



# PERFORMANCE!

Newsletter of the SAA Performing Arts Section

SUMMER / FALL 2021

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**COVER PHOTO:** Dance Theatre of Harlem Company  
Member Stephanie Rae Williams. Photo: Rachel Neville

**SUBMIT TO THE NEXT ISSUE OF PERFORMANCE!** If you are working with performing arts collections, we want to hear about it! Please send your ideas to [saaperformingartssection@gmail.com](mailto:saaperformingartssection@gmail.com). We love longer, more in-depth stories but please send along any news items as well -- all topics are welcome.

# Message from the Co-Chairs



Dear SAA Performing Arts Section Members,

We hope this finds you healthy and whole as we continue to work through this changing pandemic and all the challenges and, hopefully, moments of joy that your personal and professional lives bring.

The PAR Steering Committee is starting the year off strong with the Summer/Fall 2021 newsletter, edited by Rachel McNellis and Stephanie Neel. This great issue includes an article by Melissa Wertheimer about the latest professional performing arts organization web archives collections of the Library of Congress. Featured on the cover, Eric Waldman's article is about the creation of the archives at the historic Dance Theatre of Harlem, and a new book by their archivist Judy Tyrus and her colleague Paul Novosel based on its archive, *Dance Theatre of Harlem: A History, A Movement, A Celebration*. Finally, Matt Testa shares an announcement about the Peabody Institute's CLIR Recordings at Risk grant to digitize its electronic music collection. Enjoy!

The Steering Committee is also planning a number of activities for the year: sharing the work of all of our collections in a concerted way on social media, and inviting you to take over Instagram or Twitter for an hour, a day, or a week; possibly partnering with other SAA mentorship efforts to connect people with shared interests, shared paths, shared stages of careers (or divergent), etc. These opportunities will be open to anyone, SAA members or not. We are also thinking about an early 2022 coffee chat/conversation with non- or not-yet-archivists, curators, and librarians who want to learn about the field.

If you are interested in any or all of these ideas, or if you have ideas for other projects that you would like the Section to pursue (or if you would like to get involved!), please do not hesitate to contact any of us on the Steering Committee.

Also, come the 2022-2024 term, we will be looking for a new editor, so if you want to get involved, reach out!

Stay well,

Cecily Marcus and Katalin Rac

## Section Leadership 2021–2022

### Co-Chairs

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# Peabody Institute Receives CLIR Grant for Electronic Music Collection

Matt Testa

The Peabody Institute's Arthur Friedheim Library has been awarded a Council on Library and Information Resources Recordings at Risk grant to digitize approximately 300 recordings by composer Jean Eichelberger Ivey and some of her students and colleagues in electronic music. As a student at the University of Toronto in the 1960s, Ivey was often the only woman in her electronic music composition classes. In 1969 she founded the Peabody Conservatory Electronic Music Studio, the first such studio in a conservatory. The recordings in the Ivey collection contain important examples of early electronic music from the 1960s and 1970s, including works by Ivey and her students for tape and live performers.

Once digitized, the recordings will be available to researchers through the library's streaming site, <https://streaming.peabody.jhu.edu/>. An online exhibit featuring Ivey's work is planned for 2023, which will be the 100th anniversary of the composer's birth.



*Jean Eichelberger Ivey, 1960s. This photograph is a part of the Jean Eichelberger Ivey papers, Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University.*

*Matt Testa is the Archivist at the Arthur Friedheim Library, Peabody Institute, The Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD.*



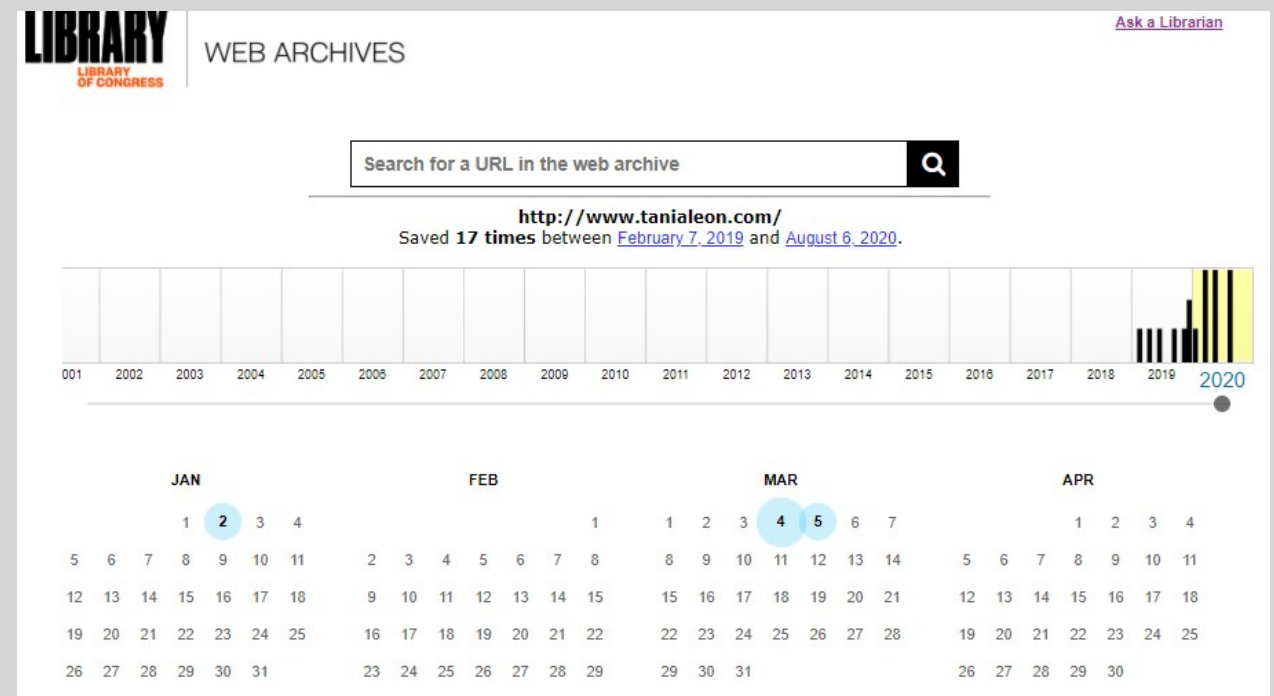
# Music Division Web Archives at the Library of Congress

Melissa Wertheimer

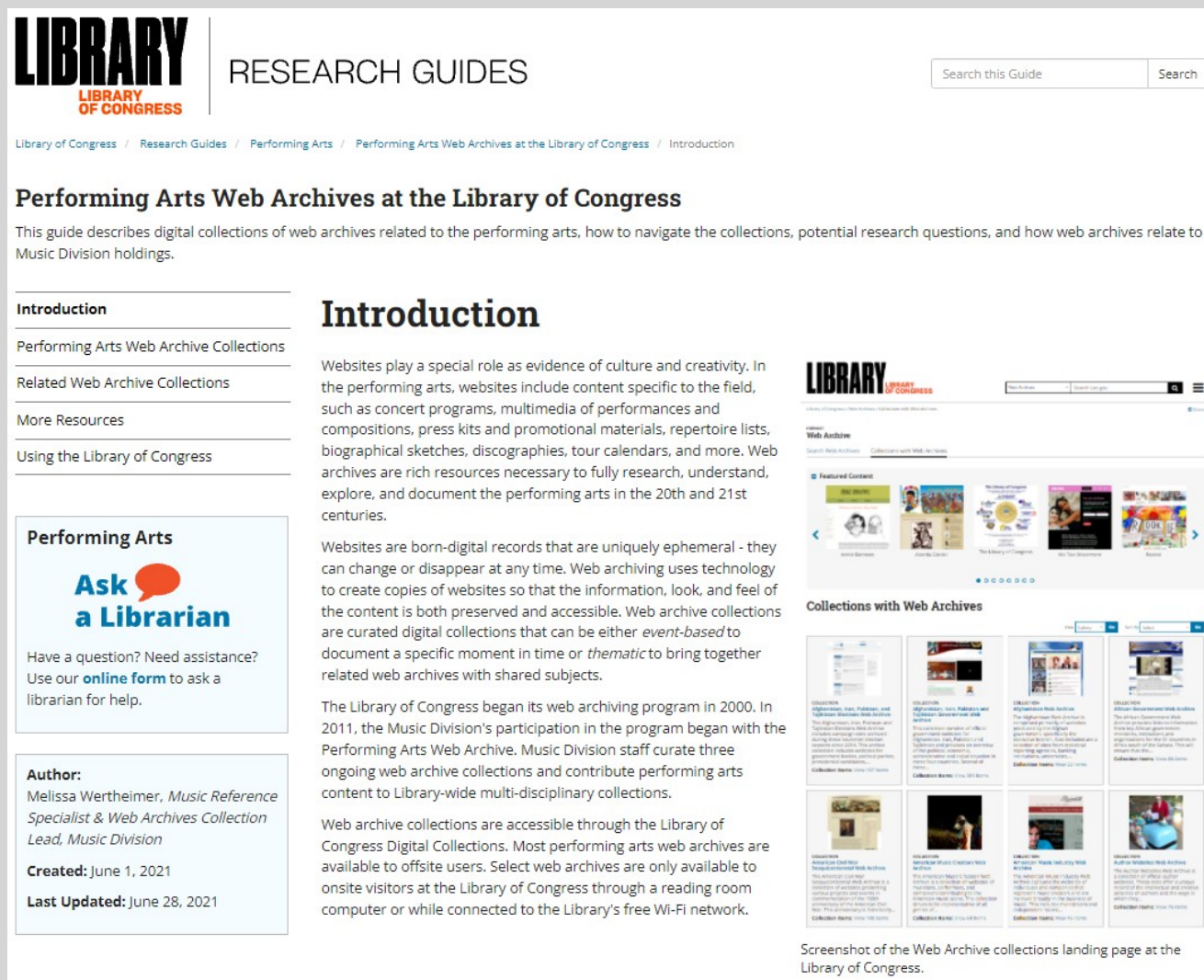
The Library of Congress has released a third collection of web archives administered by the Music Division. The Music Division's web archives curator and collection lead is Melissa Wertheimer. All three web archive collections are thematic web archives with ongoing crawls and new seeds continually added. The goal of these web archives is to crawl until there is no new content generated or the URLs disappear.

The newest collection is the Professional Organizations for Performing Arts Web Archive (<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.natlib/collnatlib.00000144>). Crawls began in November 2019. The Professional Organizations for Performing Arts Web Archive contains websites and select social media to document professional networks in the performing arts over time. The collection items are those of professional, labor, and advocacy organizations at regional, national, and international levels. The websites in this collection represent the range of fields within the performing arts, including performance, publishing, scholarship, technology, education, advocacy, and labor organizing. The breadth of this web archive is an opportunity for users to discover the interrelated nature of professional performing arts organizations and also invites research and appreciation of other disciplines, such as education, technology, journalism, and labor.

The LC Commissioned Composers Web Archive (<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.natlib/collnatlib.00000120>) was released in 2019. Crawls began in 2018. The LC Commissioned Composers Web Archive contains websites of composers who have been commissioned by Music Division funds. This web archive is not only a resource in itself, but also an information pathway to the Music Division's unique collection materials and a digital record of the Music Division's role as an active commissioning body in the new music community.



*Screenshot of the Library's Wayback interface for archived captures of composer Tania León's website in the LC Commissioned Composers Web Archive. The timeline shows how many snapshots of the site were saved between February 2019 and August 2020. Screenshot by Melissa Wertheimer*



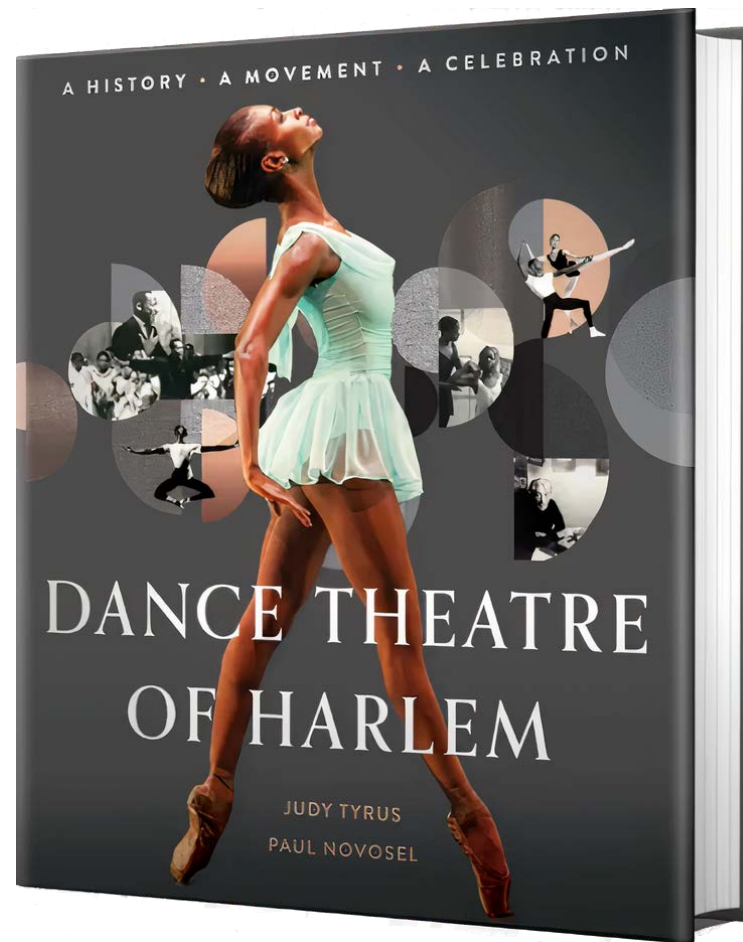
*Screenshot of the author's published research guide, Performing Arts Web Archives at the Library of Congress. Screenshot by Melissa Wertheimer*

**Melissa Wertheimer** is a Music Reference Specialist and web archives curator at the Library of Congress. She is the 2021-2022 Chair of the SAA Web Archiving Section.

The LC Commissioned Composers Web Archive includes the professional websites of living and deceased composers, as well as websites of foundations, institutes, museums, and awards established in memory of deceased composers. Archived websites include content that documents composers' careers over time, including biographical information, photos, musical recordings, videos, writings, concert calendars, reviews, social media, upcoming projects, and works lists.

The Performing Arts Web Archive (<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.natlib/collnatlib.00000048>) began crawls in 2011. The Performing Arts Web Archive contains web-based content related to the Music Division's current special collections and rare material holdings. The goal of this web archive collection is to reflect, enhance, and contextualize the division's unique holdings with websites that have direct personal, institutional, or subject relationships to them. Melissa Wertheimer took over the curation of this collection and revised its scope in 2018.

Melissa's online research guide *Performing Arts Web Archives at the Library of Congress* is available at <https://guides.loc.gov/performing-arts-web-archives>. This guide describes digital collections of web archives related to the performing arts, how to navigate the collections, potential research questions, and how web archives relate to Music Division holdings. The guide features the Music Division's three web archive collections and directs researchers to related web archives content administered by other Library divisions. This is the first online research guide at the Library of Congress to feature web archives.



## How an Archive Writes a Book

### Eric Waldman

Books are birthed in many ways. Non-fiction tomes are researched from information held in libraries and sometimes solely from an archive. Writing the important book *Dance Theatre of Harlem: A History, A Movement, A Celebration* was a twelve-year odyssey of astonishing discovery and relentless organizing of fifty years of historical information—no small task for authors Judy Tyrus and Paul Novosel. Their process from the beginning was dictated more by fortuity and duty than by commission.

After her two children began middle school, Judy Tyrus, who had retired from a stunning twenty-two-year career as principal dancer for Dance Theatre of Harlem (DTH), decided to volunteer for the multicultural classical ballet company established by Arthur Mitchell and Karel Shook. Upon arriving at the Harlem studios where Tyrus had rehearsed celebrated ballets like *Giselle*, *Firebird* and other major Balanchine ballets, her good friend and colleague Sharon Duncan gave her a monumental task: to go through piles of programs, documents, and production photos. It was her first archival sorting procedure, ever.



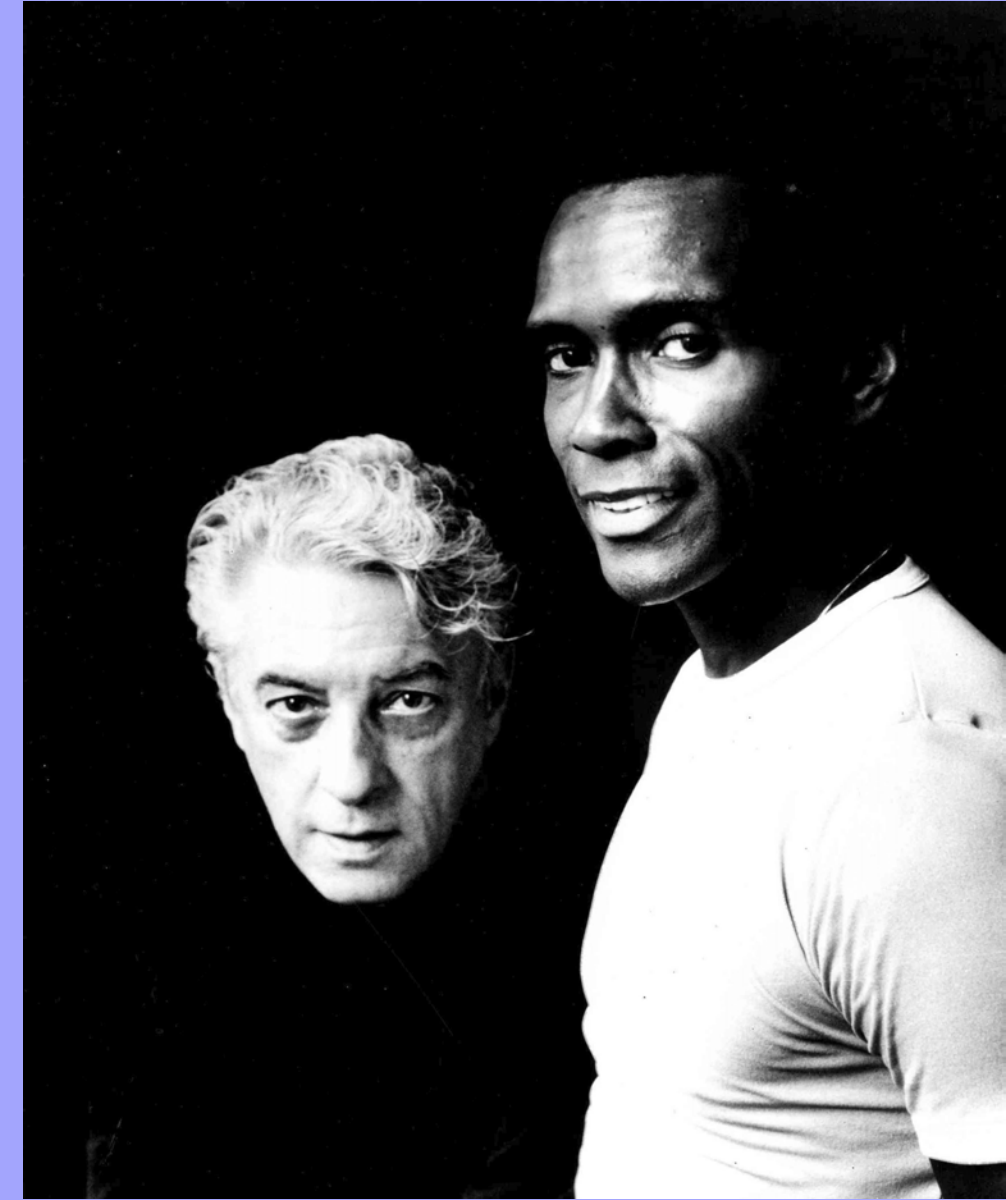
Master ballet teacher and dancer extraordinaire Karel Shook, with Arthur Mitchell, the first African American principal male dancer and permanent member with Balanchine's New York City Ballet, had built an internationally acclaimed company starting with four dancers in a Harlem church basement in 1969. Within seven years, Mitchell and Shook's Company of more than twenty-five dancers began touring the globe. Through the Company's fifty-two year history, these ballet masters formed their community-based School and Company according to their own philosophy. The school grew organically, with Shook and Mitchell teaching allied arts. They trained many dancers, from the streets of Harlem and around the world, turning many into ballet superstars.

This kind of success and notoriety generates a lot of press, pictures, and programs. Why so much? Some ballet companies have their own theater, but DTH did not. The

Company would usually perform a two to four-week season in New York City, but their bread and butter came from constant national and international touring. For every venue that DTH appeared in globally, a program was created—and all of these, literally thousands, are part of the archive. It was fortunate for Tyrus and Novosel that Mitchell always prompted everyone to “save everything!”

Everything was squirreled away—in people's desk drawers, in closets, in little storage spaces, in boxes in the basement, under stairwells, under tables, at the scenic warehouse, and in nooks and crannies throughout the Dance Theatre of Harlem building. Decades of historic materials, mostly unsorted, were scattered and ill-protected. Piles and piles of materials were strewn helter-skelter. It wasn't long after that first task from Duncan that Tyrus began to organize these materials into the archive. She was hired and given the titles of archivist, alumni liaison, and social media manager. She campaigned and spread the word about the DTH archive, the rich legacy it held, and how it could be used, accessed, and even monetized.

*The early Company posing with Arthur Mitchell.  
(Photo: Courtesy of the Dance Theatre of Harlem  
Archive)*



*Karel Shook and Arthur Mitchell, co-founders of Dance Theatre of Harlem. Photo: Henry Grossman*





Due to a financial downturn in 2004, the Company went on a six-year hiatus. To keep DTH in the public eye, Mitchell thought that mounting a retrospective exhibition (and launching a small Touring Ensemble) would be a way to keep some dancers performing, and the DTH name alive. So, in 2008, to celebrate the Company's 40th Anniversary, Mitchell met with the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts' Executive Director and Curator of Exhibitions at the time, Jacqueline Z. Davis and Barbara Cohen Stratyner.

He asked Tyrus to co-curate an exhibition with Stratyner. It was built to tour and was successful in museums throughout the United States. Full of artifacts such as set pieces, programs, photos, videos, design drawings and costumes, the exhibition followed DTH's forty-year history of barrier-breaking multiculturalism—from rehearsals in church basements to performing at the Metropolitan Opera House. The exhibition was titled *Dance Theatre of Harlem: 40 Years of Firsts*.

Work began shortly after Tyrus sat down with Mitchell, and from his memory, they sketched a chronology with a year-by-year timeline of Company highlights. This would become one of the backbone reference documents in organizing much of the archive and writing the book with Novosel. As the year progressed and the exhibition was curated, the DTH archive became particularly important, and Tyrus continued to rally for its financial support. As more materials were unearthed, and the need for identification and verification became evident, it became obvious that the archive needed to blossom and become the fountain of history it was meant to be with access for all. No easy task, but the process of organizing an exhibition was indeed a driver towards that goal.

Rodney Trapp, Dance Theatre of Harlem's former director of institutional giving, worked his magic and generated funding to begin the business of cataloging, inventorying, and processing the Company's archival holdings. In 2010 The Dance Heritage Coalition included DTH on their first list of America's Irreplaceable Dance Treasures. The Coalition also provided consultants to assess the archive.



*Historical programs, booklets, and brochures from the DTH archive. (Photo: Judy Tyrus)*





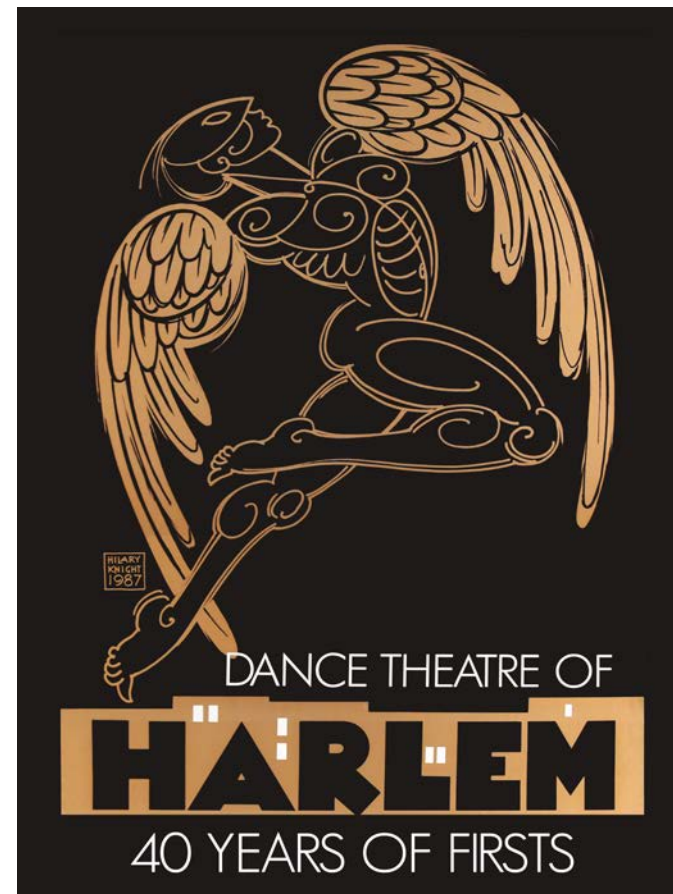
*Clockwise, from top: One of the many piles of archival materials found at Dance Theatre of Harlem; Part of the DTH Collection before organizing; The basement space before organizing. (Photos: Judy Tyrus)*







*Clockwise, from top: Children interact with the 40 Years of Firsts exhibition (Photo: Courtesy of Dance Theatre of Harlem Archive); Main exhibition area of Dance Theatre of Harlem: 40 Years of Firsts (Photo: Gene Ogami); The opening panel for the 2010 exhibition at the California African American Museum (Graphic: Hilary Knight)*





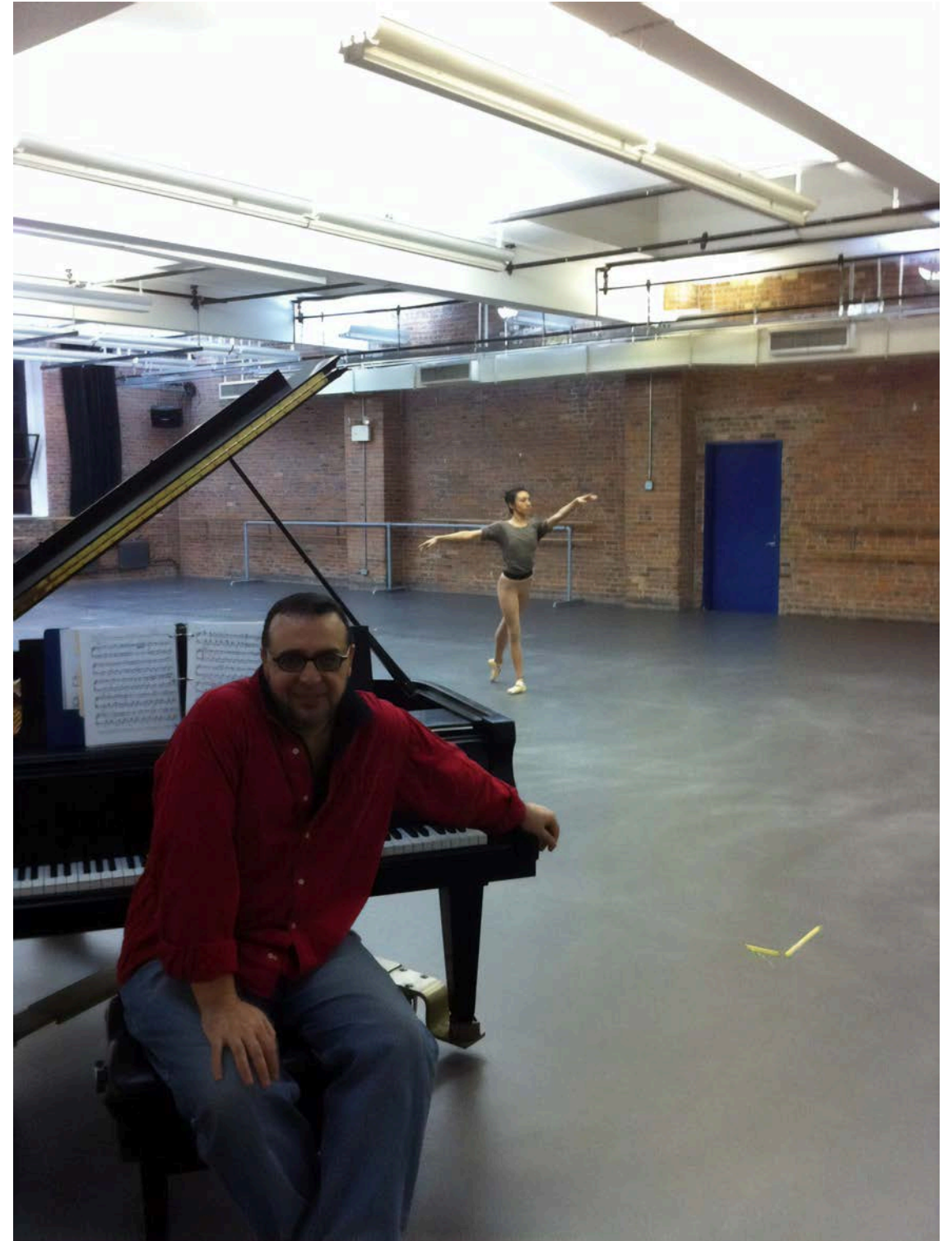
## Writing the *Dance Theatre of Harlem* Book: The Next Chapter

Paul Novosel, a DTH pianist, had a fortuitous encounter with Tyrus. He had seen her in the building and knew that she was now on staff taking care of social media, exhibitions, and “something she was doing in the library with archives.” He had also seen her at the DTH studios during classes, taking photos of dancers. He marveled at her talent to click the camera shutter at the precise moment a dancer was at the highest point in a midair jump.

One day in 2007, after playing the Company’s morning ballet class and while milling around the grand piano in Studio 3 with the dancers, Tyrus approached Novosel. She had asked if he could look at a stack of orphaned music scores and recommend how and where they should be filed. With years of musical experience and a passion for music history, he more than gladly obliged. That first encounter sparked a passionate conversation that would begin a fifteen-year collaboration leading to the publication of their book, *Dance Theatre of Harlem: A History, A Movement, A Celebration*. That day, Tyrus felt the connection, and Novosel did as well.

That same week, Novosel volunteered to help in the archive, and a few months later, Rodney Trapp again worked his magic and acquired a modest grant for Novosel to inventory and process all the DTH playbills and programs from 1968 to 2014. Theara Ward, a former Company dancer from the education department, also helped in the effort. It was an exhaustive sorting of thousands of pieces spread out over long tables set up in the small library of dance books. Novosel and Ward handled each program with white gloves, inputting the metadata into a brand-new cloud-based program called Google Sheets, and stored the pieces safely away in acid-free folders and archival boxes.

Tyrus and Novosel soon learned that the programs would be a crucial resource for developing a chronology of DTH’s history. They decided that arranging the majority of the materials by date made the most sense for the archive, because when requests came in regarding specific dancers in specific ballets, the archivist’s first question to the client was always, “Do you know what year?” The paper trail of programs and playbills was hard



Paul Novosel in the studio. (Photo: Unknown)



evidence of the balletic repertoire, as well as the who, where, when, why, and how of each performance. This would be an invaluable resource, if not the most important for the writing of their book, especially when it came to reconciling factual and chronological discrepancies.

They gained extensive experience in the archival arts. Processing continued the following years, box by box, as the duo digested all things DTH. The two encountered many challenges, including separating out Arthur Mitchell's personal archive when it was bequeathed to Columbia University. One exceptional find in the building that eventually became problematic was the discovery of 100,000 feet of undeveloped 16mm film and 59 1/4-inch reels of audio, recorded during the Company's historic South African tour in. This was the tour where the dancers met Nelson Mandela backstage. The film had been sitting for close to twenty years in non-climate-controlled storage cabinets, unbeknownst to anyone. Tyrus and Novosel were always sniffing around for the



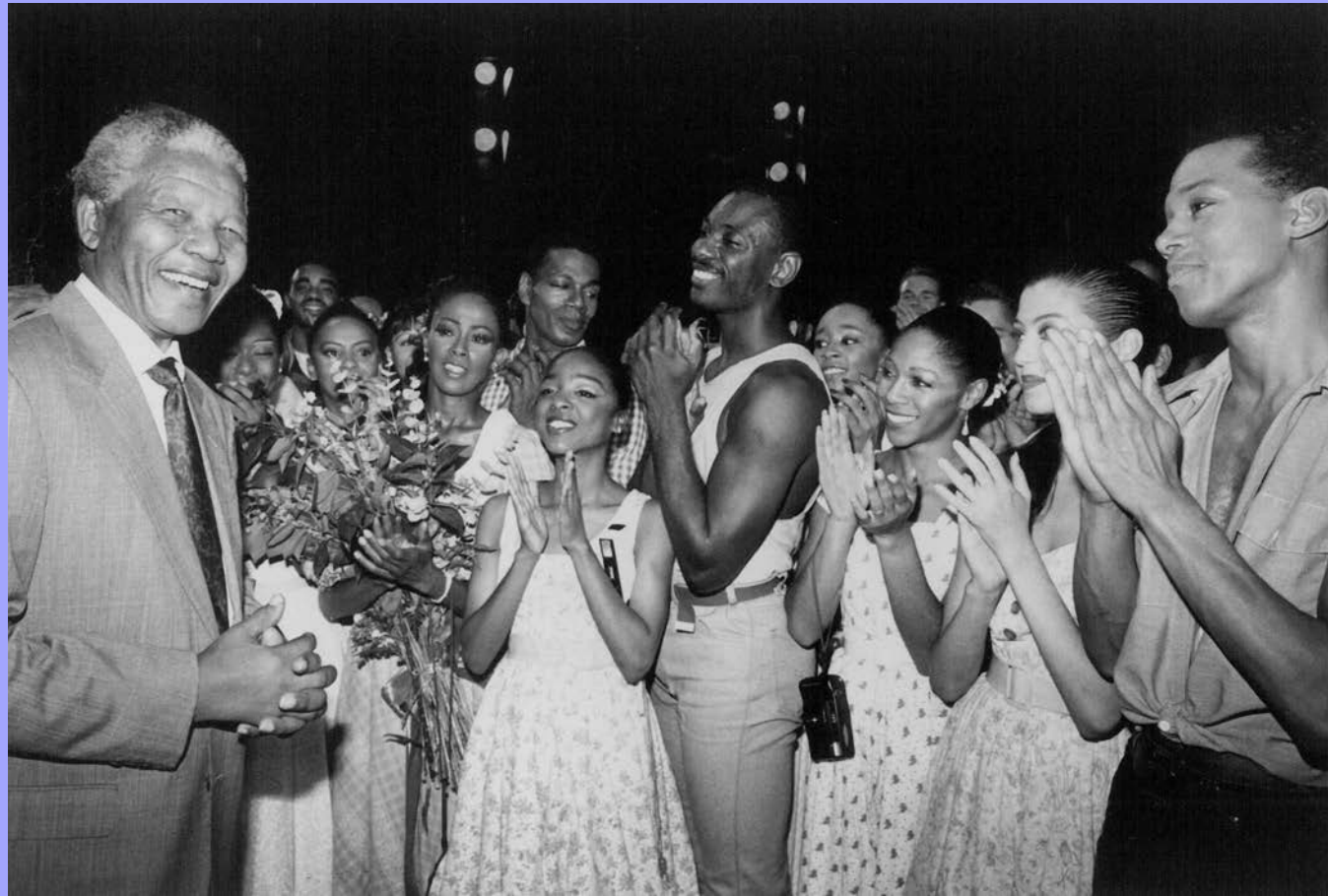
scent of vinegar, a telltale sign that the film was disintegrating. The condition of the film was analyzed and safely placed in cold storage, off-site in New Jersey.

As the two continued to care for the archive, they frequently bemoaned the fact that a single book had never been written about Dance Theatre of Harlem. And the archive held the story about DTH's founding, uniqueness, and all the benevolence it spread through its dancers, about the distinctive DTH style of performance dress with flesh-toned shoes and tights, and the neoclassic and urban contemporary repertoire that made the Company one of a kind (not to mention that George Balanchine was DTH's artistic godfather). There were brief mentions of Arthur Mitchell in other ballet books, but regrettably, the Company was not included in most historical ballet writing.

*Above: Archive volunteer parent with daughter. (Photo: Paul Novosel) At left: The basement archive space at DTH; Nancy Watrous, executive director of the Chicago Film Archives, analyzing the South African film with a loupe. (Photos: Judy Tyrus)*







*Nelson Mandela and the Company backstage in South Africa. (Photo: Marbeth)*

The two archivists soon realized that they were a perfect match for each other. Novosel had worked for ten years at DTH as a ballet pianist and loved to write on music and the arts; and Tyrus had the archival talents, was a college professor in dance at Marymount Manhattan, and had close to thirty years of experience as a principal dancer and staffer. She *knew* DTH. He had the “writing chops,” she had the “DTH brain.” In Novosel’s words, “Writing with a partner makes all the difference. You get to discuss everything with someone, correct each other, feed each other ideas, learn how to surrender a viewpoint, and strategize together. You must perfect being an active listener, and really think through everything. It beats writing alone in a vacuum. Collaboration such as this is pure magic.”

They began with a conversation on what kind of book they wanted. Novosel was most familiar with the structure of classic music history texts by Gustave Reese, Donald J. Grout, and J. Peter Buckholder. Tyrus thought that the book’s historical narrative should reflect the culture of DTH through facts, humor, barrier-breaking historicity, and beautiful photographs from the archive’s exclusive Marbeth Collection and beyond. Thus began the seven-year journey to publication.

The history of Dance Theatre of Harlem resided in four places: in the physically abundant DTH archive on West 152nd Street in Harlem; in a warehouse in New Jersey; in people’s heads; and a good deal in cyberspace. With these materials, and innumerable trips to The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Tyrus and Novosel were ready to begin.

The first task was to find an approach to organizing the book’s contents. After lengthy conversations about DTH culture and hours spent sorting and reading archival materials, the written chronologies proved to be little more than general timelines of major events in the Company’s life. The chronology had to be filled out in a grand manner. Tyrus and Novosel knew that the beauty of the book would be in its nuance. The different “stages of growth” were named, and like the archive, the book would be organized by groups of sequential calendar years. Novosel remembers, “We wrote the table of contents first.” From then on, it was piecing the puzzle together and then writing and editing, re-writing, and re-editing, for seven years. Finding the right place for the right event was an endless process.



Tyrus and Novosel would collaborate every day, sometimes for hours, and if not in person then with their mobile phones on speaker and their laptops tuned to Google Docs. They would take turns asking questions and writing notes as the other delved into various subjects, performance theories, and Company history. Novosel, a night owl, would work until 4:00 a.m. turning the day's research and conversation into the night's prose, to be read, proofed, and edited by both the next morning. Sometimes they would individually write in a stream of consciousness, turning off the editing part of their brain. "Getting it down," they would call it. They followed the dictum, "Nothing is real until it's written down."

The most personal experience for them both was having lengthy, in-depth, "down to the bone and thorny" discussions on ethnicity, culture, diversity, and skin tone. In the authors' own words, from the book's website:

"A good portion of the vocabulary used in the current American discussion of diversity is spurious. It is riddled with hidden meaning or used to control or divide cultures through acceptable derogatory passibility, sometimes unbeknownst to the user. While writing *Dance Theatre of Harlem: A History, A Movement, A Celebration*, we confronted hundreds of instances where word choice concerning multiculturalism had to be

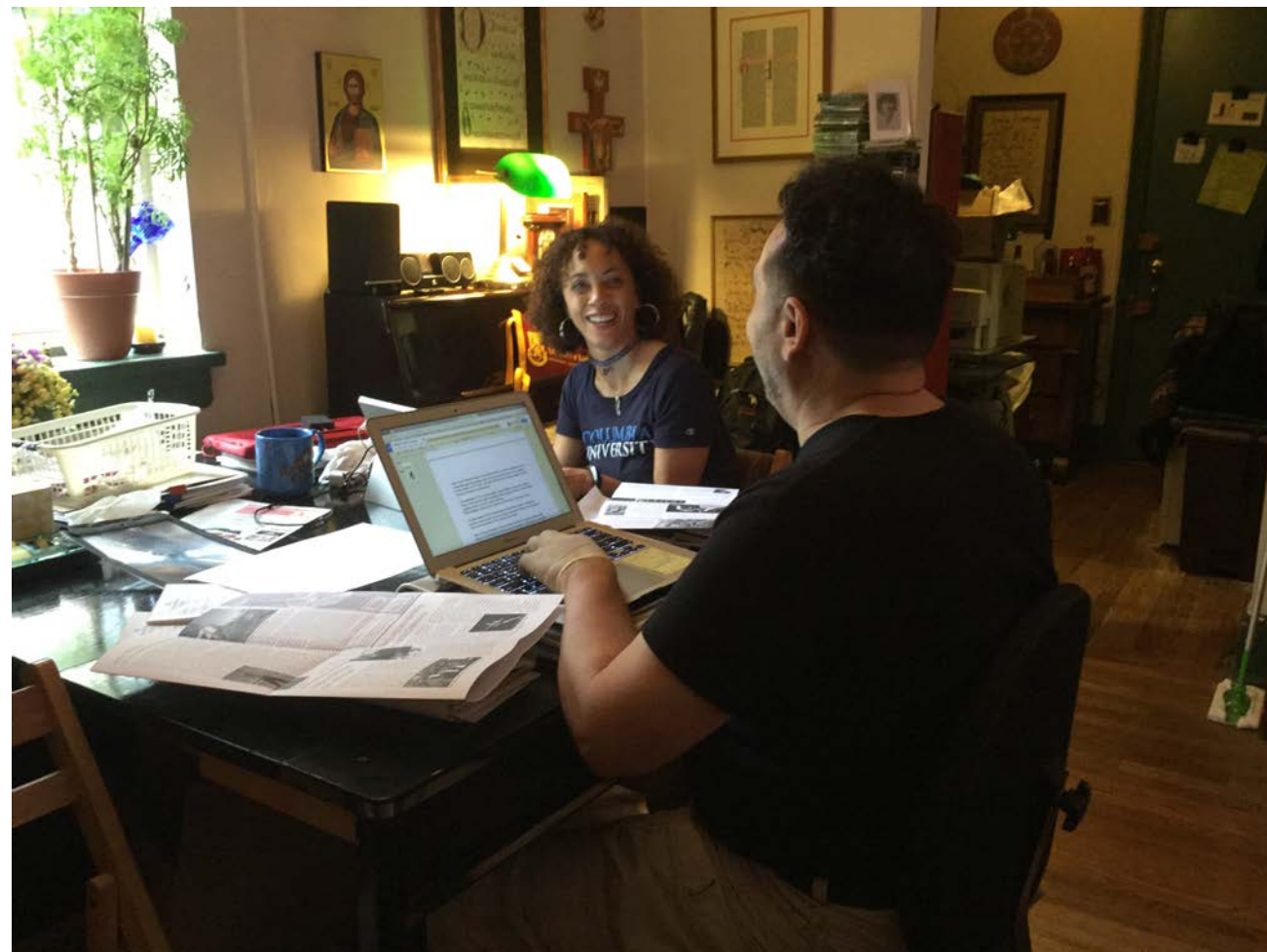
carefully engineered. Early on in our writing, out of necessity, we began to choose our defining terms. This meager attempt at lexicography stemmed from the need and desire to name people and cultures through accurate, respectful, inclusive, and defining word choices. Our approach to diversity came from deep bone and blood conversations about our lives, how we identify with our own African, Asian, Sicilian, and Croatian ancestry, how we identify others, and how others identify us. The United States of America has a long tradition of using derogatory slurs for its melting-pot ethnicities. The term African American for example, has an interesting and fluid transition from Negro, to Colored, to Black, to African American. Language is in constant flux. Acronyms abound in the world of digital texting, which further complicates communication. We searched and favored words that say what they mean with grace, style, and equity." The authors' comprehensive Wordlist of Multiculturalism can be found at [DTHbook.org](http://DTHbook.org), along with other resources on multiculturalism.

After writing more than 150,000 words, sorting through thousands of photographs, and completing a first draft manuscript, it came time to find a publisher. Once again,

the team's multitasking talents surfaced. They spent months on writing a book proposal, did massive amounts of research on book publishing, and networked with friends of theirs who had worked in the publishing industry. They knew they had a unique product and at one point, were fortunate enough to have three publishers interested in their work. They decided that Esi Sogah, senior editor at Kensington Publishers, was a perfect fit. Her passion for the project was invaluable, and Tyrus and Novosel knew they had a talented team at Kensington. After obtaining the appropriate licensing from DTH, the book was ready for publishing.

It was then that they decided to use their experience even further by founding a non-profit, ChromaDiverse, to promote diversity in the fields of dance and theatre through archival projects. ChromaDiverse offers its services and support to dance companies to digitally manage their archival assets.

Their book was released on October 26th, 2021, by Dafina, an imprint of Kensington Publishing, in hardcover, with 90,000 words, 304 pages, and more than 250 photographs, some of which have never been published. From the rehearsal studio to the stage to the archival boxes in the DTH basement, Novosel and Tyrus brought dance history to life, and are determined to continue doing so into the future.



*Judy Tyrus and Paul Novosel during a writing session in New York City.  
(Photo: Eileen Novosel)*

**Dance Theatre of Harlem: A History, A Movement, A Celebration** was released on October 26, 2021. To purchase, and see book extras and ancillary research materials, go to [DTHbook.org](https://DTHbook.org).

**Eric Waldman** is a founding partner of ChromaDiverse, Inc. and has held senior roles at large corporations including Hitachi America and Microsoft. As well as a conference speaker, he has consulted across a wide array of advanced analytic products in Microsoft, Google, and EarthNow, as well as for the advanced technology marketplace in data analytics, imaging, cloud computing, machine learning and artificial intelligence.