

Research Findings – Rates of Pay for Dance

In 2009 DANZ undertook some research on rates of pay in New Zealand dance for the period 2007/8. The survey response from the dance industry was not as strong as hoped but the responses we received covered 300 employment positions and gave us a snapshot of the range of rates being paid. On the whole the research showed that rates of pay in New Zealand were low.

Minimum rates of pay are traditionally negotiated by unions. In New Zealand hardly any dancers belong to unions, this contributes greatly to the general lack of collective strength and a weak knowledge base in relation to dance wage rates and employment issues. In Australia and the UK the dance industry is much more unionized and regulated (for example in Australia approximately 90% of performers are members of a union). It is the role of the unions to negotiate rates or pay for their members, and not that of a service organisation such as DANZ (Ausdance or Dance UK).

The research showed the following information:

Dance Contract work

For the period 2007/8 we found contract and casual dancers were paid the following rates:

Dancer	Rate
Dancer - Contemporary	\$225 - \$800 per week
Dancer - Commercial	\$115 – 600 per day

As a comparison the Australian Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance Dance Company Award **minimum** rates in 2008 were as follows:

Artists 16 years and over	Minimum rate in Australian \$
Level 1 – a dancer in first year of experience	\$698.20
Level 2 – a dancer in second year of experience	\$724.50
Level 3 – a dancer in third year of experience	\$747.00
Level 4 – a dancer in fourth year of experience	\$770.40
Level 5 – a dancer in fifth and sixth year of experience	\$801.90
Level 6 – a dancer in seventh year of experience	\$831.90

Level 7 – a dancer minimum of eight years of experience	\$860.00
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Fees for contract work are usually set at a higher rate than company pay, as contactors are not eligible for employee benefits such as holiday pay (8% on top of basic pay) or sickness pay.

Studio/private sector – hourly rates for teaching

For the period 2007/8 we found the following rates were paid in the studio/private sector:

Qualifications/experience	Hourly rate
Student	\$13 - \$15
Trainee	\$15 - \$20
Qualified teacher	\$20 - \$30
Qualified teacher with five or more years' experience	\$25 - \$60
Top rate; guest teachers	\$60 - \$100

Choreography

For the period 2007/8 some of the rates paid for choreography was:

- Choreographers undertaking casual work for schools, studios or tertiary organizations were paid hourly rates ranging from \$35 - \$75 per hour.
- Choreographers working for schools, festivals, community and amateur performing groups were often not paid. Examples of fees paid for amateur productions ranged from \$800 - \$2,000.
- Emerging choreographers working in a company were often paid a weekly rate, in line with dancers, rather than a fee.
- Established/Senior choreographers were more likely to receive a fee, these ranged from \$2,000 - \$7,500 per work; in addition some choreographers were paid a weekly rate for working with the company, these ranged from \$1500 - \$3,000 per week.
- For a national dance company, examples of fees for a one act dance piece (of around thirty minutes) ranged from \$5,000 - \$25,000.

Tertiary and School Education sectors

The research showed that the highest paid sector of the dance industry was the tertiary sector, with salaries in 2007/8 ranging from \$ 31,000 to \$115,000. Casual rates for teaching in the tertiary sector were between \$30 and \$75 per hour.

Casual rates for dance artists working in schools varied between \$50 and \$100 per hour depending on experience. Performance groups or companies often negotiated fees beyond this range for performance/workshop provision in schools.

For further information

Union Information:

- Actors Equity New Zealand, an autonomous section of the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance, www.actorsequity.org.nz
- Together, a new union for people whose jobs are not otherwise covered by a union, www.together.org.nz
- For up-to-date information on Australian collective agreements for dance (**Live Performance Award**), go to the Australian union MEAA website: www.alliance.org.au/resources/Equity/5/0/name/DESC/

Minimum wage:

- For current minimum wage rates go to The Department of Labour, www.dol.govt.nz. The adult minimum wage in New Zealand, as of 1st April 2011, is \$13.00 per hour, which equates to \$520 for a forty hour week.

Other DANZ resources:

- *Guide to the Minimum Rights for Employees and Contract Workers* – outlines the main differences of the employment rights of employees and contractors under New Zealand law.
- *Contract Checklist for Dancers* – a starting point for thinking about what could be included in a contract, with information clarifying contract clauses, and tips for negotiating contracts.
- *Being Professional and Surviving in the Dance Industry* – a checklist of skills and knowledge that DANZ believes professional dancers in New Zealand need to have. This resource also includes comments from a number of dance professionals, about how they have managed their careers.

For DANZ resources see DANZ website resources page, www.danz.org.nz/resources.php

Thank you Creative New Zealand for supporting the development of professional resources.