

# STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, ACCESS, AND BELONGING

## Virginia Freeman Dupont

Diversity strengthens the work and well-being of creative artists. Along with creating beauty and elevating the mood, the arts provide a window to the human experiences of the past, a mirror in to who we are as a society now, and a catalyst for positive change. We come closer to the truth of these possibilities when differences in ability, age, background, culture, ethnicity, experience, gender, gender identity, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, and more are not only represented, but sought after, listened to, valued, and fulfilled. As a dance performer, choreographer and educator who works closely with and in collaboration with dance artists, students, and educators, I am committed to taking a multidimensional approach to addressing equity, diversity, inclusion, access, and belonging across all areas of my life and work.

To affect real change, the work must start from inside oneself to those closest to them and outward like ripples on the water. Starting with myself takes pausing, reflecting and continuously self-educating. I seek out opportunities to ask, hear, and really listen to as many perspectives as possible. Outside of my personal life and the way in which I move through the world, my commitment to allyship and anti-oppression has manifested thus far in the following ways:

- Implementing tools gained from being a performer in the International Day for Eliminating Racism project: striving for true collaboration with all artists involved, pondering the current social constructs and contexts of the work at hand, and digging deep (writing, having difficult conversations, and reflecting).
- Completing, implementing, and making available to others the Studios for Equality, Prevention & Science course.
- Creating a safe space in which to share preferred names and pronouns by sharing my own first and then using preferred names and pronouns consistently.

### Specific to my work as a ballet educator:

- Every dancing body has an access point in which to engage with ballet. I actively present material in class to reach each access point and to accommodate diverse learners and diverse bodies.
- Discussing history and inherent stereotyping in ballet while recognizing that movement itself does not have a gender and allowing all bodies, regardless of how they present, to experiment, explore, and enjoy all of the movement options.

### Specific to my work at UNCG:

- Fully welcoming and supporting male-presenting bodies en pointe in Pointe classes at UNCG.

### Specific to my work at Burlington Academy of Dance & Arts ("BADA"):

- Shifting dress code policies on appearance to include accepting, making accessible, encouraging, and celebrating natural hair as well skin tone inclusive tights and shoes.
- Making intentional, diverse choices in decisions regarding the casting of roles as well as employment at BADA to include and elevate people of color and members of the LGBTQIA+ community. Making consultation with people of these backgrounds a priority in the decision making process.
- Offering scholarships to study and train at BADA in an effort to break down socioeconomic barriers and ensure underserved populations have access to quality dance & arts experiences.
- Providing and promoting diverse programming at BADA, including West African in our curriculum as well as master classes in Latin Dance and Bollywood; celebrating cultural observances and holidays; and teaching the history of the genres we offer.

I am committed to creating a safe space for every dancer where everyone can show up as themselves and do their best work every day. I am focused on equity, fostering a culture that is unconditionally inclusive. In service to the mission of inclusivity, I actively seek and welcome people of diverse backgrounds into my life, my work, and my classroom. This includes Asian, Black, Indigenous, Hispanic, and Latino/Latina/Latinx

**people; LGBTQIA+ people; people with disabilities; women; and people at intersections of these identities. Ultimately, I seek to build an elevated arts community, educational experience, and world.**