

HAPPENINGS

BROADWAY @ SARDI'S



Photo: Ben Strothmann

Sardi's hosts Karen Ziemba, Mercedes Ellington, Ken Roberson, Hope Clarke, Francesca Harper, and Allyson Tucker



Photo: Ben Strothmann

Justin Greer



Photo: Jerry Ruotolo

Randy Davis

Hope Clarke, Mercedes Ellington, Francesca Harper, Ken Roberson, Allyson Tucker, and Karen Ziemba hosted a CTFD "Between-Shows" informational session at Sardi's on February 15th. Graciously underwritten by The Shubert Organization, over 90 dancers from the Broadway musicals **All Shook Up**, **Beauty and the Beast**, **The Lion King**, **Chicago**, **Chita Rivera: The Dancer's Life**, **Chitty Chitty Bang Bang**, **The Color Purple**, **Fiddler on the Roof**, **Hairspray**, **The Lion King**, **Mamma Mia**, **Pajama Game**, **The Phantom of the Opera**, and **The Producers** came to hear about CTFD's methodology and programs. CTFD clients **Justin Greer**, Dance Captain of The Producers and Choreographer **Randy Davis** gave testimonials about their CTFD experience and the vital services CTFD provides. A highlight of the evening was a surprise visit from **Phil Smith** and **Gerald Schoenfeld** of The Shubert Organization who came to meet some of the dancers and hear the testimonials of the CTFD clients. Many thanks to Board member Judith Anderson for organizing the event.

Photos: Jerry Ruotolo



Phil Smith



Gerald Schoenfeld

WINTER HEAT II

Representing both ends of the spectrum of a performer's dance career, Career Transition For Dancers and Harbor Conservatory for the Performing Arts joined together for the second time for the special event, **Winter Heat II**, on March 2nd. The purpose was to raise funds to ensure futures for both performers beginning in dance as well as performers preparing for transitions from their dance careers. Even though a snow storm loomed over the festivities, **The Heat Was On!**



Photo: Jerry Ruotolo

Event Chairs Janice Becker & Fe Saracino Fendi

The 21 piece Harbor Latin Big Band kept the nearly 300 patrons dancing at the Copacabana until almost one in the morning, and once the music stopped, they took the festivities to the streets. The event was a huge success thanks to the Benefit Chairs, **Janice Becker**, **Fe Saracino Fendi**, **Beth Dannhauser**, and **Ginny Knott**. Honorary Chairs for Winter Heat included **Sarita Allen**, **Peter Martins**, and **Chita Rivera**. **Mercedes Ellington**, **Rosie Perez**, **Pedro Ruiz** were the Guests of Honor and **Heléne Alexopoulos-Warrick**, **Caroline Cronson**, **Olivia Flatto**, **Susan Krysiwicz**, **Lady Maughan**, **Ann Van Ness**, **Homera Sahni**, **Patricia Shiah**, **Susan Fawcett Sosin**, **Burgi Steiner**, and **Laura Zeckendorf** served on the Benefit Committee. The sought after floral designer **Joseph Campbell**, also volunteered his time to make sure the event was one to remember. Thank you to everyone who attended and volunteered time.



Photo: Jerry Ruotolo

Patrons raising the Winter Heat before they have to battle the snow storm raging outside

ROLEX HOSTS GALA LUNCHEON

Allen Brill, President and CEO of Rolex Watch U.S.A., Inc. hosted a pre-gala luncheon at Sardi's on June 20th, 2006. The luncheon was held to celebrate **Chita Rivera**, being honored with the **Rolex Dance Award** and The **Rudolf Nureyev Dance Foundation**, being honored with **CTFD's Outstanding Contributions to the World of Dance** at the Annual Gala on October 23, 2006. 21st Anniversary Chairs **Patricia J. Kennedy** and **Anka K. Palitz** gave inspiring speeches about the history of the Gala and our 21st Anniversary Gala goal of \$1 million. Patricia also explained that if every patron of last year's Gala only contributed 10% more in our 21st Anniversary, we would definitely make our goal. In the spirit of the afternoon, Allen Brill said that Rolex would lead the way by increasing their 21st Anniversary contribution by 10%! The lunch was underwritten by the Gala's Executive Producer Alexander J. Dubé. The wine for this event was graciously donated by Cambria, the **Official Wine Sponsor of CTFD's 21st Anniversary Jubilee**. Thank you Allen, Alex, and Cambria for your support.



Photo: Jerry Ruotolo

Allen Brill with Gala Chairs Victoria Herbert, Heléne Alexopoulos-Warrick, Mercedes Ellington, Anka K. Palitz, Jane Powell, Patricia J. Kennedy, Yolanda Santos Garza, Laura Zeckendorf, Ann Van Ness, Janice Becker, Ann Marie DeAngelo

After the Dancing Stops: HELPING PERFORMERS FIND NEW CAREERS

By STEPHEN PIER

"What do dancers do when they hit 40?" asked my father, when he learned I was determined to make a career of dance. "I don't know," I shot back, with all the blind passion of the newly possessed. "Ask me when I'm 40."

After more than 25 years in the profession, and having successfully negotiated many transitions in my career and life, my major concerns were still focused exclusively on the first two phases of a dance career: training and performing. The third phase, post-performance, had still not entered my myopic view of life. I knew it was out there and inevitable for us all, but somehow I had managed to avoid it. Indeed, I looked somewhat skeptically upon all this talk about "career transition," which one occasionally heard about. How could one be dedicated to dance while at the same time thinking about another career? That felt somehow disloyal and uncommitted—and I knew that, if there was one thing success in this field required, it was commitment.

In April 2001 I was invited to join the Board of Directors of the aDvANCE Project as a representative of Juilliard. Led by Philippe Braunschweig (founder and director of the International Organization for the Transition of Professional Dancers, based in Switzerland) and Harvey Lichtenstein (CTFD Board Member and Director Emeritus of the Brooklyn Academy of Music), the project was to commission an international study of the transitions of professional dancers to post-performance careers. We needed to find out two things: Who cares about this and why, and what can realistically be done to help dancers continue to develop beyond their years as performers?

It seemed to me that, if society cares little about the arts (and in particular, dance), it will care even less about the fate of its practitioners. Dancers, it could be argued, choose to do what they do and should accept the consequences of their choice. It also seemed unrealistic to expect dancers to prepare for a second career while in the midst of such an exceptionally demanding first career. They simply have to dedicate themselves to the moment, move on as best they can—good luck and God bless.

During the next three years I met regularly with the other members of the board, which included the directors of the four existing centers for transition from Canada, the Netherlands, the U.K., and Career Transition For Dancers; Michael Byars, a former New York City Ballet soloist turned lawyer; the director of the Swiss Arts Council; and a principal dancer from the Royal Ballet. We began defining the direction and scope of the research project, which came to include the study of 11 countries (Australia, Canada, England,

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France, Germany, Hungary, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the U.S.). The project would, we hoped, provide a clear, factual assessment of the extent and nature of the challenges of the transition process and suggest ways in which these challenges could be addressed by members of the dance community, government agencies, arts organizations, funders, and society in general. We commissioned a brilliant research team, headed by William Baumol (author of the groundbreaking 1966 study, *Performing Arts: the Economic Dilemma*) and Joan Jeffri (director and founder of Columbia University's Research Center for Arts and Culture).

In December of 2004, with the research completed, we held a conference at the Monaco Dance Forum to disseminate the results. Attending were representatives of many facets of the dance community from 14 countries. Company directors, arts administrators, school directors, dance service organizations, arts councils, artist unions, and government organizations all took part in discussions of the findings and their relevance to the dance field.

Naturally, the situations are different in every country and culture, and there is no "one size fits all" solution to the problems illuminated by the research. The issue of transition is inextricably linked to the place of the artist and art in society, but the information generated across so many cultures and societies gave tremendous insights into the conditions and practices of dancers around the world, including what is being done to support them, how they are facing their continued development, and how all of this affects the development of the art form itself.

First of all, most dancers don't even "hit 40." The study showed that, although current dancers expect to dance until age 41, the average dancer stops performing before the age of 34—more than 35 percent of them because of physical injuries. Most dancers also overestimate their incomes. The average dancer in the U.S. earns about the same as he did in the 1970s: around \$27,400 annually (and of that, only \$15-20,000 is from actual dance work). Compare that to \$42,800 for actors, \$48,300 for musicians, \$36,800 for carpenters, and \$42,600 for bricklayers. Some believe these low salaries are a reflection of gender discrimination: In the U.S., 72 percent of dancers are women. Of course, nobody's in it for the bucks, but the combination of a relatively short, extremely intense, and grossly underpaid career makes transition especially difficult for dancers. The average cost of retraining/re-education in the U.S. is \$27,000 and requires three to four years, after which the dancer is attempting to start at the bottom of a new career ladder at an age when most people are near or at the top.

Besides the physical, educational, and financial difficulties, there is a psychological component to transition. Many dancers experience a huge sense of emptiness when their identity as dancers can no longer be maintained. Their entire sense of self-worth is shattered when the sole measure of their value no longer exists. Many successful dancers are unaware of skills utilized at their level of professionalism that are directly applicable to other fields. Employers of former dancers note they tend to be highly motivated, disciplined, good team players, excellent at following directions, accustomed to rigorous work, punctual, self evaluating, and extremely able to present themselves well. And although many dancers have felt a lack of confidence entering academic situations, one study showed that dancers ranked in the top 15 percent on intelligence tests.

Well, if dancers are that smart (one might think), they must be aware of the circumstances facing them at the end of their performing careers. That appears not to be the case. Eighty-three percent of current dancers in the U.S. claim to be "very aware" of the challenges of transition, but only 34 percent of those who have actually been through the process felt they were truly aware of what it would entail—yet another gap between reality and expectations. Former dancers also felt that family and friends were, by far, the greatest source of support. Schools and companies were of little or no help at all.

What can we do about all this? We can begin by recognizing that dance is both a profession and a calling. In following that call, the dancer separates herself from a society that tends to measure success by material gain. She offers back to that same society (from which she is philosophically marginalized) something of truly great value, communicating through her body and art form ancient values of the spiritual, intellectual, psychological, and political condition of humankind. But if our art becomes irrelevant to society, so does the situation of its practitioners. Therefore, the first thing we must do is become deeply connected to the world we live in, and make

sure our work offers something of value to our community. In many of the countries studied, there is a centuries-old concept of the arts and artists as contributing members of society. This is reflected in the amount of government support. In the Netherlands, the government contributes around \$2.30 per capita to dance; in Canada, \$.62; in Hungary, \$.97; in the U.S., only \$.06. In the U.K., taxation and revenue from the National Lottery help to fund dance. Australia has moved toward project-based funding rather than ongoing general funding. Japan's art is 86-percent funded by local government. The U.S. is the only country in the study that does not support dance significantly through governmental funding.

As educators, we do a huge disservice if we fail to present the stark realities of our world along with the exalted beauty of it. We must not contribute to the gap between the expectation and reality by "selling the dream." The health of the field, as well as of its practitioners, requires educating the whole human being, rather than merely training a "tool" for replicating existing forms. Supporting development outside the studio is also critical. Although the study indicates that parallel preparation for another career is impractical (given the requirements of the training), a culture of awareness and respect for the entire journey of the human-artist-dancer and her place in our society is imperative. Students at the Arts Education School in the U.K. work with faculty to assess areas of interest and aptitude at age 16, to help identify areas they may be successful in as a second career (such as physiotherapy, dance medicine, journalism, arts administration, etc.). The Dance Theater of Harlem has an outreach program to involve the families of students with their careers. Birmingham Royal Ballet School has a program through which alumni who have developed past their performing careers act as mentors to students.

As artistic directors and managers (cited in the study as the most "unsupportive" or "indifferent" to transition), we must find ways to create a supportive environment for dancers as they begin their transition away from performing—realizing that, by so doing, we bring benefits not only to the dancer but to the entire organization. Many companies are establishing links with educational institutions that benefit dancers by offering lower tuition and benefit the schools by infusing their student body with members of exceptional ability and experience. More and more companies are establishing "retraining funds" that help support dancers who have contributed a certain number of years to the company, upon retirement. (In the U.K. and Canada, a group of smaller modern/contemporary dance companies have banded together to provide a similar service.) Choreographers are challenging established concepts of subject matter, technique, and aesthetics to include a less limited definition of what a dancer must be, and must be capable of. Netherlands Dance Theater III was established in 1991 for a small group of dancers from age 40 and up, and is now one of several companies utilizing the valuable assets of experienced dancers.

As dancers, we must cultivate and maintain relationships and interests beyond the specifics of dance that nurture ourselves as full artists and members of society. It is not only acceptable, but highly respectable, to be aware of and interested in our own futures. Get involved with people who have been through what you are just entering. Ask your potential employer what they offer at the end of the line, as well as at the beginning. (Yes, you can ask questions!) Find out what is available through the transition center in your area. Take an active role in preparing and developing the entire arc of your creative life, cultivating an awareness of all the transitions we constantly undergo and of all the valuable skills we have the opportunity to develop in the pursuit of our dreams. We must become advocates for the status and relevance of our art and profession in society, if our artistic lives are to have meaning to anyone beyond ourselves.

Professional dancers give an enormous amount to society as performing artists. They continue to have great value as creative, generous, disciplined, focused, hard-working people after performing is no longer possible, and they deserve to enjoy status equivalent to other professionals in our society. I believe there is an ethical imperative for all of us who are involved with the dance and dancers to embrace the entire trajectory of the dancer's life—not just the brief moment at the summit of the performing career. It is an opportunity to begin to repay those who give us all so much at such high cost to themselves, and it will serve us all who care for the art form itself.

For more information regarding this study and to download a copy of *Beyond Performance*, a summary of the research, go to www.IOPTD.org.

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If you would like to give us feedback or have your name added to our mailing list, please email us at info@careertransition.org

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MovingOn

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