THE ROXEY BALLET COMPANY, INC DEIA+ POLICY FY 2023-2024

Board Approved 03/25/2023

Roxey Ballet was founded on and remains committed to being grounded in and communicating anti-racist/anti-oppressive ideals towards equity with regard to our leadership, staff, performers and programming. Mark and Melissa Roxey founded The Roxey Ballet Company, Inc (1995) specifically to impact a rural river town with (at the time) a largely white demographic to be the driving force for arts and education transformations engaging in anti-racist, human, civil, and disability rights topics. Their first task was to employ people of color from different cultures in all facets of the organization and to engage the surrounding counties and communities in our DEIA + narratives.

To this day Roxey Ballet is one of the only dance companies that consistently sponsors dancers and staff from other countries bringing cultural diversity to the small river town. Our current artists hail from South Korea, South America, Japan, and Finland and represent races from Asian, African American, and Hispanic descent. Everyone involved in the organization understands our commitment to DEIA+ and this practice, while understanding it is a “practice” continue to strive for anti-racist/anti-oppressive ideals creating a safe space for learning, creating, sharing, and collaborating with respect and dignity for all.

Roxey Ballet’s Board of Directors represents professionals from several NJ, PA, and MD counties. While approximately 40% of the board represents people of color, 100% of the board has experience with, truly understands, and fully supports our outreach and community work in under-represented and under-resourced communities. We fully understand that people of color are disproportionately under-represented in leadership and grant funding, which is why we continue to promote our ideals and grow our footprint finding ways to adjust the imbalance. Roxey Ballet’s board-approved mission statement includes a strong commitment to DEIA.

Mark Roxey grew up in Brooklyn with multiracial parents (an African American father and Puerto Rican mother). The impact from systemic racism and oppression as a multiracial, special needs inner-city human inspired him to break dance. That form of physical communication allowed his talents to be recognized where his formal dance training began. Since that time his mission for the company has been to pay it forward by working with students of all abilities, dancers from all over the world, professional boxers, and inner city youth. His cultural background forged this path towards building an all-inclusive, diverse, creative environment for artistic and cultural excellence across all populations. Those commitments brand our identity as the organization working with special needs, disabled, under-represented and under-resourced communities.

And while our mission conveys programming and language intersecting race, class, gender, equity, and abilities, we are cognizant of the need to continue to demonstrate progress toward increasing equity in our organization and across New Jersey. This is why we continue to create the organizational capacity to positively impact people of color, under-served and under-represented populations.

Our brand is Building Bridges Through Dance. We highlight society's inequities, injustices, and racism through our repertory and education residencies with: Washington Crossing the Delaware, Celebrating Diversity, Othello, MLK, Artillery Man, Women and Children to the Left, Palace of Mirrors, Temptation, In Excess of Four, Carmen, Carmina Burana, FRIDA (based on the life of Frida Kahlo) Mary Luz (inspired by the Argentinian poet), The C-Word: Stories of Triumph Over Breast Cancer, and Evermore-Nevermore – an honest look at racism in our country.

We encourage dialogue from our community, board, staff, dancers, and students to create non-judgmental forms for expression to guide and provide framework for positive interactions while building community. We ask all new dancers to create movement sequences of dance and spoken word addressing their cultural heritage, their differences (gender, race), how they relate or see themselves in the world, and how they can positively impact our community (which is also used as the introduction to Celebrating Diversity).

From our humble beginnings at Matheny Medical Center serving those with severe disabilities, we are cognizant of not assuming gender or race, being open to all cultures and peoples. We find it imperative to get to know the unique characteristics of each human to support and nurture their comprehension of physical ability.

Our location was chosen specifically to educate and serve under-represented communities intentionally, creating diverse programming to build authentic connections and improve the quality of life in our region. Our county’s Latin population is growing, and we are mindful to positively impact them with programming representative of their culture, perspectives, and backgrounds. We are cognizant of the mostly white population in our region that are the typical supporters of the ballet, however, we continue to create programming to reflect all communities of all colors. We are aware of the differing abilities and actively search for the best practices to deliver optimal outcomes.

We have made progress achieving our equity goals. Our successful humanistic programs have defined the organization and through audience and participant feedback, post debriefing meetings, and follow ups with partnerships/collaborators, we are advancing equity throughout our communities by:

- additional visibility and support from partner organizations

- change in societal behavior of our organization’s outreach programming

- increase of activist or political awareness and creating works around it

- understanding art can facilitate a broader humanities perspective

- future collaborations with organizations or color

- new patronage and target audiences near and far

- new events highlighting choreographers of color

Relative to our size we have positively influenced the underrepresented populations and provided unique contributions affecting this sector. We are achieving greater impressions across a vast section of New Jersey than the size of our organization should be able to accomplish. Roxey Ballet is a small company in a small town impacting large scale change, engaging and influencing under-represented and under-served populations to heighten equity and educate society.