

PIA BOUMAN SCHOOL
for Ballet and Creative Movement

To the clerk of the Planning Housing Committee of the City of Toronto

April 27, 2022

Pia Bouman School for Ballet and Creative Movement (PBS for short in this presentation letter) is not a resident of 225 Sterling Road. But it has a *vested interest* in the space it occupies since March 2019. Although the 5 year lease agreement with an option of a five year extension did include a demolition clause, The School, forced out of its Parkdale location was desperate for a new home.

PBS is unique in that it is the only school of its kind in the city of Toronto and beyond that is a recognized Charitable Not for Profit institution. Its compelling mandate: *A chance to dance, to create and to perform for all* opens the door to all who wish to pursue it. PBS is a much respected institution because of the high quality of its dance program that enables with a full dance education to students age 3 -17. Its impressive Bursary program offers full or partial bursaries to all who need support. Its history spans 43 years. Since 1979, thousands of children and youth have benefitted from its dance teaching and could follow their dream: to dance, to create, to perform now.

Since its inception, PBS's philosophy and mandate has been recognized, at first by its community of parents, then by organizations and foundations:

- 1) The Ontario Trillium Foundation: a total of \$350,000 in Capital Grant and special support 2004, 2021, 2022)
- 2) Scotiabank: a capital Grant and ongoing bursary and performance support \$300,000.00.
- 3) The Minstrel Foundation for the Advancement of Music and related Arts (total 2007 - present: over \$75,000.00
- 4) The continued and loyal volunteer support from its alumni parents, and students and friends who strongly believe in the values PBS stands for.

The importance of community: in 2003 the school was forced to move from its Parkdale -Queen Street location. A derelict mattress factory on 6 Noble Street (still in Parkdale) was renovated with the help of volunteers (parents of students and friends) who donated thousands of hours. With its spacious studios and small black box studio theater, Noble Street became a community and artist hub where the young and the older shared their love of dance and performance. The building was sold in 2016, and once again the School faced the challenge of finding a new space big enough to accommodate its own needs as well as accommodate the needs of the daytime renters, artists who need space to create their work. It was after a long search, in March 2019 that PBS found its new space: Over 9600sq.ft in this building, 225 Sterling Road.

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With financial support of three benefactors, we renovated this beautiful section of the building: the breathtaking 30feet high ceilings of one section seemed natural for a theater space – so much needed for small companies to showcase their work... Four studios accommodate the PBS dance program, that would again welcome young and old, regardless of socio-economic position or socio-cultural background.

When PBS was forced to leave Parkdale, Parkdale lost an institution, a place kids could walk or bicycle to, Parkdale lost a special community that was part of its infrastructure. This was heartbreaking for many.

Here we are. The Lower Junctions, is a unique quilt of artists and artisans, place of MOCA, home of Anansi Press. Town houses. A part of Toronto that is filled with artists who live and work and create. But there is more: the 225 Sterling Road building connects the city of Toronto with history.

For our children, for our youth, for the mental wellbeing of this wonderful city, I plead for maintaining 225 Sterling in such a way that we together can continue to celebrate the importance of live-work-play-learn: *in our community, where we live*: by making it possible protect of our artisans and artists art and art expression in our lives.

I urge all who have a vested interest in this beautiful city, to protect this unique and diverse community of artisans and artists *and* this School. Together they make this part of Toronto, Davenport, the lower Junctions a remarkable and noteworthy. And this is what must be available. This is what enriches life in a city for its citizens. This is why 225 Sterling Road must be protected: A city needs to protect its history, its creative energies.

Without it 225 Sterling road, the City of Toronto will be so much poorer.

Pia Bouman
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Pia Bouman School for Ballet and Creative Movement