The New Orleans Ballet Association

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The New Orleans Ballet Association

A Master’s Examination Report

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
Arts Administration

by
Brooke Alicia Barrios
B.A., Columbia University, 2011

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the central issues and management structure of the New Orleans Ballet Association (NOBA), apply them to industry best practices, and make recommendations for improvement. The initial investigation occurred during a 480-hour internship in the Education Department from January-April 2013, under NOBA's Executive Director and Education Coordinators. The thesis is enhanced through a prior 240-hour practicum in the Development department and position as Site Monitor for the Pre-Professional Program, which provided hands-on experience. The thesis will show a working knowledge of the organization, reflection on its practices, and a look towards the future.
Chapter One
The New Orleans Ballet Association

History

The New Orleans Ballet Association (NOBA) was originally founded in 1969 as the New Orleans Ballet, a civic ballet company. In 1983, the organization formed a unique partnership with Cincinnati Ballet, sharing artists and repertoire but maintaining separate boards and staff. As a result, the New Orleans Ballet achieved a greater level of artistic excellence by employing the 50 professional American Guild of Musical Artists (AGMA) Union dancers and internationally renowned artistic director Ivan Nagy who came to NOBA via Cincinnati. Although practical in theory, the organization accumulated debt and the partnership was terminated in 1991.

At this point, the New Orleans Ballet shifted its focus to presentation of dance and community service and changed its name to the New Orleans Ballet Association (NOBA). By 1993, successes in earned revenue and programming excellence indicated the sustainability of the organization, which was further supported by the retirement of the organization’s debt in 1995.

Mission

NOBA’s mission is “to cultivate understanding, appreciation, and enjoyment of dance through performance, education, and community service.” NOBA brings preeminent international companies and artists to New Orleans stages, ranging from Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, designated “a vital American cultural ambassador to the world” by Congress, to The Joffrey Ballet, “America’s Premier Ballet Company.” NOBA’s
Education Programs provide first-class instruction and exposure to local youth with 2,500 tuition-free dance classes and workshops annually, serving 1,000 children. NOBA hosts a senior citizen program with bi-weekly movement-based fitness classes, as well as weekly adult ballet classes. The organization educates and serves the community with arts integration in schools, public workshops, and pre and post-performance talks.

**General Management Structure**

NOBA operates under a Board of Directors of 46 members, including four lifetime members. Executive Director Jenny Hamilton has held the position for 15 years, having worked as an intern while pursuing her Master's in Arts Administration at the University of New Orleans. There are nine full-time employees, including Ms. Hamilton. Director of Finance/Operations Sandra Fank and Box Office Manager/Administrative Coordinator Wanda Fulton have a combined 46 years of experience with NOBA. The Director of Programming/Marketing, Laura Burkhart, works in conjunction with graphic designer Lauren Faustermann. NOBA’s Development department includes two Directors, one in Individual Giving/Special Events, Caitlin Williams, and one in Institutional Giving, Marieke Gaboury. Presently, there are two Education Coordinators, Millette White and Susan Bensinger, and a vacancy in the Communications role. The Technical Director, Joan Long, works in several different capacities, including costumes, set design, backstage management, and lighting.
Organization Structure

NOBA's structure is twofold:

1. Main Stage, a dynamic season of dance featuring a variety of world-class companies;
2. Education Programs, nationally recognized comprehensive dance programs that educate, train, and nurture.

Main Stage

Since 1989, NOBA has presented 126 companies in 258 concerts on the Main Stage. Companies selected are of local, national, and international significance – artistic quality is primary. Companies and artists include American Ballet Theatre, “America’s National Ballet Company”\(^3\); Martha Graham Dance Company, the legacy of The Mother of Modern Dance Martha Graham; Scottish Ballet, one of the four leading ballet companies of the United Kingdom; and tap prodigy Savion Glover. The 2012-2013 Season saw seven performances by five companies, six companies as artists-in-residence, and 100 world-class artists on the stage. NOBA’s Main Stage program also involves producing new work. NOBA has been recognized by the National Endowment for the Arts, New England Foundation for the Arts, Whitney Houston Foundation, and President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities.

In 2008, NOBA commissioned and premiered the first collaboration between Trey McIntyre Project and local Preservation Hall Jazz Band, “Ma Maison”, a 30-minute work featuring skeleton figures dancing to New Orleans jazz standards. Chris Waddington of The Times-Picayune described the piece as “one of those rare instances where an artist from
outside the community was able to tap the spirit of New Orleans.”4 “Ma Maison” toured more than 30 venues nationally and filled the Hollywood Bowl with 7,000 people in 2010.5 Distinguished reviewer Gia Kourlas of The New York Times wrote, “Mr. McIntyre taps into the music with vigor, and finally the dancers are more than just spirited performers; they are spirits in the flesh.”6 NOBA commissioned the duo's second project, “The Sweeter End”, another work exploring New Orleans culture and its unique relation to dance in 2011, which was also well received on a national tour (See Appendix A).

NOBA continued to chart new territory with its next successful commission connecting New Orleans artists with the national dance community, 2012’s “Charter”, a special tribute to Desmond Richardson of Complexions upon his retirement that year.7 The 12-minute duet, danced by Richardson and Wendy Whelan, New York City Ballet prima ballerina, had its world premiere at the Mahalia Jackson Theater to live accompaniment by its composer, Nicholas Payton, Grammy award-winning New Orleans-born trumpeter. “Charter” marked the first time Whelan and Richardson danced together and the first time Payton played for a live ballet performance8 (See Appendix B). NOBA seeks to continue to diversify public programming through commissions and collaborations with New Orleans artists in the 2013-2014 season with internationally acclaimed New York company Parsons Dance.

**Venues**

NOBA utilizes two venues for its Mainstage season. Mahalia Jackson Theater of the Performing Arts, which boasts a capacity of over 2,240, hosts the larger and more popular performances. The Mahalia Jackson Theater can accommodate large audiences and dance
companies, as well as grander productions with highly technical requirements. Through a partnership with the New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts (a regional, pre-professional arts training center)\(^9\), NOBA holds smaller and more progressive events at NOCCA’s Lupin Hall, a 380-seat proscenium theater. In the future, NOBA hopes to host performances at the Saenger Theatre, which is scheduled to re-open in September 2013 following its renovation due to damage from Hurricane Katrina.

**Education Programs**

* NORDC/NOBA Center for Dance

In 1992, NOBA joined forces with the New Orleans Recreation Department (now the New Orleans Recreation Development Commission or NORDC) to form the Center For Dance (CFD), a cultural community partnership. The CFD was inspired by the lack of accessibility to dance for New Orleans youth. The private-public partnership was formed “to level the playing field, making it possible for any child to experience the art of dance in neighborhood centers”\(^{10}\) (See Appendix C). Classes began at one NORDC Center in September of 1992 with an enrollment of 30 students. Today, the Center For Dance has served 11,000 children with more than 35,000 free dance classes (See Appendix D).

NOBA programs have been honored by the 2001 Selection as one of twenty pilot sites for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Creative Communities Program. In 2002, NOBA received the prestigious *Coming Up Taller* Award, which recognizes exemplary arts and humanities programs which foster young people’s intellectual and creative development, from the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. In 2004, NOBA was selected as one
of eight pilot programs, out of more than 800 applicants, for the highly competitive National Endowment for Arts Summer Schools in the Arts award. NOBA has also received a multitude of awards from around the community and state, including the Greater New Orleans Foundation’s coveted Managing For Excellence - Sustained Excellence Award for Outstanding Non-Profit Management.

*Open Track Youth Programs*

Hundreds of youth ages 6-18 study ballet, tap, modern, and hip hop in NORDC centers throughout the city of New Orleans. Classes are regularly filled to capacity on a first-come, first-served basis. Students perform in Winter Holiday Open Houses at each center, the CFD’s annual production of *The Nutcracker*, and the NORDC/NOBA Center For Dance Spring Concert. *The Nutcracker* and Spring Concert, held at Tulane University’s Dixon Hall, are fully produced with costumes, professional stage management, and lights. Costumes are free of charge and tickets are accessibly priced at $5 each.

*Pre-Professional Program*

The Pre-Professional Program (PPP) is open by audition to youth ages 9-18. The PPP provides intensive training and gives access to world-renowned artists through the Chevron Master Artist Series and Summer Intensive (see below). As a PPP participant, students may receive scholarships to study at prestigious summer programs across the country. Students have performed on regional and national stages like the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. and international dance hub Jacob’s Pillow in Becket, Massachusetts.
Fall 2012 brought an opportunity of a lifetime for some PPP students. Complexions Contemporary Ballet selected seven current students and two alumni to learn the Complexions repertory and perform on the stage of one of the leading dance venues in the world, the Joyce Theater in New York City, as part of the Company’s 2012 Gala. Martha Graham Dance Company’s “Panorama” Project brought yet another extraordinary opportunity to select PPP students, as well as students from local Lusher Charter School, NOCCA, and Tulane University. Thirty-three students danced Martha Graham’s 1935 social protest piece “Panorama” during the Company’s program at the Mahalia Jackson Theater after months of lengthy rehearsals.

*Summer Intensive and Chevron Master Artist Series*

The Summer Intensive, held in July, provides four weeks of vigorous hands-on training from celebrated artists. Students are split into two groups: advanced students trained 6 ½ hours per day and intermediate students trained 3 ½ hours during evening hours. During the 2012 Summer Intensive in Tulane University’s McWilliams Hall, students worked with guest artists from Ballet Hispanico, Paul Taylor Dance Company, and Houston Ballet. Over seventy students benefitted from workshops in choreography, African, hip hop, Brazilian, yoga, and Pilates, in addition to daily ballet and modern technique classes. Local experts led seminars in dance history, nutrition, injury prevention, and musicianship. Students performed excerpts of pivotal choreography by Paul Taylor and were handpicked by Ballet Hispanico Artistic Director Eduardo Vilaro to perform his work, a rare opportunity for young students and professionals alike. Vilaro sang the program’s praise, saying, “These students are getting exposed to the kind of artists that don’t necessarily
walk into just any studio. To be able to work with such renowned artists, especially tuition-free, is very special. This is an incredibly unique program that is highly specialized”11 (See Appendix E).

Advanced Summer Intensive students were invited to participate in a special extension project entitled *Code 3* in June as part of the 2012 Chevron Master Artist Series at McWilliams Hall, made possible by generous support from Chevron. A trio of directors – Complexions Co-Artistic Director Dwight Rhoden, Co-Artistic Director Desmond Richardson, and Associate Artistic Director Jae Man Joo – joined by dancer Clifford Williams, led the workshop, which consisted of ballet technique classes, choreography workshops, including original choreography, and a culminating performance. The June residency was the first time the project had left New York City. Participant Alex Danna compared working with Dwight and Desmond to “learning how to shoot basketball from Michael Jordan.”12

Summer 2013 brought unprecedented programming and exceptional talent. The 2013 Chevron Master Artist Series, held during the month of June, expanded to four one-week residencies at the state-of-the-art Chevron Studio at the Lyons NORDC Center. Artists-in-Residence include Troy Powell of Alvin Ailey, San Francisco Ballet, Ballet Hispanico, and Alonzo King LINES Ballet. Advanced dancers (day track students) took ballet and modern technique classes and learned company repertory for 5 ½ hours, while intermediate dancers (evening track students) took technique classes and participated in choreography workshops for 2 ½ hours. Every Thursday, the evening track held an open studio for families to observe the class and view original choreography. On Fridays, day
track students held a mini-performance of company repertory learned throughout the week.

The 2013 Summer Intensive, lasting 3 ½ weeks in July, brought New York City’s Complexions Contemporary Ballet and Parsons Dance. Summer 2012’s Code 3 leaders returned to teach ballet technique and set Co-Artistic Director Dwight Rhoden’s repertory and Associate Artistic Director Jae Man Joo’s original choreography on day track students. Two Parsons dancers, including New Orleans native Abby Silva Gavezzoli, conducted modern technique classes and set celebrated modern dance choreographer David Parson’s work on day track students. Evening track students worked with the guest artists and local artists in modern and ballet. Both tracks benefitted from workshops in nutrition, injury prevention, yoga, Pilates, and other styles of dance, such as Brazilian and African.

In the Community

Accessibility and diversity are paramount to NOBA. During the 2012-2013 season, guest artists provided workshops to over 3,300 schoolchildren and 150 master classes. In 2007, NOBA established a partnership with St. Jerome Catholic Church, located in Kenner, LA, as a response to the growing Hispanic population in the metropolitan area. In Fall 2012, NOBA and Ballet Hispanico teamed up to reach out to the Hispanic community with bilingual classes and workshops throughout the greater New Orleans area in schools with predominantly Hispanic student bodies and free family performances at Delgado Community College in New Orleans and Alfred Bonnabel Magnet Academy High School in Kenner (See Appendix F).
In one of its first expansions of education programs beyond Orleans Parish, NOBA has partnered with Chalmette Refining and the St. Bernard Parish School Board to bring NOBA’s award winning youth programming to St. Bernard Parish, an area greatly affected by Hurricane Katrina located southeast of New Orleans. NOBA’s commitment to artistic and creative enrichment is the key tenet to a partnership with the Broadmoor Charter School Board and the Broadmoor Improvement Association, which provides classes at Andrew H. Wilson Charter School in New Orleans. These partnerships enable NOBA to expand programs and help keep them tuition free.

Increasing rates of obesity and physical health issues among children incited NOBA’s Moving 4 Health in-school program in 2010. Moving 4 Health integrates movement into the science, health, language arts, and physical education curricula of schools and educates children in nutrition and promotes daily physical activity (See Appendix G). NOBA’s In Motion programs bring dance into the school environment through original teaching and learning methods and presentation of world-renowned companies and local artists. In 2010, NOBA presented Komenka Ethnic Dance and Music Ensemble as part of its In Motion program to more than 250 students at Lake Forest Elementary Charter School in New Orleans East. The Ensemble performed selections from a work entitled “Dances of the World” from China, Turkey, Mexico, Spain, Hungary), and the U.S. and taught a dance from Brazil and song from Bulgaria. The dance program used an “innovative teaching method that incorporates geography and language arts through movement while encouraging family communication, improving research skills, appreciating other cultures, and creating dances to reflect this information”13 (See Appendix H). NOBA was selected in 2005 as a Kennedy Center Partners in Education site with the Orleans Parish Public Schools.
Senior Citizen and Adult Classes and Workshops

NOBA offers classes free of charge for senior citizens in stretching, cardio, and movement-based learning at two NORDC centers (See Appendix I). Seniors are further involved with the community through the Senior Olympics and performance opportunities, such as the CFD’s *The Nutcracker* and Spring Concert. The seniors opened the 2012 Senior Theatre USA Festival conference in New Orleans. NOBA offers weekly beginner ballet classes for adults, which are also free. Summer 2013 brought a special workshop series for seniors and adults at the new Chevron Studio at the Lyons NORDC Center, enhancing regular instruction with guest artists and different styles of dance.

Chevron Studio at the Lyons NORDC Center

Over its twenty years of existence, the CFD has never had its own space. June 2013 marked the opening of the Chevron Studio at the Lyons NORDC Center, a space created for the sole use of the NORDC/NOBA Center For Dance, made possible by Chevron. The beautiful 3,000 square foot studio, with sprung floors (ideal for dance) and walled mirrors, also serves as a performance space with 100 seats on risers. As of this writing, the Chevron Studio has been used for the June Chevron Master Artist Series, Summer Senior and Adult Workshops, and some upper level Open Track classes. The Studio opens up many class and performance possibilities for the CFD and is a long-awaited triumph for NOBA.
Funding

NOBA has an operating budget of 1.6 million dollars. It is supported through private and public funding. Ticket sales total less than a third of its operating budget, which mostly consists of corporate, foundation, individual, and government support. According to NOBA’s Form 990 from the 2011 fiscal year, contributions total $1,051,412; government grants total $142,915; program services total $573,834; and investments total $38,575. NOBA’s total expenses in the 2011 fiscal year were $1,735,961, contributing a net gain of $70,775.

Ballet Resource and Volunteer Organization

The Ballet Resource and Volunteer Organization (BRAVO) provides financial resources that support NOBA’s education programs. The biggest fundraising event is the annual gala, showcasing guest artists and students and featuring a silent auction and star-studded guest list. The funds raised go towards the Summer Intensive and summer-study scholarships for Pre-Professional students (See Appendix J). 2013 is the sixth year that BRAVO has been the recipient of the Men of Fashion and Women of Fashion Prix d’Elegance Awards Luncheon proceeds, contributing towards NOBA’s education programs and scholarship funds. The Men of Fashion and Women of Fashion is an organization that celebrates the style of local personalities, emphasizing “civic pride, community action, and fashion.”14 As a direct result, alumna Alayna Acosta was afforded the opportunity to study with The Joffrey Ballet of Chicago and Complexions Contemporary Ballet.
Chapter Two
The Internship

I began my work with NOBA in March of 2012, volunteering through May, when I began a practicum with the Development department. I continued with NOBA upon the completion of the practicum in September 2012. After nearly eight months with the Development department, I was assigned to the Education department, alongside Education Coordinators Millette White and Susan Bensinger, for my internship, where I presently contribute. I will include the execution and resolution of several projects that were started over the duration of my internship in this report.

Work in Education
Specific Tasks and Duties

I became the first point of contact for general information on NOBA’s Education programs, fielding phone calls and emails. As a member of the Education Department, I spoke on behalf of NOBA’s summer programs at a NORDC expo and acted as a liaison at summer on-site registrations, working with parents to register students. Most documents distributed by the department were created by me, including spring and summer registration, summer information, and Spring Concert documents. The most intensive task assigned to me was the management of the student database, which dates back four years and houses information on over 2,400 NOBA students. I employed html skills in managing the Education portion of the website, updating summer registration, summer program, senior program, and adult class information. I trained other interns and program alumni workers in student database management and filing method.
I handled the Nutcracker and Spring Concert DVD sales, preparing and receiving order forms, processing credit card payments, and ensuring distribution. Distribution involved dividing and compiling DVDs by site so that they may be given to an instructor that teaches at an appropriate site. In a few cases, a surplus or deficit of money was received, possibly caused in transport or by a lack of certification upon receipt. Some families reported to have never received the DVDs, which may have been caused by improper processing or misplacement during transport. The same problems arose with ticket sales and distribution.

_Spring Concert_

The Spring Concert was a big initiative for the department, requiring a great deal of time and effort. While faculty and students rehearsed numbers, the department coordinated with the Technical Director and venue management, ordered refreshments, and managed volunteers. My responsibilities included participant database management, music management, parent participation permission and media release organization, and flyer and form construction. During the performance, I supervised participants, prepared students for the stage, gave technical support, and worked with parents in the check-in and check-out of participants.

Checking the students in and out proved difficult as parents and guardians had not been informed of the formal system used, with some parents expecting to drop students off without exiting their vehicles. Students were checked in at the door of the room the students occupied during the performance with their parents releasing them while a NOBA staff member checked the students’ names off of a list. The check-out system paralleled this
system, which required an adult to receive the children. Many parents were not aware of this system and were upset by it, preferring a looser one, allowing students to leave en masse and find their families. It was also not communicated clearly that parents and guardians must wait until the end of the show to retrieve students. This information was inserted in a handout in the same type as the other notifications and not expressed orally. Many parents do not read handouts, and some do not receive them. Handouts are usually not received when a parent does not come into the building to retrieve a student or does not get a copy from the instructor, whether that be due to lack of effort on the parent’s part or mistake on the instructor’s. Also, if students are not present when handouts are given out, they may never receive it.

June Twilight Dance Camp Registration

NOBA continued its after-school programs with the June Twilight Dance Camp, which consisted of dance classes held in the evenings, at the same time as the after-school program classes. I handled the entirety of the Twilight Camp registration, which began in early April. This duty was given to me without guidance or a formal system. I was not informed of any previous methods employed. We received over 500 enrollment packets, all of which I processed. Registrations were held at the NORDC and other sites where classes were held. Approximately 300 enrollment packets were received at the sites. After on-site registrations, the remainder of enrollment packets were accepted via email, fax, or in person at the NOBA office. Choosing a processing system without knowledge of previous experience proved difficult. Receiving and processing enrollment packets felt chaotic and stressful. It was difficult to track which packets we had received and whether or not we had
received all the necessary forms with the proper signatures, especially being the only person performing the duty.

Once camps started, it was difficult to ensure that enrollment packets had been received for each child attending camp. This is especially important as contact information and medical and media releases must be signed for a child to participate for safety and legal reasons. Many families arrived at the Camp not having submitted any paperwork, especially returning students who had already turned in packets in the spring. It was not clearly communicated that new summer packets also had to be submitted by parents and guardians. Many parents wished to give the packets to teachers, unaware that teachers do not operate out of a central base where paperwork may received, but instead travel to different sites across the Greater New Orleans area, often without visiting the NOBA office for weeks, even months.

During the school year, enrollment packets are particularly important for listing students in show programs, giving the spelling and punctuation of a child’s name as written by the parent. Pulling filed packets out individually is overly time-intensive, especially when on a strict deadline. To alleviate this, we asked instructors to get the spelling of the student’s name with the student, but the spellings were sometimes submitted with incorrect spellings or omission of names. The omissions are often due to the child's absence and are ultimately not recorded. Instructors are inconsistent and dismissive of deadlines in submitting and returning information, including the names for the programs.
Design Projects

Some of my projects in Education involved graphic design, employing programs such as Adobe InDesign. Ms. Hamilton conceived an idea to create photo collages for each participant in the “Panorama” Project and asked me to select images from the 5,000 images taken at auditions, studio rehearsals, and dress rehearsals to design the collages (See Appendix K). A quickly approaching deadline made the project challenging and exciting. All 33 participants were given their individual collages before the performance and were delighted by the keepsakes. I also designed guest artist biography flyers for the 2013 summer programs, which involved editing biographies, designing the layout, and making stylistic choices (See Appendix L). The flyers were distributed to participating students and their families.

Other Departments

My work extended beyond Education, involving me in other departments. I assisted the Executive Director by drafting summer guest artists’ contracts and booking their travel. I also worked with the Director of Institutional Giving when crediting funders on flyers, forms, and documents. The student collages from the “Panorama” Project required consultation with the Director of Programming/Marketing and graphic designer. I volunteered for performances and events, such as the annual Men and Women of Fashion luncheon and BRAVO gala. Performance assistance included providing information about NOBA’s education programs, selling raffle tickets, ushering, checking in guests, and helping with auctions.
Regarding events, I sometimes would not be aware of my role or any information concerning it until the event, even if a prior production meeting was held. For example, I was asked to operate a projector showing a video that concluded with a dedication to deceased founders of the program. I was shown the video one time only hours before the show, as well as how to turn the projector on and off. During the first performance, I turned off the projector before the dedication as I was not familiar with the video. During the second performance, the projector lens had shifted and I was unable to re-focus it. In another instance, I was not informed of the specific age requirement for a program before an audition and misinformed auditioning students, alarming them unnecessarily and showing a lack of knowledge as a NOBA representative. With better communication, these issues could have been avoided.
Chapter Three  
Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

Strengths

Purpose and Caliber of Programming

Saying dance is underrepresented in New Orleans is an understatement. It is safe to say that without NOBA, the city would have little to no dance presentation and would definitively not be recognized on a national scale. Essentially, there are no other dance presenters, aside from the partnership between NOBA and NOCCA. NOBA fills the gaping hole in dance presentation. It is not sufficient to say that the organization serves a purpose; NOBA brings performances of the highest caliber, bringing companies touring venues such as the prestigious Joyce Theater in New York City. The Director of Programming/Marketing attends performances across the country, as well as conferences, keeping in touch with current trends and talent. NOBA goes beyond the classic companies, recognizing up-and-coming artists and even serving as a jumping-off point for their careers. NOBA also operates as a producer, commissioning new works with world-class dancers and choreographers, as well as musicians. NOBA leads the Central Gulf region in presentation, serving as a model for other dance organizations.

Education Programs

The most unique and valuable aspect of NOBA’s Education programming is that all programs are tuition-free, both the programs without auditions and the more exclusive talent-based programs. Students are responsible for their costumes and shoes, but there is
a generous amount of free supplies. There are supplies fees for pre-professional summer programs, for which there are scholarships available.

NOBA also provides support for study away in the form of program research, application assistance, and scholarships. Students have attended programs with Houston Ballet, LINES Ballet, and Complexions Contemporary Ballet and at the Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis School of American Ballet Theater in New York City. The LINES and Complexions relationships began with the companies on the Mainstage Season bill, a benefit of the binary mission of the organization. Former student of the NORDC/NOBA Center For Dance and prestigious North Carolina School of the Arts freshman Alayna Acosta commented, “The NOBA scholarship program changed my life. Not only did they give me the opportunity to study dance all over the U.S., but they also provided counsel on the best summer program for me, took headshots, and made a DVD which saved my family time, stress and money.” She added, “The Complexions Intensive in Detroit pushed me to become more aware of myself as a dancer. I realized that dance is more of a mental game than I thought”\textsuperscript{15} (See Appendix M).

\textit{Role in the Community}

In its many years of presentation, NOBA has come to understand the components of attracting audiences and providing an enjoyable experience. Audiences are attracted by NOBA’s excellent programming to an exciting experience of dance presentation at one of the largest and most elegant arts venues in the city. It contributes to the social aspect of the city with parties and events, in addition to performances.
NOBA is part of the cultural fabric of New Orleans in its NORDC partnership. NORDC Centers, which serve as community centers for recreation and communal gathering, are entrenched in the various neighborhoods of the city of New Orleans. CFD students and families become a part of the organization and feel a sense of belonging. They shape its identity. Without them, there would be no CFD. Education programs get dance directly into local schools and promote healthy lifestyles with performances and integrated learning methods.

**Partnerships and Sponsorships**

NOBA utilizes partnerships to most effectively reach goals and achieve milestones. The NORDC/NOBA Center For Dance is nationally recognized as a model for "Best Practices" for programming, curriculum, and innovative partnerships and was presented by the National Endowment for the Arts as the model program for Summer School in the Arts on the US Senate floor in 2005. Due to the success of its education-based partnerships, NOBA was invited by the City of New Orleans to join First Lady Michelle Obama's *Let's Move!* campaign to discuss strategies for improving the overall health and wellbeing of New Orleans youth. Partnering with NORDC and having the support of the City of New Orleans places NOBA in community centers that are utilized by those who may not otherwise have access to dance training (See Appendix N). NOBA continues its communal partnering with local educational institutions such as NOCCA and Tulane University, opening master classes and auditions. Cultivating and forging these connections is key to the success of the program.
With the support of Chevron, NOBA has reached new heights. NOBA now has its first space dedicated solely to the organization after twenty years of offering free dance classes. The Chevron Master Artist Series brings “master artists” to work with students as young as nine years old and to prepare high school students for their future careers, whatever they may be. One of the relationships that has been formed as a result is that with Complexions Contemporary Ballet, a recipient of the New York Times “Critics Choice” Award. In addition to training, students get exposure and gain access to these talented professionals who have the ability to shape their futures, an opportunity few older, more experienced dancers have. Mr. Warner Williams, Vice President of Chevron North America Exploration and Production Company’s Gulf of Mexico business unit, enthusiastically supports the program, along with his wife Pamela Williams, who serves as NOBA’s Board Secretary.
Weaknesses

Management – Understaffing, Lack of Communication and Structure

NOBA, like many non-profits, is greatly understaffed. Their exceptional programs are rapidly growing but the staff is not increasing along with it. Staff members are spread thin, wearing many different hats. In addition to their own duties, several, including myself, are taking on the responsibilities of the vacant Communications position. This can be problematic when it is improperly coordinated, as some tasks may get lost without a direct line of production.

Communication is key among a small staff, and it seems that NOBA has yet to figure out how to achieve clear lines of communication. There is no management structure in place outside of the Executive Director as the principal authority. As a small staff, this is not uncommon, but it often halts projects or creates confusion without a source of information or guidance. Within its existing structure, NOBA does not have a staff calendar; information and updates are usually transmitted via group email or text. Although administration holds staff meetings before events, it is often the case that not all of the necessary information is communicated, leaving staff unsure of responsibilities in the moment. In the projector and audition instances, prior practice and a clear explanation of information would have made the execution of my duties more successful.

Communication with the student community is ineffective and not streamlined. Email is the main line of communication but many families do not have an email account or read the emails. The multitude of class sites makes communication difficult, as information has to be distributed through instructors, a link further from the source. Forms are distributed by teachers during class but often do not get in the hands of parents or do not
get returned to the teacher who then has to return them to the office. Instructors are vital as liaisons between the student community and NOBA. Some teachers have a casual attitude regarding their roles, failing to communicate and to submit important information and missing or ignoring deadlines.

Central Base

The central base is the NOBA office, which is located in the Central Business District in Downtown New Orleans. This is an inconvenient location as it is in a busy, tight area and parking requires payment. The office is in the New Orleans Exchange Center, a 21-story office tower that is not conducive to hosting guests. The building does not have a large open space or a performance space for housing things like registrations or performances. Holding classes at several different NORDC and partner sites across the Greater New Orleans area further complicates things by making it more difficult to collect information and easier for information to be lost. The sites also do not have adequate, convenient spaces that can be utilized for registrations with NOBA staff often being confined to a small area unsuitable for setting up tables and signs and for parents and guardians to complete paperwork. Posting flyers at NORDC and partner sites is challenging as there is no space dedicated for use by NOBA and flyers must be haphazardly placed in obscure places.

Brand

A brand aids in the sale of a product. NOBA is selling an experience. Thus, for it to be successful, the brand needs to be engaging, attractive, and substantive. NOBA’s brand is not strongly communicated or formed. Upon hearing NOBA, many locals conjure up an image of
stuffy, classical ballet performances, despite the fresh programming the organization has put on in recent years. It is not the ample publicity that NOBA receives that has contributed to this misconception. The issue is NOBA’s stale brand, which needs an overhaul. NOBA is bringing exciting performances to the Main Stage and achieving unsurpassed milestones in educational programming, warranting a buzz among the community. NOBA can inspire this buzz with an evaluation of its internal vision of its brand and outward communication.

Looking towards aesthetics, NOBA has no recognizable visual. Its white logo is bland and sterile. The logo should reflect the vibrant nature of the organization. NOBA’s visual focus each season is its seasonal poster image, a strong visual of one of the more famous or sexy performances placed on the website and cover of the program (See Appendix O). NOBA lists a theme for each season, but there is no description of the theme’s origin or meaning in the season program, or anywhere. Defining NOBA’s brand through these simple designs and themes would not only communicate the organization’s identity but also generate interest and excitement among the community.

Web Presence

NOBA keeps its Mainstage seasons relevant with new artists and new programs from previously presented artists. Its Education programming is growing rapidly with new developments every day. Its Web presence should reflect these things. It should be strong, current, and exciting, just like the organization. NOBA’s website is simple and antiquated. Its Facebook account is outdated with images from the 2012-2013 season for the profile and cover photos, noting that the 2013-2014 season has been released. Its Twitter account is under-utilized with tweets occurring an average of two and a half weeks and the length
of a month passing without a tweet at times (See Appendix P). Although NOBA does have YouTube and vimeo accounts, the content of the video outlets is outdated. NOBA should not only maintain these Web essentials but it should also make a wider reach through other avenues. NOBA needs to prioritize its Web presence in the digital age.

**Evaluation**

It is important to evaluate an arts organization’s efficacy in carrying out its mission, particularly in the case of a nonprofit organization, which retains its tax-exempt status by aligning its practice with its mission. NOBA lacks internal evaluation with day-to-day tasks overshadowing overall operations. This is due in part to understaffing both in the Communications role and the organization as a whole as staff members constantly strive to complete exercises and meet deadlines while undertaking the duties of other positions. There is a need to step back and look at the bigger picture, which can best be achieved by a formal evaluation process.
## Opportunities

### Management Changes – Staffing, Communication, and Structure

NOBA’s growing programs necessitate more staff members. Expanding NOBA’s staff, by filling the Communications vacancy and adding Education support, would increase productivity and relieve other staff members, allowing the programs to succeed and further grow, as well as increase capability of external communication. Increased productivity and staff relief also allows for better communication among members. Miscommunication and lack of communication within the NOBA office call for new methods, including an enhanced management structure with more links in the chain of command. NOBA has the opportunity to build organizational stability through a more layered management structure, giving employees the ability to consult more than one authority. To its advantage, NOBA is housed in a centralized office, which makes meetings convenient, and has access to several software programs that enable communication. Improved communication within the office will positively affect that with faculty.

### External Evaluation

NOBA would benefit from external evaluation, giving the organization the opportunity to look at its operations through a different lens. Potential perspectives include the community, particularly audience members, and also the dance community specifically. Although it employs local dance artists and musicians, NOBA does not have a substantial part in the local dance community. Reaching out to the dance community presents an opportunity for NOBA to get an outside perspective from related sources, as
well as build positive relationships with local dance groups and artists by providing services and forming partnerships, furthering its mission.

**Marketing – Brand and Web Presence**

In its 22 years, NOBA has built a reputation around fine dance and education, but its brand has dulled. Re-branding gives new life and identity to an organization. NOBA needs to reinforce its identity through the confirmation of a strong brand. NOBA is fun and hip, but these characteristics are not translated aesthetically and cannot be conveyed without a powerful Web presence, especially in social media. NOBA can reach younger audiences, who are no longer reading print or receiving physical mail, through the Internet.

**Merchandise**

NOBA has the opportunity to look to other revenue streams, such as merchandise. Merchandise is relatively inexpensive to produce and may produce significant returns as drastic markups are common. In addition to revenue, merchandise provides exposure outside of the ticket-buyer community and instills a sense of pride in the consumer. Venues such as the Mahalia Jackson Theater take a percentage of merchandise sales, but, being supported by only 33%, additional profit is advantageous to the organization.
Threats

Venue

NOBA presents the majority of its season at the Mahalia Jackson Theater for the Performing Arts, also home to the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra, New Orleans Opera, and the Broadway Across America series in New Orleans, located in the Tremé neighborhood of the city. Scheduling at the Theater is difficult due to its multitude of presentations. Broadway Across America has an advantage that gives them priority in renting the space. Thus, despite NOBA having scheduled a show, Broadway may rent the theater for that date. This poses a serious problem for NOBA as seasons are scheduled years in advance. Financially, shows become more expensive as rates get higher when scheduling so close to the date of a show. If NOBA is able to coordinate a date with a company, the rate is significantly higher, especially if the artists are not on tour at that time and charges a higher fee to accommodate their travel.

NOBA may benefit from its own performance space, whether it is something as large as the Mahalia Jackson Theater or NOCCA’s smaller Lupin Hall. A smaller venue may be more appropriate as it would not require the extensive management that the Mahalia Jackson does and would be suitable for NOBA’s smaller-scale performances, which would also be attractive to other New Orleans arts organizations for rental use.

Local Culture and Lack of Audience Dance Education

NOBA has the advantage of being located in one of the cultural hubs of the United States. As a cultural hub, New Orleans is home to a plethora of arts organizations in a city of
fewer than 400,000 residents. Although a constant flow of tourists contributes to the city’s volume, visitors are usually attracted to more open arts settings like jazz on Frenchmen Street. They are often unaware of, and even not interested in, the city’s performing arts organization’s seasons.

New Orleans is not a city known for dance. Its reputation for music, particularly jazz, draws tourists to the French Quarter for sidewalk entertainment or to jazz clubs. This takes both the time and money of tourists, leaving less for dance. Additionally, audiences have many other arts-event options in the city. “High art” competitors include the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra and New Orleans Opera, which share the Mahalia Jackson Theater as a venue, and the New Orleans Museum of Art.
Chapter Four
Best Practices

Michael Kaiser, President of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, writes in *The Art of the Turnaround: Creating and Maintaining Healthy Arts Organizations*, “My goal for any organization is to create a system that works. This system starts with strong programming, supports it with aggressive marketing, and produces revenue that is invested in better programming that creates more revenue, and on and on.”16 He expounds on these three elements in the following:

I. Strong Programming

“Focus on projects that seem exciting and worthy of press attention and funding... Well-designed joint ventures allow both organizations to benefit from the strengths of the other entity.”17

II. Aggressive Marketing

“Too few organizations spend any time or effort performing institutional marketing, the marketing of the entire institutional image that gets people excited about supporting the company.”18

III. Producing Revenue that Is Invested in Better Programming

“Revenue is the problem with most arts organizations, not cost. Organizations focused simply on reducing costs will continue to get smaller and smaller and will never create the economic engine that is required for long-term stability and growth.”19

NOBA achieves strong programming with each season. It brings some of the best and most up-and-coming artists to the city. Even with the threat of losing its venue and its programming and financial repercussions, NOBA manages to bring at least one trendy or new act that promotes excitement within the community every season. With its Education
programs, NOBA brings the finest national artists from New York to San Francisco. Each year, it brings artists representing new genres, choreographers, or companies. NOBA forms positive relationships with the artists, generating a reputation that brings more exceptional artists. Their success keeps ticket sales up and secures them more contributed income. With Chevron’s support, NOBA continues to engage top artists and sustain its current relationships, which bud into partnerships.

NOBA needs to improve its marketing, which suffers from a vacancy in the Communications position. Despite this, NOBA should have a system in place to remedy the situation and market aggressively. Keeping in mind that marketing funds are limited, it needs to reach a larger audience, outside of its current one, through its web presence and through physical marketing tools throughout the community. Institutional marketing is particularly lacking, as NOBA needs improvement on its brand. NOBA needs to solidify its identity through its brand before it can market as an institution.

Through continued strong programming and more aggressive marketing, NOBA will increase revenue production to sustain and grow its programming. Although short-staffed, NOBA does not solely look to reducing costs to maintain the organization. Two staff members have been added within the past year, including one in Development. It uses support from partnerships and organizations like Chevron to create Kaiser’s system, investing in better programming to create more revenue. The achievements of the Education program promote the organization overall, giving it publicity with a vast reach and creating revenue used to continue the cycle.
Similar Organizations

NOBA is a truly unique organization in its dedication to presenting dance, coupled with year-round education programming, offered free of charge. Dwight Rhoden of Complexions has been quoted as saying, “In these days and in this economy, dance instruction is very expensive. These students are getting high-level master artists coming into the city to work specifically with them for free. I don’t know of another program like this in the country.” The following two “similar organizations” are dance presenters with education components.

DANCECleveland

DANCECleveland, as one of only a handful of stand-alone, dance-only presenters in the United States, curates a dance series that brings world-renowned dance companies to northeast Ohio for performances, master classes, educational residencies, and lectures. Its mission is to “to bring the passion and verve of modern and contemporary dance into the hearts and minds of the people of Northeast Ohio.”

DANCECleveland’s 2013-2014 Season includes Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet, presented by NOBA in 2009; Jessica Lang Dance, presented by NOBA in 2012. There is a special performance by The Joffrey Ballet, which is being presented by NOBA in 2014, with the Cleveland Orchestra. Live music is a hallmark of making more exciting programming.

DANCECleveland has a strong web presence with a visually pleasing website home page including a Season image gallery and with active social media accounts; although, it is difficult to find information on the organization via Google (See Appendix Q). The logo is a
pleasant green color in a clean design. There is much to be desired to achieve “aggressive marketing”.

_TITAS_

TITAS was founded in 1982, as the “Texas International Theatrical Arts Society,” to provide North Texas communities with the opportunity to experience the best of American and international music, dance, and performance art through a variety of presentations and educational outreach activities. Since 1994, CROSSROADS has brought artists and communities closer by providing unique direct access and educational opportunities to the communities through TITAS’ Contemporary Master Series, post-performance Q&A sessions, dedicated student performances at the theater with world-renowned artists, and interactive arts residencies by local artists/educators in conjunction with schools.

TITAS’s Season opens with a performance by Jessica Lang Dance, accompanied by visual artist, and Lang collaborator, Shinichi Maruyama. The season continues with Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo, presented by NOBA in 2010; Pilobolus presented by NOBA in 2012; Alonzo King LINES Ballet, presented by NOBA in 2011; and Mark Morris Dance Group, presented by NOBA in 2011. Shen Wei Arts – scheduled on NOBA’s season in 2012 but unable to perform – rounds out the season with another exhibition collaboration.22 These performing and visual arts collaborations make for strong programming that interests audiences and funders.

TITAS has a faulty website with inoperative and incorrect hyperlinks, irregular formatting, and outdated publicity and press releases. Social media is weak with the last tweets being from 2009 and Facebook not having yet been updated with the 2013-2014
Season information. The logo font is bold, but the text is white, outlined in black, on a white background, which appears weak visually. TITAS’s online presence negates “aggressive marketing”.

The three organizations are in tune with the current dance circuit, presenting exciting and relevant work. Live music and collaborations with other art forms make for “press worthy” programming. NOBA also has this live music element, but it is lacking in arts collaborations, which would be a positive route for the organization to take. NOBA could follow DANCECleveland’s example and improve its social media presence, but all three organizations’ marketing efforts need work. NOBA stands out in its education element with expansive programs with deep roots in the community. Its dedication to dance makes it stand out among other programs, but it is its commitment to education that truly sets it apart as an institution.
Chapter 5
Recommendations

Management

Communication is an issue at NOBA with employees being ill informed of other departments and day-to-day operations. Management does not embrace effective communication with a structure largely built around the Executive Director. Largely all channels go through Ms. Hamilton, which make issues difficult to resolve as she is consistently occupied, and therefore unavailable, as well as physically out of the office. An identifiable structure with smaller matters being presented to another staff member would improve communication. Bi-weekly meetings would benefit staff members so that they could inform one another of current projects and times they will be out of the office. The meeting should be held at the same time on the same day every other week to ensure consistency. NOBA staff should utilize an online calendar with access restricted to staff to record events and dates. A monthly newsletter, to which each department would contribute, would inform staff members of news and updates. NOBA needs to fill the Communications position and would also benefit from more support in the expanding Education department. The person in the Communications role could help foster communication throughout the office, being well informed of all activities and being in a “communications” role.

Branding

Re-evaluating and establishing a brand that conveys its mission and is true to its core, while simultaneously being current and accessible, would invigorate NOBA. It is
important to stay familiar to active patrons and also appeal to new audiences. Kaiser
discusses two types of marketing – the previously quoted institutional marketing, which
embodies an organization’s brand, and programmatic marketing, which includes mailings,
posters, and emails that center around an event and sell tickets by reaching the potential
buyer. It is clear that NOBA is successful in carrying out programmatic marketing. NOBA
needs to employ institutional marketing through the brand it has built to establish
consistency and solidify its image. This can be rectified through a marketing campaign
highlighting the organization as a whole with a tag line that represents the superior and
far-reaching work NOBA is doing.

In an International Journal of Arts Management article by Stephen B. Preece and
Jennifer Wiggins Johnson, it is stated that the problem of difficult branding in the
performing arts is combated by “establishing ‘persistent presence’.“ Persistent presence
refers to the consistent presence of the organization even during “down times” when there
are no performances or events. Persistent presence is especially important to NOBA as
there are gaps between performances and events, especially for those that are not donors,
including subscribers and single ticket buyers. It is important that NOBA utilize a clean but
engaging logo, which it can place on all its materials to identify itself and establish
consistency. Thus, during “down times”, NOBA can use the logo on stickers, advertisements,
or even billboards to keep the organization relevant. NOBA can also use it on the previously
mentioned revenue stream opportunity merchandise.
Web Presence

On a rudimentary level, NOBA needs to have its website and social media accounts in top shape. Designating each account to a specific person or all accounts to one person should achieve greater consistency. References to successful social media maintenance by similar organizations such as DANCECleveland are useful. Truly successful organizations go beyond this element and utilize the Web to achieve persistent presence. NOBA can do this by placing ads on Facebook and banners on nola.com, the website of the local newspaper The Times Picayune. A strong web presence translates to a wide reach of an organization’s brand, which is marketing institutionally, and therefore continuing the system.

Local Dance Community

As mentioned, NOBA does not have a substantial part in the local dance community. The recently formed Dance Alliance of New Orleans (DANO), a nonprofit service organization for the dance community of Greater New Orleans whose mission is “to empower the dance community and to increase the visibility of dance in all forms”, seems a natural point of departure for NOBA to reach the community. A relationship with DANO could lead to extensive outreach, providing services like access to guest artists. Opening master classes and holding community professional development seminars and workshops would engage both groups in dialogue and foster a positive relationship. NOBA could offer free or discounted tickets to local artists. Another opportunity to enhance the New Orleans dance community is to host artists-in-residence and commission original works. Providing a space for choreographic development would encourage creativity and create good will.
Evaluation

There are several ways NOBA may evaluate its operation: survey questionnaires, individual and group interviews, and direct observation. While volunteering for the Fall for Dance Festival, twelve nights of programming of a diverse lineup spanning genres and popularity at New York City Center, I distributed surveys and pencils at intermission, capturing the viewpoints of people amidst performance. The benefit of surveying audiences during the performance is that audiences are more likely to complete surveys than if the survey was available online or by mail. In addition to asking about City Center's programming, the surveys presented questions about audience members' performance going habits and attitudes. This is a model that NOBA could employ at its own Mainstage performances and also Education events.

Interviews are a relatively easy way to receive feedback. Participants may voice opinions, comments, and suggestions that may otherwise not be addressed in an “Additional Comments” section of a survey. Neutral parties are useful as moderators, as a NOBA representative may unknowingly influence the conversation. The authors of The Arts Management Handbook include “instruments of predefined categories of behavior (such as student question-asking or oppositional behavior)” and video technology as direct observation.26
Conclusion

The New Orleans Ballet Association is a leader in dance presentation and education. NOBA commissioned and internationally premiered three original works by celebrated choreographers within three years. 2012 marked the 20th anniversary of the nationally recognized NORDC/NOBA Center For Dance, a testament to the work that NOBA board and staff members have done. Education programs are expanding in numbers, physical space, and caliber, on a daily basis and NOBA is fully immersed in the community through successful partnerships and sponsorships.

Moving forward, NOBA must look internally for its continued success. Maintaining a proper staff and clear communication among staff are paramount. It is not only important that NOBA comprehend its own identity but also that it communicates it effectively, through its brand and web presence. Additional maintenance includes regular evaluation to perform checks on the staff, communication, and identity. In addition to internal evaluation, NOBA can look to the outside for feedback and also to make connections to better itself as an organization.

Despite threats of cancelled shows and competing events, NOBA thrives due to its alignment to its mission and the role it plays in the community. Artists are premiering original works in NOBA’s venues. The Center For Dance has its first dedicated space in 20 years. Students are performing on the world’s celebrated stages. Through internal checks, NOBA will continue to improve the community and the region.
Notes

8 Ibid.
10 New Orleans Ballet Association American Moves 2012-13 Season Brochure, Pg. 4.
11 Ibid. Pg. 28.
12 Ibid.
15 Ibid. Pg. 30.
17 Ibid. Pg. 8.
18 Ibid. Pg. 9-10.
19 Ibid. Pg. 6.
20 New Orleans Ballet Association American Moves 2012-13 Season Brochure, Pg. 28.
23 The Art of the Turnaround. Pg. 9.

25 Ibid.

Appendix A
nola.com Article by Chris Waddington
about Trey McIntyre's "Ma Maison" and "The Sweeter End"

Trey McIntyre Project meets the Preservation Hall Jazz Band in a dance extravaganza

Published: Wednesday, February 02, 2011, 5:00 AM  Updated: Wednesday, February 02, 2011, 9:20 AM

By Chris Waddington

What happens when a world-renowned choreographer encounters the street styles of the New Orleans second line?

Trey McIntyre answered that question with "Ma Maison," the electrifying 2008 collaboration between his company of nine dancers and the musicians of the Preservation Hall Jazz Band. That death-haunted, 30-minute piece featured dancing skeletons, dressed in Carnival colors, who jigged, shimmied, knocked their knees in a Charleston step and spun in slow motion pirouettes while the band unleashed drum rolls and wails.

Commissioned by the New Orleans Ballet Association, "Ma Maison" got a stomping, cheering crowd out of its seats at Tulane University’s Dixon Hall and has gone on to be reprised more than 30 times nationally. Most recently, a crowd of 7,000 packed the Hollywood Bowl to see the piece.

On Friday, Feb. 4, the same creative team will premier "The Sweeter End" — and reprise "Ma Maison" — in an evening-length New Orleans extravaganza that includes live music by the Preservation Hall players. The new dance is another NOBA commission.

"Working on 'Ma Maison' was an education for me," McIntyre said. "I came to see how New Orleanians embrace an awareness of death in the course of celebrating daily life. The city is a richer place because of those contradictions — and very inspiring to me."
Read more about Costume designer Andrea Lauer's designs featured in "The Sweeter End."

The new piece was meant to be a pendant to "Ma Maison," McIntyre said — an examination of pleasure and joy in New Orleans life.

"As an outsider, it struck me that New Orleanians understand the need for pleasure in ways that are fundamentally different than the rest of the country. They don't view pleasure as some narcissistic indulgence. For them, it's more like a spiritual release. And it's bound up with a sense of mortality."

McIntyre, who used to dance for the Houston Ballet, has been visiting New Orleans for years.

"Houston was a very classical ballet company, and I was starting to find my way as a choreographer. I kept coming to New Orleans during layoffs — just a few days at a time, without thinking about the artistic possibilities," McIntyre said. "In retrospect, I think I was starved for a more colorful, authentic life. New Orleans has that. It feels like a land of possibilities to me, a place without limits."

McIntyre brought a lot of dance experience to his two New Orleans pieces. He has created more than 80 works for top companies, including American Ballet Theatre, New York City Ballet and Stuttgart Ballet. He established the Trey McIntyre Project as a full-time company in 2008 — and moved it to Boise, Idaho.

"At this point in my career, I'm not interested in looking at the work of other choreographers," McIntyre said. "I'm looking for different inspiration, and often look to collaborators from other disciplines."

In New Orleans, McIntyre forged a close working relationship with the musicians of Preservation Hall — and especially with bassist and creative director Ben Jaffe.

"Trey and I did a lot of talking, but I also wanted him to see that we're not embarrassed about our joy in New Orleans," Jaffe said. "I made sure that he came down for Mardi Gras and got him out in the street. We marched with the Krewe of St. Anne — lots of costumes and craziness — so he got to experience the city through that technicolor lens."

Jaffe and McIntyre also settled down to some serious work during recording sessions at Preservation Hall. The resulting soundtrack will be used for dance rehearsals and for tours when the band is
Dancers from the Trey McIntyre Project rehearse for a new ballet called "The Sweeter End" with the Preservation Hall Jazz Band on Monday, January 31, 2011. Many of the costumes were made from jeans by Andrea Lauer. unable to join the company. On Friday, at the Mahalia Jackson Theater for the Performing Arts, both groups will share the spotlight.

The musical centerpiece will be an extended version of "St. James Infirmary." The band’s version of this jazz classic incorporates ideas developed with another collaborator, the hip-hop DJ King Britt. The arrangement, which evolves from a dirge to a festive dance piece in the manner of a traditional jazz funeral, has become part of the Preservation Hall repertoire in live performances.

“Collaboration is a funny business, full of wonderful accidents and surprises,” Jaffe said. “At one point, when we were recording this music, Trey laid down at the back of the hall — a spot where you can feel the beat of the drums through the floor. It’s a very physical experience — just like dancing — and as I watched him, I could see the piece coming together in his head. It’s as if he soaked up New Orleans right out of the walls.”

THE SWEETER END

What: The Trey McIntyre Project’s new dance piece, a collaboration with the Preservation Hall Jazz Band

When: Friday, February 4, 8 p.m.

Where: Mahalia Jackson Theater for the Performing Arts

Tickets: Ticketmaster.com or call 800.745.3000

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Could there be anything more exciting than to experience the creative energy of not one, not two, but three superior artistic performers at one time, in one production? And what if those three performers are New Orleans favorites Wendy Whelan, prima ballerina of the New York City Ballet, and Desmond Richardson, co-founder and dancer with Complexions Contemporary Ballet, along with Grammy award-winning New Orleans-born trumpeter, Nicholas Payton?

That’s what is going to happen Saturday night at the Mahalia Jackson Theater when Whelan and Richardson premier a new work choreographed by Complexions co-founder Dwight Rhoden. The work, commissioned by the New Orleans Ballet Association, is a special tribute to Desmond Richardson, who will be retiring at the end of this season.

“Charter,” set to an original score by Payton, marks the first time Whelan and Richardson have ever danced together and the first time Nicholas Payton has ever played for a live ballet performance.

“What’s really interesting about these two dancers is that they actually hear the music very differently,” choreographer Rhoden says. “Desmond is very bold in his musicality and Wendy is all about suspension. And then, of course, you’ve got Nicholas.”

Many conversations took place among all four participants over many months as they...
Wendy Whelan and Desmond Richardson will perform to music by Nicholas Payton on Saturday.

worked together on this 12-minute duet, destined to be the highlight of a high-energy program of contemporary dance. For Rhoden, translating Payton’s music to movements for Whelan and Richardson proved to be an experience that he says was an “embarrassment of riches.”

“Working with artists as seasoned as Wendy and Desmond meant I could give them room to participate and to contribute to this piece,” he explains. “It just wouldn’t have been the same with any other two dancers.”

For more information about Complexions Contemporary Ballet, go to nobadance.com or call 504-522-0996.

Sharon Litwin is president of NolaVie. For more information on NolaVie, go to nolavie.com.

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Solutions offered

Committee says needs is urgent

By RHONDA NABONNE
Staff writer

A citizens committee assigned to study poverty, crime, inadequate health care and other problems affecting the city's children Wednesday presented sweeping solutions, including creation of a Metropolitan Youth Commission.

In a report to New Orleans Mayor Sidney Barthelemy, the 100-member advisory group called for more jobs for youths, stricter discipline in schools to fight drug abuse, sexual violence, and increased health services.

The report was released in a news conference and reads:

"We have been confronted with the threats that face our young people," Barthelemy said.

The committee is scheduled to meet in February to find ways to rescue children subjected to poverty, crime and other social maladies.

"We're treating our children finally with the same seriousness we treat our buildings," committee member Al Kennedy said after the committee unveiled a plan to create a youth commission.

"It's about time we lavish the same care on our children," Kennedy said.

Headed by an executive director with a 29-member advisory committee, the commission would lobby for programs and policies for children.

It would cost about $400,000 a year to operate, the report said.

The director would be a paid annual salary of $35,000.

The committee suggested using existing taxes as well as revenue from casino gambling to fund the commission.

Ballet classes on tap for new center

By RHONDA NABONNE
Staff writer

Ever since her parents took her to a ballet, Alisha Glapon wants to spend as much time as possible on her toes.

She was 5 years old when she got the urge to become a ballerina. Just days after seeing a performance she signed up for dance lessons, compliments of the New Orleans Recreation Department.

Now 13, Alisha is still dancing with NORD and until now could only wish that her class was offered more than once a week.

Thanks to a new program, she will take lessons three times a week and hundreds of other budding ballerinas will get a chance to dance.

Alisha will be among some 500 children participating in the New Orleans Center for Dance, unveiled by city recreation officials and cultural leaders in a news conference Wednesday night at the NORD Behrmann Center in Algiers.

The result of a partnership between NORD and the New Orleans Ballet Association, the program will offer ballet classes at four NORD centers.

"We eventually want to take the program to all neighborhoods," NORD director Dolores Aaron said. "All children need the exposure and the ability to achieve in ballet."

For Ferneasa Cutno, the new center will provide an opportunity to gain experience.

STAFF PHOTO BY ELIOT KAMENITZ

See BALLET, next page
BOARD RETREAT...
A FUN, WORK WEEKEND

Mix 25 Board members, 15 spouses/significant others, 7 staff, an icebreaker of singing one line from a song (from "Wild Thing" to "Happy Birthday" to "Everything is beautiful at the ballet"), a 7:30am exercise/walk session, a rainy weekend in Biloxi and 5 hours of intense work -- and what do you get?! A productive, rewarding, motivating, sense of togetherness retreat!!!

We express our deep gratitude to Joe W. & Dorothy Dorsett Brown Foundation for making the retreat at the Broadwater Beach Resort in Biloxi, MS possible.

We also thank Emma Hale Burnett, Executive Director of the State Division of the Arts for graciously giving up her weekend to participate in the retreat and be the keynote speaker at the Saturday luncheon.

The SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) exercise generated lively discussion and friendly dissent. The top four issues will be discussed throughout the fiscal year at the monthly board meetings. Objectives and time lines will be defined, and at the end of the year the New Orleans Ballet Association will have a comprehensive strategic plan.

BRAVO to President, Phyllis Taylor for developing and organizing the retreat, and to the many board members who were able to participate!

A "CHANCE TO DANCE"...
NORD/New Orleans Ballet Association
Center For Dance

1992 marks the first year of the NORD/New Orleans Ballet Association Center For Dance. This cultural community partnership between the New Orleans Recreation Department and the New Orleans Ballet Association offers public dance programs to the children of our community. This shared vision of NORD/NOBA provides our youth with the opportunity to develop self-esteem, cultural awareness, and give access to greater career opportunities through exposure to dance.

This program is highly disciplined dance training conceived as a two-track program. The Chance To Dance children's dance program is track I of the Center for Dance project. As of September 28, 1992, this track I pilot program offers dance to any child who has a demonstrated interest. Classes are offered for children ranging in age from 6 to 13 years plus there is a special "Basketball" class for young athletes age 9 to 16. Chance to Dance is currently offered at Behrman Center, Gernon Brown Center, St. Bernard Center and Stallings Center. Call: NORD 826-1770

photo: Jon Teeuwissen, Emma Burnett, Wayne Soulant

photo: Behrman student "high fives" Chance To Dance
Ballet meets NORD

By FRANK GAGNARD
Dance writer

A free dance training program for the city's youths will be launched next week by the New Orleans Recreation Department in partnership with the New Orleans Ballet Association.

Four different courses will be offered at four NORD centers, with a fifth center to be added in January. One of the courses will be "Ballet for Basketball," which was "designed to help guys with their jump, but won't be limited to just boys," according to Jon H. Teeuwissen, executive director of the Ballet Association.

The program, which grew out of discussions with NORD director Dolores T. Aaron, was designed by Wayne Soullant, artistic director of the New Orleans Ballet Ensemble, a performing unit of the Ballet Association. It is hoped that the teaching program will develop into a talent feeder for the Ensemble.

In addition to "Ballet for Basketball," the courses will be an introduction to ballet, for 6- to 8-year-olds; and ballet classes for ages 9 to 10 and 11 to 14. Parents interested in enrolling their children are requested to contact the NORD centers at which classes will be held. They are:

► Gernon Brown, 1001 Harrison Ave., 483-2533.
► St. Bernard, 1500 Lafreniere St., 286-2195.
► Stallings, 4300 St. Claude Ave., 941-4590.
► Rosenwald Center, 1120 S. Broad St., will join the program in January.

Most of the teachers will be members of the Ballet Ensemble, including a New Orleans native, Homer Avila, who recently returned after working with Iwyda Tharp, Moses Pendleton and Moomix in New York.

"This is the first phase of the program," Teeuwissen said. "The second, a year from now, will bring in two more facilities and the creation of a gifted students program. Talents will go to one designated center for a higher level of training and more intensive study."
THE New Orleans Recreation Department (NORD) and the New Orleans Ballet Association (NOBA) have forged a meaningful relationship. Through this connection the two organizations are helping local youngsters build self-esteem, self-discipline and cultural awareness. How? Through "Chance to Dance."

Chance to Dance is a tuition-free program available to children ages nine and 10 with a demonstrated interest in dance. So far, the program has captured the interests of some 300 youngsters throughout the New Orleans area. According to Jenny Thompson, director of education and community services for NOBA, Chance to Dance has been "quite a success." The eight-month-old program's long-range goals include integrating student dancers into the New Orleans Ballet Ensemble, a multi-cultural troupe of dancers whose purpose is to expose children to the wonders of dance.

Currently, four NORD centers are sponsoring the Chance to Dance program—Behrman, Gernon Brown, St. Bernard and Stallings. Classes are held twice weekly, utilizing a teaching curriculum designed by Wayne Soulant, artistic director for the New Orleans Ballet Ensemble. The talented Soulant previously served as artistic director of Ballet Metropolitan and director of the Ballet Academy, both in Columbus, Ohio. He also taught on the dance faculty of Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, Texas, and has danced professionally with the Norwegian Ballet in Oslo, Norway.

NOBA's Thompson seems pleased with the results of the program. She noted that some of the participating youngsters have displayed a great deal of talent and potential. To help further their artistic development, NOBA has established a second phase of Chance to Dance, Intermediate and advanced classes for this phase of the program are open to children ages 11 to 14 and will also be held twice weekly.

The classes are slated to begin in the fall 1993 and will be held at a dedicated NORD facility. Plans are underway for students leaving Phase II of the program to audition for acceptance into New Orleans Center for Creative Arts (NOCCA) for further studies.

According to Thompson, from this pool of gifted students, NOBA plans to select dancers for the New Orleans Ballet Ensemble. The goal is to have the ensemble reflect the multicultural population of New Orleans. It is also expected that instructors for the New Orleans Center for Dance will eventually be recruited from the ranks of the New Orleans Ballet Ensemble. Fulfillment of this long-term goal will give young New Orleanians additional career opportunities and supply the community with positive role models.

To realize the dream of fully implementing Phase II of the Chance To Dance program, corporate sponsorship will be key. Currently, sponsors are being sought to lend funding assistance to the program. "Dance has traditionally been an elitist type art form," Thompson says. "To participate usually requires quite a bit of money. 'The shoes, tights and leotards can be expensive. And with the second phase of Chance To Dance, as the kids' muscles develop and they're ready to advance, they'll require pointe shoes. We hope that funding will allow the program to provide these things for the students.'"

NORD and NOBA deserve a standing ovation for their efforts in developing this worthwhile program. At a time when the headlines frequently carry negative stories of youth led astray, it is refreshing to see a program that offers not only education, but hope and the fulfillment of dreams that may have never been realized.

Parents interested in enrolling their children in the Chance To Dance program should contact their nearest participating NORD center: Behrman Center, 2529 General Meyer Ave., 364-4092; Gernon Brown Center, 1001 Harrison Ave., 483-2533; St. Bernard Center, 1500 Lafreniere St, 286-2195; Stallings Center, 4300 St. Claude Ave, 941-4590.
In 1992, leaders of multiple institutions united in a common vision: to touch the lives of every member of our community through dance. Led by Councilmember Jacquelyn Clarkson, NORD Director Dolores T. Aaron, NOBA Board Chair Phyllis Taylor, and NOBA Executive Director Jon Teeuwissen, this dedicated group created a unique partnership between the New Orleans Ballet Association and the New Orleans Recreation Department – the NORD/NOBA Center For Dance – that ensured access to high quality dance instruction regardless of economic means.

Classes began at just one site – Behrman NORDC Center – in September 1992 with an enrollment of 30 students. With an unyielding conviction by NOBA and City leadership in the years that followed, this groundbreaking partnership has now served over 11,000 children with more than 35,000 free dance classes throughout the region. The program has also emerged as a pacesetter in arts education nationally with recognition by the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, the National Endowment for the Arts, and others.

Each week throughout the year, hundreds of youth ages 6-18 study ballet, tap, and other dance forms in neighborhood NORDC centers with a professional faculty that brings a wealth of experience to their students. These classes are regularly filled to capacity on a first-come, first-served basis, and if a child has a specific need, the Center For Dance provides shoes, leotards, and tights. The Pre-Professional Program, open by audition to youth ages 9 and up, provides more intensive training, classes by world renowned dancers through the Chevron Master Artist Series, internships, scholarships to study at national, prestigious summer programs, and more unique opportunities. All students and their families are offered $5 tickets to at least one Main Stage performance.

For a packed house of family and friends, students ages 6-80+ take part in fully produced performances with costumes, professional stage management, and lights at Tulane University’s Dixon Hall, as well as presentations at each site. The Pre-Professional students annually receive invitations to perform throughout the community, and have also appeared on regional and national stages like the Kennedy Center and Jacob’s Pillow dance festival.

For information on any of the education programs, contact NOBA’s Education Department at (504) 522-0996.
“This 20-year unprecedented partnership with the New Orleans Ballet Association has brought the joy of dance to thousands of youth, enriching the lives of their entire families with superior training and opportunities. As the city moves forward with an historic investment in NORDC’s infrastructure, we look forward to implementing the NORDC/NOBA Center For Dance as a core service in all of our centers throughout our city. NOBA has been and will remain a valued and critical partner of NORDC, and we are proud of the extraordinary accomplishments of this program.”

– VICTOR N. RICHARD III, CEO, NEW ORLEANS RECREATION DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
World Class Act
At the Summer Intensive, Area Students Follow in the Steps of the Best

For many aspiring young dancers the world over, the chance to be face to face for only a moment with dance legends is rare. The opportunity to study – tuition free - with three artistic directors and a renowned dancer all at one time in one studio, perform excerpts of pivotal choreography by Paul Taylor, and be handpicked by Ballet Hispanico Artistic Director Eduardo Vilaro to perform his work, is unheard of.

“These students are getting exposed to the kind of artists that don’t necessarily walk into just any studio,” comments Vilaro. “To be able to work with such renowned artists, especially tuition-free, is very special. This is an incredibly unique program that is highly specialized.”

Dwight Rhoden, Complexions Contemporary Ballet Co-Artistic Director, echoes Vilaro’s sentiments. “In these days and in this economy, dance instruction is very expensive. These students are getting high level master artists coming into the city to work specifically with them for free. I don’t know of another program like this in the country.”

Complexions was part of an expanded summer of intensive training for selected NORDC/NOBA Center For Dance advanced students, thanks to the support of the Chevron Master Artist Series. Rhoden was joined by Co-Artistic Director Desmond Richardson, Associate Artistic Director Jae Man Joo, and dancer Clifford Williams for Code 3, a unique workshop developed by the trio of directors that, until June, had only been held in New York City. “I compare working with Desmond and Dwight to learning how to shoot basketball from Michael Jordan,” says participant Alex Danna.

Following the success of Code 3, Man Joo and Williams returned for an additional week of choreography workshops, where students learned more about the creation process. Former Alvin Ailey and Dance Theatre of Harlem principal Stephanie Powell also led an intense, varied session of ballet technique, pointe, modern, and Pilates classes.

The summer’s vigorous momentum continued in July with the annual four-week Summer Intensive, which is designed to help students broaden their understanding of various dance styles and meet other young artists from the region. Students had to have at least two years of ballet training and successfully audition among more than 100 youth for a place in the intensive.

In addition to Vilaro, this year’s roster of guest national faculty included Ballet Hispanico School of Dance Deputy Director Nicholas Villeneuve and dancers Vanessa Valcillos
and Jamal Callender, a 2012 Princess Grace Award recipient; Richard Chen See from the Paul Taylor Dance Company; and Houston Ballet principal dancer and New Orleans native Mireille Hassenboehler. Also on the faculty were more than twenty local artists. Over seventy students attended daily technique classes in ballet and modern, and benefitted from workshops in choreography, African, hip hop, Brazilian, and body conditioning (Yoga, Alexander Technique, and Pilates). Local experts led seminars in dance history, nutrition, injury prevention, and musicianship.

Students in the day camp danced 6½ hours a day, five days a week, for four weeks, which was challenging, even by professional standards. For the serious dance student like Alayna Acosta, these experiences were “all at once insane, brilliant, grueling, and fun. I had never danced with that much purpose or physicality, and now there isn’t a day that I go into the studio without it.”

For visiting teachers, the Summer Intensive experience was equally gratifying. “The students attended all my classes with an eagerness and fire that inspired me,” says Villeneuve, who created a new work for the advanced group. “Each day I was able to see them improve a bit at a time. I enjoyed teaching, and I am honored to pass on the legacy that was once given to me.”

For these students, their hard work in the studio pays off in many ways, particularly for 13-year old Isabella Beninate. After seeing “her responsiveness and natural ability for the work,” Villeneuve offered her a full scholarship to attend Ballet Hispanico’s 2013 Summer Intensive in New York. “I love when I see a budding artist and a dedicated student,” he states. “Isabella is all the above and more.”

In addition to new works created by Villeneuve and Callender, students learned and performed excerpts of two seminal works by dance icon Paul Taylor, Esplanade and Cloven Kingdom, for the culminating concert. Former Taylor dancer Richard Chen See exquisitely set the works and taught the technique that has been the foundation of many world renowned artists and the inspiration of the next generation of dancers. “I really enjoyed this experience,” comments Tayler Butler. “With these classes and choreography workshops, I feel like I have really expanded my level of skill with this program.”

For NORDC/NOBA Center For Dance alumni, summers offer an ideal environment for multifaceted learning in the arts and beyond. “After my second summer as an intern at NOBA, I have returned to school having learned so much more than dance,” comments Raven Ross, a sophomore dance major at Southern Methodist University. Working in the administrative office, Ross “witnessed the long hours and patience it takes to produce and execute a spring performance, create contracts, and plan for future seasons. Through this program, I have learned countless lessons about dance and life that will continue to navigate me through my college dance career and into my life as a professional dance artist.”
NOBA’s comprehensive programs reach deep into the community, bringing dance to neighborhood centers, schools, and churches in three parishes. In addition to its 20-year partnership with NORDC, NOBA is honored to collaborate with these institutions to enrich the lives of hundreds of youth through quality training.

At each of the locations below, ballet classes are offered twice a week for any child 6-18 years of age. Students also have the opportunity to perform at open houses at the sites, at the annual Nutcracker Suite and spring performances at Dixon Hall, as well as performances at other venues. Family field trips to see Main Stage companies, workshops with guest artists, successful auditions for NOBA’s pre-professional and summer intensive programs, and more are all part of the experience.

St. Bernard Parish After-School Ballet Program
In one of its first expansions for education programs beyond Orleans Parish, NOBA began a partnership with Chalmette Refining and the St. Bernard Parish School Board system to offer free ballet classes to any child 6-18 years old. Now in its 17th year, this program is being held in the beautiful dance studios of the Chalmette High School Cultural Arts Center. Annually, students have been invited to perform and take part in St. Bernard Parish’s Art in April extravaganza.

St. Jerome After-School Dance Program
In response to the growing Hispanic population in the metropolitan area, NOBA established a partnership in spring 2007 with St. Jerome Catholic Church in Kenner. With classes tripling in enrollment, this center is thriving and was expanded in the summer of 2012 to a year-round curriculum of ballet classes offered twice a week on Mondays and Thursdays.

Andrew H. Wilson Charter After-School Dance Program
The New Orleans Ballet Association and the Broadmoor Education Corridor are built around a common vision: affordable and quality programming opportunities for New Orleans youth. NOBA’s free ballet classes provide children with an outlet for artistic and creative enrichment – key tenets of the Education Corridor’s recreational program. Wilson School students as well as others from across the city participate in classes with one another – strengthening skills and technique and building relationships with one another. Since NOBA’s partnership with the Broadmoor Charter School Board and the Broadmoor Improvement Association began in 2010, the program has grown dramatically, with classes now offered year-round on Wednesdays and Saturdays.
Partnerships are paramount to the success of NOBA’s work in the community. In addition to its 20-year anchor partnership with the New Orleans Recreation Development Commission (NORDC), NOBA works with schools and organizations to provide opportunities for youth to access and maintain a healthy lifestyle through tuition free after-school dance instruction. Annually, students receive concentrated workshops in nutrition and injury prevention along with their training, NOBA has also collaborated with K-12 teachers and artists for more than 20 years through its In Motion programs, which develop innovative teaching and learning methods designed to infuse dance into the school environment while enhancing guiding principles of the schools’ missions.

In response to the alarming and increasing rates of obesity and physical health issues among children, NOBA launched its Moving 4 Health in-school program in 2010. Through the collaborative efforts of Dr. Susan Koff, Clinical Associate Professor of Dance Education at New York University; educator Theron Lewis, former track and field Olympian; nutritionists, physicians, and scholars, Moving 4 Health integrates movement into the science, health, language arts, and physical education curricula of school classrooms. This innovative program equips students to choose nutrition rich foods and increase daily activity levels, while simultaneously facilitating their educational and social development. In 2005, NOBA was selected as a Kennedy Center Partners in Education site with the Orleans Parish Public Schools. Today, the partnership includes KIDSmART and the Algiers Charter Schools.

In 2011, because of the success of these partnerships and programs, NOBA was invited by the City of New Orleans to join First Lady Michelle Obama’s Let’s Move! campaign to discuss strategies for improving the overall health and well-being of our youth. NOBA is committed to the pursuit of heightened health and fitness for local youth through its continued work as partners with Fit NOLA and other agencies.

“I would like to thank the New Orleans Ballet Association for providing generations of dancers a world class opportunity to not only fulfill their dreams of dance but also to be physically fit. NOBA has enriched the lives of countless youth and sets the bar for a wide reach of youth engagement and professionalism. As a fellow dancer, I know first-hand the power and value of the skills and lessons learned through dance: discipline, teamwork, creative expression and the critical importance of becoming and staying physically and nutritionally fit and active. These attributes will serve the next generation well as we work together to build a vibrant and active community. I am so proud and honored to have them as partners in the City of New Orleans Fit NOLA Partnership. The New Orleans Ballet Association has been an outstanding partner by not only graciously providing recreation opportunities to our young people at no cost but also collaborating with the community to educate students on proper nutrition and injury prevention. It is only with partners like NOBA that New Orleans will become one of America’s top 10 fittest cities by 2018.”

— KAREN DESALVO, CITY OF NEW ORLEANS HEALTH COMMISSIONER AND SENIOR HEALTH POLICY ADVISOR TO THE MAYOR
As part of its In Motion Partner Schools Program, the New Orleans Ballet Association presents Komenka Ethnic and Dance Music Ensemble in a performance for more than 250 students at Lake Forest Elementary on Monday, May 10, 2010 at 2:00 pm. The performance will include performances of “Dances of the World” selections from China, Turkey, Mexico, Spain, Hungary, and the U.S., as well as a dance teaching from Brazil and song teachings from Bulgaria.

This unique dance program, presented by NOBA for students and teachers at Lake Forest Elementary, uses an innovative teaching method that incorporates geography and language arts through movement while encouraging family communication, improving research skills, appreciating other cultures, and creating dances to reflect this information.

Since 1992, the New Orleans Ballet Association has offered arts programs in Orleans Parish Schools through its In Motion Partner Schools Program. This program uses an innovative teaching method to bring world-renowned companies and local artists into the lives of students and training teachers. The curriculum was developed by NOBA and a national dance consultant with the state standards and benchmarks to offer these students an exciting way to dance to higher knowledge.

Komenka Ethnic Dance and Music Ensemble’s 30 member company is firmly rooted and supported by a history which includes well over 1,000 performances for over 100,000 viewers both locally and abroad. The ensemble’s repertoire includes more than 100 regional ethnic dance and music styles rooted in Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, and Oceania.

The In Motion Partner School Program consists of three partner schools in Jefferson and Orleans parishes: Phoebe Hearst Elementary in Jefferson, Lake Forest Elementary in Orleans, and M.M. Bethune Elementary in Orleans. For more information, please contact at (504) 522-0996 ext. 207.
The program is supported by a grant from the Louisiana Division of the Arts, Office of Cultural Development, Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, in cooperation with the Louisiana State Arts Council.

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Senior Programs of the NORDC/NOBA Center For Dance

Each morning Monday through Thursday, more than 100 seniors from around the community gather at one of two NORDC Centers for exercise, socializing, and friendship. They are participants in the Center For Dance’s innovative dance and fitness program for senior citizens at the Behrman and St. Bernard NORDC Centers. Since NOBA expanded its partnership with NORDC in 2008, artist Aline de Souza has led the classes in stretching, cardio, and movement based learning. “The program is not just about exercise,” she comments. “It’s much more than that. We are building community on a weekly basis while exercising our bodies, minds, and emotions.”

For Carolyn McCurdy, whose 6-year-old granddaughter takes ballet from de Souza at the Behrman Center, the program provides special moments beyond the classes. Annually, she and other participants learn, rehearse, and perform alongside the youth of the Center For Dance in the party scene of The Nutcracker Suite and in the spring production at Tulane’s Dixon Hall. “I never dreamed that I would have the opportunity to perform with my granddaughter!” she exclaims.

Each center also has a dance team of seniors who do it all, creating choreography, sewing costumes, and designing and making their own props. Their gold medal-winning presentations each year at the Senior Olympics have earned them invitations to perform around the community. This summer, the St. Bernard Center’s “Jazzy Seniors” headlined the 2012 Senior Theatre USA Festival by kicking off the conference with a standing ovation before leading the audience around the Harrah’s Casino Theater in a second line.

For more information, contact NOBA’s Education Department at (504) 522-0996.

A Journey of Strength

Her battle with cancer began 12 years ago, but Irethea Gilyard, a two-time cancer survivor, is not one to give up. In 2008, she found this program and has faithfully dedicated herself to strengthening her mind and body. “I thoroughly enjoy the entertainment and fellowship components of the program in addition to the classes,” she says. A year ago, Irethea discovered that the cancer had returned. At first, weak from chemotherapy, she was only able to complete the first half of the two-hour dance fitness sessions. Then her “angel,” as she refers to de Souza, took the time to suggest ways in which she might strengthen her muscles after the treatments. With each passing week, Gilyard has become stronger, and plans to compete and perform again this fall with her fellow “Jazzy Seniors.” Today, she has much to celebrate – her remission from cancer and her full re-entry into the weekly rigors of de Souza’s classes. “I love this program!” she proclaims.

“I am always learning something from the seniors’ creativity and the vast experience they earned during their younger years and now so kindly share. I don’t feel as if I am the only one providing instruction. The seniors care for me as if I belonged to their family, and that’s something really special.”

– ALINE NEVES DE SOUZA, INSTRUCTOR
I begin my first year as the President of BRAVO, the Ballet Resource and Volunteer Organization of the New Orleans Ballet Association, with great enthusiasm. Every new season of dance continues to excite and inspire me, and I know this season will be no different. Just as NOBA brings to the community a year filled with performances by extraordinary dance companies and community outreach programs, BRAVO has also planned a year filled with fun and engaging events.

Through the years, BRAVO has been an integral part of the New Orleans Ballet Association, providing the financial resources that enable NOBA to continue its important dance education programs in our community. Annually, BRAVO presents events that are both entertaining and enjoyable, while raising much-needed funds for NOBA. I am honored to be a part of these efforts and to work with such a dedicated and talented membership.

Meetings are held at beautiful homes and locations throughout New Orleans, and for the second year, the exquisite Elms Mansion will host our Holiday Party, December 13. Following the performance of Ballet Hispanico and the Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra, we invite you to take the floor with the dancers of the Company at a special Latin Dance Party complete with music by the Orchestra and delicious Latin-inspired food and drinks. Then on June 8, 2013, we will welcome internationally renowned artists for another star-studded Gala in celebration of the 20th anniversary of the nationally recognized NORDC/NOBA Center For Dance. This award-winning program has provided tuition-free dance education classes and activities to over 11,000 students, and we are incredibly proud of the role that BRAVO has played in the extraordinary success of this partnership. NOBA is honored to once again be the beneficiary of the annual Prix d’Elegance Luncheon on April 8, 2013. We extend our sincere gratitude to the Men and Women of Fashion organizations for this tremendous gift!

BRAVO’s success comes from its members, and I hope you will consider becoming a member and participating in our important mission! Memberships are $35 (single), $50 (couple), and $100 (supporting) and can be purchased at the NOBA table during intermission or by calling the NOBA office for further information. I look forward to seeing you at our events!

Sincerely,

Sonda Stacey
President
2013 SUMMER INTENSIVE GUEST ARTISTS

Artistic directors Dwight Rhoden and Desmond Richardson's lifelong appreciation for the artistic and aesthetic appeal of the multicultural forms the cornerstone of Complexions Contemporary Ballet's, a singular approach to reinventing dance. Founded in 1994, Complexions' groundbreaking mix of methods, styles, and cultures has created an entirely new and exciting vision of human movement over the past 18 years. Complexions has received numerous awards including the New York Times “Critics Choice” Award. The company’s foremost innovation is that dance should be about removing boundaries, not reinforcing them. Whether it be the limiting traditions of a single style, period, venue, or culture, Complexions transcends them all, creating an open, continually evolving form of dance that reflects the movement of our world — and all its constituent cultures — as an interrelated whole.

DWIGHT RHODEN  Co-Founder/Co-Artistic Director

Dwight Rhoden has established a remarkably wide-ranging career, earning distinction from The New York Times as “one of the most sought out choreographers of the day.” A native of Dayton, Ohio, Rhoden, who began dancing at age 17, has performed with Dayton Contemporary Dance Company, Les Ballet Jazz De Montréal and as a Principal dancer with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. Rhoden has created over 80 ballets for Complexions, as well as numerous other companies, including Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Joffrey Ballet, Dance Theatre of Harlem, Miami City Ballet, and Aspen Santa Fe Ballet. Dance Magazine called Rhoden’s work, “post-Balanchinean choreography, a new aesthetic in movement, stage, picture, and performance concepts reflecting a post-modern, techno-savvy worldview.” Rhoden is the Resident Choreographer of North Carolina Dance Theatre and has lectured, taught, created works, and served as Artist in Residence at universities around the United States including New York University, The Juilliard School and The University of Mississippi, where his 2004 Racial Reconciliation Project was credited as a catalyst for dialogue in a community that has been historically divided. In May 2006 he received The Ailey School’s Apex Award in recognition of his extensive contributions to the field of dance.

DESMOND RICHARDSON  Co-Founder/Co-Artistic Director

With his technical virtuosity and statuesque expressive demeanor, Desmond Richardson has been hailed as one of the great dancers of his time. Reviewer Lara Hartley of Ballet Magazine described Richardson as “a moving sculpture, body that is art, passing through time and space with power and grace – all parts connected, never stopping but heart stopping in beauty and complexity.” Richardson is an international performer, trained at the The School of Performing Arts: A Division of the Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts, The Ailey School & the International Summer Dez Tanz in Köln, Germany. He has been a Principal dancer with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, American Ballet Theatre and The Forsythe Company under the direction of William Forsythe. He has performed with San Francisco Ballet, Royal Swedish Opera Ballet, Washington Ballet, and many others. Richardson has danced on some of the most prestigious international stages such as The Metropolitan Opera, Teatro alla Scala, Paris Opera, The Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow, and Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg. Richardson is the recipient of the Bessie award, Dance Magazine Award, Capezio Award, LA Ovation award, and the prestigious Tony Award nomination and is a YoungArts Alumni and Presidential Scholar of the Arts.

JAE MAN JOO  Associate Artistic Director

Jae Man Joo has been involved with Complexions Contemporary Ballet since 1996 as Associate Artistic Director, Ballet Master, Choreographer, Photographer, and Costume Designer. He began his classical ballet training at UM Ballet Studio in his native Korea, where he also studied modern dance and Korean traditional dance. After graduating from Dankook University, Mr. Joo danced with a wide range of Korean dance companies, including the Korea Contemporary Dance Company. Before moving to New York City in 1996, Mr. Joo received the Best Individual Dance Award in the Bagnolet International Choreographer Festival in Paris, France. He is a recipient of the 2009 Princess Grace Award for Excellence in Choreography.

CLIFFORD WILLIAMS  Artist-in-Residence

Clifford Williams began his dance training at Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and the Performing Arts. He attended The Ailey School and The School of American Ballet, both on scholarship. In 1998, he attended The Juilliard School and was a first-level recipient of a National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts award in 1998. In 2001, Mr. Williams was invited to join Dance Theatre of Harlem, where he danced for two years. In 2008, he danced as a Principal dancer with Compañía Nacional de Danza under the direction of Nacho Duato. Mr. Williams rejoined Complexions in 2009, dancing as a Principal until 2012 before being appointed to Artist in Residence. He rejoined Complexions in 2009, dancing as a Principal until 2012 before being appointed to Artist-in-Residence.
Each summer, NORDC/NOBA Center For Dance students move one step closer to achieving their dreams of dancing professionally by attending some of the most prestigious programs in the country. The opportunity to travel and learn from the best is made possible by scholarships raised by the Men and Women of Fashion’s Prix d’Elegance Luncheon.

“The NOBA scholarship program changed my life,” comments Alayna Acosta, now a freshman dance major at North Carolina School of the Arts. “Not only did they give me the opportunity to study dance all over the U.S., but they also provided counsel on the best summer program for me, took headshots, and made a DVD which saved my family time, stress and money.” For Acosta, the exposure to dance icons such as Desmond Richardson and Dwight Rhoden at the Complexions Intensive in Detroit opened her eyes to new possibilities, and “pushed me to become more aware of myself as a dancer. I realized that dance is more of a mental game than I thought,” she adds.

For both current and former scholarship recipients, gaining perspective is a difficult yet crucially refining component to summer study. Jasmine Forest received NOBA scholarships during her years as a Center For Dance student. “These programs exposed me to other dancers, and that allowed me to see where I lined up,” she explains. “I also loved studying away because there was always someone better than me or stronger than me. I used that as ammunition to push myself even further.” For Forest, this attitude proved highly beneficial. In 2006, she received a bachelor of fine arts degree in dance from the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, Pa., where she attended on presidential scholarship. She has danced professionally with Dallas Black Dance Theater II, the world renowned Camille A. Brown & Dancers, and others.

For all of these students, the rigorous training by renowned teachers allows them to sharpen their technique, while giving them a peek into the demands of the professional dance world. “The six-week intensive at Houston Ballet brought a whole new meaning to the word ‘intense’,” scholarship recipient Alex Danna explains. With less than a year of dance training, Danna was accepted into the highly
competitive summer intensive of Houston Ballet, where he participated in all male classes for the first time. He explains, “This was very foreign to me because I have never taken a class with all guys, and the environment really pushed me to advance. My technique improved tremendously, and I’m not afraid of challenging movement.”

High school freshman Destiny Billot, who attended American Ballet Theatre’s Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis School, agrees. “I really had an amazing time because every day I would see myself improving and becoming stronger.” While in New York, Billot had many unforgettable experiences, including the Paris Opera Ballet’s performance of Giselle, the opportunity to work with School Principal Franco DeVita, and to meet ABT dancers Julie Kent, Misty Copeland, and David Hallberg.

Being able to see and experience many different troupes and artists at the American Dance Festival (ADF) “unleashed the beauty of dance for me,” comments Rebekah Lee. “One of the companies that left me completely amazed was Vertigo from Jerusalem.” Lee was joined in Durham, N.C., by fellow Center For Dance student Jessica Eugene. “ADF has changed the way I think about dance, and I believe I have gained a better sense of fluidity and connection in any style of dance that I engage in,” says Eugene. Lee adds, “The American Dance Festival offered so many wonderful opportunities. I had the privilege to see at least twelve different dance companies during the festival.”

Claire Daigle was so inspired by seeing LINES Ballet when the Company appeared on NOBA’s 2010-2011 season, that she made it her goal to attend this San Francisco based program. “The highlight of the experience was meeting Artistic Director Alonzo King. Taking class from such a legendary choreographer was motivating and enlightening.”

Gabrielle House, like all the other recipients, is “thankful to the NORDC/NOBA Center For Dance and the volunteers for making all of this possible.” Through her scholarship to Ballet Chicago, she was able to study Balanchine technique, and continue to be “inspired to reach my very best potential through the study and discipline of ballet.”

“Knowing that the people at NOBA have faith in me and see my potential is very encouraging!” exclaims Daigle. “Attending LINES Ballet made me realize just how lucky I am as a dancer, and helped me to appreciate the master classes and workshops offered through the NORDC/NOBA Center For Dance.” Acosta adds, “I am so thankful to everyone who is supporting me as I pursue the art of dance.”

“The NOBA scholarship program changed my life.”

– ALAYNA ACOSTA, FRESHMAN DANCE MAJOR AT NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL OF THE ARTS.
October 2012

As Mayor, I am proud to share with you the New Orleans Ballet Association 2012-2013 season, “American Moves.” As always, NOBA has prepared a world-class program showcasing the diverse world of modern and traditional dance and enhancing the City’s cultural landscape. Live performance is an essential part of our culture and our economy. Last year, over 450,000 people attended dance, theatre, and musical performances here in the City. Because of the high-caliber productions brought to us by organizations like NOBA, New Orleans continues to be a live performance destination in the region, drawing audiences from throughout Louisiana and the Gulf Coast.

I also want to congratulate NOBA on the 20th anniversary of its nationally award-winning after-school and recreation programs provided through the Center For Dance. Our city’s children, teens, adults, and seniors have been dancing at these free classes since 1992. This year, the program will continue to grow, as NOBA and the New Orleans Recreation Development Commission present the Center For Dance at NORDC sites throughout the city. It is truly a great achievement that a program that started with just 30 students will celebrate its 20th Anniversary having served more than 11,000 children with over 35,000 free dance classes. The NORDC/NOBA Center For Dance fitness/dance program for senior citizens that was established in 2008 has also become nationally recognized for quality, and now serves 120 seniors at the Behrman and St. Bernard Centers.

The city is a proud partner of NOBA, and we will continue to work together to establish and grow these programs and spread the positive impact of dance and the performing arts.

Mitchell J. Landrieu

Mayor, City of New Orleans
The New Orleans Ballet Association has continued to lead our city’s famous classical dance to great heights. Fine dance has been one of the hallmarks of our city’s long renowned multicultural and international world for which we are so respected!

Twenty years ago, they set a new precedent which was a prototype for the United States – they created the New Orleans Recreation Department/NOBA Center For Dance. Our young citizens, girls and boys, especially those without access to dance, were given the opportunity to learn from the masters.

They created a private-public partnership with the city of New Orleans and have continued to fund state of the art ballet and dance for our youth in the city’s recreation facilities. Many of these young people have gone on to an education and career in dance. Without having had the NORDC/NOBA program, many children would never have been able to achieve these great heights.

Recently, our senior citizens in these very same recreation facilities have been added to the dance program, making it an even more valuable experience for all of the citizens of this great city.

On behalf of a grateful city, we cannot say enough to express our appreciation to the New Orleans Ballet Association and congratulate them, their board and staff, volunteers and contributors on the 20th anniversary of the NORDC/NOBA Center For Dance!

Jacquelyn Brechtel Clarkson

(New Orleans City Councilmember-at-Large)
New Orleans Ballet Association

NOBA

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2012-13
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Works Cited

Vita

Brooke Barrios was born and raised in New Orleans, Louisiana. She attended preparatory school at The Hotchkiss School in Lakeville, Connecticut and received a Bachelor of Arts in English from Columbia University in 2011. Following commencement, she returned to New Orleans to pursue her Master of Arts in Arts Administration at the University of New Orleans.