



The 2020/21 KP3 year in review

by Keshet's Pre-Professional Education Director, Sarah Gonzales

Given the state of the COVID pandemic, KP3 could not take place as normal in this fiscal year. KP3 students, parents, and faculty gathered in Summer 2020 to discuss ideas and desires for the program moving forward in Fall 2020. Given the uncertainty of the time, families asked for the program to be a semester-long commitment, as opposed to a full year-long commitment. They also asked to have more weekends off to spend time with their families. These suggestions and more were taken into account when planning the KP3 Fall 2020 semester.

KP3 Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 both featured:

- Online group training classes
- Weekly private or semi-private lessons
- Access to online recordings of group training classes
- Access to additional Keshet Community Classes of appropriate age
- Student Online Attendance Self-Tracking
- Weekly one-on-one mentorship from a Keshet faculty member

In Fall 2020, KP3 students were placed in groups to develop a project along with fellow KP3 dancers and a Keshet faculty mentor. Students all developed a proposal, created a work-in-progress showing, and discussed the further development of the work. The Fall 2020 semester ended with two virtual presentations of "KP3 Student Voices," connecting families in New Mexico, around the country, and around the world.

Mentorship and prioritizing mental health were a huge priority in the KP3 2020-2021 year. KP3 students each set goals at the beginning of each semester. KP3ers were each paired with a KP3 Faculty mentor and met with them weekly to discuss their progress in their classes and towards their goals. Additionally, students and teachers learned more about each other and formed deep connections. KP3 students were also mentored with the addition of personalized private and semi-private lessons as well as in their group projects, where mentors worked to support the visions of the students as they learned how to work together.

With the bulk of KP3 students engaging in online school during the day and Zoom KP3 classes in the evening, students began having screen fatigue mid-semester and asked when it would be possible to dance in-person again. In the middle of the Fall 2020 semester, the KP3 program started experimenting with privates taking place back in the Keshet building and with having very small group classes in the studios. Safety precautions were taken, including daily temperature checks, Covid questionnaires, masks, and social distancing. The students who did return were so grateful to have the opportunity to return to the building.

Spring 2021 began with a choreographic immersion, in which students learned Keshet Dance Company repertory from Company members. The semester offered the option to train in-person (with masks, socially distanced) and online, although the bulk of KP3 students remained online at the beginning more and more moved to in-person by semester end. KP3 Group Projects were presented in the Spring Concert in May 2021.

KP3 Director Sarah Gonzales and Faculty Sonia Bologna spent a great deal of Spring 2021 compiling a KP3 Retrospective event, a look at KP3 performances from the start of the program to the present. The virtual KP3 Retrospective event was a gathering of 61 "logins" including KP3 alums, family members, and current KP3 students, who watched old footage, shared their experiences, and made connections. At the end of the event, many KP3ers new and old seemed interested in seeing an in-person KP3 Reunion become a reality.

In the 2020-2021 school year, KP3 students and families continued to volunteer with Keshet. Volunteering shifted from assisting with community classes and performances to students finding ways to positively impact their families and the community near them. Some KP3 students chose to volunteer as KP3 buddies, checking in with each other weekly on how they were doing. Others volunteered in their family businesses. This pivot of volunteering reminded us all that building community starts at home.

The KP3 2020-2021 year was not like any year of KP3 that had come before. Many KP3 students shared how important they now realize it is to be in the same space as their peers and teachers. Glitches in technology are frustrating. Despite difficult circumstances, KP3 faculty did their best to support students as they processed enormous changes in their lives. KP3 students danced, albeit in 6 feet by 6 feet squares. KP3 students performed, though virtually. KP3 faculty discussed important topics relating to pre-professional dancers, like site-specific dance, mindfulness, nutrition, dance history, and many more. Not even a pandemic can stop the KP3 program from training the minds, bodies, and hearts of our extremely dedicated dancers.

