



The Performing Arts Can Heal!

Nearly half of our nation's healthcare institutions recognize art's healing powers and provide arts programming for parents, families and staff.

UPAF Member Groups are invested in improving our community's physical, mental and behavioral health. Read below to learn about just a few of the healing programs that are happening right here in our community!



UPAF Cornerstone Group Initiatives

Both First Stage's Next Step Theater Academy and Milwaukee Ballet's Tour De Force Program have received Eureka Awards from the *Milwaukee Business Journal*. These awards seek to identify and honor individuals and initiatives impacting Milwaukee for the greater good.

First Stage's "Next Steps Theater Academy"

Using research-based best practices, First Stage's Next Steps Theater Academy serves young people through the philosophy of teaching life skills through stage skills. First Stage strives to help each student take his or her next steps as an artist and a person.

The classes cater to both verbal and non-verbal students, students with classic autism, pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified, other sensory processing disorders and Asperger's.

With small class sizes, Next Steps explores acting, singing, dancing and improvisation, through which students improve social understanding, fine and gross motor skills, empathy, conversation skills, public speaking and confidence.



Students Attend Class
Photo by Lindsey Abendschein

First Stage is also proud to offer sensory-friendly performances and a variety of accommodations helping to make theater accessible to everyone in Greater Milwaukee!



[Click here](#) for more information
on First Stage's Next Steps program!

Milwaukee Ballet's "Tour De Force"

In 2014, [Milwaukee Ballet](#) and [Children's Hospital of Wisconsin](#) partnered to create a landmark program to offer children with disabilities the chance to do something they once thought was impossible: dance!

These little dancers stretch their muscles and minds in new ways as they work with a professional dancer and physical therapist in beginning ballet classes. In 2017, Tour de Force expanded to include a class for students in wheelchairs.

"Our goal was to create a supportive environment where the children could try ballet classes in a format that made them feel empowered rather than excluded."

--Alyson Chavez, Director of Community Engagement

Milwaukee Ballet dancers are inspired to keep pushing themselves as they see their ballet buddies making weekly progress - lifting their torsos, responding to touch and direction, standing in "relevé," walking, jumping and holding their arms in fifth position with less assistance or none at all.

At the end of their five-week session, the children and their families enjoy a family-friendly Milwaukee Ballet performance where they see 'their' dancer on stage!



Tour De Force Dancer
Photo by Patrick Trautfield

"The art of ballet had always seemed too exclusive for our family to be a part of. As we learned about the Milwaukee Ballet's programs and have been invited to be a part of their extended group, we have met a group of wonderful, talented and accepting people."

--Luisana Waukau, mother of a student in Tour de Force



[Click here](#) for more information
on Milwaukee Ballet's Tour de Force program!

UPAF Member Group Initiatives

Bel Canto's "Senior Singers"

The Bel Canto Senior Singers Program was created in 2006 to bring the increasingly documented physical, mental, emotional and social benefits of participatory choral singing to senior citizens in the community.

Bel Canto Senior Singers is open to seniors of all abilities, regardless of previous singing or musical experience. No participant is required to audition.

A typical rehearsal begins with gentle stretching and vocal warm-ups, then, the class reviews the music that will be performed at the semester-end concert.

These rehearsals are run by professional conductors and accompanists, providing Senior Singers with quality instruction while learning basic musical concepts and good singing practices.



Senior Singers Rehearsal
Photo Neal Easterling

"My self-esteem and trust in myself has increased with the singing of new music which challenges me. This challenge also helps me improve my memory... my breathing, posture and small motor skills. I experience many positive emotions with the music such as joy, gratitude and happiness."

-- Nancy, New Berlin



[Click here](#) for more information
on Bel Canto's Senior Singers program!

Danceworks "50+ Initiative"

Danceworks' 50+ Initiative offers classes to adults of all ages, genders and abilities, regardless of their past dance experience. Classes offered rotate alongside the adult class schedule, and currently include multiple levels of ballet and tap, as well as yoga.

The Initiative was born out of a need that was seen in Milwaukee for more programs aimed at engaging older adults. Since its launch in the fall of 2000, the 50+ Initiative has had a profound impact on its students.

"My students love the social aspect of it and get coffee together after lessons. They also tell me about things that they can do, that they couldn't have done before dance. We also consistently see studies - often sent to us by 50+ Initiative students! - that show dance is the best kind of exercise to help issues associated with aging."

-- Amy Brinkman-Sustache, Danceworks Director of Education

"I drive from Racine every Friday to take the 50+ beginner tap class. Prior to starting the 50+ tap class in September 2017, I had never put on a pair of tap shoes, or for that matter, dance shoes of ANY kind! Although I am definitely not a natural, I love tapping and have seen steady growth in my abilities. It is awesome that Danceworks validates and supports those of us who are 50+."

-- Carol-Anne Frank, a Danceworks 50+ Initiative student



Mary Lou, Diane, and Jane. 50+ Students
Photo by Danceworks Staff

[Click here](#) for more information on Danceworks' 50+ Initiative!

BEYOND THE PERFORMANCE

Engaging in the performing arts has untold benefits, from improving social and physical skills to promoting mental well-being. These programs are proof of that.

90+ SENIORS REINVIGORATED BY SONG
del Canto Senior Singers

MUSICAL COMPOSITION BECOMES A TEAM-BUILDING ACTIVITY
Present Music's ComposeIt Milwaukee

30,000 PEOPLE SERVED EACH YEAR THROUGH OUTREACH
Milwaukee Ballet

BRING OUT OF THE ARTISTIC TALENTS OF THOSE ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM
First Stage's Next Steps Program

TOURING GROUPS VISIT SCHOOLS, LIBRARIES AND COMMUNITY VENUES
Skylight Music Theatre

Support 14 world-class performing arts groups in Southeastern Wisconsin with a single donation to UPAF. Donate at www.UPAF.org.

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Milwaukee Ballet Company dancers Nicole Teague and Alexandre Ferreira in Michael Pink's "Mirror Mirror." Photo by Mark Frahm.

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