

The Vision Series Dance Festival



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“We need more such programs to prove to educators, administrators, politicians and the public that dance and the arts make for strong people and great performers.”
Joanna Gewertz Harris, Ph.D.
Voice of Dance

“DANCE MAGAZINE has been proud to lend our name to the *Vision Series*... The commitment of Ms. Heath and those who work with her is of the highest standard.

I wish that each of our partnerships with the dance community could be as easy and fruitful as this one.”

Sincerely,
Barbara Paige Kaplan

“Thank you for all the time and faith you have invested in my peers and me. You’ve contributed to our development as individuals and our position in life...”

Love Always,
Lauren Nelson, Sequoia H.S.
Vision Series 1999-2001

“I took a dance convention and wanted to say that it was one of the best experiences in dance I have had in a long time. Donnette is a wonderful choreographer and I hope to be as good as she...”

Amanda McSweeney
Lamar H.S., Texas

San Francisco Youth Arts Festival
Performing Arts Award 2001

Zellerbach Family Foundation
Grant 2001-2002, 2004-2008

Fort Mason Foundation
Grant Recipient
2000-2002, 2004-2008

Mission: The Vision Series provides educational and professional performance opportunities to an innovative cross-section of dance artists from the Greater Bay Area. It develops and presents the diverse visions of high school dancers, professionals, emerging choreographers, and academic instructors, regardless of individual experience or expertise. This education project expands knowledge, provides mentorship, offers support, cultivates artistic exchange and increases the exposure of a variety of dance styles as an art form to the general public. Here, artists are supported and given the framework in which to grow and flourish.

History: Since 1999, it has provided opportunities to over 800 choreographers and 3,500 performers from 56 California high schools, youth programs and dance studios and 86 professional emerging companies and collegiate dance programs. Over 100 professional educators, along with professionals from Dance Magazine and California Dance Education Association, have graciously given their time, energy and expertise to the advancement of the program. Alonzo King LINES Ballet Training Program has been secured as the festival’s special guest on an annual basis. This project has also provided exposure for these artists to over 8,800 audience members. In addition, Vision Series Dance Day Conventions, sponsored by Alonzo King LINES Dance Center have given professional dance training to over 2,250 high school students.

The youth development goals of the Vision Series are: 1) to provide high school dancers and dance groups with high quality arts education and training; 2) to offer a unique and meaningful opportunity for these dancers to express their imaginations through dance and performance; and 3) to introduce high school dancers to professional dancers and companies.

Further goals include the following:

- Provide educational lectures, classes, discussions, workshops and in-school/on-site mentorship from dance experts and professionals to educate and expand knowledge of modern, jazz and ballet dance choreography, technique, and performance to high school youth and professional emerging companies.
- Strengthen and develop the minds, character and self-esteem of high school youth through the values of dance, performance and participation in a non-competitive, constructive and positively reinforced environment.
- Provide a unique and meaningful opportunity for youth to express their imaginations through dance and performance while gaining the knowledge and experiences of the lifestyle of a professional dancer.
- Provide youth with the inspiration to create dance, thereby engaging their own unique talents and creativity and helping to keep them off the streets.
- Expand support and spirit within communities by integrating emerging artists and educators with high school students.
- Provide a supportive environment in which to network and learn in an open, collaborative way.
- Provide scholarships and peer awards of recognition to enhance participants' motivation and progress toward careers as developing professional artists.
- Offer professional performance opportunities and exposure in a respected and well-established venue external to the education systems and smaller performance theaters.
- Provide a dance community forum for networking by supplying information in the lobby of our performances, including information and promotional material about local dance companies, events, workshops, college dance departments, and upcoming performances.
- Educate the general public by building a new awareness and appreciation to the varieties and values of various dance forms

The Vision of the Company: From the Founder, Donnette Heath

In 1997, the vision for Dance Repertory was born. The initial goal was to form a professional modern dance performance company dedicated to presenting outstanding works of both established and up-and-coming choreographers. Because many incredible choreographers find it difficult to be presented to wider audiences, Dance Repertory became a vehicle to sustain works on the professional stage and continue presenting them to various audiences through tours and home seasons of the company.

From 1992 until 1995, I was the producer of dance workshops and performances while obtaining a Master of Fine Arts Degree and subsequently working with Ririe-Woodbury Dance Company in Salt Lake City, Utah as master teacher of their TEEN BOARD Project. During that time, I began to notice a gap in the education and development of young artists' work, as well as a lack in performance opportunities for them in the professional arena. Based on programs I had previously implemented, I wanted to create a diversified program to feature works of the younger generation and emerging professionals, while providing them with guidance and support. Such an approach helps young artists gain self-confidence and inspires them to create from a deeper place inside of themselves. I also wanted these artists to enhance their work through mentorship from highly experienced and respected dance educators and choreographers.

The most important aspect of forming this program was a steady belief that no one should be turned away or put through a rigorous audition process in order to present their choreographic works. Though necessary and vital to a dancers experience, I felt a non-competitive environment should also be part of a healthy balance to a dancers emotional well being. As a result, in the VISION SERIES DANCE FESTIVAL, participation is on a first-come, first-serve basis such that any choreographer is welcome. I believe expertise comes from experience, and that opportunities should be available to give everyone a place to shine--ultimately allowing them to develop and find their own artistic voice.

Furthermore, I found my own early experiences in dance to be highly competitive and demanding on personal and professional levels. Most would agree that as a field, dance can be very unforgiving, such that we often develop a constant awareness of our faults as dancers and choreographers. For me, this began to cause me to lose interest in the very thing I had loved—dancing and performing! A primary component of the vision for this company, then, is to continue creating avenues not to only educate aspiring artists, but to do so within a uniquely supportive educational environment. In such an atmosphere, we can come together on equal ground and start transforming negative aspects of dance—such as the type of unhealthy competition that diminishes one's self-esteem--into beneficial learning opportunities. In the Vision Series, we learn to embrace our differences and accept ourselves where we are, rather than compare ourselves with where we think (or others think) we *should* be. At the same time, we see that the successes of others can inspire us to strive to improve in order to reach our own potential.

In the Vision Series, we can embrace every experience as a positive opportunity to learn. From this perspective, we push the boundaries of what we believe to be possible. As we see that time is actually on our side at every stage of our careers, we can be humble and comfortable with our progress, while inspiring one another to grow! Here, we everyone looks *to* each other, not *at* each other.

In 2009, Dance Repertory presented their first adjudicated concert of selected Bay Area high school programs that was created as an opposition to its current non-competitive programs. dRep wanted to introduce a new and healthy perspective for young dancers to be inspired through opposite perspectives: what it feels like to be selected and not selected. Each experience has its own feelings and connotations. Healthy competition can actually be a valuable and inspirational tool for their futures regarding confidence by overcoming negativity as a positive experience that shapes their belief system and being supportive when it seems to be the hardest thing to do. After four successful annual showcases, dRep discovered their participants' true passion went back to the beginning: the basic philosophy of the Vision Series – share and accept each others visions at all levels – we are all equals and seek experiences on stage to develop expertise and be ourselves. The Extravaganza had run its course.

In 2013, Donnette survived a hemorrhagic stroke and has become even more dedicated to her philosophy to “REVIVE your spirit to SURVIVE your challenges to THRIVE through love. She now visits dancers to inspire them to live their dream...

Contact Donnette Heath, Founder of Dance Repertory 415.225.0934 or dancerepertory5678@gmail.com or www.dancerepeetory.org

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What the Vision Series IS:

- Professional Showcase presentation
- A full-lighting but low-tech performance
- A shared program format that features professional emerging companies, college programs, youth/high school dance groups and studio dance companies that each perform one original work
- A welcome format for choreographers and dancers at various levels of expertise and experience to perform in a supportive, non-competitive environment.
- Networking opportunities for performances, auditions and job opportunities. Several people have gone on to dance for others and work with colleges and companies and many build long-lasting friendships.
- Educational dance careers and creative process discussions, life as a professional dancer, college dance program information, studios, Dance Magazines and careers in the arts information.
- A 2 full-day commitment for all: "Buddy/Mentor Weekend" (4-6 weeks prior to showcase) AND Showcase Day (master classes, "buddy" time, CharityChanceDance (fun and simple dance put together event day, Evening show)

What is the "Buddy" System?

- As the most popular and supportive element of the Vision Series (the "glue"), both the companies and the schools in the Festival will be assigned a "Buddy" (one emerging company/college for 2 youth groups). "Buddies" will be sharing the Buddy Weekend activities, all event day activities/rehearsals and performance with each other.
- "Buddies" will encourage each other through interaction and Peer Spirit Awards, striving to develop a long-lasting dance network.
- The "Buddy" System was created to generate artistic and educational support and community involvement with one another. The more seasoned dancers function as role models and must all be committed to making a difference in the lives of the younger generation and want to contribute their knowledge of life in the professional dance world or going to college.
- The high school students are encouraged to reach out to their "Buddy" so that they know you are interested in their process and that you want to get to know what their world is like, too. You will exchange ideas and your choreographic processes. This system was created so that all participants do not perform in a competitive atmosphere. Rather, to enhance community support and foster growth within each other.
- As a basis for participation, all participants are to attend all festivities in the "Buddy" System at full capacity. If an entire group doesn't take time to be a full part of the process, act as role models for each other or spend time building relationships with others in the field, then this festival is not meant for you. Schedule ahead for those that work to take off on required days, participation is only two days, but those 2 days will make a HUGE difference to all who give and take part.
- At the event, you will gather for allocated "Buddy" sessions to exchange thoughts, give and receive feedback and knowledge, and well, laugh a lot! Learn about each other and share your hearts!

"BUDDY AWARD"

- To provide recognition for everyone's hard work and festival spirit, each group will create and present their "buddies" a "Peer Spirit Award" for the work they perform. All awards will be given on stage prior to the performance. They are the most essential element of community enhancement to boost spirit and enable everyone to feel that their efforts are appreciated. Everyone's work makes a difference and it is very encouraging right before performing! All performers, no matter their expertise, feel like they are AMAZING in their own way!
- After spending time with them, you will probably want to give them a type of award that has nothing to do with their work or technical ability, but is more supportive of their character, ambition, etc. We encourage awards that really speak from the heart and let each other know that there is much more about them as people that you appreciate more than their dance or technical abilities!
- All "buddies" make it a really memorable moment - make up cheers, sing a song, bring a present, etc.

Anna Halprin, Featured Guest 2009

"The whole experience was delightful. Congratulations on the wonderful contribution you are making. Bravo!"

"Vision Series 2004" Joanna Gewertz Harris, Ph.D, Voice of Dance, March 2004

"We need more such programs to prove to educators, administrators, politicians and the public that dance and the arts make for strong people and great performers."

Barbara Paige Kaplan, Former Senior Editor, Dance Magazine

"DANCE MAGAZINE has been proud to lend our name to the *Vision Series*... The commitment of Ms. Heath and those who work with her is of the highest standard. I wish that each of our partnerships with the dance community could be as easy and fruitful as this one."

Performing Arts Award 2001 by the San Francisco Youth Arts Festival for Vision Series 2001

"High School dancers get a feel for professional performance..." Janet Cohen, Dance Magazine Press Time News, May 2001

Several dancers are now planning dance careers. But to Donnette Heath, creator of the series, that is just the icing on the cake..."There are so many lessons dance can teach," says Heath. To bring the experience to as many students as possible, she designed the Vision Series to support and celebrate dancers at all technical levels..."It's a very supportive environment, the kids learn about the business, but also how to help each other. Vision Series dancers may go on to become scientists, bank clerks, or teachers," says Heath, "but hopefully the experience will turn them into lifelong dance fans and leave them with happy memories. Most of all," says Heath, "I hope they walk out of the theater feeling great about themselves. They should all feel as tall as the Empire State Building..."

"It's All Good" Valuing process over product — Rachel Howard, *Dance Magazine Studio Talk*, June 2005

George Washington High School students and Mentor Deborah Slater are participants in the Vision Series, a program that is simple in structure and infectious in spirit. "Seeing the high school kids reminds me why I do what I do," says Slater. Nina Mayer says the Vision Series inspired one of her former dancers to pursue a full-time career, though all the students benefit from sharing the stage with professionals. "This project has allowed us to expand their idea of what modern dance can be. This is different than any competitions, they learn more at the Vision Series," says Director Nina Mayer. Heath believes that at this stage many artists benefit more from "loving suggestions" than "harsh criticism." What matters is that you're going to learn and you're going to get better. I want this show to be a big embrace," says Heath, the Vision Series Creator.

J.R. Glover, Director of Education, Jacob's Pillow Dance and Vision Series educator 2001

"I really appreciate the work you are doing to expose young people in their endeavors... You never know what clicks and makes an impression and fuels the dream... Keep up your Vision – it's a gift to the Bay Area."

"Young Performers get big chance with Vision Series..." Rachel Howard, San Francisco Examiner, February 1, 2001

"We can be so paranoid about showing our work, especially these kids," says Heath. "They're in a vulnerable state, and so are the young professional artists, who move to San Francisco because they want to become something big. This is about the performance opportunity, the time on stage. The performers are going to walk away from this feeling validated, feeling positive..."

'Vision' Inspires Teen Dancers... Tori Minton, San Francisco Chronicle, February 2001, "Students Find Stories in Dance..."

"It is that kind of intimate communication that Heath, executive/artistic director of Dance Repertory/San Francisco, wants to encourage in young modern dancers and their audiences through her Vision Series...The program is meant to educate and give exposure to the artists, and to introduce audiences to a commonly misunderstood art form... Heath says dance helped her find her identity. "It might help them discover something new about themselves, and accept who they are,"

From High School Students - Lauren Nelson, Vision Series 1999-2001

"Wow, what an experience! Thank you for all the time and faith you have invested in my peers and me. You have contributed to our development as individuals and our position in life. I don't know how you do it, how you bring so much life to your movement and still have enough energy to devote to us and this cause."

From Educators in the Field - Gary Masters, Jose Limon Dance Foundation of San Jose, sjDANCEco, Vision Educator/Mentor "One of the most vital dance programs in the Bay Area. Considering the breadth and wealth of dance in our region, this is quite a statement, but completely factual."

From Professional Emerging Companies in the Field - Emma Lou Huckabay, Huckabay McAllister Dance

"...the Vision Series is one of the most energizing events I have encountered. I am convinced this event will become an integral part of the San Francisco Bay Area dance scene. In doing so, the opportunities for dance audiences to see some engaging work, for seasoned and emerging choreographers to expose their work to new audiences, and for young dancers and choreographers to gain some unique insights will have the overall result of expanding the exposure of modern dance as an art form, inspiring young imaginations, and providing growth to all who participate."

From High School Directors in the Field - Lauren Manduke, Past Director, Sequoia High School

"...myself and my students were able to grow artistically and expand knowledge through this valuable and unique endeavor. It expanded community support, integrated many levels of performers and choreographers and allowed my students to use their imaginations in ways they never thought possible. Most of all, they felt their messages were being acknowledged and applauded, regardless of expertise."

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