Introduction

In 2019 RAWdance took a leap of faith. Challenging the all-too-common non-profit mindset of scarcity, and questioning the traditional choreographer-led model of dance companies, we hypothesized that the key to our not only surviving, but thriving, was through expansion. The future of the company was “more.”

**More artists.** After 15 years under the sole direction of its Co-Founders, Ryan T. Smith and Wendy Rein, RAWdance expanded to include a third, equal Co-Artistic Director, Katerina Wong. Our commitment to supporting a plurality of diverse artistic voices also extends to the platforms and opportunities that RAWdance offers other dance makers. The company has a strong history of curation and partnerships. How can we draw on our experience as a launching point to do more with, and for, other dance artists?

**More community.** While staying rooted in the San Francisco Bay Area, RAWdance’s expansion continued with the creation of a second branch in New York’s Hudson Valley. RAWdance was built on the belief that it’s not enough to bring people to the dance; one also needs to bring dance to the people. Site-specific work, virtual events, dance film, new collaborations, touring, etc.—now spanning two coasts—cracks open abundant potential to connect to new communities. How can we do more with, and for, contemporary dance? With and for a larger community?

2020 was slated to be an enormously robust year, with activity throughout the Bay Area, New York, New England, and beyond. The calendar was supposed to embody our plan of “more” and test the potential of our new model. But as Covid-19 put the performing arts on pause or, at best, in long-term slow-motion, we took the newfound time to turn inward and reflect on who we are today.

RAWdance is now **ONE COMPANY, fortified in TWO ARTISTIC HOMES, stewarded by THREE ARTISTIC DIRECTORS.**

This time and space to reflect allowed us to unify as Co-Directors, to question what drives each of us as individual artists, and to reflect on how RAWdance as an organization can do better for the field of contemporary dance and for the communities it serves.

Assisted by Vogl Consulting, we began this planning process by gathering external feedback through surveys to audience members, company supporters, and artists; small focus groups with our dancers and fellow dance makers; and a number of one-on-one interviews for deeper perspectives from individuals in our community. The responses provided a springboard for reflection and possibility as we, our Board, and our staff delved into how to make the most of RAWdance’s new identity.

As artists, dreaming is inherent to our nature. As Artistic Directors, we know firsthand that making dreams a reality takes immense care, detailed strategizing, and thoughtful intention. It takes a good plan. Our hope is that this document will provide a roadmap to guide us through three years of thoroughly testing our “more” hypothesis and lead us to: **More dance. More risk. More collaboration. More partnership. More inclusion. More art.**

Katie, Ryan, & Wendy  
Co-Artistic Directors, RAWdance
To realize this vision, RAWdance will pursue five strategic directions:

1. **Refresh & Reinvigorate Programming**
   We will invest in collaboration, support more artists, and center the art to deliver fresh and invigorating programming that prioritizes bold art making and impact.

2. **Share the New RAWdance**
   We will share the company’s complex model loudly and clearly to increase our visibility and strengthen our identity as a locally and nationally recognized institution.

3. **Invest in Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion**
   We will thoroughly examine and reimagine all aspects of our organization as necessary to ensure an honest and effective institutionalization of equitable, unbiased, anti-oppressive practices.

4. **Bolster our Employees**
   We will take care of our people to guarantee a healthy company and allow the Co-Artistic Directors to refocus time and energy on art.

5. **Root in Financial Sustainability & Income Diversity**
   We will increase our financial stability to remove limitations to creativity and allow for more work, for and from, more people.
“RAWdance is treating the company like you might treat a timeworn choreographic habit – breaking rules, welcoming alternate endings, collaborating throughout the process.” — IN DANCE

“Every once in a while, you encounter a contemporary dance company that is extraordinarily special. One that stands out. A group that combines choreographic excellence, innovative structures, groundbreaking concepts and impeccable performances. RAWdance is one of these rare treasures.” — Critical Dance

“witty, whip-smart, and beautiful to watch.” — San Francisco Chronicle
# Tactics and Outcomes Overview

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<th>Strategic Direction</th>
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| **Refresh & Reinvigorate Programming**   | • Pursue new collaborations  
• Launch Hudson Valley programming  
• Pilot program(s) to support other artistic voices in our communities  
• Reevaluate curatorial practice  
• Examine balance of Artistic Director art-making v. community programming | Programming centers diverse, bold, and adventurous new work in the Bay Area, Hudson Valley, and beyond |
| **Share the New RAWdance**               | • Hone and actualize RAWdance’s new story  
• Increase new Co-Artistic Director Wong’s visibility  
• Build out Hudson Valley presence  
• Boost national prominence | RAWdance is widely recognized as a champion in the dance field, with an expanded, engaged community |
| **Invest in Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion** | • Conduct organizational review and strengthen EDI practices, including antiracist principles  
• Research and adopt Board EDI and antiracist practices  
• Expand diversity of the organization | Equity work is integrated at all levels of the company and in all practices, artistic and organizational |
| **Bolster our Employees**                | • Expand staff support  
• Increase staff and dancer pay  
• Strengthen HR resources and practices | All employees are better compensated and supported, while the company invests more time, money, and energy in art |
| **Root in Financial Sustainability & Income Diversity** | • Expand and deepen donor base  
• Increase earned income  
• Examine alternative income streams | Artistic risk is supported and encouraged through financial sustainability and adaptability |
REFRESH & REINVIGORATE PROGRAMMING

Investing in collaboration. Supporting more artists. Centering the art.

A commitment to fresh and invigorating programming prioritizes bold art and impact. RAWdance will strengthen its activities on both coasts, generating creative projects in the San Francisco Bay Area and the Hudson Valley. The company’s array of collaborators will expand, diversify, and intrigue, bringing contemporary dance into direct dialogue with other forms and fields. Support of artists will deepen and grow through the company’s productions, new programs, and curatorial practice. RAWdance’s adventurous, thoughtful and welcoming programming will challenge what contemporary dance is, where it happens, who it includes, and the role it plays in our lives.
The company’s model is complex but its message must be loud and clear.

Sharing the new RAWdance and embracing its complexity will increase the company’s visibility and strengthen its identity as a locally and nationally recognized institution. Moreover, the company will be celebrated for its craft and contributions as an essential cultural organization in the San Francisco Bay Area and the Hudson Valley. All three Co-Artistic Directors will be recognized for their work as artists and leaders by audiences, supporters, press, and peers alike. This increased visibility and brand clarity will lead to an expanded, more engaged, RAWdance community and to new programming opportunities. In turn, this growth will expand the public appetite for and awareness of the diversity of contemporary dance.
Equity, diversity, and inclusion must be paramount.

Equity, diversity, and inclusion work requires that all aspects of the organization are thoroughly examined and reimagined, as necessary, to ensure an honest and effective institutionalization of equitable, unbiased, anti-oppressive practices. These practices include a continued sharing of power, transparent decision-making processes, and a focus on meaningful inclusion with consistent feedback from the community. Our goal is that the makeup of the entirety of RAWdance—its Board of Directors, artistic and administrative employees, curated artists, contractors, and collaborators—will both reflect and support an empowered, diverse community.
BOLSTER OUR EMPLOYEES

For a company to be healthy, it must take care of its people.

Bolstering our employees allows the Co-Artistic Directors to refocus time and energy on art. The balance between art and administrative responsibilities will be recalibrated towards the creative process and production, as well as big-picture planning for the organization and for the field. The company’s infrastructure will be attentively expanded to increase administrative support and to strengthen human resources practices, while also making life more financially sustainable—more livable—for RAWdance employees. This expansion includes salary increases for all staff over the next 3 years, including bringing dancers to a minimum hourly rate no less than San Francisco’s annual living wage.
Artistic risk depends on financial stability.

Financial sustainability is the backbone of the art, removing limitations to creativity and allowing for more work, for and from, more people. It means better lives for artists and a more thriving dance community. An active and equipped board will strengthen donor relations, so RAWdance is more deeply connected to and supported by the communities it serves. Diversifying income streams will boost financial security so the company can always be prepared for the unexpected. Increased earned and contributed income will create the financial capacity for better staff pay and to engage additional personnel support, allowing the Artistic Directors to better balance art and administration. Growing the company’s budget and creating security and fiscal sustainability is not only key to the execution of this strategic plan, but to an innovative yet steadfast organization.