

# Making Changes

**FACILITATING  
THE TRANSITION  
OF DANCERS TO  
POST-PERFORMANCE  
CAREERS**

BY  
WILLIAM J. BAUMOL  
JOAN JEFFRI  
DAVID THROSBY



*the*  
**ADVANCE**  
project

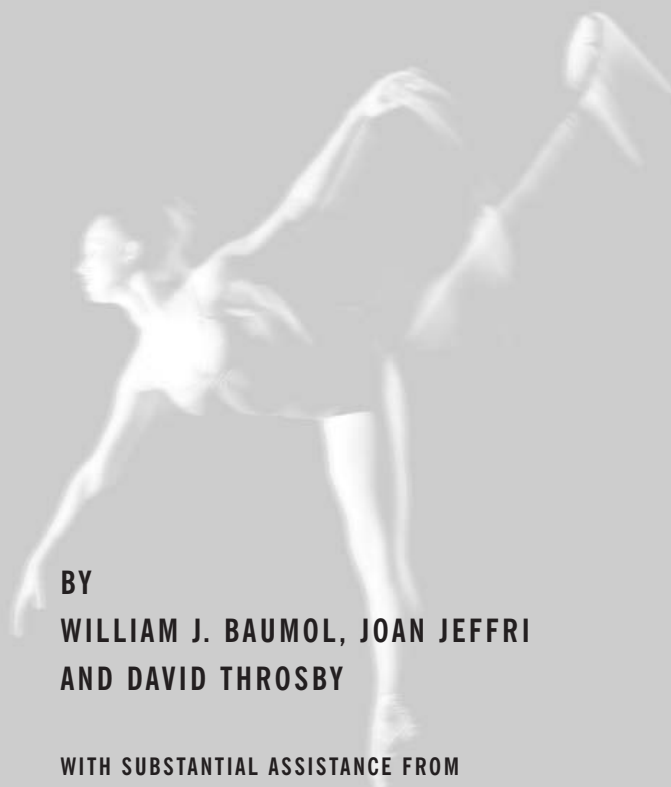
Executive Summary

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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**BY  
WILLIAM J. BAUMOL, JOAN JEFFRI  
AND DAVID THROSBY**

**WITH SUBSTANTIAL ASSISTANCE FROM  
SUE ANNE BATEY BLACKMAN, VIRGINIA HOLLISTER,  
ANNEMARIE SCHOEPFER AND LAUREN TEHAN**

## RESEARCH DIRECTOR

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William J. Baumol  
and David Throsby



## RESEARCH TEAM AND STAFF

William J. Baumol, New York University and Princeton University

Joan Jeffri, Teachers College, Columbia University

David Throsby, Macquarie University

Sue Anne Batey Blackman, Princeton University

Cheryl Carnahan, Consultant

Virginia Hollister, Macquarie University

Annemarie Schoepfer, Teachers College, Columbia University

Lauren Tehan, Teachers College, Columbia University

## RESEARCH PARTNERS (SURVEY)

Joan Jeffri, Teachers College, Columbia University, U.S.

Adrian Schriel, Tanz Ensemble Cathy Sharp, Switzerland

David Throsby, Macquarie University, Australia

## DATA PARTNERS (COUNTRY PROFILES)

Paul Bronkhorst, Dutch Retraining Program for Professional Dancers and International Organization for the Transition of Professional Dancers, Netherlands

Keiko Fukui, Geidankyo, Japan

Pia Hartmann, Hartmann Nagel Art & Consulting, Germany

Joan Jeffri, Teachers College, Columbia University, U.S.

Claire McCaughey, The Canada Council for the Arts, Canada

Pierre-Michel Menger, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, France

Gabriela Medina, La Manga Dance Company, Mexico

Annemarie Parekh, Pro Helvetia, Arts Council of Switzerland, Switzerland

Andrew Princz, ontheglobe.com, Hungary

Annemarie Schoepfer, Teachers College, Columbia University, U.S.

Adrian Schriel, Tanz Ensemble Cathy Sharp, Switzerland

Jeanette Siddall, Arts Council England, U.K.

Joyanne Sidimus, Dancer Transition Resource Centre, Canada

Lauren Tehan, Teachers College, Columbia University, U.S.

David Throsby, Macquarie University, Australia

## MANAGEMENT AND FUNDRAISING

Adrian Ellis, AEA Consulting

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## SPECIAL THANKS

*Special thanks to all of the current and former dancers and professionals in the dance field who care about transition and without whom this report would not have been possible.*

We are pleased to present the results of what we believe to be the first study of its kind, a coordinated inquiry into the career transition of professional dancers in different countries. In total, eleven countries were included in this study. Sample surveys were undertaken in three countries to provide insights into the challenges of career change as seen from the viewpoint of the individual dancer, and country profiles were written in eight additional countries to illustrate further the global environment of dance. In addition, the four existing career transition centers contributed substantially to the Summary Statement by providing illuminating information derived from their data.

# Summary Statement

## THE CHALLENGES OF TRANSITION

Dance is a career that entails an extraordinarily high level of passion, commitment, extensive periods of training, and a professional life that is relatively brief, since many dancers have to retire in their early thirties and some even earlier. Yet in most countries, dancers are among the most poorly paid of artists, despite their great contribution to the cultural life of society, and inadequate recognition often compounds their morale problems. For professional dancers reaching the end of their performing careers, this confluence of factors creates economic, psychological, and educational difficulties for which they are often ill-equipped and which are likely to have a profound effect on the rest of their lives. Having lived in a relatively inward-looking and intensely focused world, they find themselves suddenly cast out from the stimulus and support that the dance world provided. Our research indicates that the skills and experience that professional dancers accumulate during their dancing years, including self-discipline, team work and stamina, are significant and transferable resources that are in danger of being wasted as their active dancing careers come to an end. Thus, inadequacy of career transition support not only creates significant challenges for individual dancers, but also imposes a social cost in the form of wasted human capital.

## WHY THIS REPORT?

There is an urgent need for measures to ameliorate the problems of transition faced by all professional dancers. Only four countries—Canada, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom (U.K.), and the United States (U.S.)—are fortunate enough to have formal transition centers or other transition measures in place, and these programs have made significant progress in helping many dancers in these countries deal with the challenges of career change. But more generally, it remains a fact that determining what should be done is hampered by a lack of understanding of the problem, inadequate data, and the absence of an objective basis for systematic analysis of alternative strategies. At the initiative of the International Organization for the Transition of Professional Dancers (IOTPD), an international organization based in Switzerland, the present study has been undertaken by an international research team to assess the extent and nature of the challenges of the transition process, to gather factual evidence to test various propositions about the effects of transition on the individual dancer, and to suggest ways in which the problems of transition may be addressed by dance companies, service organizations, public agencies, and dancers themselves. However, fuller understanding of the issue and its scope requires recognition of the fact that the problems of transition can differ from one country to another. This report therefore explicitly adopts an international point of view in analyzing the problem and in making recommendations.

## WHAT IS A DANCER?

This study is concerned with professional dancers. It is well known that the definition of “professional” in the arts is somewhat problematic, because a simple income test that may be appropriate in most other professions cannot readily be applied to artists. Rather, we consider professionalism to derive from a combination of factors including a dancer’s training, career commitment, standard of work, income and time allocation, and we acknowledge that precise definitions of professional status differ among countries.

In regard to dance forms, we distinguish among dancers working in five broad categories: (1) classical/ballet, (2) modern/contemporary dance, (3) organized indigenous or folk dance, (4) musical theater or commercial dance, and (5) “other,” a catch-all category that encompasses

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dancers working in cinema, television, and other industries (such as revues, fashion shows, cruise ships and corporate events), as well as less-organized forms of dance. In all five of these categories, it is common to find individual dancers whose work spans more than one of the fields at a given time or at different stages in their careers.

We adopt the conventional usage of the term “transition” in this study to describe the career stage during which a dancer stops actively performing (often gradually) for reasons of age, health, injury, or some other cause, and moves to a new activity, whatever that may be. We use the terms “current” and “former” dancers to distinguish between those who are still actively performing and those who are not.

### OUR RESEARCH APPROACH

This research project was composed of four distinct components:

(1) A study of some fundamental hypotheses designed to throw light on effective methods for improvement of the transition process and of the institutions dedicated to this purpose. These hypotheses are outlined further below. This portion of the study is designed to suggest and explore recommendations for further improvements in transition programs.

(2) A series of eleven “country profiles” undertaken to illustrate the breadth of dance activity around the world as a context for analysis of transition problems. Profiles were drawn up for Australia, Canada, England, France, Germany, Hungary, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the U.S.

(3) A compendium of existing transition assistance programs in various countries including, particularly, Canada, the Netherlands, the U.K., and the U.S., to assess the present approaches that have been undertaken to meet the challenges of transition. Even more important for this study, these assessments also provide models for other transition programs and evidence of the effectiveness and promise of the various approaches as they are currently carried out.

(4) A series of three sample surveys of current and former dancers, undertaken in Australia, Switzerland, and the U.S. The results of these surveys provide invaluable insights into the challenges of career change as seen from the perspective of the individual dancer in these countries.

### THE DANCE INDUSTRY WORLDWIDE

Our individual national portraits comprising the country profiles are made up of information on the broadly defined dance industry in each country, including data on educational and training systems; public and private funding; numbers of employed and unemployed professional dancers; numbers of dance companies and institutions involved in dance; size and characteristics of audiences; institutional structures; and methods of support for dancers (benefits, pensions, and so on). Highlights from these profiles include the following:

- Most dancers in all eleven countries are female, and a number move among countries in pursuit of their dance careers.
- Dance is an important component of the performing arts, accounting for a total of about 33 million attendances annually in the eleven countries we studied, with the share of population attending dance events annually in the countries studied varying from less than 1 percent to approximately 15 percent.
- Although there are variations among countries, there has been significant growth in the dance sector in many countries over the last ten years, measured in terms of numbers of dancers, numbers of dance companies, and audience size.
- There is a substantial amount of direct government funding of dance in all countries studied, except for the U.S., where public support is provided mainly indirectly, via tax deductibility of contributions to dance organizations.
- Dance is a poorly paid occupation compared to other professions, and although some dancers are fortunate enough to be able to work full-time, many are obliged to take on other jobs in order to support their careers in dance.

## EXISTING TRANSITION PROGRAMS

There are four major formal centers that provide career transition services for professional dancers:

(1) **Career Transition For Dancers** (CTFD), with offices in New York City and Los Angeles in the U.S., provides a wide range of career programs and services free of charge to assist in career transition for current and former dancers. Since 1985, it has serviced more than 2,600 dancers nationwide and has awarded more than \$1.7 million in educational and entrepreneurial grants. A feature of CTFD's orientation is its effort to help dancers determine for themselves the steps they will take in their career transition and, by making its services dancer-driven, CTFD seeks to encourage dancer initiative and independence.

(2) **The Dancer Transition Resource Centre** (DTRC) in Canada is a membership organization that offers broad-based services to dancers on entering, during, and after their professional performing careers. Academic, career, financial, legal, and personal counseling are offered to its constituents, as well as DTRC's Dancer Award Fund that gives grants for skills courses, retraining and subsistence. In addition, the DTRC provides information to the general dance community, offering a newsletter, website, other publications, conferences, and seminars.

(3) The U.K.'s center for career transition for professional dancers, **Dancers' Career Development** (DCD), offers a wide range of practical, psychological and financial retraining and career transition services for professional dancers, including educational advice, career coaching, emotional counseling, résumé and interview guidance, grants for retraining, business start-up grants, and ongoing support for professional dancers. The DCD Company Fund Division operates a scheme in cooperation with dance companies, which contribute funds to be used to assist their dancers in transition. Currently, nine British companies participate in this scheme. The DCD also operates an Independent Trust Division that supports independent dancers and dancers in the commercial sector, funded through grants and fundraising activities.

(4) The **Dutch Retraining Program for Professional Dancers** (Stichting Omscholingsregeling Dansers, [SOD]) provides services to dancers in career transition in the Netherlands. Dancers pay a small monthly contribution to the program, which offers income support and grants for

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retraining, as well as counseling services, particularly career counseling. The program has recently been redesigned to provide grants to dancers in transition to cover study and subsistence expenses.

These four existing career transition centers—in Canada, the Netherlands, the U.K. and the U.S.—are independent and specialized service organizations with a total of 90 years of accumulated experience in the field of dance career transition. The centers have all found the problems of dancers in transition to be remarkably similar, involving economic, psychological and educational issues that need to be addressed. Over the years, each of these organizations has developed a range of programs and services that focus on the different stages in a dancer's career, and have provided integrated support that is individually tailored to the needs of each dancer.

What do differ from country to country are the methods of addressing the problems. The kinds of assistance provided through the four career transition centers vary, depending on cultural differences, the type and amount of social, health and educational support provided by government, and the resources available to the transition centers and other career transition programs. Later in the report, we provide profiles of the four career transition centers, with details of their individual programs and services.

Two other organizations are noteworthy. The **International Organization for the Transition of Professional Dancers** (IOTPD) plays a significant leadership and advocacy role in the field. The IOTPD's main objectives are to help professional dancers in the process of career transition and to promote awareness of the contribution the dancer makes to society, the needs of the dancer during the transition process, and the benefits of a successful transition to a future productive career. And the **Swiss Association for the Career Re-orientation of Professional Dancers** (NPT/RDP) provides career counseling and training as well as financial support for unemployed workers, including dancers in transition, in Switzerland.

In addition to these programs, a number of dance companies and dance schools around the world provide transition services specifically tailored to their own needs. Examples include companies such as the Birmingham Royal Ballet (U.K.), the Houston Ballet (U.S.), the



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Nederlands Dans Theater (Netherlands), the Opéra National de Paris (France), the New York City Ballet (U.S.), the Pacific Northwest Ballet (U.S.), the Escuela del Ballet Folklórico de México de Amalia Hernández (México), and schools like the Arts Education School (U.K.), Boston Ballet School (U.S.), and St. Mary's College of California, School of Extended Education (U.S.), among a number of others. Such programs provide a wide variety of career transition assistance for dancers, including support for training, job search, and information provision.

### THE CIRCUMSTANCES AND VIEWPOINTS OF INDIVIDUAL DANCERS

The survey of dancers in Australia, Switzerland, and the U.S., undertaken as part of this study, provide a picture of transition challenges from the viewpoint of the individual dancers. While we received few responses to our survey from indigenous/folk dancers, we did receive responses from dancers in the other dance categories listed above. It is also important to note that the great majority of the questions in our survey are independent of whether a formal career transition center or other transition arrangements exist in the country surveyed. Thus, to the extent that dancers in the three surveyed countries are broadly comparable with dancers elsewhere, our findings can be used in general terms as a basis for inference to other countries.

The findings from our survey include the following:

- In all three countries, between two-thirds and three-quarters of dancers are female, and the majority have formal dance qualifications. They are also better educated in terms of post-secondary school qualifications than the average populations in their countries (in the U.S., for example, three-quarters of dancers have post-secondary qualifications, compared to a little over half of the general population with at least some post-secondary education).
- Our results show that currently active dancers expect to continue their performing careers until well into their forties. However, dancers whose active careers are now over remember that, although they thought they could continue until their late thirties, on average they actually stopped dancing professionally in their early to mid-thirties.

- The great majority of current dancers claim to be aware of the challenges that transition will pose (98 percent, 86 percent, and 93 percent in the U.S., Switzerland, and Australia, respectively), but many former dancers concede that they were in fact ill-prepared for this process

- Many current dancers see continuing to work in dance as a preferred post-transition option (26 percent, 51 percent, and 48 percent of dancers in the U.S., Switzerland, and Australia, respectively). In practice, in all three countries, the most likely way in which continuing contact with dance has actually been achieved by dancers post-transition is through employment as dance teachers, although this has not always afforded the most satisfaction. In all three countries studied, considerably more than half of former dancers have been engaged in some teaching of dance in their subsequent careers.

- It is also noteworthy that the number of dancers remaining in the dance profession is reported to be significantly lower among those former dancers who have availed themselves of the programs of the formal career transition centers. Data from the transition centers suggest that no more than some 10 to 15 percent of their clients prefer a dance-related career and that those clients do succeed in careers in other fields.

- There are many types of support that are helpful to dancers in the career transition process, including financial assistance, emotional support, counseling programs and services, job search preparation, advice and information, and assistance in education and training. Dancers report that this support comes from a variety of sources, including dance companies, unions, service organizations, and family and friends. About 60 percent of former dancers in Australia, Switzerland and the U.S. identified family and friends as the most important source of support for them during this critical period.

Dancers uniformly find specific transition programs helpful, when such programs are available. Among the three countries surveyed, participation is greatest in the U.S., where transition programs have been and continue to be more common than in Australia and Switzerland. The increased availability of programs in all three countries in recent years is evidenced by the fact that participation among current dancers is greater than that among former dancers in each case. Even so, taken overall, the majority of dancers in all three surveyed countries have not participated in transition programs.

The main approaches to ease the career transition process that are likely to be used by dance companies, publicly and privately-funded support agencies, career transition centers, and other organizations and individuals include:

- (1) Income subsidies paid directly to the dancers for a limited time period after retirement;
- (2) Subsidies for re-education and retraining, paid to the retraining institutions or issued as vouchers to individual dancers;
- (3) Sustained career counseling, beginning substantially before retirement;
- (4) Establishment of a job placement agency that keeps up-to-date information on employment opportunities and guides former dancers both before and after a new career has been found;
- (5) Pre-career education and training in a second field;
- (6) Mid-career education and training in a second field; and
- (7) Post-career education and training in a second field.

We examined these approaches by formulating a series of hypotheses and testing them against available evidence. Our hypotheses, and the evidence assembled, are the following:

**HYPOTHESIS 1:**

**An income subsidy can play a substantial role in permitting the former dancer to undertake the effort needed to prepare for a subsequent career.**

Current dancers in all three of our surveyed countries report that approximately five percent of their total income comes from unemployment benefits, insurance, government grants, and other subsidies. These contributions are clearly very modest and leave a sizeable gap between costs and resources. Without additional outside support, income subsidy is a costly approach, and while such a subsidy is being paid, it may even weaken the former dancer's incentive to look for a more viable long-term solution.

A comparison of dancers' expectations with their actual experience in the three countries surveyed indicates that in the majority of cases, the availability and importance of all types of support measures (financial, emotional, informational, and educational) fall short of dancers' expectations.

**HYPOTHESIS 2:**

**Current funding of dancer retraining for a post-transition career is generally insufficient to cover the cost of such programs.**

According to the dancers we surveyed, the financial resources available for further training in fields other than dance are inadequate. The highest percentages of current dancers responding to the survey in all three countries have concluded that they plan to finance study with their own funds (51 percent in Australia, 39 percent in Switzerland, and 43 percent in the U.S.). The expectation that post-career study will largely have to be self-financed is confirmed in practice in the three surveyed countries. The majority of *former dancers* in all three countries financed their further education with their own funds (51 percent in Australia, 49 percent in Switzerland, and 52 percent in the U.S.). The mean (average) cost of retraining in Australia was AU\$11,000 (U.S.\$8,800), CHF18,000 (U.S.\$14,000) in Switzerland, and \$27,000 in the U.S.

In Canada, the Netherlands and the U.K., however, retraining and subsistence grants have apparently minimized the need for such personal financial investment by dancers, according to information provided to us by the career transition centers. In some cases, retraining can even begin while dancers are still actively dancing, thus precluding the need for investments soon after transition (see Appendix A in Part Two of this report for more details).

**HYPOTHESIS 3:**

**Retraining promises to provide a substantial improvement in the dancer's earnings after transition, particularly if the retraining occurs relatively early in the dancer's career.**

The interview data from our three surveyed countries indicate that early formal retraining is often very valuable for improvement of subsequent earnings and career satisfaction. However, surprisingly, although such early formal retraining leads to a substantial increase in income immediately after transition, in the longer term it is not particularly far ahead of all the alternatives considered, such as contemplated later retraining or the absence of any intention to retrain. Moreover, there are significant exceptions to the hypothesized superiority of post-transition income that derives from retraining and particularly from pre-transition retraining. For example, in Australia, while twelve months after transition, 39 percent of those who had completed retraining before transition had increased their incomes over the pre-transition levels, 56 percent who had not yet completed retraining were also benefiting financially, and 42 percent of those who had no retraining plans had also experienced higher incomes. A similar exception occurs in the data for the U.S., where 43 percent of those who had completed retraining before transition had increased their incomes by the time of the surveys, but 46 percent of those who had no intention of retraining were also receiving higher incomes than before. So although early retraining clearly benefits some individuals, it is not the only answer, since a majority of dancers who did not undergo such retraining nevertheless finished up with a higher income than they had earned when they were dancers.

**HYPOTHESIS 4:**

**Post-dance career retraining may offer benefits primarily in the long run, but may exacerbate the dancer's financial problems in the early stages of transition.**

According to our survey, post-transition retraining entails a serious financial hardship soon after transition, in part because of the cost of retraining. However, this disadvantage disappears in the longer term as the benefit of higher incomes due to retraining takes effect.

**HYPOTHESIS 5:**

**Training for a second career during the period of dance activity is a realistic policy, but only for some types of dance activity. The time demands of a professional dance career may leave insufficient time for an adequate level of training.**

It is probably not realistic to aim at widespread training for second careers before transition, particularly for dancers in branches of dance such as classical ballet. Ballet requires an extremely time-consuming training program at a very early age. In addition, prospective dancers are unlikely to be guided effectively in this direction before beginning their dance careers. Most dancers in our surveyed countries do not think their study for a second career should have begun earlier.

Information from the four existing career transition centers generally confirms this. In general, dancers in companies that have relatively tight schedules may not have the flexibility to begin retraining while they are still dancing. However, the experience of the four transition centers indicates that early preparation for the career transition process significantly reduces the trauma that often accompanies unprepared transition. Therefore, the existing transition centers seek to heighten the dancers' awareness of the inevitable end of the performing career. A great deal of the work of these centers is focused on dancers while they are still studying dance and performing.

**HYPOTHESIS 6:**

**For a substantial proportion of dancers, a post-transition career totally divorced from dance may not be a realistic possibility.**

Non-dance-related careers into which surveyed former dancers from Australia, Switzerland and the U.S. have moved include real estate, nursing, the ministry, insurance, massage therapy, and yoga instruction. Our results, however, showed that most dancers in the countries surveyed ended up in new careers that are related to dance. It is also noteworthy that the 2002 Paris National Opera study found that nearly 83 percent of former dancers, after transition, went into careers in the field of dance and, of those, 65 percent became dance teachers. This may be so either because after retirement from dance it is too difficult, because of age or for other reasons, to switch to a career outside of dance. The retiring dancer may, for example, have dependants, making retraining a further

difficulty. It may also be a consequence of the former dancer's personal preferences and enduring commitment to the field, or of the orientation of funding agencies. And it may be a consequence of unavailability of career transition support.

According to information from the existing career transition centers, former dancers who have gone through one of these centers have chosen a wide variety of careers, including real estate, medicine, insurance, Pilates instruction, massage therapy, yoga instruction, architecture, arts management, computer technology, graphics and web design, finance, law, massage techniques, publishing, television, theater direction and production, carpentry, and psychology.

#### **HYPOTHESIS 7:**

**Systematic programs of placement and apprenticeship of dancers with no ancillary skills at the time of career transition are likely to be most remunerative and satisfying when the new position is in the performing arts or some related arena.**

The survey evidence casts some doubt on this hypothesis. A comparison of the post-transition incomes of those dancers working in a dance-related field, another arts-related field, a health or fitness occupation, or a non-arts field shows no significant differences in the proportions of dancers reporting higher or lower incomes than when a dancer. However, our results do reveal some differences in career satisfaction according to the area of work, with satisfaction greatest when dancers work in a dance-related field.

In contrast, the experience at the career transition centers indicates no difference in career satisfaction levels between careers that are dance-related and those that are not.

#### **HYPOTHESIS 8:**

**For dancers switching to careers that are not dance-related, the older/more mature the dancer is at the time of career transition, the less favorable the dancer's subsequent earnings are likely to be.**

Entry into a new profession at the end of the dance career can be very difficult because the age of retirement from dance is probably beyond that at which people learn most easily, and because it often entails entry into a field with far younger competitors. Our survey results show that the

mean (average) age at which former dancers stopped dancing in Australia, Switzerland, and the U.S. was a little under 34 years, which is about ten years later than the general date of embarkation in most professions requiring extensive education.

The results of our survey indicate that the income prospects of dancers who stop dancing at a relatively older age are less favorable than those who stop dancing at an earlier age. In all three countries, the post-transition incomes of dancers who undergo transition before the age of 30 (which is several years before the mean and median ages of transition in these countries) are higher than for those who stop dancing beyond that age. This has not, however, been the experience in Canada where, according to the Dancer Transition Resource Centre, over the last 20 years the average age of transition was 36 years.<sup>1</sup>

#### **HYPOTHESIS 9:**

**Substantial awareness of the challenges of transition (which can be assisted by career counseling) may facilitate increases in income after transition.**

Career-counseling and provision of information to dancers about the challenges of transition can raise dancers' awareness of these challenges. In retrospect, a substantial proportion of surveyed dancers considered such awareness to be very valuable. In the three-country study, 43 percent of former dancers in Australia, 30 percent in Switzerland, and 57 percent in the U.S. reported that advice and information were "very important." Moreover, a greater percentage of the dancers who said they were very aware of the challenges also reported increases in income than those not very aware of them.

#### **HYPOTHESIS 10:**

**Dancers tend to be badly informed about matters such as future income prospects and the challenges of career transition. Such information can help prospective dancers' satisfaction with a subsequent career after transition.**

Most *current* dancers in our sample claim to be well aware of the challenges that will face them when transi-

<sup>1</sup> It is also noteworthy that Canadian grants primarily support dancers whose careers have been of considerable length, except in the case of dancers with permanent injury or other severe medical problems.

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tion occurs. But this may be more apparent than real. With the benefit of hindsight, *former* dancers acknowledge they were *not* well prepared. The proportion of those fully prepared and enjoying higher incomes in the immediate post-transition period was larger than the corresponding proportion for those not fully prepared. This income advantage apparently associated with preparedness for transition was maintained in the longer term, though the distance between the fully-prepared and the not-fully-prepared groups appears to narrow over time.

Our survey results also show a markedly higher level of post-transition career satisfaction among those fully prepared to meet transition than among those not fully prepared.

### **HYPOTHESIS 11:**

**Dancers tend systematically to overestimate their likely incomes and the length of their careers.**

The evidence supports this hypothesis. Our survey findings show that currently active dancers expect to continue their performing careers until well into their forties. However, dancers whose active careers are now over realize in retrospect that they could not continue dancing as long as they had expected. Although these dancers had thought they could continue until their late thirties, on average they actually stopped in their early to mid-thirties. One typical response to the inevitability of any kind of transition is simply denial of the problem. Thus, even if objective information is provided to the dancers, it may not have much effect. The experience of the countries where career transition centers exist tends to confirm this. Denial is a persistent defense mechanism.<sup>2</sup>

Not surprisingly, surveyed current dancers have only a vague idea about what they may earn after transition, and significant numbers answered, “don’t know” when asked what they expected. Nevertheless, about one-third of current dancers in all three of our surveyed countries said they expected to earn more after they stopped dancing. Only 15 percent expected to earn less. Our survey data suggest that, in reality, those expecting to earn more are

likely to be disappointed at first. However, in the longer term, their hope for a higher income seems more likely to be fulfilled. On the other hand, it seems that a number of those expecting less will have their fears confirmed, especially in the early stages after transition. Overall, a majority of surveyed dancers finish up earning more after transition than before, but almost 30 percent have post-transition income lower than when they were dancers.

### **HYPOTHESIS 12:**

**Dancers tend to disregard their health risks.**

Surveyed current dancers often expect that ill health or the effects of injuries will lead to the end of a professional career (this is true of 43 percent of current dancers in Australia, 37 percent of current dancers in Switzerland, and 43 percent of current dancers in the U.S.). In fact, ill health and injury do often bring dance careers to an end. Twenty-nine percent of surveyed former dancers in Australia, 33 percent of former dancers in Switzerland, and 35 percent of former dancers in the U.S. report that the health effects of injuries caused them to stop dancing.

## **SOME CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Our interviews with dancers, our study of current career transition-facilitating practices of a large sample of organizations in many countries, and our examination of the preceding hypotheses all provide insights for promising transition policies and programs that may be useful depending on particular regional or national differences. Most important, we acknowledge the invaluable contributions and the successful programs that are already being carried out by the four career dance-transition centers in Canada, the Netherlands, U.K. and the U.S. These organizations have led the way toward the design and execution of programs and services that can effectively alleviate the burden borne by dancers in the course of their career transitions. At least three of their reported accomplishments require particular emphasis. First, their programs have freed dancers from pressures to seek a new career primarily in a dance-related field and have made it possible for dancers to find rewarding second careers in other respected professions. Second, the programs at these career transition centers have helped to open an impressive variety of occupations for the dancers’ second careers. Third, and perhaps most striking, is the success of the vast majority of the graduates of the transition center programs in finding continuing employment in the

<sup>2</sup> However, part of the work of the four career transition centers is focused on raising dancers’ awareness of transitions issues during the stages of their dancing careers, even during the educational stage. Experience at the four centers indicates their efforts have succeeded. Discussion of transition in these countries is no longer taboo, as it was before the founding of the transition centers.

fields in which they were retrained. These laudable achievements underlie the first of our conclusions and recommendations:

**(1) Concern about the welfare of dancers should lead countries in which no career transition center now exists to assign high priority to the creation of such a center, and should lead the governments in the countries where the four transition centers are now located to give higher priority to their funding.**

The most important of our other conclusions and recommendations are summarized next, under six headings.

## **(2) Financial Issues: Costs and Funding**

Cost and limited finances are clearly among the most serious handicaps impeding more widespread and effective career transition programs. Government-sector support and more vigorous fundraising are, of course, the oft-prescribed solutions, but other, more indirect, approaches can reduce the financial pressures. Two examples illustrate the possibilities:

- **Partnerships with institutions such as colleges.** Some dance organizations have entered into agreements with nearby educational institutions to provide retraining to current and former dancers at little or no tuition cost to the dancers, with obvious fiscal benefits to the dancers and the dance organization. Moreover, for the educational institutions, which normally seek intellectual enrichment through diversity in the student body, the addition of a relatively small number of students will cause little increase in operating costs, since a negligible expansion in the size of classes entails no expense.

- **Incorporation into other programs in the public sector or elsewhere.** The dance community can seek opportunities in existing governmental or other programs into which it can incorporate at least portions of its activities. For example, in Switzerland, governmental programs pay to retrain the unemployed and help their transition into a more viable vocation. The Swiss dance transition programs usually first investigate whether these government programs can be used to help a candidate for transition assistance before releasing any of their own limited funds for the purpose.

## **(3) Dancer Participation in Management of Transition Programs**

Our evidence suggests that the dancers themselves should much more routinely participate in the formulation and operation of career transition programs. Programs in transition centers and dance companies that do so may be carried out more effectively. This approach may also elicit innovative ideas from the participants and will engender an atmosphere of confidence and trust.

## **(4) Training Programs**

- **Dance school curriculum development.** Although finding the necessary space in dance training programs may be difficult, educational programs in dance schools of all kinds and at all levels should consider the inclusion of a mandatory curriculum on transition, as is currently the case in the U.K. Since over half the former dancers surveyed in the three countries have done some teaching, these former dancers are the perfect vehicles to include transition awareness in their own teaching practices, whether delivered through formal course programs in dance education or through informal or private dance instruction.

- **Retraining and, in particular, earlier retraining.** There is no question that for many dancers retraining is the portal to success in a new career. But in career transition programs, one size does not fit all. While retraining may be the key to a felicitous future for some dancers, others seem to do quite well without it. The survey evidence shows that retraining often contributes both to post-transition income and to job satisfaction. However, a greater share of former dancers who had not yet undertaken retraining (or who had no intention of doing so) had higher post-transition incomes than those who had completed their retraining or were still in the retraining process. Thus, the evidence does not show that *early* retraining is necessarily the most effective way to promote these goals.

## **(5) Counseling**

The provision of counseling, particularly career counseling, services can be an invaluable component of any transition program. Given the very special and complex character of the career transition process, well-trained and

well-prepared counselors are required to provide effective services to dancers. Thus, in each country, unless it already exists, it may be desirable to organize a counselor-preparation program, offering a proficient-counselor training course to those who will be conducting the activity in dance organizations and other relevant venues. In addition, where feasible, the counselor staff should include former dancers, because they are uniquely situated to be able to understand the transitioning dancer's challenges and needs and to bring an outside perspective to their advice.

### (6) Specific Suggestions for Dance Companies and Other Organizations

- **Formation of dance companies for older dancers.** The creation for older dancers of more companies such as exist in the Netherlands, the U.K. and the U.S. can provide additional opportunities for older dancers, and allow a more gradual and less traumatic transition, while continuing to make the talents of these dancers available to the public.

- **Two-track training programs.** Dual-track training programs—such as those used in Cuba and Mexico—that require dancers to study both dance and dance teaching simultaneously can be an effective and efficient way to prepare dancers for their activities after transition, while reducing the duration of any inter-career hiatus. However, this can result in a glut of dance teachers who may then have difficulty attracting a sufficient number of students to provide an adequate income. In addition, teaching is reported, at least in some cases, to yield limited career satisfaction to post-transition dancers. In fact, the two-track program in Mexico was recently terminated.

- **In-house dance company career transition programs.** Greater awareness and promotion of transition support needs to come from dance company managers, artistic directors, and those involved in the daily operations of the companies, with an active acknowledgement that transition should be seen as a normal part of a dancer's career. In particular, established companies should seriously consider setting up their own career transition programs, tailored to their own circumstances. One difficulty, according to the four dance career transition centers, is that it may be hard for a dance company to ensure strict confidential-

ity and gain the trust of its dancers in initiating career transition programs.

- **Dancers' unions and service organizations.** Although unions representing dancers and service organizations in the dance industry in several countries have addressed the challenges of career transition in various ways, a greater effort would appear to be warranted. Unions, for example, could effect changes in pension plans and health benefits.

### (7) Government Funding and Policy

- **Government programs.** A number of the preceding proposals invite additional steps by government to facilitate and encourage them. For example, dance schools can be offered modest financial incentives to require their pupils to undertake a second field of education, along with incentives to encourage dance companies to enter into partnerships with local universities, creating programs that make it possible for dancers to pursue university degrees while still dancing.

Furthermore, governments can usefully contribute professional training to those who carry out career transition activities, possibly through grants to transition centers and dance service organizations in the field or by showing them on the basis of experience and analysis ways in which such programs can be designed and carried out more effectively. Part of this activity could include training in effective program-evaluation techniques that will enable those who conduct career transition programs to improve them on the basis of their own experience.

Finally, there is the most obvious role of government: the provision of the necessary funds.

- **Articulated health insurance and pension schemes.** Articulated protection in government health and pension schemes is clearly warranted for dancers (both company-affiliated and independent dancers), particularly given that nearly one-third of our surveyed former dancers cited health and injury as the cause of their dance career termination. Some governments and a number of organizations in several countries have already taken steps in this direction and their experience can be helpful to others in designing their own programs.

The preceding summary of recommendations that emerged from the study makes clear that there exists no

magic bullet that can make the problems of dance career transition vanish or even fundamentally ease the tasks they entail for those who are engaged in facilitating the career transition process. Yet, improvements in current arrangements are distinctly possible. And, above all, the prime candidate for improvement is the elimination of the neglect of dancers' problems, along with the creation of adequate resources for the purpose. The four extant formal transition centers have demonstrated that it is possible to do a much better job of helping dancers make the journey from active professional dance careers to successful second careers in the broader working world. These centers provide an invaluable example to other countries that seek effective measures to facilitate the dancers' transition process.

Society owes a substantial debt to those who contribute to its culture and its arts in general, and to dance and its practitioners in particular. Career transition is an evident opportunity to begin repayment of that debt. ■