7), audience attendance and diversity at live performances is still lower than other arts events, indeed 'the vast majority of adults in England have no encounters with the professional performing dance sector' (Arts Council England, 2009, p.207). This disconnect between dance's popularity in popular culture and participation in live performance sheds light on the biggest challenge facing dance managers at present – that the art form is still inaccessible, or perceived as so, to many demographics. In this paper, I will argue that this issue suggests a need for organizations to evaluate the way they are connecting with their communities, involving transformations to structures and creative work that help to solidify dance's identity as art that resonates with diverse audiences. Supporting examples from organizations in the United States and the United Kingdom will demonstrate how doing so will facilitate solutions to other interrelated issues facing the dance sector, namely increasing funding, education, and communicating value.

To begin to change the elitist perception of dance and attract more diverse audiences involves artists and organizations themselves working to adapt their motivations and structures (Hadley, 2014). Often established organizations feel 'protective' of their influential status in society, and 'the reality at ground level is that the organisations... are rooted in their routines and customary behaviours...' (Hadley, 2014). In practice, managers must be willing to undertake marketing research in sectors of the population with traditionally low attendance numbers at performances, and be willing to adapt their brand in response to findings to attract diverse or new audiences. A cultural re-branding '...could be the building block of a broader framework to explain philanthropic behaviours like one-time or regular donations... and volunteering' (Baumgarth, 2014, p.96). Willingness to grow community support requires organizational change, but could increase funding, volunteers, and general reputation of both dance and those facilitating it.

Research in the US shows that when lesser-educated, lower-income adults decided to attend an arts event, '...they more often attribute their reasons to a wish to support their communities, to

celebrate their cultural heritage, or to gain knowledge...' (National Endowment for the Arts, 2015, p.4). Awareness of such motivations and barriers to segmented audiences is crucial to managers planning programs, or artists developing work, to adopt an image of inclusiveness and sustain audiences. One company reaping the benefits of better understanding their community is Ballet Memphis. While Memphis, Tennessee, is known for its musical and literary legends, it is also a racially diverse city with '24 percent of its population below the poverty level' (Pugh, 2012). Considerate of the tensions embedded in their community, Ballet Memphis has worked to establish programs relevant to audiences because, 'We are all evolving results of... what and who surround us and affect us. Understanding this should be the base for creating and engaging in art, in performance...' (Pugh, 2012). Since their beginnings, Ballet Memphis has grown to national acclaim, presenting traditional ballets as well as contemporary dance, like performances set to the music of Memphis artists, as well as reaching 15,000 inner-city children through participatory programs (Pugh, 2012). The emphasis Ballet Memphis puts on programming that lends itself to the needs of their community, '...has provided [Ballet Memphis] a unique market niche and enhanced our financial viability' (Pugh, 2012), so that the company actually increased earnings in the first two years of the recession.

Much of Ballet Memphis's success can be attributed to objectives molded by its leadership and an infrastructure adaptive to change, both vital to managers in responding to the greater challenge of accessibility. In the case of the Royal Opera House in London, the lack of attuned leadership and infrastructure caused continued financial and reputation issues from 1997-2001 (Nopper and Lapierre, 2005). After the appointment of new Chief Executive to the Opera House, Tony Hall, an organization told it 'could be doing more to bring the art forms it maintained, preserved and promoted, closer to the people' (Nopper and Lapierre, 2005), began to repair its image. With accessibility one of Hall's core goals, he established ROH2, a platform for contemporary work, cultivating emerging artists, and accessible options like lower ticket prices (Nopper and Lapierre, 2005). Today, the ROH2's objectives are now integrated in both the ballet and opera's programs along with their traditional work. The continued emphasis on community engagement since this restructuring is evident in their "Learning and Participation" division, which according to the ROH's website, varies from lower

ticket prices, to worldwide screenings, to participatory events. This type of strategy involves ‘the creation of opportunities to allow audiences to control their depth of engagement in the cultural experience’ (Walmsley, 2011, p.8). Offering a variety of ways people can engage is key to sustaining relevance with audiences who will continue to evolve as the world around them does (Walmsley, 2011), and will help to transform the Opera House’s identity as an institution available to diverse communities.

The disparity in audience demographics who attend art events has not escaped policy makers, as funders like Arts Council England have recently placed ‘...emphasis on new audiences and creating great art for everyone...’ (Arts Council England, 2009, p.41). As statistics indicate dance is of growing interest to the public, ACE challenges dance companies to ‘...present and communicate dance in new ways ensuring that its value is evident to all’ (Arts Council England, 2009, p.41). Globally, policy makers considering this approach puts financial pressure on dance organizations to better connect with the communities they serve and change the popular perception of dance. As indicated in the examples above, refocusing in this way is a gateway to solving a multitude of other problems facing the sector. An organization who’s community is reflected in their identity will increase diversity of audiences, tangibly demonstrating the intrinsic and extrinsic values of dance on greater society, thus leading to much-needed increases in community support, funding, and education.

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