

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Engaging Dance Audiences

Dance/USA receives \$1.5 million to support innovative pilot program

Washington, DC – December 17, 2008 - Dance/USA, the national service organization for professional, not-for-profit dance, announced today that it has received a grant from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation to inaugurate **Engaging Dance Audiences** (EDA), the first national funding program and related study of audience engagement practices focused specifically on the art form of dance. The three-year, \$1.5 million award will enable the dance field to explore new methods of engaging audiences and analyze current activities.

EDA has been conceived to significantly increase the dance field's capacity to engage audiences by implementing and documenting the most effective and forward-thinking practices. Responding to increasing concerns throughout the dance community about changes in audience behavior, including dwindling attendance, EDA will employ two methods to advance the dance field's effectiveness: a re-granting initiative that will fund approximately ten (10) projects that explore engagement practices; and research, data gathering, and analysis related to audiences that will be shared with the field.

"For years, we have heard from our members and colleagues in the field that they believe the future of dance depends on our collective capacity to effectively engage current and new audiences," said Andrea E. Snyder, president and executive director of Dance/USA. "Dance/USA is honored to have this exciting opportunity to explore and assess best practices and to share our findings with the national dance field. We are deeply grateful to the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation for their support of this vitally important project."

For the purpose of this pilot, audience engagement is defined as an expansion beyond traditional ways of relating to audiences. It is both educational and participatory, creating opportunities for audiences to interact physically, emotionally, spiritually, and intellectually with the art form beyond the role of being an observer. Methods may be tied to specific performances, but also may occur independently, and will inevitably involve innovation, risk, and investment.

"The current climate in the dance community provides both challenges and opportunities, and artists and organizations are experimenting to develop more effective ways of connecting to their audiences," said Ben Cameron, Program Director for the Arts at the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. "We are pleased to support Dance/USA's new initiative, Engaging Dance Audiences, which will lead a field-wide exploration of promising approaches that are emerging for dance artists to engage their audiences and communities in new and deeper ways."

The EDA pilot will use a two-stage application process. The first, a "Call for Ideas," (deadline in May 2009), encourages member organizations to submit a description of a project they wish to pursue along with completing a short survey to capture current knowledge. A panel will review the ideas and invite those that most fully address the pilot's goals to submit full applications (deadline in August 2009). During the second stage, the panel will review final applications and select approximately ten (10) grantees that will receive funding for implementation and accompanying research over two years. Grant amounts may range between \$25,000 and \$150,000. The EDA application process is open to all Dance/USA member organizations. Consortia applications are encouraged in order to broaden the potential for greater impact; lead participants of consortia must be members of Dance/USA. Additional plans and detailed information will be forthcoming by February 2009 on Dance/USA's website: www.danceusa.org.

"The leadership of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation is highly visionary. Providing the dance industry with the opportunity to engage in replicable innovation and meaningful research at this time of uncertainty in our economy is invaluable. We appreciate the confidence placed in Dance/USA through this grant," said Cookie Ruiz, executive director of Ballet Austin and chair of Dance/USA's Board of Trustees.

The Project Manager for EDA is Suzanne Callahan, founder of Callahan Consulting for the Arts, <http://www.forthearths.org>, who managed the National College Choreography Initiative and American Masterpieces: Dance, College Component, Dance/USA's grant cycle for the National Endowment for the Arts. Research and assessment will be conducted by Alan Brown of WolfBrown, <http://www.wolfbrown.com>, who has studied audiences and patterns of cultural engagement for many cultural organizations, arts agencies, and funders.

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About the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation

The mission of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation (www.ddcf.org) is to improve the quality of people's lives through grants supporting the performing arts, environmental conservation, medical research and the prevention of child maltreatment, and through preservation of the cultural and environmental legacy of Doris Duke's properties.

About Dance/USA

Dance/USA, the national service organization for the professional, not-for-profit dance field, sustains and advances professional dance by addressing the needs, concerns, and interests of artists, administrators, and organizations. By providing services and national leadership, Dance/USA enhances the infrastructure for dance creation, education, and dissemination.

Established in 1982, Dance/USA is a membership organization serving a broad cross-section of professional dance (currently over 400 ballet, modern, ethnic, jazz and tap companies, dance service and presenting organizations, individuals, and related organizations). Its member organizations range in size from those with operating budgets of under \$50,000 to over \$50 million, and it is increasingly engaging even smaller ensembles and individual artists. For over 25 years, Dance/USA has provided a means for the dance field to communicate, share knowledge, and strengthen its voice, while working to help shape cultural policy and community priorities. Learn more about Dance/USA and our branch offices by visiting our website, www.danceusa.org.