



It is almost impossible to watch
a sunset and not dream. Bernard Williams

Dear Friend,

I started my relationship with Lou Conte and Lou Conte Dance Studio in 1994. As of 2025, the balance tipped, and I have spent over half my life (you do the math) as an artist(ic) caretaker / creative problem solver / behavioral scientist / party planner / first responder / cheerleader / accountability partner / tour guide / Good Dance Citizen / bus driver.

I am grateful to have shared the gift of time with people invested in the work of art. **Priceless.**

And speaking of time, it is time to make a change.

I have decided to retire.

And DanceWorks Chicago will sunset, as discussed and unanimously agreed with the board of directors.

This past year, I have reconnected with so many from my dance family, some by chance and some by choice, in places near and far. I recognize that investment in the development of unique artistic voices through my work at Lou Conte Dance Studio, Hubbard Street 2, and DanceWorks Chicago has contributed to a generation of inspiring humans. People have started their own blood families, studios, companies, staging careers, social justice endeavors, educational programs, artistic offerings. They are educators / mentors / supporters / leaders / entrepreneurs / board members in a variety of sectors and sharing their spirit across the world. And those are just the things that I know about. They are multi-hyphenate, messy, beautiful, flawed, resilient, powerful vessels of the human experience. I am so impressed and excited to see what is next.

Inspired by these dance family members, I know that this is the time for me to offer an act of love and step away to do my part to hold space for the next generation of leaders in the dance commUNITY. I feel like a proud parent (and even grandma).

So, I am putting on my turn signal, crossing into another lane, and working toward the off ramp.

DanceWorks Chicago continued "business as usual" through the end of calendar year 2025, filled with gratitude for local, national, and international opportunities in the studio, on stage, and behind-the-scenes. Prior to departing for the *Hallo, Deutschland!* 2025 Sunset Tour, Team DWC hosted a *Bon Voyage Party / CommUNITY Celebration* at Salesforce Tower Chicago. [Click here](#) to see some of the wonderful people who joined the celebration, representing over three decades of commitment to the work of art in Chicago.

While most of the public-facing activities are in the rearview mirror, in response to requests, DWC has crafted an off ramp of sorts for the commUNITY. So, as DanceWorks Chicago sunsets, think *fade to black* instead of blackout, an assortment of offerings is available:

Mentorship Mondays:

Mentorship is a core component of DanceWorks Chicago.

- Start 2026 with a personal / professional *Glow Up!*
- Four Mondays in January in honor of National Mentoring Month
- Zoom and in-person options for individual, confidential conversations with Co-founder and Artistic Director Julie Nakagawa
- No fee. Consider this the gift of time and pay it forward.

Tendu Tuesdays:

Training and commUNITY-building are core components of DanceWorks Chicago.

- First Tuesday of each month: January-June
- 9:30am-10:45am in the spacious Larry Long Studio of the [Ruth Page Center for the Arts](#)
- [Pre-registration required](#) via Eventbrite
- FREE

Microgrant for Chicago-based dancers:

DanceWorks Chicago continues to support the growth of early career dancers and to encourage artists to reach for development that is on the horizon.

Microgrants to support tuition-based professional development opportunities (maximum grant amount \$500), will be awarded to individuals through an application process (rolling decisions) through June 30 or when funds are depleted.

Goals:

- ease financial responsibility on individual dancers
- keep money circulating in the dance sector to support organizations offering training / professional development opportunities

Requirements:

- Applicant should be between 18-30 years of age and reside in Chicago as of March 4, 2026.

Costume sale in collaboration with Thodos Dance Chicago:

Collaboration is a core component of DanceWorks Chicago. This event honors the pARTnership with [Thodos Dance Chicago](#) (TDC) around *New Dances* (2018-2025) with proceeds going toward TDC's *New Dances / New Horizons* microgrant, designed to support elements of projects designed by Chicago-based dancemakers.

Costume sale in the library on the second floor of the [Ruth Page Center for the Arts](#), adjacent to the DanceWorks Chicago office:

- Friday, May 15: 3pm-6pm
- Sunday, May 17: 10:30am-12:30pm

Forms of payment accepted: Stripe and cash

All sales are final.

DanceWorks Chicago celebrates its birthday on May 23, 2026. In lieu of birthday gifts, please consider supporting an early career dance artist with the gift of time, talent, or treasure.

Team DanceWorks Chicago's last day at the Ruth Page Center is slated for Thursday, July 2, 2026. The work to finish strong will continue through calendar year 2026. The seeds planted will continue to flourish if each of us does our part to support the work of art.

#AlwaysMoving

Julie Nakagawa



"To affect the quality of a day, that is the art of life."
– Henry David Thoreau