

Georgia Dance Theatre's Strategic Plan for 2019



Revised by Sherri Davis & Nichole Martin
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Context: A Glimpse of Georgia Dance Theatre's 2019 Plan

In 2015, Georgia Dance Theatre underwent a comprehensive strategic planning process under the guidance and direction of Nichole Martin, Emory University graduate, Marketing Director, and GDT Alumnus, Dr. Joseph O'Brien Ed.D, GDT Benefactor with a Ph.D. in education and leadership, and Sherri Davis, Artistic Director for Georgia Dance Theatre. The plan has been revised every year since and identifies three strategic directions and goals designed to direct and guide the organization through the 2019-year.

- 1. Strengthen Program Impact with Additional Performances to the Community that We Serve**
- 2. Secure Sustainability and Security of the Organization so that we can continue educating and reaching out to the community that we serve**
- 3. Attract and Retain Highly Qualified Artistic Talent and Optimize Human Resources with New Personnel**

Some major goals that came out this plan for the 2019-year included:

- Increase Corporate, Individual, and Foundation Giving in order to support our continual growth of our outreach programs and the community
- Produce two to three more arts education outreach programs
- Engage Alumni
- Grow Community Awareness of the Arts
- Implement new board leadership plans for each member to ensure productivity and celebrate successes and milestones
- Improved website, emails tools, marketing vehicles, and social media strategies
- Create a new and unique branding strategy and style guides
- Attention to cultivation, stewardship, and loyalty amongst donor base
- Hire new personnel for administration and marketing efforts
- Create and develop a Community Engagement Committee comprised of board members and volunteers to aid the efforts and developments of new programming and outreach opportunities

2019 Planning Process

On September 7th, 2017, a group of Georgia Dance Theatre board members, staff, professional company members, volunteers, and alumni took part in a 6-hour open discussion forum and planning process, moderated by board President, Sherri Davis. We examined the organization from its inception to the present and identified current and future objectives for the upcoming fiscal year. The 2019 strategic plan reflects the lessons, evaluations, and priorities that emerged for Georgia Dance Theatre over the past 10 years. Although Georgia Dance Theatre has accomplished and achieved much throughout its 29 years of inception, it is important to continually set new goals revamp the future of the organization in order to obtain consistent and efficient growth. Participants determined the three most important strategic directions for Georgia Dance Theatre listed above. In preparation for planning the upcoming 2019-year, three groups were assembled and assigned 1 of the 3 major strategic directions. Each group was given the task to update and modify each of the goals and major outcomes reflecting the organizations most urgent needs.

What follows is a summary of the work and development during this planning process.

Strategic Direction: Strengthen Program Impact with Additional Performances to the Community that We Serve

Georgia Dance Theatre teaches its students to continually grow, improve, and set aspirational goals to help garner the artists within themselves. The organization applies these values to its own operations by continually refining its programs and performances to ensure that they effectively meet the needs of the children served.

Since its inception in 1990, Georgia Dance Theatre produces 5 multi-media performances that serve as a conclusion for their yearlong training. In association with Georgia Academy of Dance & the Performing Arts, these 5 shows are all examples of our commitment to artistic integrity and high achievement. These productions engage our entire student population along with prominent guest artists who inspire, challenge, and mentor our dancers. Our most recent productions featured 2 original ballets choreographed by our Artistic Director, Sherri Davis – *The Hunchback of Notre Dame & Alice In Wonderland* – and lighting design by the famous Robert Hand of the Atlanta Ballet. All Georgia Dance Theatre’s company members performed in the show, alongside their teachers, professional company dancers, and guest artists from the Atlanta Ballet. The experience of dancing with a large, professional cast inspires our dancers to continue their performing arts education and for many, pursue a professional career in the arts.

In our 2019 Strategic Plan, Georgia Dance Theatre outlines plans to achieve preparedness for a major capital campaign. The demand for our services, programs, and performances has continued to grow, and Georgia Dance Theatre now seeks an immediate and creative solution to set us on a path towards additional performances reaching larger audiences. The final initiative designed to strengthen impact involves reconnecting Georgia Dance Theatre’s alumni with the organization. We believe that our students will benefit greatly from the mentoring and encouragement that our alumni can provide. Furthermore, alumni can serve as a vital resource to broaden our circle of support. Lastly, we hope that formation of an Alumni Association will help Georgia Dance Theatre identify future leaders who can take part in the upcoming decades of growth and expansion we envision.

GOAL 1: ENHANCE QUALITY OF SERVICES BY OFFERING QUATERLY PERFORMANCES

Offering our students the highest quality services remains Georgia Dance Theatre’s most important and vital priority. We are goal-oriented and mission-driven in all our performances and programming and remain steadfastly committed to operating with integrity in all endeavors and offering the highest caliber of performing arts education to our students. Georgia Dance Theatre is distinguished and recognized by our commitment to excellence and to our tangible and measurable outcomes for the youth within our community. Because there is so much to gain from our performance experience, Georgia Dance Theatre continues to focus on expanding their repertoire and performing more often throughout the year to audiences where the arts is limited. Not only does this provide additional performance opportunities for

the students training within Georgia Dance Theatre, but it also opens up more opportunities for the community to see a professional performing arts production that they otherwise would not have access to.

Objectives and Strategies:

1. Refine and add to company repertoire

- a. Bring in guest artists and choreographers to set new and past works
- b. Provide more funding and opportunity to resident choreographers to create new works
- c. Provide more classes for students to learn new repertoire and work with all choreographers

2. Strengthen Program Committee

- a. Recruit dance and/or performing arts enthusiasts from the local community
- b. Identify new chair and ensure ongoing leadership within the committee
- c. Define goals and objectives for board and volunteer committee members

3. Partner with other non-profit organizations

- a. Establish a more deeply-rooted partnerships with organizations such as the Children's Village of Christian City, Wellspring, etc. to reach the youth where the arts is not as readily available.

Major Outcomes:

- Enhanced knowledge and choreographic proficiencies amongst teachers and students as measured by quantitative and qualitative evaluations
- Program staff supported by dedicated and knowledgeable Program Committee comprised of at least 2 board members and 5-7 community volunteers
- Building of company repertoire by both in resident and outside sources

GOAL 2: ADDRESS PERFORMANCE SPACE AND CAPACITY FOR PERFORMANCE PROGRAMMING

Georgia Dance Theatre's teaching and performance space at Georgia Academy of Dance & the Performing Arts is overflowing with energetic, dedicated young people excited about dance and eager to apply their technique and learned choreography, and ready to share their inspiring performances with the other youth throughout our community and beyond. They only wish they had a larger studio or black box theatre in which to showcase their hard work and learned discipline.

The only other professional venue for Georgia Dance Theatre to showcase their artists and performances is the Centre for Performing & Visual Arts of Coweta County – Unfortunately, at \$6,000 per day, our company cannot afford to pay for kind of rental.

Objectives and Strategies:

1. Assessment of current space

- a. Bring in outside expertise to focus on reutilization of existing space including staff, board, volunteers, and builders with a broad range of expertise
- b. Identify top 5 needs and draft plans for addressing each, including detailed budgets
- c. Assess integration of a black box type theatre within one of the current studios

2. Implement a temporary solution

- a. Secure donated labor and cash contributions to cover materials and supplies
- b. Develop a backup plan with neighboring high schools to use their auditorium – although they lack lighting and set capabilities, it would be a backup

3. Partner with performing arts venues to offer more performances to the community

- a. Establish a partnership with the Coweta County Performing Arts, Clayton County Performing Arts, and other additional performances venues to use the space for a discounted price in order to perform.

4. Research and development for a permanent space transformation

- a. Bring in architects from South Tree Enterprises, LLC to revamp the space
- b. Leverage our relations with other performing arts venues to have more performances at their venue for a discounted price.
- c. Track usage of new temporary space (quantify expanded capacity, numbers served, new projects, expanded community connections)
- d. Utilize data

5. Organize and host an “Evening of the Arts” for parents and potential donors with performance and dinner

- a. Tickets would be at a discounted rate
- b. Allow parents to see the show while providing more seats for other newcomers at actual show dates
- c. More community engagement

6. Seek patrons who could become or transform into potential donors

- a. Patrons who are enthusiastic about the arts could potentially become great donors.

Major Outcomes:

- Additional space allows for more performances for students performing and aspiring artists to see, additional enrollment capacity (number of people served), and new opportunities for community engagement (local artist using the space)

- Data gathered on space usage developed into research and development for plans to permanently transform Georgia Dance Theatre’s facilities and performance venues
- Increased partnership with performing arts venues and nonprofit organization for ultimate community involvement
- Implementation of more programming – “Dancing Under the Stars”
- Less fortunate students receive the opportunity to become involved in the arts and potentially become a student of Georgia Dance Theatre

GOAL 3: ENGAGE ALUMNI

Georgia Dance Theatre’s greatest achievements are shown via the fruits of the accomplishments of the young people we serve. Most of the alumni of Georgia Dance Theatre have received scholarships to colleges in dance programs or have elected to continue their education in the area of the fine arts in some capacity. Several Georgia Dance Theatre alumni are professional dancers, educators, choreographers, actors and directors in the field of dance and theatre. In addition, Georgia Dance Theatre members are awarded acceptances and scholarships annually to outlying professional summer dance programs as well as yearly invitations to continue their dance education in pursuit of a professional career in the arts.

Objectives and Strategies:

1. Create Alumni Association

- a. Seek Key Alumni
- b. Define Leadership
- c. Develop the already created tab on the web page specifically for Alumni – Find a way to connect with them on social media as well
- d. Research membership model
- e. Create goals, benefits, and structure for the Association

2. Provide opportunities for alumni to make a tangible impact

- a. Training, teaching, and choreography
- b. Volunteerism, including mentoring
- c. Recruiting and partnerships
- d. Fundraising and donating

Major Outcomes:

- Alumni will be more engaged
- Alumni will have the opportunity to give back, be involved, and solidify a relationship with Georgia Dance Theatre
- Engagement with alumni allows for more opportunity to grow and expand our involvement and partnerships
- Network of Georgia Dance Theatre family expands locally, regionally, and nationally

Strategic Direction: Secure Sustainability and Security of our Professional Company and Employee Personnel

Since 1990, Georgia Dance Theatre has learned to adapt, survive, and thrive with limited funding and personnel; yet, the organization continues to have demand from the community and its students that increases and grows with each year. The following goals and objectives are a direction reflection of both the immediate and future needs of the organization, while also taking into account the lessons we have learned, the creativity we have harvested, and the dreams we have made reality even with our previous limited resources.

GOAL 1: INCREASE INDIVIDUAL AND CORPORATE GIVING

Georgia Dance Theatre acknowledges that increasing the organization's fundraising capacity through individual and corporate giving is key to both the short and long-term success of the company. We would strive for individual giving to be in-between five to fifteen percent and for corporate giving to be in-between thirty and fifty percent. Over the last 6 years, there has been a major push within the organization to enhance Georgia Dance Theatre's individual and corporate giving program, with a focus on major gifts and commitment of our donors. The following initiatives are devised to build upon our previous successes such as increasing and integrating the development with our marketing and communications and utilizing our membership with the Chamber of Commerce in Fayette and Coweta Counties. With the continual growth of availability of social media marketing and networking vehicles, we have the opportunity to reach a larger market of potential donors not only in the Atlanta area, but also throughout the entire nation.

Objectives and Strategies:

- 1. Search, find, and hire an Administrative Assistant/ Marketing Associate**
 - a. This person would oversee all individual and corporate giving leads, communications, presentations, and closings
 - b. Create and implement a marketing and development plan with benchmarks linked to strategic plan
 - c. Help create, establish, and secure a fundraising and donation committee
- 2. Develop a major gifts strategy and implement campaign**
 - a. Convert our current large donors into major donors
 - b. Analyze the feasibility of well-known alumni, affiliates, celebrities, and corporate executives readily available to the organization
- 3. Increase online gifts and donations**
 - a. Create and nurture a plan for source retrieval and follow-up
 - b. Respond to all inquiries in a timely manner
 - c. Find and enable a technological accessible and possibly mobile donation process at fundraisers and events

4. **Engage board and development committee in fundraising**
 - a. Each member creates a specific financial target and leadership plan
 - b. Use existing relationships to build a donor database
 - c. Improve donor reporting to board and development groups

5. **Implement a technological solution to support above objectives and strategies such as a CRM (Customer Relationship Management) program, specifically, Salesforce.com**
 - a. Improve donor database, history, communications, frequency, and efficiency
 - b. Manage and maximize potential and current donors on a case by case basis
 - c. Focus solicitations to include uniquely tailored and marketable appeals
 - d. Build loyalty and commitment amongst data base
 - i. Create meaningful experiences with donors that engage them in programming and future organizational goals
 - ii. Develop communication strategies based on a categorized donor list
 - iii. Engage more affiliates and patrons in stewardship such as board members, parents, students, and alumni

Major Outcomes:

- Retain current and new donors and raise their contributions annually
- Expand donor base with a focus on major gifts (Top 100 donors within individual and corporate opportunities and potential)
- Plans and projections based on accurate reports from the CRM program that efficiently keep organized and track donor contact information, communications, retention, gift size, response rates, and campaign allocations
- Individual and corporate giving grows by at least fifteen percent annually
- Meet and exceed annual operating and marketing targets to invest in Georgia Dance Theatre’s reserve fund
- Increased paid personnel and committee involvement

GOAL 2: GROW AND DEVELOP COMMUNITY AWARENESS

Georgia Dance Theatre identifies that the organization’s community awareness is vital to the continued expansion of the company; it’s sustainability and security.

Objectives and Strategies:

1. **Expand relationships within community**
 - a. Include school systems and communities in marketing communications, events, and performances presented by Georgia Dance Theatre
 - b. Identify and train spokespeople to make presentations
 - c. Maximize strategic pilot sites

- 2. Enhance public relations, media, and social media marketing efforts**
 - a. Develop and implement a more robust email list
 - b. Enhance and develop social media marketing strategy
 - c. Continue integrating video content into website and social media outlets
 - d. Create a mobile APP

- 3. Utilize cultivation events and opportunities**
 - a. Create schedule and outline of events to ensure that they are efficient, maximizing, action-oriented, and measurable
 - b. Implement small events that create intimate, personal, and memorable experiences in order to build a stronger affiliations and relationships
 - c. Target larger events which focus on a larger and more broad exposure and ability to meet new potential patrons and constituents

- 4. Review and establish criteria for booking performances**

- 5. Integrate student, parent, and volunteer networks with community efforts and initiatives**
 - a. Engage students and alumni
 - b. Integrate content into print, web-based, and social media
 - c. Use evaluation and feedback as source material

Major Outcomes:

- Improved name recognition amongst schools, business, community leaders, nonprofit organizations, small businesses, and philanthropists
- Integrate online content with all social media marketing efforts
- Patrons converted to volunteers and/or donors
- Marketing and Future Program Development committees aligned and interconnected
- Strengthen opportunities for artistic achievement and collaboration

Strategic Direction: Optimize Human Resources with New Personnel

For the past 29 years, Georgia Dance Theatre has been defined by its human resources – our established and emerging leaders, successful program alumni, devoted and talented teachers, and students who daily put their belief, devotion, and learned skills into practice. It is the PEOPLE of Georgia Dance Theatre that create, develop, grow, and maintain the vibrant cultural community that we seek to exude with each year.

Georgia Dance Theatre has seen 25 years of sustainability based upon the matchless devotion of our board members and volunteers. It is because of the artistic excellence and high quality of Georgia Dance Theatre that these board members and volunteers have continuously volunteered their time for no tangible return. This upcoming fiscal year, our goal is to grow Georgia Dance Theatre in corporate, foundation, and individual support by having paid personnel oversee the daily growth of this organization and achieve the next level of performing arts education, program development, and community involvement.

GOAL 1: HIRE PERSONNEL

Georgia Dance Theatre recognizes the pressing need to provide operating and financial support to our fulltime personnel, part-time personnel, professional dancers, teachers, choreographers, and more.

Objectives and Strategies:

Provide salaries and financial sustainability for the following positions within the organization

1. Artistic Director (Part-time)

- a. Responsible for overseeing and managing the organization from personnel to dancers to choreographers
- b. Currently, Georgia Dance Theatre does have an Artistic Director – Sherri Davis – who volunteers all her time for this non-profit organization and has volunteered her time for the past 25 years.

2. Administrative Assistant (Part-time)

- a. Assists in all organizational related administrative duties, marketing efforts, fundraisers, and sponsorships. Responsible for implementation of strategic planning activities and seeking of donations from corporations, foundations, and individuals

3. Four Professional Company Members (Part-time)

- a. Professional dancers who train, teach, and dance in all programming and performances

4. Two Choreographers (Part-time)

- a. Professional choreographers brought in to create new works and set classic repertoire on the students and company

5. Performance Coordinator (Part-time)

- a. Responsible for all coordination and implementation of performances

6. Costume Mistress (Part-time)

- a. Responsible for all costuming needs

7. Technical Coordinator (Part-time)

- a. Responsible for all technical performance requirements such as lighting, props, set creation, etc.

Major Outcomes:

- Established and consistent growth of organization
- Achieve the next level of performing arts education, program development and community involvement.
- New personnel to help with the operations and ultimately, growth

GOAL 2: MAXIMIZE EFFECTIVENESS AND SATISFACTION

Georgia Dance Theatre thoroughly and deeply values the efforts of its board, staff, volunteers, and students. We believe in treating our personnel with the utmost respect and compassion, while encouraging each staff member's growth, celebrating their successes, and cultivating their leadership.

Objectives and Strategies:

Provide salaries and financial sustainability for the following positions within the organization

1. Increase Communication

- a. Increase positive communication between parents, staff, board, and students
- b. Host combined monthly staff meetings with board members and staff to create a seamless and amicable relationship

2. Improve morale, retention, and effectiveness amongst staff

- a. Seek consulting organizations for training our staff
- b. Provide non-financial incentives to compensate staff
- c. Talk with other non-profit organizations to share ideas

3. Maintain high-functioning and efficient Board of Directors

- a. Seek educators and well-established corporate executives to join the board
- b. Solidify goals and objectives
- c. Strengthen committees through additional volunteer participation

Major Outcomes:

- Inspired, motivated, and appreciated staff members in turn provide exceptional opportunities for the community and students
- Highly effective and functioning employees and committees reduce stress and increase productivity
- Increased learning opportunities yield new competencies amongst staff and will be reflected throughout the organization