

Legal Name

Columbia College

Project Title

To host Jawole Zollar, Artistic Director of Urban Bush Women (UBW) and UBW's BOLD team to imagine new approaches at The Dance Center and throughout Chicago to demand building for contemporary dance and jazz music, and to explore the intersections therein

DDCF Grant Number

2013231

Project Progress and Successes

The Dance Center of Columbia College Chicago hosted two Building Demand Exploration residencies with Jawole Zollar and Urban Bush Women in May 2014 and October/November 2014. Ms. Zollar was also available for two days in March 2015 to conclude the program during Urban Bush Women's one-week performance and community engagement residency at The Dance Center.

The intention throughout the eleven-month period was to explore intersections between jazz, contemporary dance and improvisation and how those intersections might contribute to demand building for the performing arts.

Targets audiences/constituents included:

- Jazz audiences and artists
- Columbia College Chicago Dance and Music students and faculty
- Students and artists working in other disciplines

RESEDENCY I -- RELATIONSHIP BUILDING AND RESEARCH

Dates: Five days; May 19-23, 2014

Who Involved: Jawole Zollar & one company member

Description: The initial five day residency was focused on relationship building and dedicated research time for Zollar into Chicago's black music heritage and the city's current and past jazz ecology.

The Dance Center arranged six introductory meetings for Jawole Zollar with leaders in Chicago's jazz field:

- Lauren Deutsch & Diane Chandler-Marshall, Executive Director and Education Director (respectively), Jazz Institute of Chicago
- Carol L. Adams, PhD., then President & CEO of the DuSable Museum of African American History
- Kate Dumbleton, Artistic Director, Hyde Park Jazz Festival & Visiting Faculty, School of the Art Institute of Chicago
- Orbert Davis & Maggie Fouche, Artistic Director & Marketing Director (respectively), Chicago Jazz Philharmonic
- James Fahey, Director, Symphony Center Presents, Chicago Symphony Orchestra

- Monica Hairston O'Connell, Executive Director, Center for Black Music Research, Columbia College Chicago

A meeting was also convened to discuss cross-campus collaborations with Columbia College Chicago's Interim Dean of the School of Fine and Performing Arts, Music Chair, Theater Chair, Dance Chair, and Film/Video Chair.

Other interactions included:

- Dinner & Listening Session at Andy's Jazz Club with the Jimmy Ellis Quartet and Dana Hall's Black Fire
- Kahil El'Zabar, world-renowned percussionist/vocalist and a founding member of the AACM, hosted a salon at his loft for Jawole and AACM members. Zollar and El'Zabar discovered an immediate connection through their work which might result in future collaborations. Very exciting.
- Jawole and UBW dancer Chanon Judson were invited to a "100 SAXOPHONE TRIBUTE TO SUN RA," marking the 100th anniversary of Sun Ra's birth. The outdoor celebration (aka flash mob) in Washington Park on Chicago's south side was led by reed-player David Boykin and about nine other professional players. The remaining 90 or so players were regular people who were given toy plastic saxophones to blow upon as they wished. Naturally, a dance jam broke out, with Jawole and Chanon in the mix. "I have never experienced anything quite like this...totally unexpected. The cacophony and spontaneous dancing would have pleased Sun Ra very much, I think." -- Phil Reynolds, Executive Director, The Dance Center of Columbia College Chicago. "I only wish my whole company could have been here to experience this extraordinary outpouring of improvised sound and movement." -- Jawole Zollar

During the week, Jawole and Ms. Judson also had unstructured time for research at the Center for Black Music Research, and visits to the Art Institute of Chicago and a special exhibit on Voodoo at the Field Museum of Natural History.

RESIDENCY II -- COMMUNITY AND CAMPUS EXPLORATIONS

Dates: Twenty one days, October 20-November 9, 2015

Who Involved: Jawole Zollar, six company members & one UBW BOLD facilitator

Description: Residency II was intended to explore demand building for jazz and contemporary dance in campus, community-based and public settings.

Campus CollabLab

An ensemble of 4-6 musicians was assembled among Dance Center accompanists to work with 12 Dance students on the Campus CollabLab. The motivation was to find ways for the musicians and students to interact in a dialogue around broad ideas of improvisation. Zollar had five 90-minute sessions to do so. Reports from Dance Center faculty indicate that the Campus CollabLab started slowly, but then grew. From Meghann Wilkinson, Dance Center Adjunct Faculty: "Students felt really pushed to explore their improvisation skills. But, I guess I had some sort of expectation of much more of a true collaboration with the musicians....it took several sessions for there to be any real connection and play between the dancing and music...during the first few sessions, the musicians didn't feel like they were being utilized much more than regular dance accompanists...On the final big showing day, there was definitely more of an attempt at cross-over and connection between music and dance. It was definitely an experiment... In all, there was so much goodness in this whole experience. Though it did not live up to some of my expectations or pre-conceived notions of what a "collab-lab" would be, there was some really rich and wonderful material and some excellent inspiration for the students (and for me!)... I know it's a challenge to

come into a college class and take the reins for a few weeks- it takes so much time to simply assess what the students are ready for. But the way in which the UBW dancers teach AND participate in class was perhaps the most valuable experience for the students- being in class each day with these beautiful, strong artists was a really unique experience for them. I was super psyched to be a part of it all, and I hope that more deep experiences like this can happen in the future- it's so wonderful for students to be able to really invest in some time with a true ENSEMBLE (and UBW is one of the most connected, communicative, healthy-seeming ensembles I've yet witnessed- really inspiring to me and my work!!)"

Community CollabLab

Running in parallel with the Campus CollabLab was a Community CollabLab involving Jawole, UBW dancers, 24 professional Chicago-based dancers working in various styles of contemporary dance, and 8 jazz musicians. Jawole and dancers had three three-hour evening sessions with the participants. It was fruitful by all accounts and most participants shared their work together at the final residency showing described below. "I really think the Community CollabLab came closer to achieving one of my objectives; that is, getting the musicians to 'hear' the dance and dancers to 'see' the music." -- Jawole Zollar

Jazz Brunch

On Sunday, October 26, 2014, The Dance Center produced a Jazz/Dance/Improvisation Brunch in a gallery space operated by the Chicago Arts Coalition (see Additional Attachments: Jazz Brunch Flyer). Kahil El'Zabar assembled a power quartet involving: himself on percussion and vocals, Corey Wilkes on trumpet, and Junius Paul and Harrison Bankhead, both double bassists. Kahil's ensemble and UBW dancers put down about 45 minutes of jazz/dance improvisation. Then a jam ensued with all of the 60 or so audience members. One audience/participant commented, "I felt like I was at church this morning." From Caroline Older, Executive Director, Chicago Arts Coalition, "I wanted to write and say how tremendous I thought the Jazz Brunch was last Sunday. I loved witnessing the intersection of art, jazz and dance. Thank you for thinking of our space for this special event. Let's do it again sometime."

Classes & Workshops

Jawole entered four First Year Seminar classes at Columbia College Chicago. James Falzone, then First Year Seminar Faculty Fellow commented, "Over two days, Jawole engaged my students in a stunning array of issues...her love and personal experience with jazz greats such as John Coltrane, Cecil Taylor, and David Murray, the legacy of black choreographers, the influence of the Black Arts Movements and the Association of the Advancement of Creative Musicians... Jawole's deep knowledge, coupled with her warm and engaging manner, had several hundred students grappling with issues and ways of thinking that they had not encountered before. A film student from Chicago's west side stated: "What I liked most about the discussion with Miss Zollar was the resonant authenticity, candor, and wisdom that she brought to the conversation, especially when speaking on her experiences with race as it contributed to her development . . . she is the embodiment of resilience and adaptation."

Jawole and her company also entered a Music Ethnography class with Columbia College Chicago Music students. Instructor Nate Bakkum commented, "Urban Bush Women's visit to the ethnography class was a valuable experience that resonated strongly across the end of our semester. Students daily recalled elements of that day's conversation as we addressed other topics, and they connected the experience to their own ethnographic projects in really strong ways."

Zollar and dancers entered two 90-minute Advance Topics classes with ten Dance Center students to develop improvisational composition skills. The second class concluded with a showing a three minute work from each student. One student commented, "The residency with Urban Bush Women was one of the most valuable experiences I've had as a student of the Dance Center thus far. Having the entire company there made a huge difference...I felt like I got to know them as a company immediately and it felt like more of an equal experience; they were here to learn from us."

Jawole and dancers joined a seminar class for 25 students at the School of the Arts Institute Chicago to demonstrate and discuss their approach to improvisation and dance composition.

Final Showing

The Dance Center presented an informal showing of the outcomes of the Campus CollabLab and Community CollabLab led by Jawole Zollar (see Additional Attachments: UBW -- Duke Exploration Reel). 18 student and community dancers were involved with 8 musicians. Roughly 60 people attended the showing which consisted of: an observed warm-up with all concerned; a showing of the Campus CollabLab's work; a sound and movement improvisation with Community CollabLab participants; an improvisation between UBW dancers and Community CollabLab musicians; and a question-and-answer opportunity for the audience.

During the two-week residency Jawole and dancers availed themselves of several unstructured explorations:

- A visit to the David Bowie exhibit at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago
- A visit to the Wangechi Mutu exhibit and a lecture on Afro Futurism at Northwestern University
- A PEEP Show at Links Hall, in which two choreographers listened to music for the first time and then had 45 minutes to create a dance while the audience watched the process; "This is a structure I would like to experiment with...sort of like speed dating for dancers and musicians" -- Jawole Zollar
- A Story Jam with DJ Justin at Beauty Bar
- A listening session with second generation AACM member saxophonist Ernest Dawkins at Norm's Bistro
- A listening session (at the invitation of Kahil El'Zabar) with Corey Wilkes at Andy's Jazz Club

FINAL VISIT -- AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT & EVALUATION

Dates: Two days, March 20 & 21, 2015

Who Involved: Jawole Zollar, seven company members, one BOLD facilitator, Jonathan Secor & Nathea Lee

Description: Jawole's final visit coincided with a week-long community engagement and performance residency with Urban Bush Women who performed their 30th Anniversary Season program.* The two-day visit provided opportunities for interactions with The Dance Center's core audience and a select group of teen dance students. It also provided time to talk about and evaluate the Duke Building Demand Exploration with lead partners and newly appointed UBW staff.

AMPLIFY is a new Saturday afternoon program at The Dance Center targeting teens. Jawole led a workshop on improvisation for approximately 20 members of Red Clay Dance's Youth Ensemble. The teens then showed Jawole about 10 minutes of their work.

The Dance Center's Associate Professor Raquel Monroe moderated a pre-performance talk with Jawole Zollar for approximately 30 patrons.

Jawole and the company attended a closing night party with approximately 60 Friends of The Dance Center and subscribers.

Ten partners involved in the residency gathered with Jawole, UBW staff and Dance Center staff to talk informally about their experiences. The conversation was far ranging and quite invigorating, though it did not go as deeply into specifics of the residencies as anticipated.

* Please note: No Doris Duke Charitable Foundation Building Demand Exploration funding was applied to UBWs, week-long community engagement and performance residency.

Challenges / Obstacles / Failures Encountered in the Project

The greatest challenge was building fertile collaborations among academic departments other than Dance at Columbia College Chicago.

The ambition for the Campus CollabLab was to involve Columbia's Music students and faculty. That proved to be impossible given obstacles due to scheduling, complications around how, or if, students would receive credit for their participation, who among Music faculty would be involved, and how Music students might be assessed for their participation. For example, a member of the Music faculty agreed to involve students from his Improvisation II class in the Campus CollabLab. Unfortunately, the class did not meet its minimum enrollment requirement and was, therefore, cancelled.

The Dance Center had hoped to produce a series of short video conversations (3-4 minutes) between Jawole Zollar and three or four important figures in Chicago's jazz world with a cohort of Film/Video students. Those videos would then be deployed on The Dance Center's website and through social media vehicles to stimulate demand. Again, assembling the student cohort was not possible for reasons similar to those encountered with the Music Department described above.

What was learned from these that might be of benefit to others?

First, people's attendance at live art events are very personal choices and, while it might seem like a natural inclination for jazz aficionados, for example, to attend a contemporary dance concert (particularly if the dance concert involves improvised movement and/or music), it is not always the case. Success in building demand among "crossover" audiences requires a sustained commitment over time. Jawole Zollar commented, "Demand building is strategic, long-term work. Not shot-by-shot interventions."

Second, developing cross-departmental collaborations on college campuses requires a very long planning timeframe to overcome administrative and pedagogic barriers.

Links to relevant website(s) and/or project publications, reports, etc.

Please see Additional Attachments

If someone wishes to speak with your organization further about your project, would there be a willing contact? Y/N

If yes, please provide contact name and information for preferred method of contact (email, phone, etc).

Yes.

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