

University of Rhode Island

DigitalCommons@URI

Arts, Humanities, Museums: Background
(1973-1976)

Education: National Endowment for the Arts
and Humanities, Subject Files II (1962-1996)

4-26-1976

Arts, Humanities, Museums: Background (1973-1976): News Article 02

Stephen Grover

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell_neh_II_23

Recommended Citation

Grover, Stephen, "Arts, Humanities, Museums: Background (1973-1976): News Article 02" (1976). *Arts, Humanities, Museums: Background (1973-1976)*. Paper 69.
https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell_neh_II_23/69

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Education: National Endowment for the Arts and Humanities, Subject Files II (1962-1996) at DigitalCommons@URI. It has been accepted for inclusion in Arts, Humanities, Museums: Background (1973-1976) by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@URI. For more information, please contact digitalcommons-group@uri.edu.

Joffrey Performs Like a Corporation To Raise \$1.5 Million

Ballet Company's Prospectus
Outlines Financial State,
Rigors of Dancers' Lives

By STEPHEN GROVER

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL
NEW YORK—In an attempt to raise \$1.5 million to finance special projects this year commemorating the company's 20th anniversary, The Joffrey Ballet is using an important corporate tool: the prospectus.

The ballet company's prospectus is unusual on several scores. It both sets forth the company's current state of finances—fully and completely as a publicly held corporation is required to do—and it graphically depicts the rigors of life in a modern ballet company.

Assuming, for example, that the entire \$1.5 million is raised, Joffrey—or The Foundation for The Joffrey Ballet Inc., as the nation's third-largest ballet company is formally known—would like to spend \$500,000 on a new rehearsal studio.

According to the prospectus, the company's present studios in Greenwich Village that it rents at an annual cost of \$15,000 are inadequate. "The rehearsal rooms are undersized, underheated, and interspersed with structural columns," the prospectus says. "The wardrobe spaces are badly congested, and the shower, toilet, and changing facilities are antiquated. The studios are not only inefficient from the point of productivity but also are depressing and demoralizing as a creative environment."

Dancers Underpaid

About \$700,000 of the money raised would go for general operating expenses. Lest anyone think the company's 44 dancers are well paid, the prospectus notes: "During calendar year 1975, average dancer remuneration was \$11,775, and no dancer received remuneration in excess of \$15,000."

It adds: "Dancers are underpaid in view of their talent and training and the unique demands of their profession. There is perhaps no other human activity involving the same combination of physical rigor and mental discipline. The ballet dancer's performing career is at best short-lived. Moreover, (s)he is in jeopardy each time (s)he leaves the floor, and the margin for error is very small. Dancers are 'divine athletes' in the words of Martha Graham, but the lowest paid major league baseball, football or basketball player may earn more in six months than the highest paid Joffrey dancer will earn in a year."

James E. Siegel, the ballet company's finance director, says "these conditions are appalling, but we felt the public should know about them."

The prospectus also explains why Joffrey "must necessarily incur an operating deficit" in each of its fiscal years, which end Aug. 31. "Dancers cannot rehearse and perform all year round due to the physical demands of their profession," the prospectus states. "The optimal number of weeks of activity is 41 to 43. Dance companies require a great deal of rehearsal time to maintain the standard repertoire and to prepare new productions. (The Joffrey is scheduling 17 rehearsal weeks in fiscal 1976.) Dancers cannot learn roles outside of the rehearsal studios (unlike actors, singers and musicians) because special rehearsal facilities are required and because most ballets are not notated, and, at any rate, very few dancers are trained in notation."

Income Isn't Enough

Moreover, the prospectus says, "the Joffrey does not earn any income during dark weeks and rehearsal weeks, which constitute half the year. Income is generated during performance weeks, but even such income does not fully cover performance-week and other performance-related expenses."

In this connection, the prospectus states: "During its current fiscal year, the Foundation expects to have total operating expenses of approximately \$3,440,000, about 63% (\$2,180,000) of which will be offset by box office receipts, performance fees and other earned income. The remaining 37% (\$1,260,000) of the Foundation's expenses must be raised in the form of grants and contributions from government agencies, foundations, corporations and individuals."

Joffrey would like to spend the remaining \$300,000 of the additional \$1.5 million fund to finance an original, full-length, annual Christmas season production of a new ballet to be entitled "Cinderella." The prospectus says: "Cinderella will be the Joffrey's first full-length production. It is not only the most ambitious but the most important project in the history of the company, for several reasons. First, the ballet should have great box office appeal and will thus contribute to the financial stability of the company. Second, it will introduce a new generation of followers to the Joffrey. Third, it will increase the visibility of the Joffrey in the New York metropolitan area, which should prove beneficial for fund-raising purposes."