



Organization History

In 2002 in the elected position as Dance Liaison for CODE, the Provincial Subject association for Drama and Dance Education in Ontario, Carmelina Martin (current chair of "Pulse"), was commissioned with the task of networking and supporting Ontario teachers that were currently delivering ministry mandated dance curriculum with resources.

It was only four years earlier in 1998 that the ministry of education had a policy for dance education written and published for implementation. Subsequently dance became a legitimate subject from Grades 1-12. However, the reality and challenge of locating teachers across this large province was daunting.

The vision for a province-wide dance conference began to emerge as a means of drawing teachers, students (recipients of dance education) and resources (the dance artist/professional) together in one central location. Through the consultation of various stake holders in dance education, the idea and name of the Pulse Ontario Youth Dance Conference was conceived. With the unanimous support of the CODE executive and management board and York University's Dance Department as co-sponsor of the event, the planning committee for Pulse was assembled. The planning/organizing committee for the first inaugural dance conference in 2006 included all stake holders in dance education, for example secondary and elementary dance specialist/teachers, CODE representatives, a York Dance Department Representative, and professional dance artists.

The planning committee was officially assembled in 2004 to begin building the architecture of this conference whose mandate was to support emerging/fledgling dance programs in the province, to support the development of new dance programs in under serviced or rural Ontario and to begin forging lasting relationships between educators and the professional dance community. This mandate was realized for the first time in May 2006 at York University in the new Accolade Building.

Overall the 2006 conference was successful in terms of realizing this mandate; bringing together the dance artist community and the dance in education community from around the province (secondary students and teachers) through dynamic workshops, performance evenings, socials and visioning meetings.

Students reported that they had a wonderful time and wished that the conference was longer. Many requested more workshops.

Artists themselves enjoyed the energy and enthusiasm of the delegates in their workshops, as well as the respectful audience behaviour during the evening of live performances. The artists also appreciated the promotion on the Pulse Website. The website not only provided

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workshop delegates (teachers and students) an opportunity to learn more about the artists they would be working with prior to arriving at the conference, but it also provided contact information so that teachers could commission artistic residencies for their respective schools in future.

Having students connect with each other was an important part of the vision for the conference. This vision was achieved and an overall sense of camaraderie was felt between the delegates themselves. Experiencing dance together in a non-competitive environment where experiential learning and discovery was the focus equalized all *levels of dance students*.

In the upcoming Conference in May 2008 we have added a second evening of live dance performances, a second keynote speaker, and 12 additional workshops have been included in the roster.

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Positioning Statement

The need for a province-wide dance conference is compelling. **"Pulse"** was conceived through many discussions among several dance educators about the underdeveloped and under serviced state of dance programs in our province. The idea of a province-wide conference reflecting our diverse provincial dance community and providing students and teachers with an opportunity to work with professional dance artists was developed as a means to address these concerns and to increase the exposure, value, and legitimacy of dance in Ontario.

Dance as a legitimate curriculum subject in the Ontario Public School System is less than a decade old, however appropriate teaching spaces, financial access, expertise, knowledge and opportunity are all issues of equity that need to be addressed as a province-wide concern for dance education to flourish in our province. The initiation of a provincial dance conference won't solve all equity issues but it will begin the development of links between the dance community and schools throughout the province. The conference also includes dance educators participating in workshops along side their students, this will give teachers direct experiences and develop contacts with professional dance artists so that the relationships created can live beyond the conference. In addition, it is our firm belief that this conference provides a rich opportunity and pathway for at-risk youth as a means of keeping students engaged and motivated to stay in school.

The status of dance is also somewhat tenuous. Artists are aware that audience development and participation is necessary to keep the art form growing and healthy in Ontario. The conference will provide an opportunity for artists to perform their work, a context for audience development, and a forum to develop prospects throughout the province for future work and touring opportunities.

"Pulse" will be open to any high school student, pre-service educator, and educator in the province and all participants will be welcomed and encouraged to take part in every aspect of the conference.

"Pulse" has established a board of directors who are members of the professional, world, and university dance communities as well as educators from both the secondary and elementary streams. York University has agreed to host the conference and to donate the use of its state-of-the-art facilities for the duration of the conference.

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Project Description

"Pulse" Ontario Youth Dance Conference is dedicated to giving all students from the province of Ontario an *affordable* opportunity and *access* to a province-wide conference, where students will participate, experience, and develop their literacy, understanding and appreciation for dance. Our goal is to educate both students and teachers about the value, scope and diversity of dance in Ontario. This conference is open to all secondary students, novice or experienced in dance from all regions of the province, however the hope is that remote or under-serviced communities who's access to the professional arts community is limited will be most served in this conference.

Workshops and Performances

Teachers and students alike will attend the same workshops, as many secondary dance educators have few opportunities for professional development. Equally, teachers in the classes will facilitate classroom management and professional development of their students. Teachers and Students will choose through an application process which will be available on-line to navigate through artist bios and workshop descriptions in order to make their selections. They will choose to participate in 3 workshops each day. There will be a total of 32 workshops to choose from over the course of 2-days. Workshops will include technique classes, composition/repertoire classes. (Please navigate our website at www.pulsedance.ca to see updates for workshop descriptions and bios).

To expose students and educators to the broad spectrum of dance in Ontario, we are producing 1 evening of a Dance for Camera film festival and 2- evenings of live dance performances. The evening's program will include a variety of 10-minute excerpts of repertoire presented by our diverse professional dance community. This will be particularly meaningful for conference delegates from isolated communities and to at risk youth without financial means to attend arts events/performances. Each evening will also include keynote addresses from a selected group from our professional dance community who have a meaningful message for youth and educators. (Please refer to Conference Itinerary for more details in the framework for the whole conference).

"Pulse" is a youth dance conference whose outcomes are:

- Initiating the development of secondary dance programs in the province
- Supporting fledgling and established dance programs in the province
- Fostering long term relationships between schools and professional dance artists
- Inspiring youth and educators to explore and participate in dance
- Presenting opportunities for youth and educators in the province to witness the scope and potential of dance (as a curriculum subject, teaching/learning tool, and creative performance art)
- Educating and guiding future audiences, participants and leaders toward the continued support and development of dance throughout the province

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- Encouraging future dance artist residencies and outreach in under serviced communities
- Supporting Ontario's Policy Expectations for Secondary Dance Curriculum
- Developing literacy in dance as a form of communication

Pulse Dance Website

Students and teachers will have access to the Pulse website as a way of navigating through the workshop roster, artist bios and workshops descriptions as well as be able to download printable registration forms. The intent of the website is also to provide dance educators with a resource section that will grow with the conference from year to year. In addition, the website provides students an opportunity to learn more about the professional dance community through the artist bios. The launch of the 2008 Conference Website is scheduled for the end of October 2007.

Financially carrying out our Mandate

In order to participate, delegates will pay a fee for the conference. The conference fee includes the following from May 8th-11th 2008:

1. 3 Breakfasts
2. 2 Snack Breaks with refreshments between workshop A and B
3. 3 dinners
4. Entrance into Opening Night Film Festival and Reception
5. Entrances to 2-live dance performance evenings & keynote speeches
6. Post Performance Reception and Meet & Greet the Artists on the second night of performances (with light refreshments)
7. A Pulse T-Shirt

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