



2020 Dance Festival Gender Equity Report

JANUARY 2021

Summary

To fully examine the entire economic structure of the world of classical ballet, Dance Data Project® (DDP) is systematically focusing on every aspect of the industry. Dance festivals provide an outlet for new, creative voices as well as revisiting favorite classics. In order for women to achieve parity in ballet, they need equal opportunities to workshop and present new works at festivals, which often attract not only avid ballet audiences, but critics as well. In 2019, DDP examined the leadership and programming of major spring/summer dance festivals. While the COVID-19 pandemic has seen many of these projects cancelled, postponed, or amended (for more info on statuses, see DDP's [Season Status Updates](#) resource), the DDP team was able to record many of the virtual and proceeding works programmed during the year and analyze them in aggregate form for this report. This publication also examines the gender distribution of individuals in top leadership positions at the sample of 39 festivals and the board chairs of each or the institution that produces the program(s).

Introduction

The report is divided into three sections: **Section I: Programming**, **Section II: Leadership**, and **Section III: 2019/2020 Comparative Analysis**.

DDP chose to delay the **2020 Festivals** report until late 2020 in order to record as much programming that was actually performed—virtually or in-person with COVID-19 safety measures in place—as possible and analyze it in aggregate form. In total, DDP examined 39 festivals, though a number of the sample was excluded from certain calculations in cases where information was unavailable¹. DDP provides the full list of festivals at the end of the report.

Researchers collected programming from festival websites and verified the data, where necessary, via third-party sources (i.e., ticket vendor websites, social media accounts of the festivals or associated parties, media coverage of the program(s)). DDP identified the individuals in top leadership positions via staff rosters listed on the websites of the festivals or the institutions that produce them. The report defines top leadership as the artistic and/or administrative leader(s) overseeing the production, curation, and presentation of the program or the producing institution. The leaders examined held titles such as “Artistic Director,” “Chief Executive,” “Founder and Producer,” “Director,” and “Executive Director.” A full list of the titles researchers came across is delineated in the **Limitations** section at the end of this report (see: Title Bibliography). The findings do not distinguish the artistic leaders from the administrative leaders due to a small sample size and outlines the gender distribution of the “top leaders” in aggregate in **Section II**.

The report defines festivals as special programs of dance curated for performance outside of ballet-centric company seasons. DDP selected reoccurring festivals that program at least one work of classical or contemporary ballet and/or include a classical company or a dancer(s) from a classical company. Festivals that do not meet these qualifications are not considered relevant to DDP’s primary area of focus, classical ballet.

The report compares programming and aggregate leadership from 2019 to the 2020 data in **Section III**.

Below are key findings from each section.

- **Key Finding 1:** Women choreographed 36% of all works programmed by the dance festivals that were held in 2020 and sampled by DDP.

¹ For a full list of instances of exclusion, see “Exclusions From Calculations” in the Limitations section.

- **Key Finding 2:** Women choreographed 48% of world premieres commissioned by the festivals that were held in 2020 and sampled by DDP.
- **Key Finding 3:** There were a total of 48 top leaders listed by the 37 festivals that listed a leader, and 65% of them were women in 2020 (compared to 63% in DDP's 2019 sample).
- **Key Finding 4:** 57% of festivals had exclusively-female leaders in 2020.
- **Key Finding 5:** The mean Equity Score for the 10 festivals examined by DDP that programmed works in both 2019 and 2020 was .33 (33% of works were choreographed by women). The median Equity Score was .27.

Further information on data collection is detailed in the **Sources** section of the report. For particular cases of limitations, see the **Limitations** section of the report.

Section I: Programming

Section I discusses the gender distribution among choreographers of works programmed for proceeding dance festivals in 2020. Please note that the descriptive statistics below only apply to the sample of festivals surveyed by DDP that programmed works in 2020. For more information, refer to "Programming | General Programming Limitations" and "Programming | Access to Works" in the **Limitations** section.

DDP recorded **199 works programed** in the sample of dance festivals surveyed.

- **58%** of works programmed for the festivals that were held in 2020 and sampled by DDP were **choreographed by men.**
- **36%** of works programmed for the festivals that were held in 2020 and sampled by DDP were **choreographed by women.**
- **7%** of works programmed for the festivals that were held in 2020 and sampled by DDP were **choreographed by more than one choreographer of different genders.**

DDP recorded **63 world premieres commissioned** in the sample of dance festivals' programming in 2020.

- **44%** of world premieres commissioned by the festivals that were held in 2020 and sampled by DDP were **choreographed by men.**
- **48%** of world premieres commissioned by the festivals that were held in 2020 and sampled by DDP were **choreographed by women.**
- **8%** of world premieres commissioned by the festivals that were held in 2020 and sampled by DDP were **choreographed by more than one choreographer of different genders.**

Section II: Leadership

Section II discusses the gender distribution among top leaders at dance festivals (that were both held and not held) in 2020. For the report's definition of top leaders, see the **Introduction**. For information on the sample and caveats to the examination of Leadership, see the **Limitations** section.

DDP examined 39 festivals, **37** of which listed leaders.

- **32%** of top festival leadership is **exclusively male**.
- **57%** of top festival leadership is **exclusively female**.
- **11%** of top festival leadership is a **slate of men and women**.

At the 37 festivals with leaders listed, there were a total of **48 top leaders**.

- **35%** of top festival leaders were **male**.
- **65%** of top festival leaders were **female**.

Section III: 2019/2020 Comparative Analysis

Section III examines the gender distribution among choreographers of works programmed for dance festivals in 2019² v. 2020 as well as the individuals occupying the top leadership positions³ at the festivals in each year. Please note that the descriptive statistics below apply to the sample of festivals surveyed by DDP that (1) programmed works in 2019 and 2020 and/or (2) listed top leaders in 2019 and 2020. For more information, refer to "Programming | General Programming Limitations" and "Programming | Access to Works" in the **Limitations** section.

2 DDP verified and amended 2019 data for accuracy prior to conducting the comparisons in this section. As a result, the descriptive statistics for 2019 programming in this report are not identical to the findings shared in the 2019 report but are a more accurate representation of the gender distributions among choreographers of works programmed for the sample of 2019 dance festivals.

3 For information regarding how DDP identified the "top leadership positions," please see the report's Introduction, which breaks down the titles considered. In 2019, DDP used artistic directors or the titles determined to be equivalents for leadership analyses.

Programming: All Works

The following table compares the gender distribution of all works programmed by festivals examined by DDP in 2019 v. festivals examined by DDP in 2020:

2019 Counts			
Total	Male	Female	Both
230	158	60	12

2019 Percentages		
Male	Female	Both
69%	26%	5%

2020 Counts			
Total	Male	Female	Both
199	115	71	13

2020 Percentages		
Male	Female	Both
58%	36%	7%

Programming: World Premieres

The following table compares the gender distribution of world premieres programmed by festivals examined by DDP in 2019 v. festivals examined by DDP in 2020:

2019 Counts			
Total	Male	Female	Both
37	22	13	2

2019 Percentages		
Male	Female	Both
59%	35%	5%

2020 Counts			
Total	Male	Female	Both
63	28	30	5

2020 Percentages		
Male	Female	Both
44%	48%	8%

Programming: Equity Scores

DDP assigned each festival that programmed works in both 2019 and 2020 an “Equity Score.” The score was developed by dividing the sum of female-choreographed works from the total number of works programmed in both 2019 and 2020.

- The mean Equity Score for the 10 festivals examined by DDP that programmed works in both 2019 and 2020 was .33 (33% of works were choreographed by women). The median Equity Score was .27.

DDP also assigned separate, yearly Equity Scores to each festival to compare practices of programming equity. The yearly Equity Scores were equal to the proportion of works each festival programmed that were choreographed by women. DDP did not find a significant difference between programming equity in 2019 v. 2020 ($p < .05$).

- On average, 30% of works programmed by the festivals examined by DDP in 2019 were choreographed by women.
- On average, 36% of works programmed by the festivals examined by DDP in 2020 were choreographed by women.

Leadership

There were 23 festivals that listed leaders in 2019. 8 of the festivals were led by men, 14 by women, and 1 by men and women together.

2019 Counts			
Total	Male	Female	Both
23	8	14	1

2019 Percentages		
Male	Female	Both
35%	61%	4%

There were 37 festivals that listed leaders in 2020. 12 of the festivals were led by men, 21 by women, and 4 by men and women together.

2020 Counts			
Total	Male	Female	Both
37	12	21	4

2020 Percentages		
Male	Female	Both
32%	57%	15%

There were 24 total leaders recorded by DDP at the 23 festivals with leaders in 2019. 9 of the leaders were men and 15 of the leaders were women.

2019 Counts		
Total	Male	Female
24	9	15

2019 Percentages	
Male	Female
38%	63%

There were 48 total leaders recorded by DDP at the 37 festivals with leaders in 2020. 17 of the leaders were men and 31 of the leaders were women.

2020 Counts		
Total	Male	Female
48	17	31

2020 Percentages	
Male	Female
35%	65%

Sources

As previously stated DDP sourced all information from festival or producing institution websites. Data was occasionally confirmed using third-party sources, such as ticket vendor websites, social media accounts of the festivals or associated parties (i.e., performers, performing companies, choreographers, or artistic leaders), or media coverage (i.e., a critical review of the program). For particular occurrences of verification using third-party sources, please contact [Isabelle Vail](#), DDP Director of Research.

Limitations

Programming | General Programming Limitations

The COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly impacted the majority of festival programming. Previously-announced lineups were cancelled and amended virtual or socially-distanced programming replaced the slated companies, works, commissions, and performers. The programming recorded by DDP in 2020 is therefore much different from what organizations may have initially planned.

While there is no way of knowing which aspects of festival programming were most severely impacted by the pandemic (unless, of course, an ally research organization

was to conduct follow-up research that directly surveys the organizations), we can confidently surmise that 2020 festival programming is not necessarily representative of the average trends in in-person, “regular” festival programming that may have been presented in prior years or will be presented in future years.

What we are presenting here are therefore trends in pandemic-era festival programming within a sample of organizations that held festivals in 2020. While we do compare 2020 festival programming to 2019 festival programming in Section III, the ways in which the two years of programming were planned and accomplished differ dramatically. One was likely to have been planned at least a year in advance, while the other was likely planned hurriedly by festival organizers. For example, the companies and performers involved in Vail Dance Festival 2019 were booked long in advance, and the programming included 50 works. In 2020, the festival presented only 10 works and two world premieres; all were presented digitally.

In short, we ask that readers take 2020 festival findings with a grain of salt and wait for 2021 festival programming to tell us whether or not there are real, significant trends in either direction for annual festival programming. Further, more specific limitations are discussed in the subsections below.

Programming | Access to Works

While DDP was able to record 199 works programmed for the 2020 Festivals Report, there was about a 13.5% decrease in works recorded compared to the 2019 data that was verified and amended by DDP for this report. The research team recorded as many works that were performed as possible. However, we acknowledge that additional, unlisted works may have appeared in any festival’s programming and the works performed in 2020 may differ from the works that were initially programmed prior to the pandemic.

There was not a sufficient sample size of festivals held in 2020 ($n=19$ from a group of 39 international festivals initially examined) to permit making inferences about dance festival programming as a whole. (I.e., DDP examined 39 festival websites and found that only 19 were held and had listed programming online.) As a result, our research team was very careful to phrase the descriptive statistics in the programming section of this report in such a way as to signify that these findings only capture the trends within that small sample of 19 companies (as opposed to phrasing findings in such a way as to indicate that these statistics signify larger trends within festival programming as a whole).

For detailed limitations pertaining to a particular festival, please contact DDP Director of Research, [Isabelle Vail](#). For information regarding which festivals did not proceed with programming or disclose programming information in 2020, see “Exclusions From Calculations” at the end of this section.

Leadership | General Leadership Limitations

DDP identified “top leaders” at each festival or producing institution based on website delineation. Typically, DDP could identify the most important staff member based on his/her/their order in the roster. The more important leaders, with titles like “Artistic Director” or “Founder” were listed first or, oftentimes, on their own page on the festival website. This practice of selecting the top leaders based on the individuals’ description on the website comes with limitations, and in two cases⁴, DDP could not determine a top leader. For more information on exclusions, see “Exclusions From Calculations” at the end of this section.

Together, the festivals examined by DDP did not amass enough artistic directors (n=23) or executive directors (n=11) to reach a sufficient sample size in either leadership category to permit DDP to make inferences about a population. (One cannot say that 39% of dance festival artistic directors are male, but rather make a more specific statement, like, “39% of the sample’s artistic directors are male.”) Rather than risk incorrectly classifying individuals like “Producers,” “Directors,” or “Founders” into either category of artistic or executive director, DDP chose to combine all of the “top leaders”—artistic, administrative, crossover—into an aggregate leadership category for this report.

Similarly, in Section III, DDP aggregated the individuals listed as artistic and executive directors for the 2019 report to best compare the leadership to 2020 findings.

Title Bibliography

Below, DDP lists all of the top leadership title variations found when examining the staff rosters of festivals and/or producing institutions.

- *Executive Director*
- *Producer*
- *Artistic Director*
- *Director*
- *Co-Founder\Producer*
- *Founder, Producer + Curator*
- *Founder and Artistic Director*
- *Chief Executive*
- *President & CEO*
- *Founding Director*

⁴ DDP did not identify leaders for Ballet Across America and Panama Ballet Festival in 2020 because the former did not proceed in 2020 (curators/festival leaders depend on the program, and there was no program) and the latter listed no information online in 2020.

- *Co-Founder*
- *Founder and Executive Director*
- *General Director*
- *Chief Executive Officer and Artistic Director*
- *Artistic and Executive Director*
- *Artistic Director/Founder*
- *Co-Artistic Director*

Gender Classifications

DDP employs a binary gender measurement in our research. No individual studied for this report identified as nonbinary, however the DDP team is actively seeking to improve our research through adopting a gender inclusive approach and acknowledging that gender is a nonbinary spectrum. DDP affirms that trans men are men and trans women are women.

Sampling Limitations

DDP took measures to include a wide array of organizations. Such measures include reaching out to tenured dance leaders and choreographers for input, extensive online research using a variety of keywords, and consulting dance publications and social media accounts for additional festivals to examine.

Exclusions From Calculations

DDP excluded the following festivals from Programming calculations. DDP will continue to examine these festivals in future research and will include them in calculations when they resume programming:

1. **American Dance Festival** [*cancelled*]
2. **Ballet Across America** [*no info*]
3. **Ballet West National Choreographic Festival** [*cancelled*]
4. **Southern Vermont Dance Festival** [*no info*]
5. **Harvest Chicago Dance Festival** [*cancelled*]
6. **Vineyard Arts Project** [*cancelled*]
7. **Stern Grove Festival** [*virtual; no dance programming found*]
8. **Cape Dance Festival** [*cancelled*]
9. **Bates Dance Festival** [*cancelled*]
10. **St. Louis – SPRING TO DANCE® Festival** [*cancelled*]
11. **Spoletto Festival USA** [*cancelled*]

12. **Los Angeles Dance Festival** [*virtual; programming unclear*]
13. **MixMatch Dance Festival** [*no info*]
14. **Dance Salad Festival** [*postponed*]
15. **Edinburgh Fringe Festival** [*virtual; no dance programming found*]
16. **Cannes Dance Festival** [*no info*]
17. **Los Angeles International Dance Festival** [*postponed*]
18. **Panama Ballet Festival** [*no info*]
19. **International Ballet Festival of Miami** [*no programming details, just program names*]
20. **Spoletto Festival Italy** [*no dance programming found*]

The following festivals were excluded from Leadership calculations:

1. **Ballet Across America** [*a program of the Kennedy Center; no info on this festival in 2020*]
2. **Panama Ballet Festival** [*no info*]

For information regarding the statuses of the entire sample of festivals, visit DDP's [Season Status Updates resource online](#).

Festivals List

The following festivals were examined in DDP's research for this report. For specific instances of exclusion from calculations, see "Exclusions From Calculations" in the **Limitations** section. For DDP's definition of festival, see the report **Introduction**.

1. American Dance Festival
2. Ballet Across America
3. Ballet Sun Valley
4. Ballet West National Choreographic Festival
5. Bates Dance Festival
6. Cannes Dance Festival
7. Cape Dance Festival
8. CHOP SHOP: Bodies of Work
9. Co•Lab Dance
10. Collective Thread Dance Festival
11. Dance Salad Festival
12. Dance St. Louis - SPRING TO DANCE® Festival
13. Edinburgh Fringe Festival
14. Fall for Dance

15. Festival Internacional de Música y Danza de Granada
16. International Festival of Ballet and Music – Nervi
17. Fire Island Dance Festival
18. Hamptons Dance Project
19. Harvest Chicago Dance Festival
20. International Ballet Festival of Miami
21. Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival
22. Kaatsbaan Summer Festival 2020
23. Laguna Dance Festival
24. Lake Tahoe Dance Festival
25. Los Angeles Dance Festival
26. Los Angeles International Dance Festival
27. MixMatch Dance Festival
28. Nantucket Atheneum Dance Festival
29. Panama Ballet Festival
30. Seattle International Dance Festival
31. Southern Vermont Dance Festival
32. Spoleto Festival Italy
33. Spoleto Festival USA
34. Stern Grove Festival
35. The Grange Festival
36. Traverse City Dance Project
37. Vail Dance Festival
38. Vineyard Arts Project
39. Virtual Pathways Dance Festival