



# DANCEMAKERS

## Strategic Plan

2024 – 2027

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# WHO WE ARE

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## Vision

Dancemakers considers the context of how dance is presented. We support independent dance curators through innovative and customized presentation opportunities. By providing flexible and adaptable platforms, various dance practices can be shared with diverse audiences.

## Mission

We honour the uniqueness of each dance project by continuously re-imagining how dance curators, choreographers and artists create and present programming in contemporary contexts with various communities and audiences in mind.



Miha Matevzic & Raoul Wilke in 'Showtime @ Shops' curated by Mel Hart 2023  
photo by Fran Chudnoff

# VALUES

## 1. Diversity

Engaging with a broad range of dance forms and artists and recognizing the value of all lived experiences.

## 2. Responsiveness

Prioritizing a deep understanding of the shifting landscapes of presenting dance, alongside considerations of the spaces, places, audiences and communities that are being engaged through the work.

## 3. Equity

Providing flexible, above-adequate financial support for dance creators, with a steady commitment to equity-seeking individuals and improving their access to all forms of funding.

## 4. Advancement

Championing the advancement of dance curation as a crucial and critical practice in Turtle Island/Canada on a local, provincial and national level.

## 5. Leadership

Demonstrating leadership in the field of dance by engaging in critical conversations around what "*learning*" and "*unlearning*" looks like to reflect a more decolonial reality for equity-seeking artists.

## 6. Relationality

Centralizing and negotiating relationships between artists, communities, land and space to ensure a reciprocal continuity of care.

# GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Suggested timelines:

**Short-term – 2024-2025**



**Mid-term – 2025-2026**



**Long-term – 2026-2027**



Kate Kamo McHugh in '20 Grains of Rice'  
Curated by Bageshree Vaze in 2023  
photo by Drew Berry

## GOAL #1

**Supporting diverse, rigorous, critical, relevant curatorial projects that are community-selected and meaningful for artists working with Dancemakers.**

### Why is this goal important/relevant?

- Responds to the company's and community's desire to support dancers and dance forms outside of Eurocentric dance traditions, ever-expanding the definition of "C"ontemporary dance to better reflect the diversity of Toronto.
- The Guest Curator structure affords agency to self-determine the conditions of the work and presentation, including various aspects of the artistic process (i.e. choice of venue, work schedule, collaborators, consultants, and technicians).
- Sculpts a commitment to new production processes that prioritize the well-being of artists that aims to prevent undue harm, whether intentional or unintentional, during their collaboration(s) with Dancemakers.



## OBJECTIVES (OUTPUTS/DELIVERABLES)

### Short-term:

- Support five values based **Guest Curator projects** + co-productions
- Formalize Dancemakers' **Conflict Resolution Policy** to ensure that individual concerns are adequately addressed within an established framework, and with adequate care.
- Implement Dancemakers' **Ethical Working Frameworks with Curators**, introducing working agreements, a list of offerings, expectation meetings and continuing Post-Mortem rituals and reflection on the process.
- Continue to adapt the Selection Process for the call for Guest Curators, utilizing an **identical set of questions** from previous year to gauge the applicants' responses, in order to adequately start building a foundation of data to inform future approaches to curators.
- Provide support during the Guest Curator selection process by hosting a **Public Information Session** to build a continuity of relationships with collaborators and aim to reduce barriers for new applicants to approach Dancemakers with a greater sense of familiarity.
- Create a **Cyclical Calendar** for each organizational year and project to establish a long-term plan and rhythm to programming.

## Mid-term:

- Support 5 values based **Guest Curator projects**
- Create a process for selecting **Co-productions** more aligned with the company's values
- Host the first annual **Curators Symposium**: gather past Guest Curators as well as others Nationally or Internationally interested in diverse dance curation
- Review the existing processes for the **Working Agreements** with artists to see if it is adequate for artists from a variety of lived experiences.
- Establish the official **List of Offerings** that Dancemakers provides that is both internally and externally available, and regularly maintain and update these, as needed.
- Continue to adapt the Selection Process for the call for Guest Curators, utilizing **an edited set of questions** from the previous year to gauge how it may alter applicants' applications.
- Host **3 Information Sessions with past Guest Curators** and focus on targeting specific community engagement opportunities at Ontario-based gatherings that serve a wide range of cultural, geographic and demographic diversities (i.e. different areas of the city, low-income neighbourhoods, age groups).
- Review and refine the **overall Selection Committee process** to ensure that it continues to reflect equity in selecting and assessing applicants, as well as represents diversity of opinion in the people selected for the Committee.
- Review the current **Cyclical Calendar** and refine it as needed for each organizational year and project.

## Long-term:

- Support five values based **Guest Curator Projects** + relevant and aligned **Co-Presentations**
- Host the Second annual **Curators' Symposium** that builds on what was experienced and shared at the previous year's events and includes additional Community Partners.
- Collaborate with Guest Curators on Dancemakers' existing **Ethical Working Processes** and gather any applicable recommendations and implement an even more refined working process.
- Based on collected data and analysis, have an established way to gather feedback and **adjust future Open Call questions** (on a bi-annual basis).
- Finalize the Selection Committee design and establish a clear process for **selecting Guest Curators integrating consensus building** practices into the process.
- Continue to host **5 public Information Sessions** with all previous year's Guest Curators and focus on targeting different applicants and communities.
- Identify creative avenues for gathering feedback and **sharing the company's progress** to report back to the community (ie - a creative annual report).
- Find platforms to **share the cyclical calendar** to establish a greater understanding of the overall ebbs and flows of how dance presentations evolve over time (this will be year 5 of using this model).



## GOAL #2

**Diversifying revenue streams of funding and stabilizing existing government funding.**



Curator Mel Hart (centre in flower dress) with audience in 2023  
photo by Juan Jose Granada

### Why is this goal important/relevant?

- Dancemakers must refamiliarize themselves with their Federal, Provincial, and Municipal funders to re-establish trust and reliability during the new phase of operations.
- To forecast the next three years of planning, it is essential to:
  - Secure the three-year multi-year operating grant from the Canada Council for the Arts (CCA).
  - Move from annual operating to multi-year operating with the Toronto Arts Council (TAC).
  - Re-enter relationship with Ontario Art Council (OAC) through Dance project grants, eventually reentering an operating stream.
- Expand our funding to target foundations in the face of shifting public funding.
- Reinvigorate Dancemakers' private donor base and expand this donorship over time

Successful operating funding will provide Dancemakers with the means to sustain stable relationships with artists that can extend outside the usual timelines of funding cycles.

## OBJECTIVES (OUTPUTS/DELIVERABLES)

### Short-term:

- Submit a **multi-year operating grant** with the Canada Arts Council (CCA)
- Apply for **annual operating grant** and **re-enter multi-year operating** with the Toronto Arts Council (TAC) moving away from the current annual operating.
- Apply for **project grants** with the Ontario Arts Council (OAC).
- Discuss and negotiate with **Charitable Gaming** what Delta Bingo funds are eligible to support, intending to increase eligibility and flexibility to more broadly support a variety of artistic endeavours.
- **Advertise marley rental** to community members (to maintain income)
- Explore **prospective donors** with a 50 Year Anniversary drive
- Develop alternative methods of payment by introducing **Pay-What-You-Can** ticketing to all appropriate events.
- Collaborate with Nova Dance and Dreamwalker Dance to administer **Cultivate Grants** to build organizational capacity and knowledge.
- Research **further funding options** related to sponsorship and foundations to establish a plan

### Mid-term:

- Submit an **annual operating grant** with the OAC (to shift from project grants).
- Develop a strategy for addressing the fluctuation of **Charitable Gaming funds** (related to co-presentations and continuation fund policy).
- Expand on the inventory of equipment for rent by purchasing a **modular spring floor** that can be used by Dancemakers and rented to the community (Ontario Trillium Foundation **Capital Grant** as an option)
- Further develop relationships with **Foundations and other funders**
- Maintain 75% of already **established donors**.
- Begin to establish relationships and a **multi-year plan for private-sector** donorship

## Long-term:

- Introduce an **autonomous rental system** that simplifies the rental equipment process for the community
- Further cultivate donorship by increasing **new donorship by 25%**.
- Continue to focus and research on applying to **foundations** for alternative funding.
- Finalize a multi-year **private-sector** donor plan and begin implementation.

## GOAL #3

**Fostering audience development by cultivating meaningful community-driven partnerships and integrated programming.**

### Why is this goal important/relevant?

- It is imperative that Dancemakers produces work that can be appreciated and interacted with by the broader public.
- Leveraging that Dancemakers' offerings have expanded beyond traditional contemporary dance through content, form and geography and its audienceship should reflect this wider expansion.
- Essential that public engagement serves as an aspect of every guest curatorship to share power and democratize access to dance.
- Dancemakers' "community-led" programs require deep engagement with audiences and better inform the Guest Curator selection process.
- Supporting the community by providing resources and programming that develops wider dance literacy in Toronto and educates growing dance spectatorship in Canada.



Briana Brown-Tipley & Hilary Brown-Istrefi in 'Upstairs in our Bedroom' rehearsal in 2024  
photo by Gillian Mapp

## OBJECTIVES (OUTPUTS/DELIVERABLES)

### Short-term:

- Initiate the first year of the **Curating Dance Working Group** that consists of emerging curators to see all shows Dancemakers offers (as well as others in the community) and invited to attend the Curator's symposium.
- Follow the lead of Guest Curators about the **communities they are making the work for** and develop creative engagement plans in partnership with them.
- Implement a standard **Audience Feedback Survey** to be sent after each event to centralize audience information and begin to develop an audience email database.
- Introduce an **Annual Community Gathering** (i.e. dinner, picnic, etc.), bringing together as a part of the Curators' Symposium.
- Explore collaborations for the **commissioning and publication of project essays**.
- Clarify and define the **Continuation Fund Process** and share this information with the public.
- Strengthen current **Strategic Partnerships** and collaborations (ie- Toronto Biennale of Art, Summerworks, etc)

### Mid-term:

- Offer the second iteration of the **Curating Dance Working Group** to attend shows (folding in new members with previous year's participants)
- Continue **commitment to audience relationships** from previous year while folding in connected and new communities based on Guest Curator project needs.
- Continue using the same **Audience Feedback Survey** to be sent after each event and begin to compare and contrast with previous year's data.
- Include all outreach and community engagement and yearly community events to the **cyclical calendar** to align with specific programs and events.
- Host a **second annual Community Gathering** alongside an additional 1-2 organizational partners.
- Initiate collaborations with **new publication partnerships** for project essays.
- Cultivate greater relationships with relevant **Strategic Partnerships** and collaborations (adding 1-2 more partners to existing relationships)



## Long-term:

- Continue the process of growing the **Curating Dance Working Group** through engagement at an annual rate of 10-20% for the third year
- Maintain the momentum of hosting the **third annual Curators' Symposium** and community gathering with partner organizations, and introduce 1-2 new partners.
- Expand the **publication of project essays** by creating new relationships with various publications
- Explore connections with other disciplines (**Film Festivals, Performance, Radio, etc**)

## GOAL #4

**Develop a clear branding identity that speaks to Dancemakers' evolution and communicates decisive shifts forward.**

### Why is this goal important/relevant?

- Important that Dancemakers has a clear, concise foundation to share more about the organization and its current programming after a period of transition (in-person, online, through partners, etc.).
- Rebranding to refresh the look of Dancemakers, including a change in logo and website design, and demonstrate the revitalization of Dancemakers.
- Create a dedicated section on the website that showcases Dancemakers' history by highlighting past activities and achievements.
- Commitment to comply with digital accessibility standards, ensuring those with physical and situational disabilities are able to interact with the organization with minimal and reduced barriers.



Shay Erlich and Paulina Drohomysky in the Pushmakers Residency 2023  
photo by Simeon Taole

## OBJECTIVES (OUTPUTS/DELIVERABLES)

### Short-term:

- Work with Co-Effect to create a **new logo and branding**.
- Working alongside Co-Effect to **merge, organize and categorize content** for the new iteration of the website.
- Hire a Summer student to assist in **merging content** to new website.
- Initiate collaboration with **Dance Collection Danse** to integrate history of the company
- Initiate opportunities for **feedback** from artists, partners and curators to respond to the proposed re-branding designs.
- Ensuring the website is aligned with current **AODA access standards** and features.

### Mid-term:

- Maintain collaboration with Co-Effect to **monitor the success** of the new website and adapt as required.
- Continue to engage with Co-Effect to produce printed published essays and annual reports (i.e. **Impact Report**) to better inform audiences, partners and funders of the growths and successes of Dancemakers.
- Continue to collaborate with **Dance Collection Danse** to link historical content.

### Long-term:

- Refine and publish the first **Annual Report/Essay Publication** connected to fundraising goals and Curators' Symposium.
- Complete merger collaboration with **Dance Collection Danse**.



## GOAL #5

**Building internal organizational capacity to effectively support the Dancemakers team and better serve the Dancemakers community.**



Artistic Producer Cara Spooner with performers from 'Showtime @ Shops' curated by Mel Hart 2023

### Why is this goal important/relevant?

- Establish a sustainable working model for the administrative team to ensure that working relationally and decentralizing decision-making remains effective.
- Distribute artistic and operational responsibilities between staff to adequately avoid staff burnout and support a healthier organization.
- Focus on Board recruitment and renewal to keep Dancemakers connected to different networks and groups in the dance community.
- Broaden Board membership to reflect different areas of expertise that can guide and counsel the staff (finance, governance, etc.).

### OBJECTIVES (OUTPUTS/DELIVERABLES)

#### Short-term:

- Introduce a **Co-Leadership model**, which aims to develop cyclical roles for the organization:
  - Increase staff to two members (i.e. one full-time, one part-time)
- Engaged in **Active Board recruitment** to increase the size of the board, aiming for 5-7 members with diverse skill sets.
- Expand on the roles and areas of expertise that each Board member can offer in order to clearly define the “**point person**” for various required aspects.

## Mid-term:

- Sustaining the **Co-Leadership model with two staff members** and allowing for an increase of hours for the part-time role.
- Develop a strong strategy to aid in ongoing efforts to find new **Board membership** and renewal for current members.
- Second year working with a **Board point person structure** to tackle specific issues or requirements to ensure Dancemakers ongoing health.

## Long-term:

- Advancing the Co-Leadership model by moving the **two full time staff** members, with the intention of each staff member maintain a four-day work week.
- **Maintain the Board renewal process** to ensure continuity with the existing Board's structure.



Ange Loft at a community meeting in 2023 as part of The Laboratory for Artistic Intelligence's Reimagining Dancemakers process  
photo by Gillian Mapp



# DANCEMAKERS

## Strategic Plan

2024 – 2027

**DANCEMAKERS**  
CENTRE FOR CREATION



Participants in the 'Engaging in Repertoire' residency  
Co-curated by Tanveer Alam & Nithya Garg  
photo by Akshay Moncy