

Guest opinion: Carly Hambridge: Boulder can be a leader in the presentation of exceptional art

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October 14, 2023 at 6:00 a.m. *By Carly Hambridge*

I have been a company member with Boulder Ballet for seven seasons. I would like to offer my story to you as an example of how large of an impact arts funding has on my profession and my relationship with the Boulder arts community in hopes that the 2A initiative will bring further funding to Boulder.

I moved to Boulder in 2016 after dancing with a company in Ohio that was only able to pay a small living stipend for my work as a professional dancer. Unfulfilled by this position, I decided to audition for Boulder Ballet because I had faith that a more intimate company experience would offer a greater fulfillment to my career and hopefully a larger financial offering. Colorado offered a variety of possibilities and matched my preferences in its political and social tendencies, so the move here was immediately validated when I received my job offer.

After beginning my work with Boulder Ballet, I quickly realized that funding in the arts is a true challenge. Although Boulder Ballet offered a fulfilling career with performing opportunities that helped me grow as an artist, I was still unable to cover my living expenses or establish a strong financial foundation and had to seek additional work elsewhere.

Aware of this financial gap, Boulder Ballet prioritized increasing both pay and hours in the past few years, but it is unfortunately still not enough. Even with a 38% salary

increase since 2019, I still work two additional jobs to come close to meeting the living wage bracket for Boulder County. It is a dream of mine to one day no longer need supplemental work to be financially stable. While a career in the arts is applauded in our community, its value is not compensated adequately by providing a living wage to its artists and that is where dedicated governmental funding can make a huge impact.

You may ask, why do I continue on this path? Because I believe in art. I believe in dance as a way to connect to individuals that are not like me. Humans communicate with one another in a physical way each day. Dance takes that physical communication and breaks it out of its everyday functionality allowing us to relate to each other, feel emotions, and see new perspectives in a different and sometimes surprising way. This ripple effect creates a more compassionate society willing to give back to others, boosts the desire for positive social change, and keeps us impassioned about our environment both near and far.

Boulder Ballet and the entire Boulder arts community can be a leader in the presentation of exceptional art. We just need more funding. We need more funding for artists to devote their full time to their craft, more funding for world-renowned choreographers to bring their unique perspectives to our special county, more funding to advertise our offerings and bring these experiences to those who may not have access to them, and more funding to teach this art form to the next generation offering them a deeper understanding of self-expression and confidence in themselves.

Thank you for reading my story and perspective and thank you for your consideration in voting “yes” for the 2A initiative this season.

Carly Hambridge is a company dancer with the Boulder Ballet.