

**Grantee Name**

Danspace Project Inc

**Project Title**

Theory & Practice: New Curatorial Connections for 21st Century Movement Based Work

**Project Progress and Successes**

During the third year of the grant period, ICPP welcomed its second class of students to the certificate program at Wesleyan University. 15 students were admitted, and 14 successfully completed the program requirements and were awarded certificates in May 2013. Students enrolled over 2012-13 arrived from nine different states including Michigan, California, Washington, New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Minnesota, and one foreign country (Sweden). The class included employees of museums, contemporary arts centers, universities and independent curators. 25% of this second class of students were non-white, and 43% received financial aid.

Core faculty for ICPP over 2012-13 included Wesleyan professor Nicole Stanton, performing arts professionals Philip Bither (Walker Art Center), Doryun Chong (MoMA), Judy Hussie-Taylor (Danspace Project), Sam Miller (Lower Manhattan Cultural Council), art historian Mari Dumett, artist Kristy Edmunds (Founder of the Portland Institute for Contemporary Art and TBA Festival, currently at UCLA), and ethnomusicologist Stephen Taylor. Students and faculty convened on campus during the program's summer intensive over July 6-22, 2012, and again over November 15-18, 2012 and March 8-11, 2013.

The summer intensive introduced the 2012-2013 class of students to the program, spearheaded by its core faculty of cultural leaders and enriched by guest lecturers and visiting artists. Adjunct lecturers for the summer intensive included Wesleyan professors Gina Ulysse (Anthropology), Rashida Shaw (Theater), and Eric Charry (Music); Jenn Joy, professor at Rhode Island School of Design; and choreographer/dramaturg Katherine Profeta. Visiting artists were Brian Brooks, DD Dorvillier, Rinde Eckert, Ralph Lemon, and Reggie Wilson.

Students were sent readings in advance of the summer intensive, which included the courses: Curatorial Practice (Hussie-Taylor with Chong and Bither); Perspectives on Performance as Culture (Stanton); Introductory Colloquium, Entrepreneurial Strategies and Independent Project (Miller); Social and Cultural Context I (Taylor); and Social and Cultural Context II (Dumett). To improve the program during its second year, program leaders and instructors worked to align the content between courses offered, so that particular artists or themes could be addressed across the curriculum. This allowed instructors to utilize shared interests and overlapping points of reference in a complementary manner across coursework. Hussie-Taylor collaborated with Taylor on course curricula, complementing historical and theoretical readings (essays by Walter Benjamin and Peggy Phelan) by screening full-length works including Miguel Gutierrez's "Heavens What Have I Done." This allowed instructors to draw many connections between this work, 19th century Dada performances, Trisha Brown's Orfeo, Lacan, Monteverdi and the history of opera. Social and Cultural Context (SC I and II) courses underwent significant changes as well. A new syllabus for the SC II course was developed Mari Dumett, a new instructor who is an art historian with a specific expertise in Fluxus. Dumett provided an extensive survey of performance art from the 1960s into the present with an emphasis on global practices, including important movements in Brazil and Japan. The SC I and SCII courses together were considered as a related series with Steven Taylor and Dumett developing their syllabi in full communication with the other.

In Curatorial Practice, Chong and Hussie-Taylor introduced their major upcoming curatorial projects during the July session. Hussie-Taylor curated PLATFORM 2012: Judson Now at Danspace Project, marking the 50th anniversary of Judson Dance Theater, and Chong curated a Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) exhibition, Tokyo 1955-1970: A New Avant-Garde. During the November (2012) session, ICPP students were able to see their curatorial instructors in action through a site visit to NYC. In addition, students participated in: 1) a private tour with RoseLee Goldberg through her exhibition, Performance Now, at Wesleyan's Center for the Arts; 2) Judson Now performances at Danspace Project with Hussie-Taylor; and 3) a private tour with Chong at MoMA. MoMA also made classroom space available to ICPP for the Curatorial Practice course.

In response to exit survey feedback from the inaugural ICPP class (2011-2012), program leaders Tatge, Miller and Hussie-Taylor also implemented changes to broaden the scope of the curriculum. The course formerly entitled Artistic Practice was renamed Perspectives on Performance and its syllabus was modified to include more diverse performance practice. Guest lecturers with knowledge and connection to non-dance disciplines (specifically, theater-based practice) were brought in to the classroom. Guests included Morgan von Prella Pecelli, a curator, producer, anthropologist and dramaturg who has worked with Richard Foreman's Ontological-Hysteric Theater; as well as Katherine Profeta, Gina Ulysse, and Rashida Shaw, each of whom added nuanced perspectives. Profeta holds a PhD in Dramaturgy from Yale University and has worked most extensively with the NY-Based Elevator Repair Service, while Ulysse is an anthropologist and spoken word artist. In addition to her professorship at Wesleyan University, Shaw is also an actress with a special interest in African Diaspora and African American theater.

Danspace Project (DSP) continued its role as practicum to the ICPP curriculum over 2012-13. DSP selected choreographer DD Dorvillier as an ICPP artist-in-residence during the summer intensive, in anticipation of Dorvillier's single-artist Platform presentations at DSP (Spring 2014). Students were given an holistic view of the curatorial process as it relates to DSP's current work with Dorvillier in developing a Platform, as well as insight to Dorvillier's creative process through informal showings of her choreography. DSP also enlisted its second Curatorial Fellow from the 2012-13 ICPP class. Student Katrina de Wees provided instrumental support in research, planning, and documentation of DSP's PLATFORM 2012: Judson Now series (held in fall 2012). In addition, ICPP alumna Lydia Bell continued to provide capacity and continuity in her role on DSP staff as Curatorial and Development Associate. Bell served as Managing Editor of the Judson Now Platform catalogue, DSP's seventh publication (and largest, at over 250 pages).

Of the 14 final projects students developed through the ICPP program during the grant period, nine have been implemented thus far and three are in the process of being implemented. One student employed at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco, CA, curated a summer series entitled "Chill Bump Summer" as part of their YBCA:You "Smart Night Outings" series. Her curatorial focus centered on the 1980s San Francisco dance collective, Contraband, and the performing artists it influenced. Another student curated "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Museum," a performance and film evening examining humor at the SF MoMA; and a third has proposed a student self-presented performance series for Millersville University, PA, called "Open Space." The range of interests and curatorial approaches in students' final projects show the breadth of the ICPP's reach in just two short years.

- With the aid of Wesleyan's Office of Institutional Research, ICPP again conducted an exit survey of this second class of students:
- 79% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the overall focus of the coursework

and class discussions matched their expectations (up from 33% in 2012);

- 71% agreed or strongly agreed that ICPP's methods of distance learning (emails, response writing, online comments, etc.) were effective (up from 25% in 2012);
- and 57% agreed or strongly agreed that Moodle (ICPP's online software system) was a helpful tool in communicating information regarding course syllabi and assignments (in comparison to the first year when Moodle was not implemented consistently across courses, resulting in little usage or less than satisfactory experiences).

The program was promoted throughout the grant period with several panel discussions, information sessions and marketing outreach:

- David Milch, Program Coordinator at ICPP and several students enrolled in the program participated in a panel discussion in San Francisco, California; and Pam Tatge, Director of Wesleyan's Center for the Arts and Managing Director of ICPP, presented the program at the New England Presenters Meeting, both in October 2012.
- Hussie-Taylor, Miller and ICPP alum presented at the National Performance Network's annual conference in Philadelphia.
- Faculty member Kristy Edmunds presented ICPP at the meeting of Major University Presenters (MUPS), and an ICPP faculty panel was held at the National Performance Network annual meeting in Philadelphia, PA in December 2012.
- ICPP panels of students, alumni and faculty members (Philip Bither, Kristy Edmunds, Miller and Hussie-Taylor) were held during the annual Association of Performing Arts Presenters (APAP) conference in New York City.

Throughout the grant period, ICPP was marketed through ad placement in Art in America, Art News, Inside Arts, and paid advertising in e-flux (e-newsletter). An ICPP informational postcard was mailed to over 1,000 presenters with a focus in New England, and distributed at the New England Foundation for the Arts booth at the APAP conference.

### **Challenges / Obstacles / Failures Encountered in the Project**

Students and faculty identified a number of areas for improvement following the inaugural year of the ICPP program. In exit surveys, students particularly specified 1) a need to balance the program's emphasis on dance with theater and other performance disciplines, and 2) room to improve the mechanics of the online components of the program, including faculty availability between on-campus sessions.

To address these points, the curriculum was modified in a number of ways for the second ICPP class over 2012-2013. The selection of guest artists and lecturers was enhanced to include a balanced representation of dance and theater. A theater-based artist-in-residence, Rinde Eckert, was brought in for a residency during one week of the 2012 summer intensive. ICPP students were then able to see the theatrical premiere of Rinde's work on campus during the November residency at Wesleyan.

As mentioned previously, the Perspectives on Performance (formerly Artistic Practice) and Social and Cultural Context I and II courses were also modified to reflect the wider scope of performance as defined by the ICPP. A statement addressing "What do we mean by performance?" was added to the ICPP's Overview webpage to clarify for prospective students: "The Certificate Program considers performance in its broadest sense and the curriculum addresses time-based art practices of artists, curators and cultural leaders working in dance, performance art, experimental theater and traditional/culturally specific programs and various combinations of these and other disciplines. While students will have exposure to artistic and curatorial practices from multiple aesthetic perspectives and cultural lineages, the Certificate Program is not intended to be comprehensive in its examination of

performance forms and their histories."

Addressing the need for a technical orientation of the program's online software system, special emphasis was placed on creating and delivering training for faculty and students in 2012-13. A mandatory online orientation was required, to provide students access to the online tools (Wesleyan portfolio, Moodle, library access) necessary for their success in the program. Students and faculty also underwent an in-person orientation on the use of the online tool, Moodle. A specific orientation was held by the Wesleyan University library staff to introduce the students to online research methods and tools available to them through the Wesleyan library system. An "academic intern" position was also created to support the faculty in their use of the online tools. Lastly, a clear policy was created which clarified the expectations of all parties regarding communication.

Faculty also identified specific areas for improvement following the first completed year of the program, including 1) communicating the rigor of the program before students enroll, 2) a need to understand students' academic history in the admissions process, and 3) delivering reading list well in advance of the opening summer intensive.

Through clear and unified program messaging through the ICPP website, info sessions and direct communications with faculty and staff, ICPP was able to better represent itself to perspective students in 2012-13. A unified language ("a program of academic rigor") was employed along with a clear statement of student expectations. The application specifically asked students to address "how participating in this academically rigorous program will further [their] career goals."

Slight modifications were made to the application itself which required students to address their desire as well as demonstrate an ability to work in an academically rigorous environment. This simple change in the application helped applicants properly self-select, and the pool of applicants as a whole came to their application with both a better understanding of requirements and better preparation for success. Once enrolled, reading lists were delivered via email to students well in advance (4-6 weeks) of the July intensive and where applicable, readings were posted online giving students click-through access once logged in to their portfolio.

The vast majority of the students ICPP attracts are working professionals in the arts, so the larger challenges of implementing the program are around sensitivity to the particularities of the students. Faculty have continually assessed best practices for the timing of academic workload for working students, finding the appropriate class size, and improving long-distance communications between faculty and students.

Faculty and staff have become more adept at coordinating the demands of the program internally (for example, ensuring that course assignments are properly spaced out over time), as well as responding to the ever-changing issues which a professional student body bring to their studies (coordinating their own professional obligations with an academic workload). In its second year (and entering its third), ICPP has become both clearer in its academic expectations early on as well as more flexible in working with the student body. While the ICPP class sizes have varied over the three years, there have been strengths and challenges for each. ICPP still believes that a class size between 10 to 16 students seems to optimize the program and mitigate the challenges. Lastly, the creation of a clear communication policy as well as the hiring of an "academic intern" to support this process has improved the ICPP student/faculty communication tremendously.

**What was learned from these that might be of benefit to others?**

In three years, the need for this program has been confirmed by developments in the field itself. There is rapidly expanding interest in incorporating contemporary performance into broader contexts (such as in museums, public spaces and in film/video and other media), and increased momentum to advance the discourse on performance. New initiatives, symposia, and intensives attest to this shift in the landscape, including Danspace (DSP)'s Judson Now platform, the Tate Modern's Art in Action program, and the inaugural Montreal International Symposium on Curating the Performing Arts (co-organized by ICPP graduate Jane Gabriels). Artists' performance practices themselves have become more interdisciplinary, and also more multi-platform, in response to widespread re-imagining of what performance can constitute.

Through ICPP's pilot phase, the immediate value of the program has been reinforced by the achievements of ICPP students, faculty, and artists-in-residence. For example, of the twelve student curatorial projects designed by the inaugural 2012 ICPP class, seven were implemented. DSP invited three of the students to curate evenings of performance at its venue in St. Mark's Church in New York City. Two students assumed new positions of greater responsibility and curatorial influence (and credited ICPP as key to their success) and one student was tapped to co-curate a new performance festival. As mentioned previously, DSP published two major catalogues to accompany two of its Platforms performance series: Parallels (spring 2012) and Judson Now (fall 2012). Each catalogue was produced with the assistance of an ICPP Fellow and both are important resources for the field. Of the fourteen independent projects created by the class of 2013 class, nine have been realized and three are in the process of being realized.

Moving forward, we hope to leverage the initial success of ICPP to develop a biennial convening, and shape the program's online presence to amplify and disseminate ideas being generated in the institute as a resource to the field. A third major goal is to launch a Master of Arts program to sustain the institute into the future, complementing the certificate program as it continues. Students in the first three ICPP classes have discovered the program because of their pre-existing interest in this emerging practice, and their desire to engage with ICPP faculty and visiting artists and expand their peer networks. As a continuation of the partnership between DSP and ICPP, a current digital research effort is underway, funded by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. Several pilot projects are being launched at DSP over fall 2013 and tested for user engagement, which will inform recommendations for ICPP's outreach and alumni relations.

Following a planning retreat funded by the DDCF in July, 2013, the Advisory Committee endorsed suspending the certificate program in FY15 in order to:

- take the time to gain approval for the certificate as a permanent program and approval of the new Masters program; build our alumni network;
- align our marketing to more widely disseminate the achievements of our graduates;
- and host a convening to disseminate the ideas being explored at ICPP and launch our online presence.

In this way we hope to thoughtfully translate the pilot iterations of ICPP into a more sustained, widely visible program that can build the next generation of leading practitioners.

We believe that this approach over the next several years will foster a new generation of leaders in the field of performance, raise the level of intellectual discourse around issues of performance curation, and concurrently strengthen national and international peer networks of curators, administrators, artists, and scholars.

**Links to relevant website(s) and/or project publications, reports, etc.**

ICPP website - <http://www.wesleyan.edu/cfa/icpp/program/index.html>

Danspace Project website - [www.danspaceproject.org](http://www.danspaceproject.org)

Danspace Project publications -

<http://www.danspaceproject.org/aboutdanspaceproject/catalogues.php>

National Performance Network annual meeting 2012 -

<http://npnweb.org/site/annualmeeting2012>

**If someone wishes to speak with your organization further about your project, would there be a willing contact? Y/N**

If yes, please provide contact name and information for preferred method of contact (email, phone, etc).

Email David Milch, Program Coordinator, at [icpp@wesleyan.edu](mailto:icpp@wesleyan.edu) (preferred) or call 860-685-3283.