



STEP

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Annual Report 2023



These past fifteen months have been even more challenging than the first year of the pandemic. The subsequent waves of COVID-19 variants, the lack of funding for the performing arts – particularly modern dance – and the decision of Hartford’s major businesses to keep workers at home impacted us greatly. We accomplished much, yet the audience numbers and donations did not match our needs. We have taken the past few months to reflect, regroup and re-energize. Due to lack of funding, our much lauded Apprentice Training Program for underserved Hartford Youth has been put on hold. Presently, we are rehearsing in New York, teaching in the Hartford Public Schools through Hartford Performs, looking for venues to perform in, touring, and running classes when possible locally and abroad. It is our connection to people, in real space and time, that has been, and always will be, the cornerstone of our success. Our commitment to equity, accessibility, and diversity in all of its forms has never wavered. Our dancers, staff, and board reflect the global community we serve while constantly aspiring for high-caliber creativity and ingenuity both on and off the stage. For this I remain true as an artist and a leader.

I want to particularly thank all the volunteers, digital artists, photographers, videographers, technical and production support—those that consider our work important to the creative fabric of humanity. Please see a full list on our Sponsor page.

We look forward to the day you can join us in the flesh. In the meantime, you can find us on a variety of digital platforms. We have all gone through the pandemic challenge collectively, and I know that we will come out dancing on the other side.

With gratitude and boundless joy,

Sonia Plumb

Artistic Director and Founder



What we did and how we did it

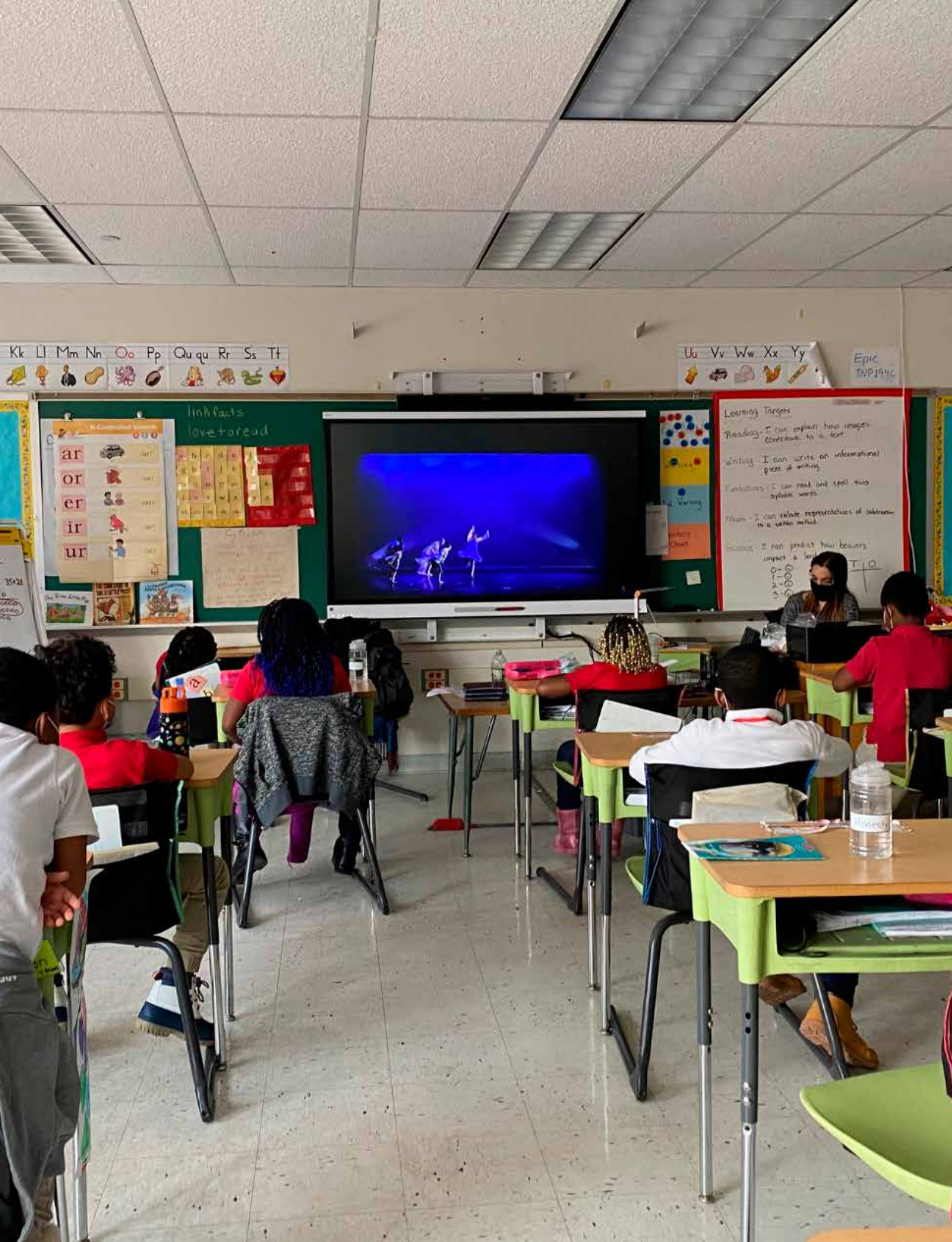
In January 2022 we officially opened the SPDC studios. After months of negotiations and with the pro-bono support from Robinson & Cole we were able to execute the lease at 960 Main Street, Suite 555B, Hartford, CT. We shared the space with Columns Dance and Wellness Centre, LLC. The space had premium sprung flooring, high ceilings, and extra space for office and storage. It doubled as a rehearsal and intimate performance space.

Free dance classes at Hartford Public Library
Between January 2022 and June 2022, SPDC offered four (4) free creative movement and foundational dance classes for children ages 6 -10 and their families.

The School of SPDC
After a three-month build out, we officially opened The School of SPDC February 2022. We offered adult morning and evening classes as well as children's classes for ages 7+ including: Adult Ballet, Children's Ballet, Boys' class, Flamenco, Belly Dance, Heels, Conditioning, Creative Movement for Families, Modern and Contemporary. Spirits were high. Our Director of Education kept an accurate account of activity through Dance Studio Pro.

**Hartford businesses continued to delay "the return to work in-person" and vaccination rates remained low throughout the City. Try as we might we closed the School and rehearsal space in December 2022.*





Arts Integration residencies in Hartford Public Schools with Hartford Performs

In early January 2022, we entered the Hartford Public Schools for the first time since the pandemic began in March of 2020. There is no denying that the classrooms were fraught with challenges, social, emotional and academic. Older students were very focused on systematic racism. The younger students often did not know how to interact. From the Director: *"I was often the only white woman in the room—I knew it and they knew it. To engage on their level while asking for mutual respect was one of the hardest things I have ever done. Witnessing the mental despair and lack of self-control in some of the second and third grade classrooms was heartbreaking as well as daunting. Most were eager to see us—the little ones in particular wanted hugs and to be close to another human being. They loved moving and dancing. They asked lots of questions, the third grade boys huddling near me asking "why is the boy dancer doing girl movement?" They respected my answers, pushing them to think otherwise—that boys dance, too. Some days I would leave the school and cry. My heart hurt for them.*

SPDC Arts Integration programming follows the Kennedy Center Model based on multiple intelligence

learning. We connect dance to science, math, social studies, and language arts curriculum. Our programs are vetted by educators and undergo a strict planning and implementation process. Below is a list schools we visited last year and the programs:

Thomas Milner Middle School, Grade 7:
Water Wonder

Global Communications Academy IB, Grade 2:
Water Wonder

Fred D. Wish Museum, Grade 2:
Water Wonder

Sarah J. Rawson STEAM, Grade 3:
Turning the Triangle

Global Communications IB, Grade 1:
Sound and Light Waves

E.B. Kennelly Grade 6: *Privacy Settings*

Global Communications IB, Grade 8:
Dance of da Vinci





P.U.P. – Pop Up Performance and Classes

In June we held a day of free performances and classes featuring the work of dancers, choreographers and teachers in the community in addition to our own offering *free* rehearsal space in exchange for performance time. The day of dance included a variety of genres including: Heels, Flamenco, Vogue, Historical Hip-Hop in addition to SPDC technique and repertory.

The Pearl – May 11-14, 2022

Directed by Sonia Plumb with photography by Rob Goldman, *The Pearl* presented a poetic interweaving of projected photography and choreography. Seven women shared the struggles they each endure between their conditioned selves and their true nature. *The Pearl* provoked poignant, honest dialogue by intimately confronting the destructive nature of commercially propagated norms. The dancers embodied diversity in cultures, genres, ages and ethnicities, dancing with their digitally projected selves in an intimate setting. Seating was capped at 30 per performance. This project was funded in part by a generous donation from the Edward C. and Ann T. Roberts Foundation. Unlimited streaming can be purchased [here](#). Proceeds go towards the continuation of our Equity in Dance programming.

**Watch *The Pearl* - Directed by Sonia Plumb
Online | Vimeo On Demand**

A poetic interweaving of projected photography and dance, six women share the struggles they each endure between their conditioned selves and their true nature.

[The Pearl by Sonia Plumb and Rob Goldman](#)

Stamford Block Party

On June 25, SPDC performed at the Stamford Block Party in Stamford, CT. SPDC showcased excerpts from *The Pearl*, *The Dance of da Vinci 2.0* and *Penelope's Odyssey*. SPDC was featured alongside internationally acclaimed choreographer David Parsons. "We held our own if not surpassed everything else on that small stage. We were paid a mere \$300. I had to pay the dancers a working wage as well as travel. We spent more than we made, but I knew we needed to get out and be seen."





CT Forum and Music Moves Us

The CT Forum, one of Hartford's most respected event organizations, reached out to Artistic Director Sonia Plumb to create a flash mob for Music Moves Us. "In six short rehearsals we created two pieces of choreography that could easily be taught to willing participants. Held outside in the Bushnell's courtyard, we performed to live music and danced our way through the evening. It was thrilling to be engaging with so many people."

The Bushnell Local Stage Project

Once again The Bushnell reached out to SPDC Artistic Director, Sonia Plumb, this time for an interview with their Community Project Director - New England Emmy Award Winner Ryan Glista - for a feature video on the Bushnell's Local Stage project. Link for Bushnell Interview <https://bushnell.org/localarts> *Tens of thousands of "eyeballs" have seen SPDC on the walls of the theater and the outside digital screens.

Underwater for Penelope's Odyssey

In a mutual collaboration, Artistic Director Sonia Plumb and The Bushnell's Ryan Glista created an underwater video for *Penelope's Odyssey*. The dancers spent a ten-hour day diving and swimming, shooting over 200 minutes of footage for a 3:51 minute video that could be mapped onto the Bushnell's theater walls. The video, now named "Odysseus' Nightmare," is part of the projections included in the live performance.

Penelope's Odyssey -

Conceived in 2019 with the plans for a premier in 2020 but delayed multiple times due to the pandemic, SPDC set the wheels in motion for a full premiere at the Bushnell in the Fall of 2022. We set a date for September 2022 and then again for October 2022. Anemic ticket sales, combined with the "give away art for free" mentality and lack of sponsors, SPDC could not responsibly hold the performances at the Bushnell. Says Artistic Director, Plumb, "The labor cost alone would have been \$30K. Our last performance there was \$19K for the entire labor and space rental. The plug was pulled. We did an intimate showing as a work-in-progress at our 960 Main Street Studios. *(*Penelope's Odyssey* later premiered at Castleton University, Castleton, VT in February 2023. It is now ready to tour.)





New Work

The Sound of Migration—Imagine a space where the audience moves from location to location through an immersion of dance, music and digital projections. The sound of the dancers' bodies reverberates throughout the space, capturing movement that mimics the whispers of monarch butterflies or the thundering sounds of a flash flood. Images from calving icebergs, barren deserts and fields of grain are projected onto the dancers, the audience and throughout the space. The dancers migrate, as humans migrate, as icebergs melt, as the sands shift and the sound of earth, wind, water and fire reveal an ever-changing landscape, challenging survival, breathing in and out the beauty of hope to keep moving and migrating, as the world's climate changes...

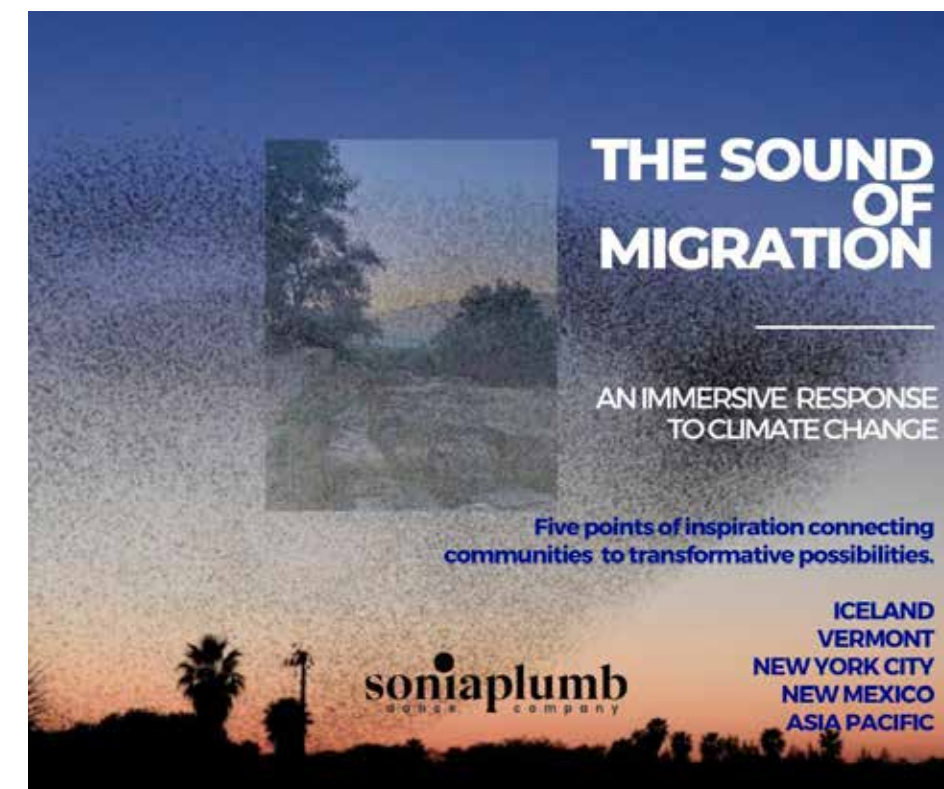
The Sound of Migration is conceived as an immersive performance intended to inspire activism for climate change while taking a closer look at how humans, animals, flora and fauna have migrated through the millennia. Ultimately, the performers include a core

group of 8-10 dancers plus an additional 25+ “general movers” of all ages and abilities representing the communities the event takes place in.

Research and Development Phase 1, began in Hartford at our studios and then “migrated” to the Baryshnikov Arts Center in mid-town Manhattan, New York City. Phase 2 is being held in Iceland and Phase 3 in New Mexico, U.S.

International Connections

Despite the challenges of the pandemic on national soil, we continued to broaden our international connections—an essential and vital part of the SPDC mission and vision. The U.S. visa process to bring international artists here has proven to be insurmountable at this time, with delays and restrictions affecting casting. Thus, a second trip to Greece was made to finish filming for *Penelope's Odyssey Home Videos*. The videos are now being submitted to numerous dance film festivals both here and abroad.





Financials, Pandemic challenges and changing landscapes

SPDC has, in the past, relied primarily on in-person ticket sales. As Connecticut audiences have proved reluctant to return to the theater, we are relying heavily on donations from the private and government sectors to close funding gaps. Abroad, dance companies such as ours would receive line item funding from State sanctioned resources ensuring our ability to continue our work. The transition to a hybrid model of live and virtual platforms is still underway.

Please consider donating Now.

[Donating Now](#)

Here is a copy of our most recent 990:

[FY2022 990](#)

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In-Kind Donations – valued at \$65,000

Catchafire volunteers courtesy of Hartford Foundation for Public Giving
Sonia Plumb

Who we engaged and partnered with:

Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts
Capital Community College Heritage Project/One Dance
Connecticut Forum
Hartford Performs
Hartford Public Library

Virtual/Digital content platforms

soniaplumbdance.org
[linkedin.com/in/sonia-plumb-78497b27/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/sonia-plumb-78497b27/)
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Please consider donating.

Support - Sonia Plumb Dance Company
Individual Donations/Annual Fund Drive Move and Be Moved. Sonia Plumb Dance Company (SPDC) was founded on the mission: to enrich and educate the community through innovative modern. SPDC fulfills this mission by providing performances, classes, workshops, community outreach, arts integration residencies, webinars, library talks and more to diverse audiences. SPDC collaborates with artists, educators
soniaplumbdance.org



2022 Year In Review— Sonia Plumb Dance Company.

<https://vimeo.com/user115545425/yearinreview?share=copy>

