Pones Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access Statement

Pones was founded on the belief and practices of diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA). Since 2008, we have been frontrunners in merging social justice and the arts and have challenged the status quo by asking “how can we democratize dance?”

We are committed to expand upon our foundational core values of DEIA by continually discovering best practices in innovation, modeling, and implementation. We are ready to be challenged and to challenge; therefore, Pones acknowledges, accepts responsibility, and apologizes for our role in perpetuating, excusing, and participating in systemic discrimination within the arts. We will continue to de-center the privileged, Eurocentric lens through which dance is often viewed and valued, as we remind our community that dancers come in all sizes, ages, and abilities, and from various races and backgrounds. We strive to prove that dance is valuable off the proscenium stage and outside the performative space, as a means of expression that encourages social, ceremonial, and community engagement.

At Pones, a diverse, inclusive, equitable, and accessible organization is one where all employees and volunteers (whatever their gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, age, identity, sexual orientation, education, ability, religion, socioeconomic status, physical appearance, or attributes) feel valued and respected. We are committed to providing equal opportunity for employment and advancement in all of our departments and programs. We respect and value diverse life experiences and heritages and ensure all voices are honored.

We are dedicated to being a progressive model of diversity, equity, inclusion, and access for the arts industry of the nonprofit sector. We will maintain an intrinsically inclusive environment with authentically equitable treatment for all, with no expectation of reward, and without box-ticking.

We have divided our DEIA Statement into three areas: People over Profits (valuing our collective and community over financial gain), Action over Performativism (truly doing the work versus putting it on paper or discussing it), and Engagement over Outreach (creating genuine, long-lasting partnerships with organizations and communities toward mutual growth and development).

PEOPLE OVER PROFITS

We will continue to:

- Commit time and resources to expand more diverse leadership within our board, staff, committees, and advisory bodies.
- Follow a Board dues structure which makes participation accessible by allowing members to quantify volunteer time to meet the equivalent of a monetary donation using the Independent Sector hourly rate; this alternative removes the barrier of financial resources, and makes it easier for those who are part of the collective (e.g., dancers and teaching artists) to have a voice in organizational governance.
- Value diversity and community in our collective. Part of our success in this area is directly related to the company operating as a collective versus a traditional audition process or dancers signing annual contracts. We allow for the ebb and flow of life experience, naturally cultivating inclusion, fluidity, and flexibility for our dancers. *see Appendix A
- Be intentional about where we seek funding and donations, seeking funders whose mission aligns (or at least doesn’t conflict) with our own.
- Remove cost barriers for individual and organizational partners who self-identify a need.
- Recognize the importance of mental health and trauma-informed care for dancers and partners.
- Reflect upon how we gather data, how we measure need, and survey best practices.
- Improve our cultural leadership pipeline by creating and supporting programs and policies that foster leadership which reflects the diversity of our service area.
We will strive to:

- Explore pricing structures that promote equity and racial justice. *see Appendix B
- Expand diversity of staff. We are committed to developing and implementing inclusive, equitable, and accessible hiring practices once funds provide the opportunity to hire more staff. *see Appendix C
- Continue to investigate best-practice self-identifying surveys and other data collection models that focus on DEIA aspects. *see Appendix D
- Elevate opportunities for Black, Brown, Indigenous, and other historically marginalized artists; identify and address gaps in representation within the artistic field of dance. *see Appendix E

We will know we accomplished this goal by:

- Maintaining current diversity within our collective of dancers. *see Appendix F
- Creating a hiring guide that is fueled by DEIA best practices by 2023.
- Retaining a 3.0 rating or higher in Data. *see Appendix G

**ACTION OVER PERFORMATIVISM**

We will continue to:

- Advocate for and support board-level thinking about how systemic inequities impact our organization’s work, and how to address them in a way that is consistent with our mission. We acknowledge this is a journey and hold ourselves accountable to difficult discussions and complicated ideas. *see Appendix H
- Generate and aggregate quantitative and qualitative research related to equity to make incremental, measurable progress toward the visibility of our DEIA efforts, which we will share publicly on our website. *see Appendix I

We will strive to:

- Go beyond standard DEIA efforts, push the definitions and elevate the importance of DEIA in the arts sector.
- Develop a system for being intentionally conscious of bias during the hiring, promotion, and evaluation processes, including training our hiring team on equitable practices.
- Be explicit in our policies to both staff/board and dancers by sharing survey data and creating a way to continue a dialogue around DEIA. *see Appendix J
- Expand DEIA Training beyond the LOM teachers and open it up to all board, staff, and teachers/dancers. *see Appendix K

We will know we accomplished this goal by:

- Maintaining board diversity. *see Appendix L
- Offering a DEIA training in 2022 to all levels of the organization with the goal of improving this rating by 2023. *see Appendix M
- Integrating applicable strategies outlined in the BIPOC Demands for White American Theatre by 2022. *see Appendix N

**ENGAGEMENT OVER OUTREACH**

We will continue to:
• Meet our community members where they are and share our art with them by taking performances and activities into neighborhoods across the region, rather than having a permanent facility where the community must come to us.
• Minimize performance barriers by continuing to perform off the proscenium stage, at free/reduced cost, close to bus lines, and by including work/artists outside the traditional Eurocentric lens of dance.
• Eliminate educational barriers by offering dance after school, without specific shoes or supplies, in schools where at least 50% of the students are eligible for the free or reduced-price lunch program.
• Be authentic partners by focusing on invitation versus “parachuting” into/ out of neighborhoods, continuing engagement post-production, listening to the community’s needs and wants, and investing in those communities.
• Pool resources and expand offerings for underrepresented constituents by connecting with other arts organizations committed to diversity and inclusion efforts. *see Appendix O

We will strive to:
• Expand our reach by returning to the original intention of the Pones in Public program to democratize dance.
• Continue to partner more directly with varying abilities (Visionaries and Voices/Collective Visions) and to expand our work with those who are currently or previously incarcerated.
• Offer on-boarding for board, staff, dancers, and teachers to promote understanding of our core values. *see Appendix P

We will know we accomplished this goal by:
• Maintaining Laboratory of Movement education programming demographics at 50-60% Black, Brown, Indigenous, and Multi-racial students and a 50/50 gender breakdown. *see Appendix Q
• Reaching 5 new partners and 3 new neighborhoods by 2022 with PIP programming. *see Appendix R
• Continuing to meet with and train a DEIA Ad Hoc committee that reports to the full board and emphasizes accountability toward the implementation of this DEIA plan. *see Appendix S
• Using the Meyer DEI Spectrum Tool to evaluate and reevaluate with board, staff, dancers, teachers and stakeholders. *see Appendix T

User Guide and Notes:

1) Click here to easily access the Appendix, where results of efforts to-date are summarized.

2) Ratings are based on the Meyer DEI Spectrum Tool Survey found here. The scale focuses on five points along the DEI continuum – “Not Yet Started,” “Ready to Start,” “Launched,” “Well on the Way,” and “Exemplary/Leading” – but few organizations’ DEI experiences will fit neatly into these stages. The descriptions of organizational characteristics at each point in the process are intended to serve as guideposts rather than fixed stages.

3) These goals were identified via extensive internal evaluation that can be found here and Top Three Priorities voted on by Board, Staff, and DEIA committee members.