

“Dance is one of the ways in which a society communicates with itself and with other societies.”

- Shirley McKechnie, “From Grand Chngement to Grand Narratives”¹

Introduction

1. Preamble

The Canada Council for the Arts (CC) in partnership with the Ontario Arts Council (OAC) (with the support of public arts funders, dance service organizations, professional dance makers and companies) commissioned MDR-Burgess Consultants to undertake the first phase of a more comprehensive study on dance in Canada. The purpose of this study is to review the current literature on dance to be followed by a report identifying the current gaps in the literature and a research plan addressing these for consideration by the CC and OAC. Phase 2 will be aimed at addressing the research gaps identified through the literature review.

2. Approach and Methodology

2.1. Goals of the Study

The purpose of the overall study is to map the presence of dance in Canada – including a better understanding of the full scope of dance activity in all regions of the country.

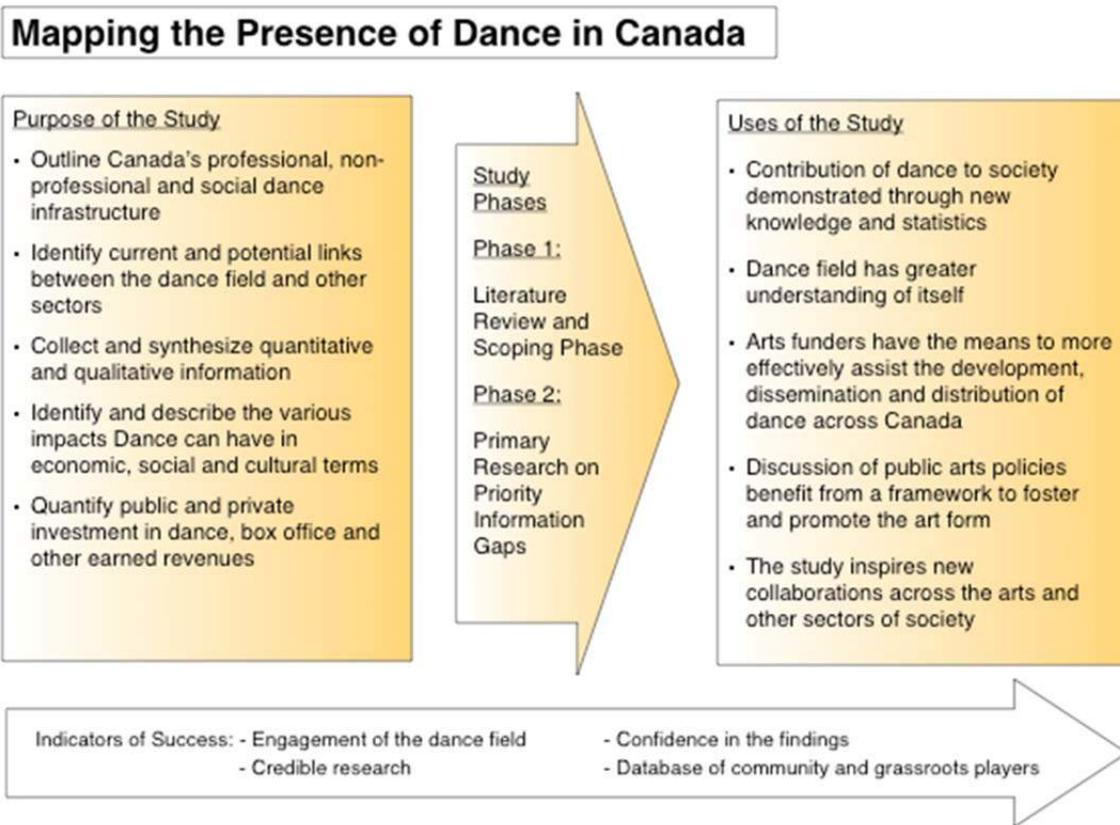
The goals are four-fold:

1. Outline the full spectrum of dance in Canada, including Canada’s professional, non-professional and social dance infrastructure, identification and analysis of its component parts (for example, learning, training, creation, production, performing and distribution systems) and the links or lack thereof between and across these components;
2. Identify current and potential links between the dance field or its components and other sectors, for example, cultural industries, health, education;
3. Collect and synthesize quantitative and qualitative information to identify and quantify and describe the various impacts that dance can have in economic, social and cultural terms including the types and level of public engagement with dance;
4. Quantify public and private investment in dance as well as box office and other earned sources of revenue.

The mapping undertaken is three-dimensional – quantifying and illustrating the richness and diversity of dance and locating dance in relation to our spaces, places, regions and land. Our proposed approach and methodology took into account these goals and the ultimate outcomes that the CC wishes to accomplish in both Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the study. Figure 1 provides a visual depiction of goals of the overall study, the phases to be undertaken, the uses of the study and the ultimate indicators of success.

¹ Originally published in *Dance Rebooted: Initializing the Grid Conference Proceedings*, July 1, 2004.

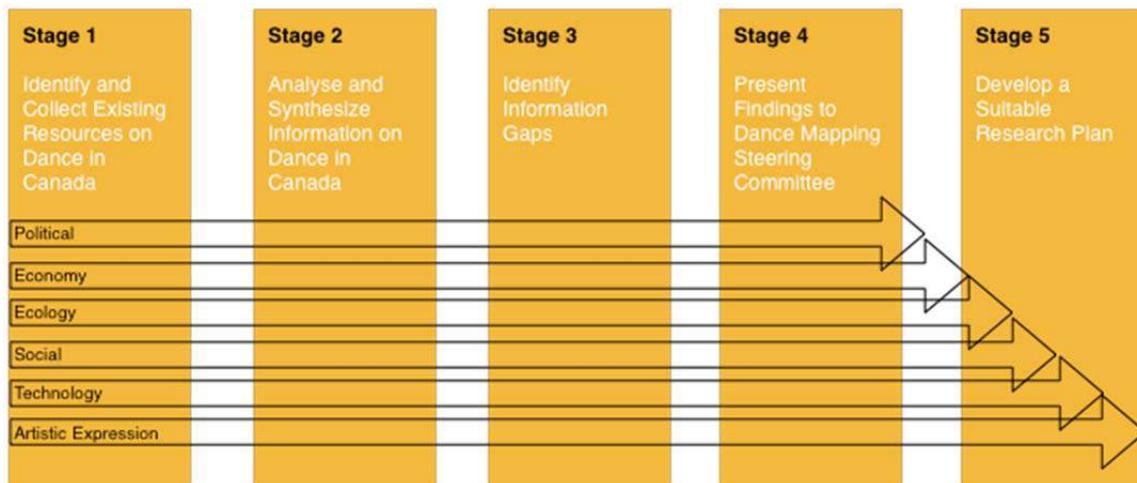
Figure 1: Goals of the Study



2.2. Six Themes

The six key themes identified by the CC guided the mapping of the literature of this study. Figure 2 contains the six themes and the various stages of mapping that this study undertook.

Figure 2: Six Themes of the Study



The CC provided the consultants with a detailed and comprehensive bibliography of sources, which the consultants used for this report. To these documents, the consultants added documents relevant to dance and technology, and consulted the website of the Society for Canadian Dance Studies (SCDS) for academic publications of interest to the study. A detailed bibliography is included at the end of this report.

Our review of the literature included qualitative and quantitative sources. International sources of literature informed our analysis of gaps in Canadian literature and provided a basis on which to develop a proposed research plan.

3. Structure of this Report

Section A provides an overview of the dance field in Canada drawing from the results of the mapping of the literature on each of the six themes identified by the CC;

Sections B through G present detailed portraits on dance according to the six themes: political, economy, ecology, social, technology and artistic expression.

Together, these sections provide a comprehensive view of the existing literature on dance in Canada today.

“As long as people have inhabited the land we now call Canada, there has also been dance.”

- Max Wyman with Michael Crabb²

Overview of Findings

1. Preamble

This report presents a view of dance in all its contexts -- politically, economically, ecologically, technologically, socially and artistically.

Our picture of dance in Canada is limited by a lack of literature and documentation that captures the full scope and breadth of dance particularly non-professional dance. However, there are compelling examples that illustrate that Canadians are engaging with dance socially. The extent to which Canadians are participating in or watching dance performances is also not well documented.

2. Cultural Policy and Dance

The policy context within which Canadian dance operates is a blend of involvement by all levels of government.

Dance is funded by the Department of Canadian Heritage (DCH), the CC, provincial arts agencies, municipal agencies and Aboriginal jurisdictions. DCH, through the programs of the Arts Policy Branch, is an important contributor of funding to the dance field, supporting professional training institutions, festivals and series presentations, infrastructure projects, and funding to not-for-profit arts organizations for projects and programming. A comprehensive picture on funding from all these players and their priorities is however lacking.

At the time of writing this report, federal government cultural policy orientations include sustainability, access by Canadians to Canadian artistic expression, audience development and community engagement. Government studies show that its support has been beneficial. There is evidence that this funding support has had a leveraging effect in attracting other sources of funding and that it has had concrete benefits in helping a number of dance companies and presenters expand audiences, build partnerships and reach out to communities.

An important development in the delivery of programs for dance at DCH, the CC and OAC in the last decade was the introduction of programs aimed at remedying the historical lack of access to programs by culturally diverse artists.

Government priorities at the time of writing this report include copyright legislation, the impact of technologies, and streamlining of funding support. The extent to which these priorities will impact on the dance field is not clear.

The CC as an instrument of government policy supports the professional not-for-profit dance sector in a way that is complementary but distinct from support provided by DCH. Where it is DCH's role to set national cultural policy, the CC delivers programs aligned to public policy, such as DCH's Results Based Accountability Framework.

² <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ARTA0002120>

At the provincial level, the arts are generally seen to play an important role in building vibrant communities and enhancing quality of life, and offering opportunities to deepen appreciation of diversity and heritages. All of the provinces and Nunavut have commissioned studies to measure the economic and social impact of the arts and culture on the overall economy in their respective provinces.

Most provinces consider that the role of the arts in the new economy is critical to maintaining a strong sense of identity in an increasingly globalized world. Public investment in the arts is seen to be an important economic and cultural lever.

Arts education is considered a way to expose arts to children and youth, broadening their understanding of the world and strengthening their capacity for creativity and innovation.

There is also increasing emphasis being placed by these funders on the importance of foreign markets for artists and arts organizations as well as professional development and training.

The professional dance sector has called for increased funding for the sector as a whole, reinstatement of support to international touring, which contributes to the sustainability of the sector and increased investment in order to help it make the transition to digital technologies.³

While it is said that First Nations governments (Band Councils) fund dance in Canada, including powwow and regional dance forms within the community, evidence to this effect was not present in the literature surveyed.

3. Economy: The Economic Contribution of Dance

Although there is evidence of the economic importance of the arts to the economy, there are no specific studies that provide an analysis of the contribution of the dance field to the creative and general economy.

Some indicators that are being used to measure economic impact of arts and cultural industries include the value of domestic and foreign revenues, international trade balances, direct benefits measured by domestic operating expenses, the number of jobs created, and indirect and induced benefits associated with these. In measuring the economic impact of the dance field, evidence exists with respect to only a few indicators: employment, salaries and revenues for professional dance. These data, coupled with further research, could be used to as a basis to develop a more complete analysis of the economic impact of the professional dance sector.

The professional dance sector is characterized by very low wages and primarily contract work or self-employment. Over half of all dancers are self-employed. This has the effect of limiting the overall economic impact that the professional sector could have, particularly from the re-spending of salaries in the general economy.

The professional dance sector has lower revenues overall than other performing arts disciplines.

Economic trends show a professional dance sector that has experienced decreases in public funding support, particularly in recent years despite employment being created and the overall benefits to the creative economy. The lack of growth in public funding to the professional dance sector effectively amounts to a funding decline as a result of the doubling in the number of companies funded and inflation. The impacts of this include less new repertoire, less rehearsal time,

³ As mentioned on the previous page, equity policies were introduced at DCH, the CC and the OAC.

lower production values, and a reduction in touring activity. In organizational terms, the situation has resulted in a lack of stability.

Data published by the Observatoire de la culture et des communications du Québec (OCCQ) and the Conseil des arts et lettres du Québec (CALQ) provides evidence of increased activity as a result of strong provincial funding to the professional dance sector. Funding to dance producers has increased, making provincial funding in Quebec the most important source of production grants for dance companies in Quebec. While other provinces, notably Ontario, also provide comparable resources to support dance in a wide variety of genres and forms, there is a lack of comparable data. Overall, there is a lack of published data on trends in funding by provinces other than Quebec.

There is more complete data on larger organizations than smaller ones.

Trends also show that while there have been increases in funding from earned and private sector revenues to the non-profit professional dance sector, these are more easily accessed by larger dance organizations.

The growth of the dance economy is very much tied to its ability to generate interest and business domestically while increasing its competitiveness in foreign markets. However, revenues from dance presentation in Canada are reportedly limited because of the small number of specialized presenters and dedicated venues across the country. Touring income abroad is also said to have fallen significantly, which has been attributed to the cancelling of two federal programs to support international touring – Trade Routes and ProMart.

Canadian professional dance companies were successful in increasing revenues through increased ticket prices in the years before 2008. However, according to a number of reports the economic recession forced many organizations to scale back on their activities.

These economic trends are being said to point to the relative instability and uncertainty for the professional dance sector, which makes it a challenge for dance companies to plan ahead, maintain quality, and attract and retain talented staff.

4. Ecology: Measuring Health and Sustainability

A brief prepared by the Canadian Dance Assembly (CDA) and the Regroupement québécois de la danse (RQD) estimates that there are over 100 professional companies nationally. The CC website notes that many emerging and 'micro' companies are missing from existing estimates. These may be companies representing new dance styles and expressing diverse and Aboriginal cultures (which are estimated to number over 150).

There are an estimated 7,330 professional dancers across the country. Visible minority dancers make up 12% of all dancers. Aboriginal dancers represent 1.2% of all dancers. It is estimated that between half and three quarters of dancers are self-employed. The vast majority of dancers are women.

On average, dancers achieve eight years of professional training before undertaking their careers. Over 60% attended a professional dance training school. One third have a dance-related university education. Professional development is ongoing throughout the careers of dance professionals and dance artists continue to train for many hours a day beyond their initial training.

The most recent surveys available at the time of writing identified 21 specialized professional dance presenters across the country and 14 institutions (including post-secondary institutions)

in Canada that provide core training for dance. The majority of these institutions are located in the major urban centres in Ontario and Quebec, and supported by the National Arts Training Contribution Program and other public funding agencies. In 2009, half were providing training in non-European dance forms. At the same time, it has been reported that the professional dance sector's job market is underdeveloped.

Among the touring networks discussed in the literature, *La danse sur les routes de Québec*, Ontario Dances and *Made in BC: Dance on Tour*, are said to facilitate regional touring through relationship building between presenters and artists. Dance Ontario facilitates regional touring by providing a database of potential audiences to presenters interested in developing new markets. The Canadian network of dance presenters, Candance, supports the commissioning and touring projects of dance artists and offers centralized tour facilitation. Réseau Ontario coordinates touring of francophone performers in Ontario, in conjunction with presenters and school boards. The Ontario Presenting Network is another provincial network, while Canadian Arts Presenters Association (CAPACOA) and the *Conférence internationale des arts de la scène* (CINARS) are national networks that support the distribution of dance.

A survey of Canadian Aboriginal traditional and contemporary dance groups and artists in 2003 found that powwows are the primary host or organizer of Aboriginal dance performances. As mentioned in the survey report, "Openings and ceremonial events, festivals, and celebratory events such as powwows, Aboriginal Day and Treaty Days are among the most important engagements identified by Aboriginal dance groups for their work. Other presenting opportunities include schools, festivals, and engagements in multi-purpose theatres or halls."

The professional dance sector also benefits from a number of cluster management service providers. The most prominent of these are Diagramme (Montreal), Dance Umbrella of Ontario (DUO) (Toronto), and Eponymous and New Works (Vancouver).

The literature shows that the infrastructure broadly defined to include physical facilities, personnel and systems supporting the professional practice of dance in Canada is the least developed of all the performing arts. Significant investment is required in order to bring the professional dance sector to the level of development of other performing arts in Canada.

As described in the literature, there are challenges at each stage in the structure of dance. (See Annex 1 for an illustration of the structure of dance.)

For example, it has been reported that there is a direct correlation between the time put into the creative process and the end result. Adequately funded research and creation leads to greater success in domestic and foreign markets. It is further reported though that extending funding to a greater number of artists and dance companies for research and creation encourages a greater diversity of expression and supports the creative renewal of the professional sector through the development of new works and new talent.

Another challenge noted as being faced by producers is the high cost of production and touring, and the low fees that Canadian presenters are able to pay, which do not adequately cover production costs. Dance production has expanded more rapidly than presenting opportunities, creating challenges particularly for young companies to get their works to market. Emerging companies sometimes choose to present their own works, taking on considerable financial risk and a heavy workload.

Professional dance is reportedly hampered by a lack of infrastructure and funding to support its presentation. The opportunities to present and tour professional dance in Canada are limited by the small number of presenters and venue.

With respect to careers in dance, it has been noted that “making it possible for dance organizations to have access to labour that is qualified to work in different management functions, as well as in the use of digital technologies, will broaden the range of opportunities for careers in dance, improve the living conditions and conditions of practice of artists.

Similarly, it has been put forward that in order to encourage on-the-job training and career reorientation among a large, well-educated and specialized dance labour force, greater flexibility will be required in employment integration and support programs, as well as in financial incentives for intergenerational transfers of knowledge and know-how.

One estimate puts Canadian audiences for dance at 1.8 million Canadians although with changes in the make-up of Canadian society due to profound demographic changes, it is very likely that audiences for Aboriginal, diverse or culturally specific dance are not adequately captured in the existing literature, or that they represent opportunities for future growth.

A need has also been expressed to map the role of the non-professional dance sector in order to understand the links between this sector and the professional dance sector.

5. Social: Measuring the Benefits of Dance for Canadians

There appear to be many avenues for Canadians to engage with dance socially. Provincial organizations exist across the country that promote the many opportunities to take dance lessons, attend dance presentations, compete in dance competitions, or learn more about dance. However, beyond these organizations' websites, there is a lack of literature on the subject.

The extent to which Canadians are participating in or watching dance performances is also not well documented. Few studies of performing arts attendance provide analyses of dance audiences. Similarly, studies on arts participation are not isolating dance activities.

There is no denying the popularity of dance in television shows and in dance films, of which there has been a recent resurgence. However, the extent to which Canadians participate in dance socially, or in other professional contexts such as health, is not well documented. The exception is Aboriginal dance, for which one report exists, suggesting a large number of dance groups and great uptake by powwows and in the schools.

Dance in Aboriginal contexts is described as a form of celebration while also serving important spiritual or sacred purposes. Many contemporary dances can be traced to earlier social practices, as may be shared, for example, through powwows. Their mandates extend to preserving Aboriginal culture and educating young people. There is a recognition of the link between dance and community and that dance has “cultural functions and meanings.”

The literature is clear on the beneficial link between arts education and intellectual, personal and social development. Educators, funders and dance professionals alike agree on the many benefits that arts education can bring. Dance education has evolved in Canadian schools and often involves the professional dance community in bringing dance to the classroom. In spite of progress, dance is not being taught to the same extent as other arts such as music and theatre. There is a need being expressed to do more to ensure that arts education includes dance. Studies on the benefits of arts education often do not include dance.

6. Technology: Enhancing Creativity, Promotion and Audiences

It is clear that new digital technologies have had an enormous impact on dance in Canada. With the support of the National Film Board, and various funders, a generation of dance

filmmakers and choreographers has emerged, interested in developing choreographies specifically for the camera. Among Quebec artists, dance artists are the most likely to be integrating video and animation tools into the creation of their works.

Dance on screen extends from new developments in stereoscopic (3D) dance films, to dance creations for video cell phones and to live simulcasts of major productions in movie theatres.

In addition, Canadian dance artists are recognized pioneers in the development and integration of interactive computer applications to dance making. Research and development labs in major Canadian universities are supporting the work of dance artists developing new applications with motion capture technologies and dance notation software.

Dance has also enjoyed a resurgence of popularity in mainstream media. New dance competitions on television are encouraging new forms of engagement with dance on the part of the public, while the Internet provides 24/7 access to dance videos from around the world.

A new generation of Canadian dance artists are reaching out to Canadian audiences through the promotional opportunities afforded by the Internet, through MySpace, Facebook, YouTube and other web-based platforms.

In addition, numerous initiatives exist to preserve and share Canada's rich dance heritage electronically.

At the same time, the dance community is facing new opportunities and new challenges as it seeks to mobilize these tools to greater advantage. The Internet affords obvious opportunities to promote and disseminate works, but greater resources are needed to train dance professionals to realize the potential of new communications platforms. Greater access to technologies and training is also needed for creators to continue to develop their sophisticated use of creative applications and to be competitive on the world stage. The globalization of the dance economy requires Canadian dance professionals to be at the cutting edge of the creative possibilities and dissemination opportunities afforded by new technological innovations. Budget constraints may be a barrier to the use of digital technologies for some.

7. Artistic Expression: Fostering Excellence, Creative Renewal and Innovation

Canadian dance enjoys a reputation for excellence at home and abroad for its innovative dance creations.

There is a wide range of dance practices being publicly funded by the CC and provincial arts agencies, which reflect the diversity of artistic expression in dance today.

However, there is a reportedly lack of resources to sustain innovation for the benefit of Canadian and international audiences.

To develop and hone the artistic expression of artists requires opportunities for risk-taking and creative renewal. Time to reflect and create, and adequate resources to experiment, are said to be key to enabling new dance expression to flourish. To this end, creative residencies have been identified as essential to support the artistic development of dance makers' creative visions through opportunities for research and development, skills development, and access to technical expertise and resources. Critical discourse is recognized as supporting engaged and informed reflection on the art of dance, encouraging sophisticated engagement with the art form on the part of dance makers and their audiences.

Foreign markets for dance are very competitive and to continue to succeed, Canadian dance artists are said to require access to resources to allow them to research and develop innovative new works on par with creations being developed abroad.

Opportunities for touring and cultural exchanges are seen to provide artists with valuable exposure to new ideas and influences.

The integration of technology into dance is seen as central for artists to break new ground in artistic creation.