

# Dancemagazine

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## NEWS AROUND NEW YORK

There haven't been birthday cakes with candles or big celebrations. The only public evidence, in fact, is a small sticker affixed to the office's front door and letterhead proclaiming **Performing Artservices'** tenth anniversary. But the work of a great many of the country's most innovative performing artists are an eloquent tribute to the accomplishments of this unique management organization.

Artservices, as it is known to friends, was founded in 1971 to provide professional management and administration for a small group of avant-garde artists in dance, theater and music. Its staff of nine provides everything from fiscal and fund-raising services to the coordination of New York productions, and tour arrangements both domestic and foreign.

Its client roster reads like a "Who's Who" of modern performing artists. In dance, Artservices represents the **Lucinda Childs Dance Company, Douglas Dunn and Dancers, David Gordon's Pick-Up Company, and the Sara Rudner Performance Ensemble**; in music, composers John Cage, Robert Ashley, Philip Glass, David Tudor, Alvin Lucier, David Behrman, and Richard Teitelbaum; and in theater, the Mabou Mines group, Richard Foreman, Joseph Chaikin, the Talking Band, Joan Jonas, and Stuart Sherman. Artservices also operates **Lovely Music**, a record company devoted to the dissemination of new music.

The organization also takes on special projects. Because of its experience in foreign touring, Artservices will handle the premiere European tour of Robert Brustein's **American Repertory Theatre** in the fall of 1982.

According to **Jane Yockel**, co-director of the organization, "We didn't invent the idea of Artservices. It was in the air. We were just the ones who did it.

"Mimi Johnson and I had been talking intensely about the idea and I finally made her promise that we would just stop talking about it for a while," Yockel continues.

"About five days went by and the phone rang one evening. It was the unmistakable John Cage saying (in perfect mimicry of Cage's distinctive voice), 'Hi, Jane, it's John. Mimi made you a promise but I didn't. Why don't you come and do Artservices.' And that was it."

**Mimi Johnson**, also co-director of Artservices, picks up the story: "I called Richard Foreman on the phone and said, 'Hello, my name is Mimi Johnson, would you like management?' He said, 'Oh yeah. Sure.'"

"The Grand Union dance group needed help, as did Viola Farber," Johnson adds. "One of them put us in touch with another . . . ultimately we came to represent a good part of a whole generation."

The Artservices staff exhibits a fierce dedication to its clients. "We are working with the artists because we think their work is terrific," says Yockel. "That isn't what needed help. They needed to be relieved of the burden of the business."

"It has always been our intention not to tamper with the art but to be there to listen, to give advice if we were asked. We've never said, 'You've got to make another dance like the last one.'"

Mimi Johnson adds: "Someone asked me recently why Artservices hasn't sewed up every artist in Soho and created a vast empire of affiliations. We aren't trying to build an empire; if we did that we couldn't give any one of them the kind of support we're giving the eighteen we manage."

It remains a challenge, sometimes, to convince American presenters that Artservices' clients do not represent an artistically incomprehensible radical fringe.

"What we are trying to do," says booking manager **Jedediah Wheeler**, "is to establish to a national public that these artists are here to stay. What I am most proud of is that it is no longer just two or three artists that are touring but in fact that all of our artists are touring, getting a chance to perform in other places."

Artservices' operating budget last year was \$225,000. Approximately forty percent of that amount comes from the New York State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts. With cutbacks looming at the federal level, the organization, like many, anticipates potential financial problems in the future. By getting involved with revenue-generating projects such as the American Repertory Theatre tour, Artservices hopes to alleviate some of the problem.

Still. "It terrifies me to think that 150 artists (including the clients' companies and technical staffs) would have no one to go to without us," says Yockel.

After ten years of success — due, says Yockel, to "some talent and the ability to work on a shoestring" — it seems an unlikely possibility.

David Bither