

BRIDGE LIVE ARTS

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HOPE MOHR DANCE CHANGES NAME TO BRIDGE LIVE ARTS REFLECTING ORGANIZATIONAL EQUITY WORK & A REIMAGINED MODEL FOR THE ARTS

San Francisco, CA (August 16, 2022) Today Bridge Live Arts (B.L.A.), formerly Hope Mohr Dance (HMD), announces the organization's new name, a change that reflects years of intentional work to move away from the tradition of a founder-led, hierarchical nonprofit and toward an emerging new model. Grounded in collective vision, the newly-named Bridge Live Arts will continue to grow its capacity to present performance, embodied practice, and public dialogue that embraces social justice, builds community, and centers artists as agents of change.

In 2020, HMD announced a shift to distributed co-leadership, naming Cherie Hill, Karla Quintero, and Hope Mohr as co-leaders. The three directors have equal weight in all of the organization's artistic, financial, and strategic decision-making, instead of solely Mohr, a move that had been in the works since 2018. Hill, Quintero, and Mohr will continue to co-lead the newly-named Bridge Live Arts. The organization will also establish a resident choreographer program; Mohr has already moved from Artistic Director to resident choreographer status and the organization plans to bring in other resident choreographers in the future.

The shift to distributed leadership is not the only recent organizational move. Within the last two years, the Board transitioned to 100% working artists; the company established pay equality across the organization (now dancers and co-directors alike make the same hourly starting wage); Mohr stepped off the Board and the selection panel for the organization's Community Engagement Residency; and HMD established a new mission, values, and operating principles, with input from artists the organization has partnered with through its various programs.

"This renaming is an important next step, an invitation to continue to evolve together away from inherited paternalistic dynamics that value production over community building in the arts," states Karla Quintero, Bridge Live Arts Co-Director. "As we have evolved as an organization—ever in the direction of a collective vision that embraces multiple perspectives on artmaking, performance, and artists' needs—our distributed leadership structure has opened new channels for artists to influence various aspects of the organization, shaping everything from what we present to our budget."

"I know that building this distributed model is not all about me, or my fellow co-directors; it is about growing Bridge Live Arts in conjunction with the opinions and concerns voiced by artists we collaborate with," shares Co-Director Cherie Hill. "At the center of our work are artists, and

the inclusion of artists within our decision-making model has been integral from the start to the present. We will continue to center artists and our community as we move forward.”

As Bridge Live Arts, the organization will offer public workshops and dialogues, multidisciplinary performances, events, choreographic explorations, and residencies. The company will build upon its 12-year track record of activist cultural programming through the continuation of its Community Engagement Residency (CER) program, which provides year-long support to movement artists to engage in social justice projects in their communities. Current CER lead artists include Andreina Maldonado, jose e. abad, and Stephanie Hewett. [Click here for more information on Bridge Live Arts programming.](#)

Embodying A New Equity-Driven Model

"Our shift to a model of distributed leadership reflects a sea change in the performing arts away from hierarchy. This change reflects a groundswell in the field toward models that center artists and center equity. This is artist-driven work and justice-driven work. It is possible to re-imagine how we work as artists. Not only possible, but necessary," shared Hope Mohr, founder and Co-Director.

In 2007, choreographer Hope Mohr founded Hope Mohr Dance (HMD). In 2010, Mohr created The Bridge Project, an activist curatorial platform that built community among artists across genre, geography, and perspective. For more than a decade, HMD served as a platform for Mohr's original choreographic work, premiering 40+ original works and performing across the U.S. as The Bridge Project presented unique multi-disciplinary programs bringing artists and activists together. Programming highlights have included *Radical Movements: Gender and Politics in Performance* (2017), a festival that asked, "What does it mean to have a radical body" and featured Judith Butler, Jack Halberstam, boy child, Julie Tolentino, and Becca Blackwell, and over 20 other queer artists and activists. The Bridge Project has also presented two groundbreaking programs re-examining iconic dance lineage from a multi-disciplinary perspective, including *Ten Artists Respond to Locus*, a partnership with the Trisha Brown Dance Company, and *Signals from the West: Bay Area Artists in Conversation with Merce at 100*, a partnership with the Merce Cunningham Trust and SFMOMA's Open Space.

Beginning in 2017, Mohr, who is white, began examining the disconnect between the company's majority-white leadership and its equity-driven programs. In 2020, the company announced the change to distributed co-leadership among Hill, Quintero, and Mohr. That same year, the Board transitioned to 100% working artists; the company established pay equality across the organization; Mohr stepped off the organization's residency selection panel; and HMD established a new mission, values, and operating principles.

2021 brought about more change. This included unpacking and redistributing staff and organizational power; meetings with funders; the establishment of a paid artist council with authority over 30% of the program budget; and more. In 2022, Felicitas Fischer joined the staff as Community Engagement Manager and the Bridge Live Arts name change was developed through a collaborative process co-facilitated by creatives Kyle Wai Lin, Josephine Yatar, Alex Camacho, Eric Sugatan and Suzette Sagisi, with input from the company's larger artistic community.

Hill, Mohr, and Quintero have been invited to speak about distributed leadership to many major arts organizations and conferences, including Dance/NYC, Dance/USA, National Performance

Network, Creating New Futures, Western Arts Alliance, New Yorkers for Culture and the Arts, and currently offer consulting on shared leadership work for other arts organizations.

About Bridge Live Arts

Bridge Live Arts (B.L.A.) combines art and activism through embodied practice, community-based programs, live performance, and public dialogues. Founded in 2007 as Hope Mohr Dance, expanded with The Bridge Project in 2010, and evolved into distributed leadership in 2020, B.L.A. is a live-arts organization committed to building artist power and cultural and racial equity.

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Bridge Live Arts Co-Leader Bios

Cherie Hill (Co-Director, Director of Arts Leadership) is a dance educator and choreographer whose art explores human expression through the body in collaboration with nature, music, and visual imagery. Cherie has published articles on dance in *Gender Forum*, *the Sacred Dance Guild Journal*, *Dance Education in Practice*, and *In Dance*. She has presented at multiple conferences, including the International Association of Black Dance, the International Conference on Arts and Humanities, and the Western Arts Alliance. As a choreographer, she has held artist residencies with Footloose Productions, Milk Bar Richmond, the David Brower Center, and CounterPulse Performing Diaspora Residency Program. With B.L.A., she has co-curated the Power Shift: Improvisation, Activism, & Community Festival, Anti-Racism in Dance, and Money in the Arts equity series. She presents on distributed leadership with B.L.A. co-directors and recently participated on a panel for Dance/USA. Cherie holds a BA in Dance and Performance Studies and African American Studies from the University of California Berkeley and an MFA in Dance from the University of Colorado Boulder with graduate certificates in Women and Gender Studies and Somatics.

Hope Mohr (Co-Director, Managing Director, and Resident Choreographer) has woven art and activism for decades. In 2007, she founded Hope Mohr Dance. In 2010, she founded HMD's core program, The Bridge Project. In 2020, she co-stewarded the organization's transition to an equity-driven model of distributed leadership.

As a dancer, Mohr trained at S.F. Ballet School and on scholarship at the Merce Cunningham and Trisha Brown Studios in New York City. She performed in the companies of dance pioneers Lucinda Childs and Trisha Brown, among others.

Passionate about pursuing both activism and dance, Mohr earned a J.D. from Columbia Law School. She works at the intersection of the arts and the solidarity economy as a Fellow with the Sustainable Economies Law Center and as the General Manager of Guided, a cooperative that empowers freelance artists.

As a choreographer, Mohr makes work that “conveys emotional and socio-political contents that just ride underneath the surface of a rigorous vocabulary” (*Dance View Times*). She was named to the YBCA 100 in 2015. In 2014, *Dance Magazine* editor-in-chief Wendy Perron named Mohr as one of the “women leaders” in dance. Her book, *Shifting Cultural Power*, is out now from the National Center for Choreography-Akron. hopemohr.org

Karla Quintero (Co-Director, Director of Marketing and Development) graduated from Barnard College with a BA degree in Urban Studies and later earned a BFA from the SUNY Purchase Conservatory of Dance. For five years she worked for the advocacy group Transportation Alternatives (NYC) supporting pedestrian safety and community health efforts in Latino and immigrant communities.

Karla's performance work explores intimacy, consumption, and biculturalism. Recent highlights include the dance film *Flavedoom*, which screened at the 2021 San Francisco Dance Film Festival. Karla also performs in the works of other artists, including Gerald Casel, Catherine Galasso (NYC), Hope Mohr, and Maxe Crandall.

As an arts administrator, Karla has worked with PUSH Dance Company coordinating their annual mixed-genre dance festival PUSHfest and as the Production Manager for the Festival for Latin American Contemporary Choreographers in 2019. Her curatorial work with B.L.A. approaches equity from a personal lens. She co-curated the Festival *Power Shift: Improvisation, Activism, and Community*, including its virtual exhibit, as well as and the audio series *Danzacuentos: Voz, Cuerpo, Y Raíces* for the Anti-Racism in Dance Series.