# Peterborough New Dance/Public Energy: An Evaluation

Includes:

# Final Research Report Bibliography

## By Sara Korosi and Rebecca Shoesmith

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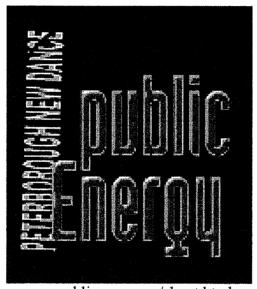
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# Peterborough New Dance / Public Energy: An Evaluation

**Abstract:** An author-generated executive summary is available

**Keywords**: dance, arts, Market Hall, Trent University students, The New Canadians' Centre, PND/PE, Peterborough New Dance/Public Energy, audience, survey, gender trends

# Peterborough New Dance/ Public Energy: An Evaluation



www.publicenergy.ca/about.html

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A joint venture between Peterborough New Dance/ Public Energy, The Trent Center for Community Based Education, and International Development Studies 422

By: Sara Korosi and Rebecca Shoesmith

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#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Since World War Two, arts has been deemed a cost efficient means of fostering morale. Despite governmental economic cutbacks, the organization Peterborough New Dance/ Public Energy (also known as PND/PE) has managed to survive to the present day. This organization has two goals. The first of which is to create employment for local artists, the second of which is to create an audience for contemporary dance. This report evaluates whether PND/PE was successfully meeting the latter goal. The specific methodologies used to carry out this study were as follows; reading of historical documentation, surveys, participant observation, informal conversations, and personal interviews via e-mail.

In terms of data analysis, the subsequent information was found. Many people attend PND/PE performances, however, more people attend local productions. More women attend than men, and the average age of audience members is mid to late thirties. The overwhelming majority of people in the audience are from the city of Peterborough. Audience members are comprised of mostly those who do not claim to be professional artists. However, many of those who attend performances are also involved in other aspects of the PND/PE organization. Finally, over half the number of performances that audience members attend, are dance-oriented in nature.

A variety of advertisement mediums are used by PND/PE. However, audience members prefer some mediums to others. Most people are pleased with the performance venue of Market Hall. Lastly, ticket prices are deemed fair.

The evaluators, after much thought and deliberation, concluded that PND/PE is achieving its goal of developing an audience for contemporary dance. Yet, this development is vulnerable as few new persons are attending performances. Rather, most performances are frequented by the same audience members.

In the interest of expanding performance audiences we made the following recommendations. First, stronger ties should be made with Trent University students. Secondly, discounted ticket pricing should be made available for all performances. Thirdly, partnerships with other organizations, such as The New Canadian Center should be fostered. Fourthly, and finally, further evaluation projects that focus on PND/PE's first goal, as well as economic factors, should be undertaken and build upon the findings of this evaluation project, in order to reach a broader level of understanding.

#### INTRODUCTION

#### History of Arts

After World War Two much of the world was left in a state of turmoil. The limited amount of money that was available for rejuvenation of the state was dedicated to rebuilding the infrastructure in war torn areas. As a result, social programs were often overlooked. After the immediate need to reconstruct the economy of Europe was met it became readily apparent that the European state could no longer ignore the need to raise a sense of morale among its citizens. Different nations went about addressing this issue in a variety of manners. Britain made a decision to turn to the arts as a means of fostering morale. This route was chosen because it was deemed a cost efficient and result-producing method (Margo Perun, October 10<sup>th</sup> 2003).

These concerns over morale promotion were not only existent in Europe. Across the Atlantic Ocean, Canada was also troubled with similar issues. However, the context was not identical. Many people in Canada were growing concerned over creating a strong national identity. As an increasingly pluralist society, Canada was in need of a stratagem that bound together the diversity of religions, ethnicities, and cultures present within its borders. Following the successful example set by post World War Two Britain, Canada also made the decision to direct more attention to the arts. In this way, Canada hoped to not only create a unified national community, but also a strong sense of morale among its citizens (ArtsCanada, We're more Pelletier than Pelletier, 1975: 68).

The first step that the nation was confronted with was the task of democratizing art, in order to make it accessible to all. In the 1970's, the government donated substantial amounts of funds to arts programs. Small communities such as Peterborough, Ontario, took advantage of the funding opportunities they were presented with by creating independent art venues. These venues were then readily accessible for people who would otherwise not have the chance to participate in these sorts of programs. However, in the 1980's when the recession hit, the Canadian government cut much of the funding it had previously allotted for arts programs. As a result, many independent art venues could no longer continue to operate. Those venues that did survive the recession were forced to restrict their arts programs to a single focus topic (Margo Perun, 2003: 113).

Peterborough was fortunate in that it was one of a few communities that was able to maintain its arts venues to the present day. Prior to the 1980's, a small group of likeminded artists collaborated in an effort to bring arts to the community of Peterborough. Thanks to the perseverance of this group, Peterborough arts was able to survive the lean years of the recession, by concentrating its attention on dance and other visual arts, rather than the arts in general (Bill Kimball, January 2004).

#### Peterborough New Dance/Public Energy

In the heyday of arts funding Artspace was a program that was multi-diciplinary in its focus. Music, poetry, film, video, and dance performances were shown in its gallery. Known for its presentations of radical dance, and the profound collaborations created between dancers and visual artists the organization quickly gained a praiseworthy reputation. However, due to more restrictive government funding in the 1980's, Artspace was forced to abandon performance programming in order to survive. By focusing solely

on visual arts, Artspace has been able to endure to the present day (PND/PE Organizational Profile, 2003: 1).

Prior to the abandonment of Artspace's dance programs, Bill Kimball had been responsible for the organization of these programs. With a profound commitment to the continuation of dance programs, Bill Kimball founded Peterborough New Dance in 1994. After six years of successful programming, Peterborough New Dance was officially recognized as a charitable organization (ArtsCanada, The Patron-politicans, 1975: 58). The focus of Peterborough New Dance differed from that of the previous dance program under Artspace, in that it provided support for upcoming artists and also produced entertainment for the general public. In 2002 Bill Kimball decided to add the term 'Public Energy' to the organization's name, because work was being presented that was not strictly dance oriented.

Peterborough New Dance/ Public Energy (referred to as PND/PE) today has a clear mission statement that reads as follows:

"Peterborough New Dance/ Public Energy is an animator of contemporary dance, committed to professional standards of presentation and payment of artists' fees. For PND/PE, animating means creating a kind of public energy in the community that only comes about when artist and audience meet around the creation, performance and touring of contemporary dance" (PND/PE Organizational Profile: 2003).

Through PND/PE's mission statement the organization has been able to define two distinct goals it wishes to fulfill. These goals are both considered equally important. The first goal is supporting contemporary dance creation, while the second is developing an audience for contemporary dance. In supporting these goals Peterborough New Dance/Public Energy searches for professional artists from the national and provincial dance community (provincial also includes local) (www.publicenergy.ca).

#### The Evaluation Project

Peterborough New Dance/Public Energy) is now considered an integral part of the Peterborough community. Although the organization is now in its tenth year of existence, it has not previously undergone an evaluation. Due to the fact that this is the first evaluation being conducted on this organization many questions need to be addressed. However, given the time constraints and the tremendous magnitude of issues that could be examined, the subjects investigated in the evaluation had to be narrowed considerably. As such the evaluators chose to focus solely on PND/PE's second goal given above, the development of an audience for contemporary dance venues.

PND/PE organizes a variety of dance venues. Some of these include performances, workshops, as well as '8-To-8' dance projects. The 8-To-8 dance project is an annual event in which performers create a production and perform for an audience within 24 hours. It should be noted that all of these venues are conducted by local and visiting artists. Therefore, the evaluation topic had to be narrowed even further if any constructive evaluation work was to take place.

This evaluation focused on the question of whether or not PND/PE was meeting its goal of providing accessibility of dance performances to all persons in the Peterborough area. By choosing this avenue of research, many aspects of the organization could inevitably not be addressed. For instance, one could study whether or

not performing artists were being supported in their creation of contemporary dance, as well as if they were being given a wage on which they could subsist. However, due to time and resource constraints, the scope of the topic unfortunately had to be narrowed.

The topic of whether or not PND/PE has developed an audience for contemporary dance performances was specifically chosen for many reasons. The question of studying if this organization was contributing to the national arts goal of raising community morale is difficult to quantify and therefore also to measure. Questions were directed specifically at audience members rather than those employed or volunteering for PND/PE. A focus on audience members was selected as a means of obtaining information because PND/PE is a rather small organization, consisting of only two gainfully employed staff members. As such the information gathered from audience members would likely be a more reliable source of data because of the increased sample size. Finally, the focus of this study was on dance performances, rather than workshops and other dance venues hosted by PND/PE. This was done because in general more people attended performances than workshops. For this reason, the evaluators were able to interact with a larger group of people who could participate in their study. Therefore, this evaluation aimed to measure how accessible PND/PE's dance performances were to the general public of the Peterborough area.

To measure the accessibility of PND/PE dance performances the following specific questions were examined. First, how many people are attending performances. Secondly, how effective is advertising at reaching those in the Peterborough region? Thirdly, are new audience members being introduced with regularity? Fourthly, does the location from which dancers originate directly impact who is in the audience? In other words, on what basis do audience members decide to attend PND/PE programs. For example, to what extent are such decisions based on the location of programs, artists place of residence, as well as the genre of the particular performance, among other factors? Fifthly, in what way do ticket prices impact the accessibility of dance performances? Overall, these questions should generate information about the accessibility of this organization as a whole. In doing so, it is hoped that the information gleaned may be used to improve this organization's visibility within Peterborough, therefore increasing the likelihood of PND/PE's sustainability.

#### Specifics of the Methodology

This evaluation was conducted over a six-month period of time, that being from October 2003 to April of 2004. In collaboration with the Trent Center for Community Based Education and Trent's International Development Studies class (IDST 422), the two evaluators were able to select a topic of study based on their personal interests. Beginning in October of 2003 meetings were held to gather information surrounding the topic of arts, and more specifically dance in the Peterborough region. These meetings were held with both evaluators and a local researcher. This researcher acted as a liaison between PND/PE and the evaluators for the entire duration of the evaluation. From September of 2003 to December 2003, the evaluators took classes on the topic of theoretical training in evaluation methodologies, under the tutelage of Professor Christiaan Beyers (Project was designed using ideas from: Carol Weiss, 1972: 60-91).

Beginning in January of 2004, meetings were held with Bill Kimball, the founder of PND/PE, to identify key concerns and topics of study (See : Johan Pottier, 1997: 203-

225). Using the information gathered from these meetings a survey consisting of 12 questions was composed. Surveys were printed by PND/PE and included in the middle of dance performance programs (Survey's were formulated using ideas from: M. Patton, 1982: 139-159). These were distributed to all members of the audience at three performances. One of the dance performances where surveys were distributed was a local performance, named *The Cure for Sexual Jealousy*, which was held on Saturday January 31<sup>st</sup> 2004. The remaining two performances at which surveys were given was a nationally produced performance, called *Portraits*, held on both Friday February 6<sup>th</sup> and Saturday February 7<sup>th</sup> 2004.

Both evaluators attended all three of these performances free of charge in order to carry out participant observation (See: M. Patton, 1990: 199-275), as well as answer any questions audience members may have had about the evaluation being conducted. After seventy surveys were collected, the responses were analyzed in table and graph formats (Tables and graphs formed using teachings of: Paul Nichols, 1991: 102-115). The trends that seemed readily apparent from informal conversations with audience members, as well as from surveys, were used to generate questions for formal interviews. These interviews consisted of ten questions based on a general interview guide made by the evaluators. E-mail addresses were given on thirteen surveys. A copy of the general interview guide questions was sent to the thirteen respondents via e-mail. However, only five people sent responses. Recommendations for the improvement of PND/PE's accessibility were formulated using the information gathered from surveys, informal interviews, participant observation, and e-mail interviews. (See: David Silverman, 1993: 144-170).

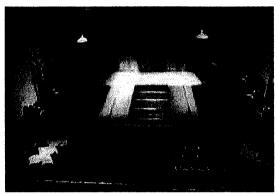
There were few problems encountered during the evaluation, however they were present. Surveys were often completed by a pair of persons rather than individuals. In the case of a married couple, which formed a major component of the audience, it was often the woman who filled out the survey. For this reason, the majority of surveys were based on the responses of women, rather than men. This meant that many opinions and thoughts may not have been incorporated in the evaluation, therefore resulting in a female bias. Furthermore, very few people were interested in personal interviews. For this reason, lengthy interviews were not carried out. In lieu of personal interviews, e-mail interview guides were distributed for completion. Not having the physical contact with audience members that personal interviews generate meant that many non-verbal observations, as well as the opportunity to ask additional spontaneous questions were lost. Furthermore, because of the nature of the project many of the questions that were asked are based on feeling and personal opinion (See: M. Patton, 1990: 371-433). Therefore, despite the effort of the evaluators to be clear in their questions meaning, some responses are quite subjective in the variety of ways they can be interpreted (See: B. Strecher and W. Davis, 1987: 43-61).

Despite these potential shortcomings, the nature of the study and the candidness of people involved with PND/PE is such that there is no repercussions for speaking one's true feelings. Many people were excited to discuss dance performances during intermission and after performances. Consequently, those responses that were received are likely to be very reliable. For this reason, the evaluators feel their interpretations are likely to be accurate and beneficial.

#### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

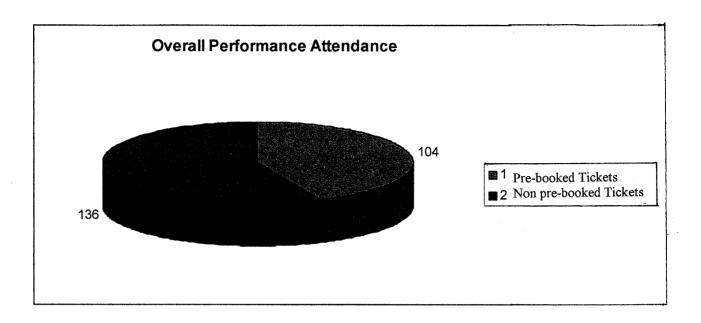
#### Attendance

The three performances at which information was gathered for this evaluation project were held at Market Hall. Market Hall is located in downtown Peterborough and is described as being located at, "the hub of all things to see and do in the heart of Peterborough" (Market Hall Performing Arts Center: 2003). The Hall is managed by the Market Hall Performing Arts Center Incorporated, which is a non-profit organization. Events held in this locale include art exhibitions, dance productions, music concerts, community fundraising events, and other arts related programs that may be of benefit to the Peterborough community.



www.markethall.org

In total 240 people attended the three performances. 104 of these people booked their tickets prior to the event. The remaining 136 people bought their tickets the evening of the performance. Considering that Market Hall is a venue that seats on average 150 people (the set-up of seating varies according to the type of performance being held, yet the maximum seating capacity is 325), by examining the numerical attendance data it is readily apparent that these performances were well received by the Peterborough community. However, before delving into such a conclusion it is important that the three performances attended are examined in their own right.



The Cure for Sexual Jealousy was the first production of three examined in this evaluation. Held on Saturday January 31<sup>st</sup> 2004 at eight o'clock in the evening, 130 people were in attendance. This is a notably large number of people, considering the fact that only about 150 seats were available. Based on observation it was quickly apparent to the evaluators that many people were in attendance for the performance that evening. Audience members scrambled to the seating area to place their coats on seats before purchasing their beverages. After a time the confusion of claiming seats in advance became so overwhelming that a volunteer was asked to stand guard at the curtain that separated the lobby from the stage. This volunteer was responsible for ensuring that no one else was able to enter the seating area prior to the performance.

Six minutes before the performance began audience members were able to pass through the curtain area and claim seats. These seats were filled within a few minutes. Consequently extra chairs had to be added to accommodate the larger than expected audience size. One audience member was overheard saying to another, "Wow, we should have come earlier dear, I didn't think there was gonna be so many people!".

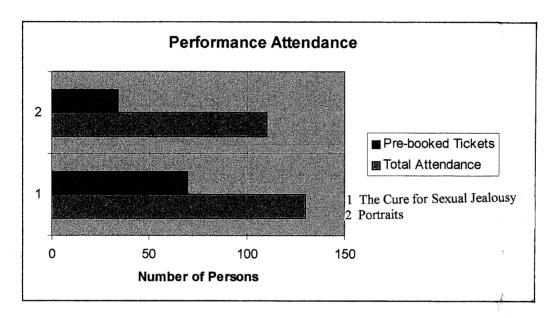
Of the 130 people in attendance at *The Cure for Sexual Jealousy*, seventy people had reserved their tickets in advance. In other words, 54 percent of tickets were prebooked. This means that over half of the people in attendance had not made the choice to attend as a spur of the moment decision. This is important to note because it illustrates the point that PND/PE is holding events that appeal to the Peterborough community.

The attendance at *The Cure for Sexual Jealousy* may now be held in contrast with that of Sarah Chase's production *Portraits*. *Portraits* was held on Friday February 6<sup>th</sup> and Saturday February 7<sup>th</sup> 2004 at eight o'clock in the evening. There were fifty people in attendance on Friday February 6<sup>th</sup> 2004 and sixty people on Saturday February 7<sup>th</sup> 2004. This is less than half the amount of audience members as attended at *The Cure for Sexual Jealousy*. As such, it is obvious that the 'turn out' was less substantial.

At the two productions of *Portraits*, the atmosphere seemed less social. Fewer people arrived in advance to converse with others. When they did arrive, they generally went straight to their seats. There was no need to clamber for seating, as seat availability

was plentiful on both evenings. The evaluators were struck by the fewer number of audience members at these performances, in comparison to *The Cure for Sexual Jealousy*, and wanted to confirm that this was a lower number of attendants than usual. Upon asking an audience member, after the Friday evening performance, about the number of spectators the following response was given, "It's Friday night, people are probably tired. Maybe more people will be here tomorrow".

Of the 110 people who did attend *Portraits*, only thirty-four pre-booked their tickets. With only thirty-one percent of tickets bought in advance, it appears the appeal of this performance was lesser than that of *The Cure for Sexual Jealousy*. This inference can be further validated by the fact that fewer people attended *Portraits* in its two evening debut than *The Cure for Sexual Jealousy*, which was only performed once.

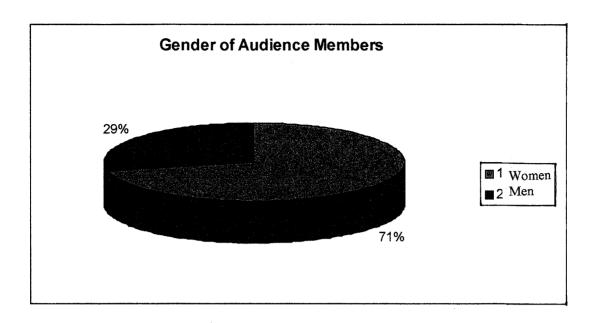


#### **Audience Members**

Gender:

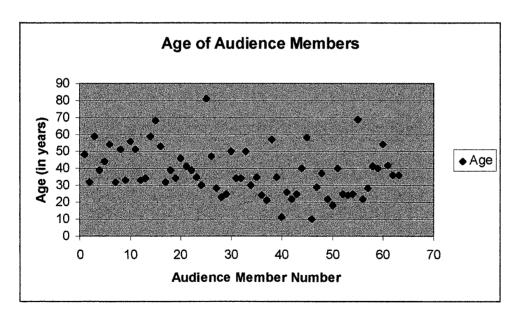
Based on the surveys that were received from performances 71 percent of the audience was female. Yet, this was contradictory to what was observed at the performances. Eyewitness accounts suggested that there was a closer to equal proportion of males and females at the performances. The discrepancy could be accounted for in that the female member of a couple most often filled out a survey for both herself and her partner.

It is likely that equal numbers of males and females were present because the performances served as a night out for couples. One woman was quoted saying, "I just love coming to these things. It gives my husband and I a chance to go out and do things other than the usual dinner and movies date".



Age:

In terms of age, there was a wide range of persons present. The youngest was ten and the oldest was eighty-one. However, the average was 38.9 years of age. The median was slightly lower, being 38.37. The average age of men was 42.9 years, while for women the average was significantly lower at 34.8 years.



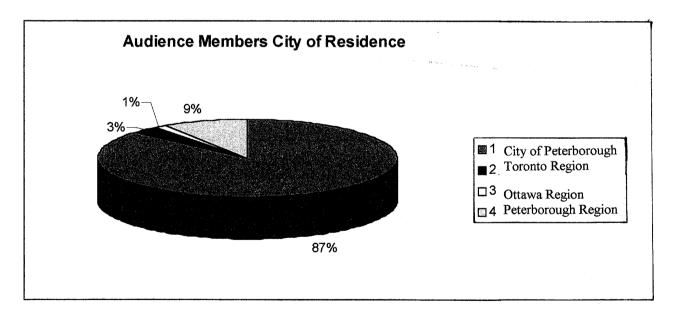
The range of ages present indicates that PND/PE's performances appeal to all age ranges of the Peterborough community. Both the average and the median ages of men and women, as well as men and women combined, are of a middle-aged category. Therefore, this seems to be the age category comprising of the majority of the audience. As shown in the quote above this is likely the case because these performances appeal to

middle-aged persons as a 'night on the town'. These people are looking for alternative social events at which they can interact with friends and meet other like-minded individuals.

The data that shows men tended to be of an older age than women can be explained in a variety of ways. First, there is the social norm of married men being slightly older than their wives. In addition, as stated earlier, many couples attended at these performances. Secondly, Trent University is located in Peterborough. This post-secondary institution has more women than men enrolled in its programs. This is especially true for the arts programs. The performances that PND/PE offers appeal to these students for many reasons. Several reasons include PND/PE supports local and upcoming artists, furthermore, PND/PE offers an alternative venue for live theatre production that is scarcely available elsewhere. Therefore, Trent arts students (primarily women) attend these productions en masse. This logic was further validated through participant observation and informal interviews.

#### City of Residence:

Statistical data was also collected on audience members' places of residence. Although PND/PE is a local organization, it draws its audience from many different regions. 95.7 percent of the surveyed audience indicated they were from the Peterborough region (including Keene, Lakefield, and Douro), 2.8 percent were from the Toronto region, and 1.4 percent were from the Ottawa region. Of those that were from the Peterborough region, 86.6 percent were from the city of Peterborough.



This data clearly indicates that the majority of audience members were from the Peterborough region. These statistics can be accounted for through the following explanations. PND/PE's performances are often held at Market Hall. As stated earlier this building is located in the heart of the city of Peterborough. Thus, it is easy for people to travel to this venue without a vehicle. Location is imperative for the many Trent

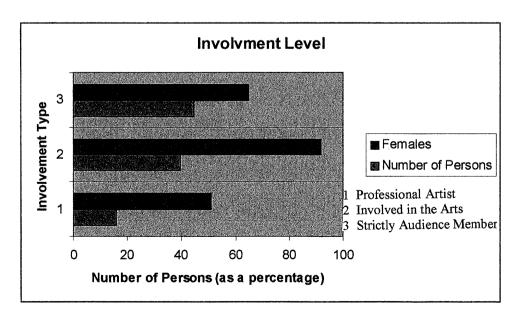
students who depend on local buses for transportation. Furthermore, many Trent students live in the downtown vicinity. Thus having performances at Market Hall draws many people who live in the region to attend who might otherwise not if performances were located elsewhere.

In terms of persons who drive, the city of Peterborough is the heart of the Peterborough region. Thus, those who live in the surrounding area depend on this city for alternative social events that would not survive in a less populated area. Furthermore, PND/PE's advertising is done through networks that exist primarily in the Peterborough region. For example, ads are placed on the Trent radio station that can be listened to by anyone in the local vicinity. Additionally ads are written up in the Examiner, which is a newspaper that is accessible in the entire Peterborough region.

The few persons that indicated that they were not from the Peterborough region can also be accounted for. It is likely that they are friends of persons who are in attendance at a given performance. For example, at the *Portraits* performance, the artist, Sarah Chase, had several friends attend in support that were not from Peterborough. Furthermore, one interviewee stated that when she had out of town guests visiting her she made a conscious effort to bring them to PND/PE performances.

#### Involvement Level:

Another feature that distinguished those in attendance from one another was their involvement level in the arts. Of those who completed surveys 16 percent said they were professional artists, 39.5 percent said they were involved in the arts, while the remaining 44.5 percent claimed to be strictly audience members. Furthermore, a trend that became apparent within these categories was the proportion of males versus females. Of the professional artist category, 51 percent were female while 49 percent were male. Those who claimed to be involved in the arts were 92 percent female, and only 8 percent male. Finally, of the audience member category 65 percent were female, while the remaining 35 percent were male.



The number of persons who claimed to be professional artists was clearly quite low. This is likely because Peterborough is a small town with a population of 70 000, that has a limited economic base, and therefore minimal funding for arts in general (www.publicenergy.ca/about.html). As such, it is not easy for an artist to maintain a standard of living above the poverty line in this locale. Few people are thus able to be a professional artist without supplementary sources of financial aid gained from other avenues, such as an additional source of employment.

Based on the statistical information given above just under half of those who filled out surveys were involved in the arts. This is a substantial proportion of the audience. Nevertheless, given that the term, 'involved in the arts' is quite vague another question was later added to clarify in what way people were involved in PND/PE. However, the question of how people were involved will be addressed later. The classification 'involved in the arts' is a distinguishable category as whole because it defines a person as not being strictly an audience member, but also not being a professional artist. Based on participant observation it seems that such a large ratio of persons were involved in the arts because of the reciprocal relationships that have been established between members of the Peterborough arts community. In other words, those who cannot afford to be professional artists, or are not so inclined, will aid in the continuation of arts in Peterborough by supporting those who are performing in a variety of ways. For example, one may not have the time needed to memorize a script and practice a series of dance movements, however, they may be able to co-ordinate lighting for another person who is performing. Those who are involved in the arts would choose to aid in this way because, as stated in many informal conversations, these people want to ensure that dance performances are still accessible for those who live in the Peterborough area. In this way, those involved in the Peterborough arts community feel that it is more likely that dance performances will continue in Peterborough despite financial, time, and other sorts of constraints.

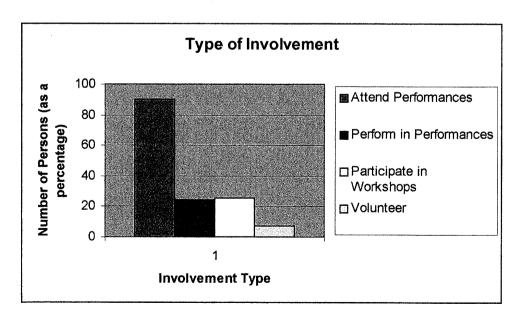
The largest portion of audience members was made up of those who claimed to be audience members. Audience members were defined as those who were simply in attendance, and therefore, did not aid in the continuation of arts programs other than through the financial aid of purchasing tickets. This trend may be due to the fact that many audience members were older retired couples spending an evening on the town. These people are generally older in age, and have years of experience in appreciating arts performances. Many spoke of attending performances in Toronto with their parents as children. Being in the audience brought back a feeling of nostalgia for past times when a sense of community was much stronger than these people felt Peterborough has today. One audience member said, "Coming to these shows makes me feel like I'm a part of something. This is the best community I've lived in where I have actually been engaged in and moved so much by dance". Being retired, these people have extra time to devote to leisure activities, and attending PND/PE performances provides an avenue for entertainment and membership in a community, in which these people expressed a genuine interest.

The remainder of audience members were either in their early twenties or mid thirties. Those who were in their early twenties were mostly Trent students who were looking for a low cost alternative source of entertainment. One student in particular

stated, "I'm tired of the usual movies or bar scene. I wanted to find something to do with my friends that was not only different but also supported the local community. PND/PE fit the bill to a tee". As this quote clearly shows, PND/PE attracts Trent students because the organization actively supports local artists. Furthermore, PND/PE is a local organization that creates venues for viewing arts performances. Moreover, it does so at a comparable cost to other sources of entertainment within the Peterborough area. Audience members who were identified as being in their mid-thirties were in attendance likely for the same reasons given by those in their twenties. In other words, they were tired of the usual entertainment scene and wanted to support local initiatives.

Finally, when examining the level of involvement with arts, gender trends were quite prevalent. Of those who were professional artists there were almost as many men as women, however, those involved in the arts and in attendance were primarily women. It must be kept in mind, as explained earlier, that many couples only filled out one survey, with the woman including her personal information on the sheet rather than her partner's. This said, it appears that the men in attendance were there for the most part because they were a part of the production. Those men not involved were there with their partner, for a night of entertainment. However, there were many women who came in groups. Based on observation it appeared that very few men came in groups made up primarily of men. In summation, of those not performing, women came with women or men, while men came almost exclusively with women.

Now it is possible to turn to an analysis of the specific ways in which audience members are involved in PND/PE. Four categories were given on the survey to indicate different forms of involvement. Those filling out surveys were told that they could classify themselves in more than one group if needed. These classifications were as follows; 'attend performances', 'perform in productions', 'participate in workshops', and 'volunteer for PND/PE'. 90 percent indicated they attend performances. 24 percent said that they perform in productions. 25.5 percent stated that they participate in workshops. Finally, 7 percent said that they volunteer with PND/PE.



At first, it may seem unusual that only 90 percent of those surveyed indicated that they attend performances given that the surveys took place at performances. However, the other 10 percent could be accounted for in that they may have been performers who were present to be in the production, but do not attend other PND/PE performances as audience members. Nevertheless, 90 percent is a large percentage of people attending performances compared with the number of people attending workshops etc. Therefore, it appears obvious that most people who are involved in PND/PE do so through attending performances.

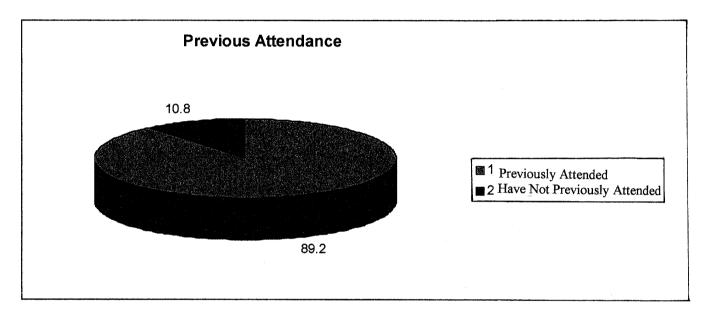
24 percent of respondents included themselves in the category 'perform in productions'. In other words, one quarter of persons said that they themselves are performers at PND/PE productions. This is an extremely large proportion of those surveyed. This information seems to illustrate that those involved in the PND/PE programs have a vested interest in attending performances as well as performing in order to support other artists and the organization of PND/PE as a whole. This personal stake can be linked to the fact that artists may be curious to see what avenues other artists are exploring through their work. Furthermore, because government funding is minimal, attending performances is thought to help ensure that PND/PE will have more money to continue holding arts programs. Thus, artists believe that they will continue to have a source of employment. Finally, many of the artists that perform at PND/PE events appeared to share friendships with one another. This was evident in the animated conversations that took place between performers during intermission and after performances. This correlation between those performing and in attendance at performances became apparent through observation. Numerous persons who were performing at The Cure for Sexual Jealousy were observed to be in the audience at Sarah Chase's Portraits.

Participating in workshops accounted for 25.5 percent of persons involved with PND/PE programs. This number is extremely similar to that given for the category of performing in productions. It is unlikely that this is correlation is coincidental. Examining the survey forms yielded that those who filled out that they were performers usually indicated that they also attended workshops. From this, it seems that the same core group of people is involved in many aspects of PND/PE programs. However, this cannot be stated conclusively because participant observation was not carried out at workshops. Therefore, the quantitative data cannot be substantiated by qualitative analysis.

The final category, 'volunteer for PND/PE' had the lowest percentage, with only 7 percent of people indicating they belonged to this category. Although this seems like a low number of volunteers, one must be sure to keep in mind that only two people are gainfully employed at PND/PE. In other words, volunteers comprised of more than three times the number of PND/PE employees at performances. This said, just under one tenth of persons surveyed in the audience are involved in making the productions happen from behind the scenes. Volunteer work includes setting up lighting for performances, addressing envelopes to send post-cards out in the mail, handling money transactions in ticket sales, as well as many other activities. Thus, the 7 percent included in this category further validates the point made earlier that many people are involved in PND/PE in more than one way.

#### Performance Attendance:

Another element of defining audience members was whether or not they had previously attended PND/PE programs. The term programs included PND/PE performances, workshops, and classes. 89.2 percent of those surveyed stated that they had attended PND/PE programs, while the remaining 10.8 percent claimed they had not. In other words, the overwhelming majority of audience members were familiar with PND/PE programs. This was congruent with the evaluators findings through participant observation at performances.

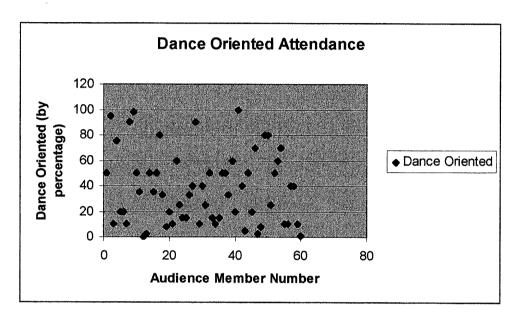


It rapidly became apparent that many of the same people were in attendance, rather than a new group of people at each performance. During intermission, people spoke with one another about other PND/PE programs they had recently seen. As well, of the three performances evaluated it was observed that many of the same people were present. Furthermore, the way in which people addressed and spoke with one another demonstrated their familiarity with each other. One lady shouted across the lobby to another lady, "Hello there, it's lovely to see you again. How are you? I didn't see you at the last performance". This statement implies that PND/PE is at the heart of some groups social formation. Therefore, to miss a performance is to miss an opportunity to socialize with one's friends. Furthermore, performances often serve as the foundation for the organization of social time among friendship groups. However, based on observation, it appears that there is a slight shift in those who are present depending on if a performance is locally produced or not. In other words, there is a core group that tends to attend both local and non-local performances, while others tend to be more selective and attend one or the other, not both.

#### Dance Performance Attendance:

A final classification that was used to typify audience members was determining what percentage of PND/PE programs of which audience members attended were dance

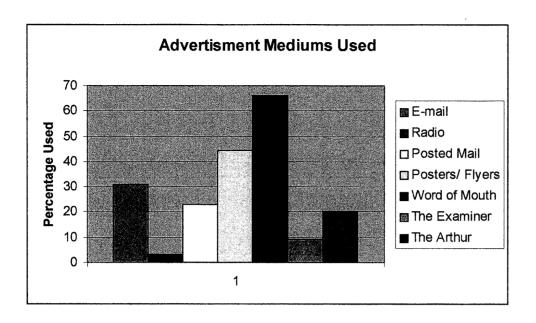
oriented. The overall average of dance oriented performances attended, given through surveys, was 37.9 percent. The median was 33 percent. In other words, this is approximately one third of programs attending being dance oriented. This does not seem like a large percent, however many programs are not strictly dance, they are also musical, or narrative, among other categorizations. Therefore, a strict definition of this category is problematic. However, this quantitative information is useful in that it illustrates that people are interested in attending dance performances, yet they also are present at other varieties of art productions.



### **Advertising**

Mediums Used:

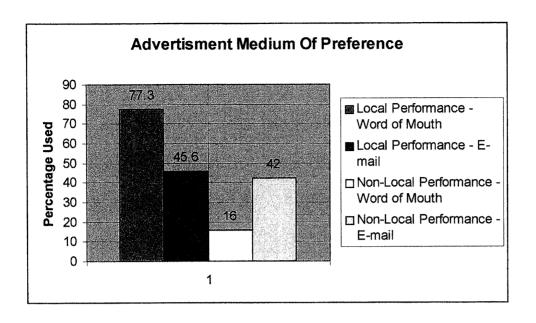
PND/PE uses a wide variety of forms to advertise upcoming events. Some of the mediums used include the following, e-mail, radio, posted mail, posters/flyers, word of mouth, and articles in newspapers such as the Peterborough Examiner, and the Arthur. Of all the forms in which people could become informed about upcoming events, people were asked in their surveys to indicate which forms relied upon. 31 percent relied upon e-mail, 3 percent relied upon radio, 22.9 percent relied upon posted mail, 44.3 percent relied upon posters/flyers, 66 percent relied upon word of mouth, 9.2 percent relied upon the Peterborough Examiner, and 20 percent relied upon the Arthur. From this data it seems that word of mouth and e-mail are the most effective forms of reaching PND/PE's target audience (target audience meaning those who are interested in the arts).



#### Medium of Preference:

Although from the information given above it appears that word of mouth and email are the most valuable means of communicating about upcoming PND/PE events this may not have been true. Therefore, another question had to be asked to confirm that these forms were being used as a primary source of information. This was done to ascertain if these mediums of informing individuals served as secondary to other mediums. This judgement was gleaned from another question on the survey that asked informants to rank advertising forms in terms of those that they relied on most frequently.

Of the performances surveyed, one was a local production and one was not. This appears to have influenced the ways in which advertising took form, and therefore the quantitative data of the performances advertising mediums will be evaluated separately. For the local performance, 77.3 indicated that word of mouth was used as their primary source of information about upcoming events. 45.6 percent of people stated that e-mail was their primary source of information. This data seems to correspond with the findings from the previous question about what forms of advertising were used in general. However, the findings from the non-local performance, *Portraits*, were quite different. In this case, only 16 percent of people used word of mouth as their primary form of information, while 42 percent indicated that e-mail served as their primary source of information.

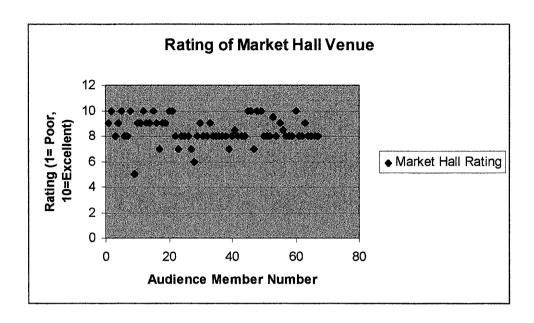


The differences can be explained in the following way. Local performances relied heavily upon word of mouth as a primary source of information. This is likely because local artists have an immediate connection to the Peterborough community, and thus they are able to tell their friends, who then tell their friends, about upcoming performances. Whereas, for non-local performances those who reside in the Peterborough area are not likely to have a direct connection to those involved in the performance. Audience members thus rely upon e-mail more so than word of mouth to be informed

#### Venue:

Location is key to any theatre production. PND/PE is well aware of this fact. Market Hall, as stated in the introduction, is located in the heart of downtown Peterborough, and provides a great locale for performances. As such, the majority of PND/PE programs are held at this location. The evaluators deemed it important to investigate how audience members felt about the venue at which productions were being held. For example, was the quality of the venue of Market Hall an influential factor in people choosing to attend PND/PE programs.

A question was included in the survey to determine whether or not the quality of the venue influenced the number of people in attendance at PND/PE programs. The results were as follows: on a scale of one to ten (where one is poor and ten is excellent), on average audience members rated Market Hall at 8.2. The overall median was 8. Although, the rating varied slightly for men and women the ratings were not significantly different. For women the average was 8.5, with a median of 8, while for men the average was 7.9, with a median of 8. The lowest rating was 5, while the highest was 10, however, for the most part ratings were equally distributed between 8 and 9.

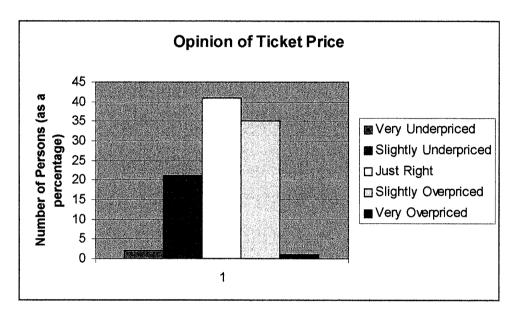


This clearly shows that the majority of people were satisfied with the Market Hall venue. The reasons for audience members satisfaction were quite varied. Based on informal conversations some of the influencing factors became apparent. Some people mentioned the spaciousness of the stage and seating area. Others were pleased with the fact that there was a bar in the lobby where they could purchase drinks, and bring those drinks back to the seating area to consume while watching performances. Many people were quick to mention their satisfaction with the comfort levels of the seating area when compared to the cost of tickets. In addition, audience members were raving about the recently renovated bathrooms, "Wow, the bathrooms look great! Do you remember them before, I hated using them then". Furthermore, it was mentioned that the downtown location of Market Hall made it easily accessible to many people.

While the majority of audience members were pleased with Market Hall, there were a few people who indicated problematic issues in regard to the venue. Specifically mentioned was the cold temperature in the theatre. While at performances it was observed that many audience members kept their coats on for the duration of the performance. One audience member wrote on their survey in the room given for additional comments, "I do not believe it ought to be this cold in the theatre for a performance". Another comment that someone made was in regard to the floorboards between the lobby and the seating area. The floorboards were older and therefore made 'creaking' noises when stepped on. This was not a problem in most cases. However, when someone got up during a performance to use the facilities, or came into a performance late the noise from the floors was quite substantial and often distracted other audience members from the production taking place. Although this was a concern, the individual who drew attention to this issue also felt it was essential to note that Market Hall is an older building, and that there is little money available for repairs. Therefore, this person would rather attend a venue with 'creaky' floorboards, than not attend at all.

#### Ticket Price:

Another factor that needed to be taken into account for this evaluation was the cost of tickets. Audience members were asked to rate the cost of tickets as 'very underpriced', 'slightly under-priced', slightly overpriced', and 'very overpriced'. 2 percent of people felt ticket prices were very under-priced. 21 percent believed that ticket prices were slightly under-priced. 35 percent stated that ticket prices were slightly overpriced. 1 percent felt that ticket prices were very overpriced. Furthermore, 41 percent of people added their own category to indicate that they felt ticket prices were 'just right'. Therefore, 64 percent of audience members surveyed felt that the ticket prices were not too expensive, while only 36 percent did.



Ticket price was an important aspect of this evaluation as prices had been elevated recently. This data clearly shows that the majority of people were accepting of the price increase. However, there is also qualitative data that must be included to make sense of the quantitative results. Many performances have different price categories. For example, at Sarah Chase's performance the cost of a ticket was 15 Canadian dollars. However, those who named themselves as 'students, seniors, or underemployed' individuals were given the reduced ticket price of 10 Canadian dollars. Furthermore, coupons were distributed within the Peterborough area that allowed two people to attend for the price of a single admission. These coupons were commonly referred to as 'two for one coupons'.

At performances, it was readily apparent that people were eager to pay the reduced price. For instance, it was common to overhear people stating that they were a senior or a student when they went to pay for their tickets. Those who were aware of the two for one deal were quick to display their coupons. One particular observation displays this behavior quite nicely. The events went as follows. A lady entered the line to pay for her ticket with two of her friends. The first two women used a two for one coupon and obtained their tickets. The third and last remaining lady stood in line and waited for the next single ticket purchasing person to join the line. When another lady approached the

first women stated that she had a two for one coupon and asked the other women if she would like to use it with her. In this way, they would both be able to pay less to see the performance. The second woman was quite pleased with this prospect, and the tickets were purchased with the two for one coupon.

Therefore, this correlates with the quantitative data given above in the following manner. Those who did not have readily available funds to use on leisure activities were not excluded from attending PND/PE programs because of discounted pricing. On the other hand, those who were gainfully employed were pleased with the cost of tickets. This was explained to the evaluators through informal comments. Cost of tickets was generally thought of as affordable in comparison to productions held in larger cities. One man stated this idea clearly when he said, "If I go see a production in Toronto, sure it would be fun but it would cost way more. I'd have to spend money on gas, food, drinks, and possibly a hotel. Not to mention the fact that tickets there go for about 60 bucks a pop. By coming to a PND/PE performance not only do I save money, I also get to support a local organization". In summation, it appears that the majority of persons are accepting of the increased ticket price because almost all persons can still attend performances despite audience members income differences. Furthermore, audience members perceive paying for tickets as a charitable act that keeps a much-respected local organization in operation.

Despite widespread acceptance of ticket pricing, 36 percent of audience members still indicated that they felt tickets were over-priced. This was likely because ticket prices just increased, and it is often the case that people do not want to pay more than they are accustomed to. Furthermore, many people were unaware of the discounted pricing categories. Once they learned about these, they stated that ticket prices would be considered fair if they were to receive the discounted price.

#### CONCLUSIONS

#### Has PND/PE Developed an Audience for Contemporary Dance

The goal of this evaluation project was to assess whether PND/PE was achieving the second half of its mission statement, to develop an audience for contemporary dance venues. In order to see if PND/PE was meeting this objective, issues pertaining to accessibility were examined in-depth. Five specific facets of measurement were set up to ascertain if this aim was being met. These facets were as follows, firstly, how many people were attending performances. Secondly, how effective was advertising at reaching those in the Peterborough region. Thirdly, were new audience members being introduced with regularity. Fourthly, did the location from which performers originate directly impact who was in attendance. Fifth, and finally, did ticket prices influence the composition of the audience.

It is now possible to examine each of these facets individually. There were a great number of people in attendance at all performances that were subject to evaluation. Although numbers varied between performances, a substantial portion of the audience seats were always filled. It is also important to note that the venue at which performances were held had a large seating arrangement. Therefore, a greater number of people would be able to attend than would otherwise be possible. Thus, it seems that if one were to

simply examine the numbers of people in attendance one would be led to believe that the accessibility of PND/PE dance performances was great.

Research quickly showed that there was an abundance of energy placed in the advertising of PND/PE events. People were informed about upcoming performances through e-mail, radio, posters, flyers, posted mail, newspapers, and word of mouth. Through surveys and personal interviews, it became clear that advertising was being relied upon by the general public. However, the reliance on certain mediums of advertising was greater than others. It seemed that people used e-mail primarily, however, other forms were used as reinforcements to remind potential audience members to purchase their tickets. Word of mouth, although not often used as a primary source of information, was essential for the reinforcement stage. Many times people would receive e-mails about an event and then would speak with one another. In this way, groups of friends were formed who regularly attended performances together. This clearly shows that advertising was effective. However, advertising was most useful when combined with other mediums of reinforcement. Thus it seems that in terms of advertising PND/PE is an accessible organization.

While it has been stated that there are many people in attendance at PND/PE performances, this is not congruent with information about the introduction of new audience members. This evaluation has found that PND/PE has created a core group of loyal followers, however, there are few new faces at any given event. While this does not pose a problem currently, because there are enough people in attendance to sustain performances, it may become a problem in the long term. Due to the fact that the audience members are a non-replenishing group, the organization is in a potentially vulnerable state. In other words, if there were an event that placed the core group in an economically fragile position PND/PE would loose a great deal of its audience. Furthermore, if a performance antagonized values held by the core group, it would be possible that audience members might boycott PND/PE events as a whole, therefore, placing PND/PE in an economically dangerous situation. To relate this to accessibility of PND/PE as a whole the following can be said. PND/PE is not reaching a new group of persons, this is potentially detrimental to their organization because it creates a situation of vulnerability to outside factors beyond PND/PE's control, furthermore jeopardizing the sustainability of the organization.

It was found that the location from which a performer derived directly impacted the number of people in attendance. While the basis of comparison was limited in this regard, the proceeding information was gleaned from the three performances that were subject to evaluation, and thus is still thought to be relevant. More people attended performances in which local artists figured prominently. Through informal interviews it was gleaned that this was a conscious decision made before deciding to attend an event. People were more interested in supporting local artists than those not from the general Peterborough region. In this way, accessibility is subject to be undermined if a performance does not appeal to potential audience members. In other words, if PND/PE does not devote a certain percentage of their performances to local artists, PND/PE is undermining their ability to develop an audience for contemporary dance.

Most people surveyed felt that ticket prices were fair. This information may be biased, because only those who could afford to attend were able to fill out surveys. Therefore, those who felt ticket prices were too high for their economic budgets did not

get a chance to say so in this evaluation project. However, it was gleaned through informal conversations that the availability of discounted pricing, through coupons, increased the number of persons able to attend. Therefore, ticket pricing did directly impact the accessibility of PND/PE performances. Accessibility was increased in this regard thanks to discounted pricing for students and underemployed individuals.

In summation, this evaluation has found that PND/PE has been successful in accomplishing its goal of developing an audience for contemporary dance. However, that said, this audience formation is quite vulnerable because of its lack of introducing new persons. Therefore, the answer to the evaluation's question would be yes, PND/PE is achieving its second goal within its mission statement. Yet, in order to ensure the sustainability of this goal, further action needs to be taken.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Creating Stronger Ties With Trent University

There are already Trent students who attend PND/PE events. However, through informal conversations with students on the Trent campus, it was learnt that many students were not familiar with this organization or the events that it held. The Trent University student body tends to be liberal leaning, and in this way, it lends itself well to many grassroots organizations, such as the Seasoned Spoon restaurant. Although in prior discussions it was said that Trent mainly offers transient audience members, many persons at Trent would fall into the audience category that PND/PE targets. In other words, many Trent students are interested in finding cheap sources of alternative entertainment as well as supporting community-based projects. It is true that many students only remain in Peterborough for the three or four years required to obtain their degrees. However, the Trent population represents a great opportunity for PND/PE growth. As senior students graduate and move elsewhere, new students are brought to the community, thus representing a replenishing potential audience group.

There are a variety of ways in which PND/PE could create stronger ties with the Trent student population. The first would be to create more performances that include Trent students, some performances of this sort already exist. As was stated earlier, more people seem to attend performances that feature people they know. Therefore, having these sorts of joint performances would pull a larger percentage of the Trent student population to PND/PE events. The further advantage of having these joint performances is that it would allow for a greater amount of advertising. Posters and flyers alone are not effective because students are bombarded with them on a daily basis. For that reason, students tend not to take as much notice of the advertisements. Instead, increased word of mouth carried out within the University community would allow more people to be informed about upcoming events, therefore increasing the number of new audience members.

Another way of involving the Trent student population in PND/PE events would be to carry out a variety of workshops at Trent. Wenjack theatre is a venue that has a suitable stage as well as a large seating area that would be quite conducive to these sorts of events. Furthermore, Trent is currently building a new theatre, which would be amenable to PND/PE workshop needs. This theatre is being built with the intention of facilitating both contemporary and traditional aboriginal productions. The co-operation

between performers at this venue and PND/PE would give PND/PE the opportunity to create dance performances that dealt with aboriginal subject matter, and thus expand the diversity of dance productions offered.

#### Ticket Pricing

Though it seems that ticket prices were considered acceptable by audience members, observation gleaned that many people were thrilled with the opportunity to make use of coupons. Some people even stated that they would not have been able to attend had it not been for the use of reduced pricing. It is therefore the advice of the evaluators that PND/PE make reduced prices available at all performances. In this way, more persons would likely attend, therefore ensuring the long-term sustainability of the organization.

It was shown earlier that the radio station was not actively used by many persons to learn about PND/PE events. However, this medium of advertisement could be made more effective in the following way. For example, advertisements on the radio could be followed up with a short 'call in contest'. After information about an upcoming event is stated, the first caller in could receive a pair of free tickets to a PND/PE performance. As stated above word of mouth is a powerful means of disseminating information. Those who won the tickets, may be inclined to tell others about the performance they attended, thus creating the potential for even more persons to attend. Furthermore, those who won the tickets may enjoy the experience to such an extent that they become repeat audience members themselves.

#### Partnerships With Other Organizations

The New Canadian Center is an organization that helps new persons to Canada become acquainted with life in the Peterborough area. Many people involved in this organization bring with them unique talents and skills developed in their country of origin. These people represent an untapped resource. By allowing these persons to perform in performances, PND/PE would be fulfilling the first part of the mission statement, in regards to creating employment for local artists. Furthermore, it would also aid the second portion of PND/PE's mission statement, as it would enlarge the already existing audience for contemporary dance. It would do so for a variety of reasons. Firstly, the New Canadian Center members represent a community of persons that support one another. If one person from this organization were to perform it is likely other members would therefore attend the performance. By attracting New Canadian Center members to attend PND/PE events new audience members may become regulars at performances.

Secondly, this attendance may be reinforced because of language barriers. New immigrants to Canada are often not fluent in the English language. Dance is a form of entertainment that does not necessarily involve speaking. Many members of the New Canadian Center may be interested in attending events as a chance to learn about Canadian culture without the added stress of overcoming the obstacles of understanding a foreign language. Thirdly, members of the New Canadian Center could bring a new and diverse genres of dance to PND/PE performances. This may attract new persons from the Peterborough community other than New Canadian Center members to attend events, therefore increasing the number of persons in the audience even further.

#### Further Evaluation Projects

Unfortunately due to time constraints this evaluation was not able to incorporate all aspects of the PND/PE organization into it's study. Furthermore, this is the first project of this kind to be carried out in conjunction with PND/PE. Future studies that focus primarily on the first aspect of PND/PE's mission statement could provide useful data. By not examining whether PND/PE was supporting contemporary dance creation, a lot of valuable information was overlooked. Furthermore, economic factors were well beyond the scope of this study. An evaluation project that focused on these topics could be combined with the findings of this evaluation in order to ascertain a better understanding of the organization's workings as a whole. These findings could be used to further improve the ability of PND/PE to achieve its goals as listed in the mission statement.

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