

THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION

TO: NL

FROM: GF

DATE: 10/4/68

Attached are the Dance Paper, and also the paper
in Theatre. I hope both serve the several purposes.

GF
G.F.

INTER-OFFICE CORRESPONDENCE

925
P+P

FROM: GF

DATE: July 30, 1968

TO:

NL	Separate copies	
HK	"	

COMMENTS:

SUBJECT: PERSPECTIVES ON RF INTEREST IN DANCE AND FUTURE PROGRAM: 1949-19681949-1963

Over the fourteen years before the creation of the Arts Program, RF activity in dance under the aegis of the Humanities Program was of secondary importance and characterized by scatteration. There is no evidence of a concentrated study of the field by officers and no distinct pattern of interest evolved.

Six of the nineteen grants* made in this period required trustee action. One of these to the City Center of New York (RF 53064-\$200,000) accounted for close to one half of the total expended under the heading of dance (\$449,685) before 1964. That grant was made as much for new opera as for new ballet productions, but the primary purpose was to help establish the Center, of which the officers made an impressively detailed study and in whose overall director, Lincoln Kirstein, they had strong confidence.

Funds for productions were also supplied to the San Francisco Ballet (RF 58133-\$25,000), to Theater, Inc. (GA 6111-\$10,000) for modern dance choreography and twice to the summer dance program at Connecticut

College (RF 55023-\$33,400 and RF 58034-\$40,000). The Jacob's Pillow

*Grant figures for the pre-Arts Program are approximations because there is no certainty at this time of how many grants were made, given field, during the earlier period.

Festival received a small amount for scholarships (GA 5758-\$5,000).

Most of the remaining actions were for studies of dance and dance notation, for organizing a library collection, and for encouraging Asian dance in the United States.

These grants appear to have been well-used for the limited purposes intended. This includes development of the Kirstein-Balanchine ballet company which in 1963 received \$2,000,000 in Ford Foundation support and also benefited indirectly from RF assistance to Lincoln Center. However, up to 1963, the RF had no programmatic interest in dance. The officers did not discriminate between ballet and modern dance in their recommendations. There was no explicit recognition of the latter's distinguishing characteristic as an indigenous American art form, there was no focus on the interrelationship of dance and other media, or on the growing audience for dance, especially among young people.

THE UTAH PROGRAM

During this period the officers, nevertheless, made one modest grant in aid which was to be pacemaking. At the University of Utah, Virginia Tanner pioneered a style of children's dance instruction which gained national and international attention. This helped produce an expanded undergraduate dance training program of good quality. Apparently, the environment of that University and area was particularly conducive to dance work which was, moreover, encouraged by the Mormon Church. ~~Whereas modern dance in New York reported into elitish companies and exclusivist audiences, broader based interest, participation, and enthusiasm for dance in Utah made for a healthy expansion of training and performance activities.~~ The RF's \$10,000 grant (GA 60107) in 1961 permitted short-term visits from established New York choreographers who brought a spectrum of styles and also sophistication

to the Salt Lake City program. By 1964, Miss Tanner supervised regular instruction of 700 boys and girls between the ages of four and sixteen and there were then eighty modern dance majors and eleven graduate students. (A folk dance training program and a ballet training program integrated with the Utah Civic Ballet Company ^{made} ~~completed~~ the dance picture at the University of Utah *one of the most complete in the country.*)

Support of the visiting choreographer program was renewed in 1964 (RF 64077-\$15,000). By this time, officers were also discussing with administrators of the University, the possibilities of establishing a professional modern dance repertory company under University auspices.*

As this development relates directly to a recommendation for future RF interest in dance, it is worth discussing in some detail.

MODERN DANCE REPERTORY THEATER COMPANY

Before 1965, graduates of Utah's dance program were mainly employed as teachers in the school systems of Utah, neighboring states and other parts of the country. A few were invited to join professional companies, mainly in New York, but the companies and the schools combined offered fewer possibilities than the graduating talent warranted. While a new performing company could offer creative opportunities and security to only a few, it would, and indeed has become, a focal point towards which many talented youngsters in the University's program could direct their ambition. For both the University and the RF, student interest in professional performance opportunities was an encouragement towards creating a new company. The University's motives in sponsoring this activity also included the following:

- (1) they believed their dance training program to be a principal center of strength on which they could build and compete successfully with any other

*Between 1964 and 1968, officers declined eight requests for assistance in starting dance companies.

institution in the country; (2) they believed that a University-sponsored company could serve educational and cultural purposes for the state and region, also improving the University's image; (3) they foresaw that professional dancers could interact with the University's dance teaching program, further strengthening it; (4) the University also felt challenged by the idea of pioneering a performing dance company, thereby possibly establishing a model for other universities.

The grant to the University of Utah for establishing the new company (RF 66021) was the only one of the fifteen actions in dance since the establishment of the Arts Program, to require trustee approval and accounts for \$370,000 of the total of \$575,570 expended for dance between 1964 and July 1968. It is clearly a principal manifestation of the RF's interest in dance which Norman Lloyd communicated to the Trustees in his Progress Report of December 1966 in the following language:

Officers of the Arts Program feel that one of the major efforts of the Foundation, in support of the Arts, should be in establishing American dance on a solid, continuing professional basis.

After two years of operation, Arts officers through personal observation and confidential consultations have been able to evaluate this project, satisfying themselves as to its high quality and significance for modern dance development elsewhere in the U.S. The Company was established with standards of excellence, technical training is improving, its repertoire of established and new works is expanding, and an intensive performance schedule emphasizing the Rocky Mountain region and especially colleges and schools within it has been developed. Company members have been given faculty status and the Company has been incorporated into the Fine Arts program where it will have new facilities encouraging interaction with the adjoining teaching program.

*developed in
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initial
essential
major figure
in the
new
works
Snyder, etc*

The only aspect of this venture which must give pause in contemplating the establishment of comparable companies at universities in other national regions, concerns financial support. Although the University's direct and indirect contributions continue to increase, it has had to request additional RF assistance to cover costs while box office receipts grow and outside funds are solicited to maintain the Company's present size and performance level. As this was an unprecedented venture, RF officers and University administrators may have been too optimistic about the pace at which financial support from other sources would become available. Comparable new establishments may require assistance over as many as five to seven years before becoming self-supporting. However, special mitigating factors in the Utah situation need to be taken into consideration. The State of Utah is one of the more backward in respect to habits of philanthropy and the use of public funds for subsidized activities of public interest and welfare. Also, during the Company's take-off years, the Utah area suffered economic setbacks due to prolonged strikes in the copper mines which are its main source of income.

*Regional
national
assistance*

PROSPECTS IN OTHER REGIONS

In contemplating assistance for the establishment of modern dance companies elsewhere in the country, a primary consideration is that this American art form enjoys a rapidly growing audience in the U.S. This is partly due to the development of American dance itself and partly to the promising interrelationships between dance and other art forms, such as film, sculpture, etc.

The major existing modern dance companies based in New York cannot satisfy this growing interest. They are wedded to their base in New York City and limited touring neither meets their economic needs nor the consistent interest of growing audiences elsewhere. The stylistic narrowness of companies built around a single choreographic talent (as contrasted with

the eclectic repertoire of Utah's company) necessarily limits what each of these companies can give to audiences outside of New York.

There is an interest in having more diversified forms of contemporary American dance permanently available in various regions of the country, especially at schools and colleges, but also in smaller towns as well as larger cities. This demand coincides with the desirability of establishing year^{or}round professional dance companies with economic security outside of the New York area, so that dancers can hold community positions more nearly comparable with orchestra instrumentalists and members of regional theater companies.

THE PRINCIPAL RECOMMENDATION

The principal recommendation in this paper is that the officers seek to find the most promising regional dance centers in the South, Far West, and in the middle of the country and in New England, with the aim of helping to establish high level repertory companies sponsored by universities and interacting with them and communities in each region. Investigation of alternative centers must necessarily be extensive and should not be restricted to sources that have requested assistance for such a purpose.* Investigations should compare with what was accomplished in the course of evolving the University-Symphony Program in which many more university-symphony-municipal centers were visited than received project assistance.

The Utah model cannot be expected to fit other promising situations precisely. In December 1966, Norman Lloyd specified the alternatives as, "assisting already existing companies that have shown proof of artistic

*In addition to the eight declinations of request to establish dance companies, the officers, during 1964-1968, declined support requests from eight amateur dance groups, two university groups, twenty-one professional groups and two workshop groups.

excellence and managerial responsibility or helping new companies get under way." Thus, following from the framework provided by the Utah experience, it may prove desirable to help nurture permanent relationships between existing professional companies and university centers, or to establish new companies based on existing strengths in one or more of the regions.

Artistic hallmarks of new centers should be 1) high quality and provision for continued development of technique; 2) development of repertoire inclusive of major established works, and, equally, of new works stemming from the choreographic talent within each company and region; 3) interaction with other forms, particularly with composers.

Organizational hallmarks must include 1) solid institutional sponsorship; 2) provision of adequate facilities; 3) initial financial support and projected increases to the point of self-support over a reasonable period; 4) interaction with local and regional music performing groups; 5) interaction with university, college, school and other institutions to provide teaching, lecture-demonstration, and performance services.

NEW YORK CITY: A SPECIAL SITUATION

New York City does not have a modern dance repertory company equivalent to its symphony orchestra, opera, ballet, and ongoing theatre companies. Efforts made in this direction have foundered 1) for lack of cooperation among the principal existing groups, 2) for lack of sufficient funds, 3) for lack of dance theatre facilities. Such a company was expected to be a constituent of Lincoln Center, but modern dance has not been included because of the inability of established groups to come together and because of the so far unsuccessful effort to establish a young eclectic company. The New York City Ballet's domination of Lincoln Center now extends to the new facilities of the Julliard School. There is, nevertheless, widespread professional and audience desire for such a

company in New York and it may be possible for the RF, as much because of its potential influence as with contributed funds, to act as a catalytic agent in bringing the interested parties together for their common purpose.

Lincoln Center remains the logical place for a modern dance repertory company and the diversified, high standard training program at Juilliard, whose very existence is now endangered, could, if resuscitated, supply the base from which such a company might grow. Certainly, the officers, in their contacts with Juilliard, could explore this possibility by expanding present discussions about assistance to continue employment of principal dance instructors to include the long-term modern dance teaching and performance program at Juilliard and within Lincoln Center.

SECONDARY DANCE PROGRAM INTERESTS: PAST AND FUTURE

The fourteen grants in aid for dance between 1964 and the middle of 1968 had widely divergent purposes. Of themselves, small amounts to assist established figures such as José Limon, Merce Cunningham, Alvin Ailey, Alwin Nikolais and Martha Graham can be justified by the exploratory nature of the Arts Program dance interest during this period. In the future, however, it is recommended that grants in aid be restricted to 1) short-term encouragement of selected dance situations for the purposes of observation leading to possible development of centers for major regional activity, and, 2) for individual choreographic effort, particularly for advancing experimental relationships between dance and other media.* Both types of grants in aid would, therefore, be directly related to the RF's proposed principal program in dance.

*Eight requests for experimental involvement of film with dance were declined between 1964 and 1968.

change

Recent grants in aid are illustrative of how such help might be given in the future and of activity that should not continue. The \$5,500 grant to the Ballet Theater Foundation (GA Arts 6721), permitting Eliot Feld to prepare a new work, the success of which led to a larger grant for the same purpose (GA 6815 - \$24,000), shows how a small sum, selectively applied, can be of critical assistance in creating a new work. On the other hand, support for established companies during the summer in areas where there are insufficient numbers of students to teach, (e.g. RF Arts 6807 - \$15,000 for the University of Florida to bring Alwin Nikolais' dance company into residence for a month during the summer), or immediately in the neighborhood of an already existing regional program, (e.g. GA Arts 6814 - \$20,000 to the University of Colorado to bring the Merce Cunningham dance company into residence for four weeks during the summer), can be wasteful and, in any event, lead to scatteration. It is also doubtful that the summer program at Connecticut College, which over the years has received four RF grants totalling \$99,600, still holds the unique place warranting further exceptions.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the principal recommendation in this paper is to have the RF play a limited but critical role in establishing permanent American dance repertory companies at a propitious moment for this American art form, principally at university institutions where the artistic, educational and cultural contributions of the dance can be husbanded and maximized. Intensive officer investigations would have to precede any of the maximum of five trustee level actions that might be proposed ^{over the next few years}. Grant in aid activity in dance would be strictly limited to explorations of existing situations which stand a good chance of blossoming into major regional centers, and to assisting

selected outstanding choreographic talents in producing new works,
especially ones involving experimental relationships with other art
forms.