

DATE: MAY 16, 2020

“So what’s the plan at Keshet?”

Hello wonderful Keshet friends and family,

We know there are many conversations going on right now surrounding when folks will physically re-open, and in what manner. And we know that you, our community wonder the same from us. *What’s* the plan at Keshet? *What’s* the timeline? Under what percentage capacity will we gather? In which government approved stage are we given the green light to go back to business “*as usual?*”

These stages, and percentages, and timelines have so many different reasons behind them – informed by economics, science, livelihoods, personal employment needs, living situations, community health, personal or family health risks, and so much more. And each business, each organization, each individual, will need to determine what is the right time and in which stage and within what percentage they will re-open, re-engage, re-“**as usual**” themselves.

While we at Keshet respect the many processes and varied timelines each business in our community will consider, the decision for our own organization must put community health at the forefront of our decision-making. Before economics, and regardless of phases. You may ask when you say “**community health**” who exactly do you mean by “**community?**” We mean each individual student dancer, young, old, or in-between with whom we so desperately miss teaching, and learning from, and every family member of each student to whom they return home after a class or a rehearsal with Keshet. We mean each company member with whom we so desperately miss rehearsing with and weaving magic with through dreamy, powerful movement, laughter, and sweat. We mean each audience member with whom we so desperately miss connecting. We mean each beautiful guest artist that we so desperately miss welcoming to New Mexico to join us in the unique Ideas and Innovation Makers Space. And we mean so many more.....

So where does that leave us? What does this mean? Right now, this means we need to be patient and cautious, and we need to give ourselves permission to mourn the loss of the experiences we will not have together while we wait. You may ask, but what exactly are we waiting for? While **it’s** hard to pin down, we are waiting for new developments to make it safe in our world to re-enter the contact sport of dance. We are waiting for new developments to make it safe once again to sit amongst each other during the connected experience of absorbing the beauty of live art together in a theater – breathing the same air, laughing together, crying together, as our heartbeats inevitably connect.

You might ask, what new developments are you *freakin'* waiting for Shira? You still *haven't* answered the question, when are you opening?... and I get it, I understand your impatience. Am I waiting for a vaccine? Yes, maybe. Do I realize that this could take years? Yes, I do. Do I realize that "a vaccine" means more than just the vaccine? That this means I'm also waiting for things like manufacturing, distribution, global cooperation, unraveled politics, the hopeful circumvention of corruption and greed, new realities cracking through embedded and rotted systemic inequities to make sure our entire community can be safe. Yes, yes I do. Ok, so maybe it's not the vaccine we are waiting for, maybe it's rapid testing resources to provide to every person that physically enters our "community." If that's what I'm waiting for, do I realize that this means somehow I'd need to get my hands on about 1,000 test per week, and the people to administer them, and waiting areas for people to wait for their test results prior to every class, performance, and event? Yes, I do. Is that realistic? No, not really. Do I realize that just because rapid testing resources might be available to some, that doesn't necessarily mean arts organizations are getting first dibs at enough testing kits to ensure the safety of every student, staff, and audience member that comes through the door? Yes. And yes, I know that some "contact sports" will re-emerge more quickly, and folks may say, but they are playing basketball again, why *can't* we dance? The reality is that the NBA has different resources than Keshet. Should all arts organizations have access to these same resources, social value, and support as professional sports, absolutely, but only one soapbox at a time here, folks.

Anyway – my point is, I **don't** exactly know what we are waiting for, and I'm sorry I **can't** be more specific. But I do know we are waiting. And we are navigating how to stay connected, even though online connections pale in comparison to the magic and meaning of this personal, vulnerable, and beautiful art form that so unites us as humans. And I acknowledge to you all that I know this sucks. I very much do. I also know that I love my community. I love Keshet. I love my fellow artists. I love my fellow audiences. And I **can't** let economics drive my decisions. I **can't** even let my own selfish desires drive my decisions, which so very desperately want to get back in the studio/rehearsal/ class/theater with you all. I so very desperately want to welcome an audience with a goofy curtain speech, and so very desperately want to yell counts and run around the studio challenging 8-year-olds and 20-year-olds and 80-year-olds to be even more expressive than they thought they could be. And I so very desperately want to celebrate the vibrancy of this art form with you all at my side. But we are waiting.

And while we wait, we will continue to embody our mission of "inspiring and uniting community by fostering unlimited possibilities through dance, mentorship, and a creative space for the arts." While our physical spaces may have changed, our mission absolutely has not. I find immense joy and comfort knowing that we have an amazing team of creative and dedicated people here at Keshet. And while socially-distanced dance programming may not have been our first choice, you better believe this Keshet team is coming up with fantastic plans, brilliant programs, and incredibly fun events that will keep us moving and growing; inspiring and uniting.

So there will still be connection. And there will still be art. And there will still be joy. And there will still be movement and magic. And there will certainly still be Keshet. But that will look so different, you say? Yep, you are right. **It's not the same. It's different and it's uncomfortable. But** from different and uncomfortable somehow emerges new. So we will ground ourselves in this season of different and we will explore the nooks and crannies and nuances of discomfort, and we will learn more about this weird space of electronically connected solitude. And Keshet will hold tight to our mission and our motto of unlimited possibilities. And we will wait, we will listen, we will mourn, we will rejoice, we will connect, we will experiment, and we will certainly make some mistakes along the way. But we will hold our community paramount as we re-invent, re-construct, and re-imagine the possibilities together.

Thank you for your patience. Thank you for your presence. Thank you for being a part of our community, centered in the beautiful and transformative art of dance.

With love and gratitude to each of you,
Shira Greenberg
Keshet Founder & Artistic Director