



The Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone

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PRESS RELEASE

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UMEZ and Mertz Gilmore Foundation Renew Seed Fund for Dance for Upper Manhattan Artists and Choreographers

\$5,000 awards will be given to 8 artists and entities for 2023 projects

NEW YORK— UMEZ and the Mertz Gilmore Foundation are pleased to announce the third cycle of the Seed Fund for Dance, an award for Upper Manhattan individual artists and groups with dance or choreographic talent. This grant program is intended for grassroots dance projects taking place in Upper Manhattan between June 1, 2023 and October 29, 2023.

The UMEZ Mertz Gilmore Seed Fund for Dance (the “Program”) was created to reach deeply into the Uptown dance community in search of talented artists and organizations not currently eligible for other grants offered by the UMEZ Cultural Investment Fund. This program seeks to acknowledge the important contributions of these unsung individual dancers and organizations to the artistic vibrancy of Upper Manhattan communities. Program funding is provided by the Mertz Gilmore Foundation.

“We are grateful to the Mertz Gilmore Foundation for their support of the third round of the Program,” said Blair M. Duncan, President and CEO of UMEZ. “This grant provides UMEZ the opportunity to use our hyper-local knowledge of our neighborhoods to bring greater awareness of the vibrant and diverse dance community in Upper Manhattan.”

The UMEZ Mertz Gilmore Seed Fund for Dance awarded grants to 16 recipients over the first two cycles from January 1, 2022 to February 28, 2023. The third cycle, which is now open, will select eight new grantees for awards of \$5,000 each. The application is currently open and will close on Friday, April 21, 2023 at 5 p.m. EDT. The project activities for this cycle must take place between June 1 and October 29, 2023.

“The regrant partnership between the Mertz Gilmore Foundation and UMEZ responds to the needs of a vulnerable segment of the Uptown dance community - small companies, independent artists, and culturally-specific collectives - that often lack access to traditional philanthropy and have been disproportionately devastated by the

pandemic,” said Leah Krauss, Senior Program Officer for Dance and Special Projects, Mertz Gilmore Foundation. “UMEZ is best dialed into their needs and has specialized access to a wide Upper Manhattan audience base.”

The UMEZ Mertz Gilmore Seed Fund for Dance will support individual dance artists, ensembles, collectives, and nonprofit organizations with annual budgets of \$250,000 or below in their pursuit of a project that expresses their artistic vision. Applicants are encouraged to use funds to pay artist fees, recognizing that for communities to benefit most from artistry, artists must thrive. Projects must be available to the public and can be performances, workshops, trainings, arts education activities, and other ventures fostering community engagement through dance.

For guidelines and the application to the UMEZ Mertz Gilmore Seed Fund for Dance, visit umez.org/seed-fund-for-dance.

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[UMEZ](#) is an independent not-for-profit corporation whose mission is to sustain the economic revitalization of all communities of Upper Manhattan through job creation, corporate alliances, strategic investments, and small business assistance. UMEZ is part of a national network of certified CDFIs that promotes economic growth by financing businesses, creating jobs, and rebuilding neighborhoods. UMEZ facilitates economic development in the neighborhoods of Central, West, and East Harlem; Washington Heights; and Inwood.