

Hello. My name is Vitek Wincza. I am the Artistic and Executive Director of the not-for-profit organization, Hamilton Conservatory for the Arts Dance Theatre.

I began my artistic journey in this wonderful city with the 1997 Hamilton Nutcracker series: animating local venues and adapting the Nutcracker ballet to reflect local, Hamilton stories - I created this for young audiences with young performers, that inspired them to realize that Hamilton is a place where dreams can happen.

This show was annual event for many years to follow and the work evolved into developing HCA Dance Theatre, that has now been in operation since 2001 and gone on to produce works with Michael Ondaatje and other professional dance works with some of Canada's finest dancers and choreographers. Today, programs like Dusk Dances (now in its fifth year – for which I would like to give special thanks to Jason Farr for supporting and championing), also Together in Dance and Fear No Dance bring professional and semi-professional performances, workshops and public engagement opportunities for Hamiltonians of all ages in spaces across the city.

In the last year we have been engaging with the dance community in Hamilton: professional and semi-professional choreographers, dancers, teachers and administrators from many different backgrounds and communities – to discuss what these artists would like to do and how we can work together. How can we make dance visible and accessible? As Hamilton continues to grow as a city, the cultural landscape expands, and I believe that dance is underrepresented, and I am working to change that.

This year, we received our first operating grant from the Culture department – that will allow us to begin to grow our infrastructure to properly staff, promote and amplify our message; we think it is essential to come together in dance – to learn from our differences and celebrate what we have in common. Dance is a beautiful art form and form of creative expression, that naturally connects and builds community.

A new initiative we are developing is the Together in Dance multicultural dance festival. This festival will showcase and blend classical and modern - African, Polish, Indian and more - dance companies and will include performances, workshops, round table discussions and networking and community building opportunities. I believe this will create meaningful interaction and exchange between experienced and new generation artists and community members from different cultures across Hamilton and surrounding area – and make dance visible and accessible in this city.

To truly achieve this, we will need engagement and support from community members, local businesses- and our politicians; we need to work together to build and strengthen our cultural fabric – particularly the gorgeous form of dance in this rich, wonderful city.

In today's world it is more important than ever that we celebrate diversity and encourage and foster compassion, inclusion and a sense of belonging; if we look around the world we see the impact of not subscribing to these values. This city – our community members, our youth, our

next generation of leaders and influencers have so much potential. But we need to foster engagement and conversation. What better way to do that than through art and tradition and coming together in community.

We hope Council will support our efforts to bring Hamiltonians together in dance and celebration; we hope you can spread the word about our work and find ways to continue to financially support the efforts with grant support for administration and marketing...alone we can achieve little, together so much more - together we are better and stronger.

Thank you for your time.