GUIDELINES FOR PRODUCING A

VIRTUAL DANCE CONCERT

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Many of you expressed interest in learning how to produce a Virtual Dance Concert and below we offer guidelines. Good news: **You do not have to do it all**! Instead, you can distribute responsibilities and instructions to different teams to help you put it together.

 First, we recommend not **instant live streaming** the Virtual Dance Concert, which means streaming as the dancers are dancing. Instead, we strongly suggest encouraging the students to prepare individually their choreography projects, film them, and then submit them for a final **pre-scheduled streaming** screening. This is, basically, the format of a Dance on Camera presentation, where the content is created, then filmed, and then streamed.

There are multiple platforms and presentations around the globe with very fine examples of Dance on Camera. Please feel free to forward to your students the upcoming Netherlands' Cinedance – a Dance on Camera Festival online screenings from March 25th through March 29th at http://cinedans.nl/cinedans-web-is-coming-to-you/

As Artistic Director of the Virtual Dance Concert, don't become overwhelmed by trying to do all of the work by yourself. **For efficiency, please share responsibilities; give instructions and guidelines to the three different groups: I. Student Choreographers, II. Distribution and Media Coordinator, III. Artistic Direction and Project Oversight.**

I.   **GUIDELINES TO THE STUDENTS CHOREOGRAPHERS:**

1) Clarify that the presentation will be in film format. Encourage your student choreographers to work individually on their choreographic concepts, movement material, and final version.

2) A simple smartphone and its embedded camera capabilities are good enough to video record a dance. Using a better camera is also fine, but this is neither a requirement nor a necessity.

3) Provide Artistic Guidelines: For example, if presenting a solo, then it should not be more than 3 minutes, duet -- 4 minutes, trio -- 5 min, etc.

4) Provide Creative Guidelines: For example, you can film your dance not only in your living room, but also in alternative outside locations: on the street, in the park, or inside an abandoned warehouse. In other words, before filming, the choreographers can go "location hunting" and explore a variety of environments where they can firm up their dances. Looking and finding an interesting environment for filming is a lot of fun!

5) Provide Technical Guidelines: For example, half of the filmed dance should show the full-body motion with a steadily held camera, so that students do not use too many close-ups or awkward filming angles.

6) Provide Specific Deadlines: For example, by when do you want the choreographers to complete their choreography, by when will the dance will be filmed and edited, and what is the firm deadline for submission of the digital files to you? Once the choreography is set and ready to be filmed, please plan for it to take from one to three days to film it in the different locations/environments and explore creative options at those settings. It will likely take another one to three days to edit the footage.

7) Once the students have completed the filming of their dances, they can transfer or email the video files from their smartphones to their email desktops/laptops in a format called MP4. From now on there are two options to continue the process: a) the students can email you a single simple shot of the entire dance -- or for a more creative approach -- b) the students can edit their video dance before submitting it to you.

   Let's continue with the second option:

8) Students can upload on their laptops a very simple program called OpenShot Video Editor at https://www.openshot.org/   It is a FREE, simple and easy to maneuver program to edit videos, add music track(s), and insert front title banners, as well as a back banners with credits of the contributing artists. There are many "OpenShot Video Tutorials" on YouTube offering instructions on how to maneuver the program. It would take about a day of learning, experimenting and playing to become familiar with how to operate the platform. Once the students are done with editing, they can email you the completed Dance on Camera MP4 file that is ready for screening.

II.   **GUIDELINES FOR THE DISTRUBUTION/MEDIA COORDINATOR:**

   1) Select a student, a staff member, or a fellow faculty member to help you create an announcement that can be placed for email distribution and social media circulation to spread the word about the upcoming virtual dance concert. Make sure to coordinate the date of the concert with all entities – choreographers, performers, and faculty, as well as the IT digital tech team at your institution – you might need their remote help.

   2) Request your media coordinator to compose a listserv by gathering and compiling in a single document the emails of everyone who is involved in the project and

everyone interested in seeing the virtual dance concert -- these might include fellow students, faculty members, parents, friends, and others. The coordinator's goal is to compile an email list of your Virtual Dance Audience. The invitation to the Virtual Dance Concert can be sent via email "blast."

3) Select a platform of shared live streaming distribution. There are multiple platforms and websites available that can do streaming, ranging from the commercial Facebook and YouTube to more boutique web distributors. Our recommendation is to set up an account and use Vimeo, which is at https://vimeo.com/features/livestreaming Once you set up an account, Vimeo will provide you with an individualized link where your Virtual Dance Concert will be livestreamed. Alternatively, you can post the virtual dance concert as a permanent file for viewing indefinitely with an access password. Up to you.

4) Make a public announcement via an email "blast" and/or social media about when the Virtual Dance Concert will take place, the involved choreographers and artists, and the date and time of the streaming. Be sure to insert the link to the chosen platform and/or permanent viewing link in your announcement. Also, make sure to clarify in your announcements that live streaming will be available to view only within 24 hours after the launch, which is the standard practice.

III.   GUIDELINES FOR THE ARTSTIC DIRECTOR OF THE VIRTUAL DANCE CONCERT

1) Make sure to monitor regularly the progress of each team. Some of the student choreographers might have questions about the technical limitations and the artistic range of the assignment.

2) Once you receive the MP4 files of the completed dances, you can view them on any standard computer or laptop and make artistic decisions about the programming order of the dance pieces and the length of the entire streaming presentation.

3) Compile all of the MP4 files into one file by either using OpenShot, or by having somebody on your IT digital team help you remotely to put the presentation together. You can also insert the title of the overall dance concert and add credits at the front or the back end of the file.

4) As in a tech and dress rehearsal during a live dance concert, we recommend that you post a file of the draft run of the entire concert in a private link on YouTube, for example. Share it with your creative team a few days before the scheduled live streaming. It is a chance to fix and correct any artistic details and/or technical glitches. Once you make corrections (if necessary), the final file version can be uploaded to Vimeo for streaming.

5) It's Showtime! - You're ready to go and it's time for the Opening (Digital) Night ☺

6) Post Production A: The good news and takeaway is that all the "likes," comments, and feedback about your Virtual Dance Concert will be in a written format in the web interfaces, so you can actually have documented feedback of the audience's response.

7) Post Production B: There are three other great advantages:

a) The student choreographers will have a video archive of their work
b) The student choreographers can use this material to apply for jobs, residencies, funding, and many other professional development initiatives
c) There are dozens of dance film festivals around the world where student choreographers can submit their work again for screening at major venues around the world. The link with this information is https://www.dancefilms.org/other-dance-film-festivals/

That is all, and before I let you go…

PLEASE NOTE: Because of my work commitments and time restraints, I will not be able to answer emails with questions related to the technicalities regarding videotaping, uploading, editing, and livestreaming. I hope that the general guidelines outlined above are helpful to get you started. If you have specific technical questions, please refer to your IT digital tech team at your institution, who will be available to help you with their professional advice.

Best of luck!

Yours,

Vlad

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