

# NYC Performing Arts Spaces

## Space Solutions for Music • Dance • Theatre

### Survey of NYC Cultural Facilities – May 2008

NYC Performing Arts Spaces runs three websites – [nycMusicSpaces.org](http://nycMusicSpaces.org), [nycDanceSpaces.org](http://nycDanceSpaces.org), and [nycTheatreSpaces.org](http://nycTheatreSpaces.org) – that list rentable rehearsal and performance spaces in New York City's five boroughs. To determine the extent to which changes in the NYC real estate scene are affecting facilities that rent to performing artists, in March 2008 we sent an online survey to all the rental facilities located in City Council District #3 that are suitable for the performing arts. Twenty-five facilities responded.

The following month we sent a slightly modified version of the survey to similar facilities in the rest of Manhattan and the other boroughs. We received 44 responses, and combined this data with the data from City Council District #3. The total response rate was 11.4%.

This survey was sent to 464 organizations that list their spaces on one or more of our websites. Sixty-three of the total responses were from this group, giving a response rate of 13.5%. We also sent to 140 organizations that do not list their spaces at this time because (a) one or more spaces are under renovation, (b) they are solely presenters, or (c) they have chosen not to list on our websites. We wanted to include them to get the fullest picture possible of workspace supply and demand. Of this latter group, six responded, for a rate of 4%. The combined total of 604 organizations had a response rate of 11.4%.

#### A capsule summary:

- Almost three quarters of the responding facilities were located in Manhattan, which corresponds to the percentage of facilities on NYC PASpaces' websites that are in Manhattan. At least one third of the Manhattan survey respondents considered their rental space to be "endangered" or "probably endangered".
- Forty-five percent of facilities suitable for theatre considered their rental spaces as "endangered" or "probably endangered", considerably more than dance or multi-disciplinary facilities.
- As for rental rates and expenses, although 80% said they have greater expenses, almost 70% have kept their rates steady. Several commented on their service to the community as their rationale for not raising rental rates.
- Expenses continue to climb and current real estate trends are not hospitable to arts organizations. But the survey results do show that New York City organizations and facilities are finding ways to survive and continue their mission in a volatile economic climate. We plan to follow up with another survey early in January.
- Comments from organizations that serve the dance community indicate that commercial landlords are reluctant to have dance facilities in their buildings.

In addition, NYC PASpaces maintains records on spaces that have removed their listings from our websites. While we are not always able to determine the reason, we have been able to confirm many that have been lost due to building demolition, conversion to other uses, or terminated leases.

## The Survey and Responses:

### Introduction

**The real estate market in New York City is volatile and rapidly changing.**

NYC Performing Arts Spaces is working to assess the impact of these changes on the city's performing arts sector. We have developed the following survey in order to assess your facility's current real estate needs and future plans. The information gathered will help everyone in the cultural community to foresee workspace needs before they become unsolvable crises.

**Which borough is your facility located in?\*** (68 responses)

73% / 50 – Manhattan  
18% / 12 – Brooklyn  
6% / 4 – Queens  
3% / 2 – Staten Island  
0% / 0 – Bronx\*\*

*\*The original City Council District #3 survey did not ask which borough the facility was located in, since all facilities in City Council District #3 are in Manhattan. The respondents from that survey are all counted above as Manhattan.*

*\*\*Although our database includes organizations with facilities in all five boroughs, none of the 14 Bronx organizations we sent the survey to responded.*

### Security of Space

**Do you own, rent, or have donated space?** (68 responses)

75% / 51 – Rent  
25% / 17 – Own

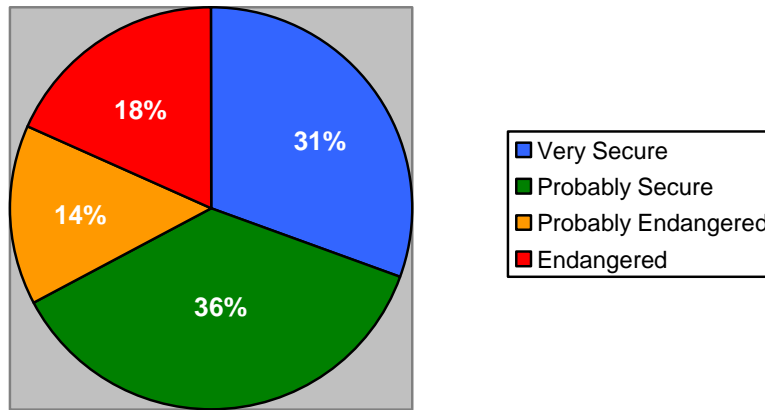
***“We have a long but very tenuous relationship with our landlord.”***

***“I regret that I didn't have the funds or the foresight to purchase a space in Astoria in the 1980's or 90's.”***

**If you own your space, do you plan to be there for the next one to five years?**

100% / 17 – Yes

**If you are in rented space, how secure is that space for the next one to five years?**  
(49 responses)



**Security of rental space by borough\*\*:**

Borough	Very secure	Probably secure	Probably endangered	Endangered
Manhattan	31.5%	31.5%	17%	20%
Brooklyn	20%	60%	0%	20%
Queens	50%	25%	25%	0%

\*\*All Staten Island organizations owned their space.

***“We are panicking right now, because we aren’t sure whether the landlord will change his mind about continuing our lease. We have an e-mail into him and hope to extend our lease, which seems unlikely with one theatre already gone...”***

***“We just lost our lease on our Williamsburg studio as of 7/31/08. We have signed a new lease and are opening an additional facility in Bushwick in April. We lost our space because our landlord is turning the building into residential housing units.”***

**If you checked “probably endangered” or “endangered”, where would you look to move if you had to?** (15 responses, some respondents selected multiple answers)

- 60% / 9 – Manhattan
- 27% / 4 – We wouldn’t open another location elsewhere
- 20% / 3 – Brooklyn (One respondent would move from Manhattan to Ft. Greene, Brooklyn. No other respondents said they would move to a different borough.)
- 7% / 1 – Queens

***“We have 4 more years left on our lease, however given the volatility of the Garment district, it is very possible we will not be offered a renewal lease. Activities like ours are welcomed in the early stages of gentrification, but once***

***neighborhoods improve landlords look for lower traffic less noisy activities. In the past 33 years we have moved our facility 6 times.”***

**Do you operate your facility as a for-profit or non-profit organization?**

(68 responses)

66% / 45 – Non-profit – 22% said their space is “endangered” or “probably endangered”  
34% / 23 – For-profit – 26% said their space is “endangered” or “probably endangered”

***“Running a non-profit theater in NY is financially challenging given the regulatory agencies. In addition the costs continue to rise with no additional funding on the horizon or artists getting any richer.”***

**Usage of Space**

**Do you use your facility’s space for your own (in-house) rehearsal and/or programming?**

(68 responses)

91% / 62 – Yes

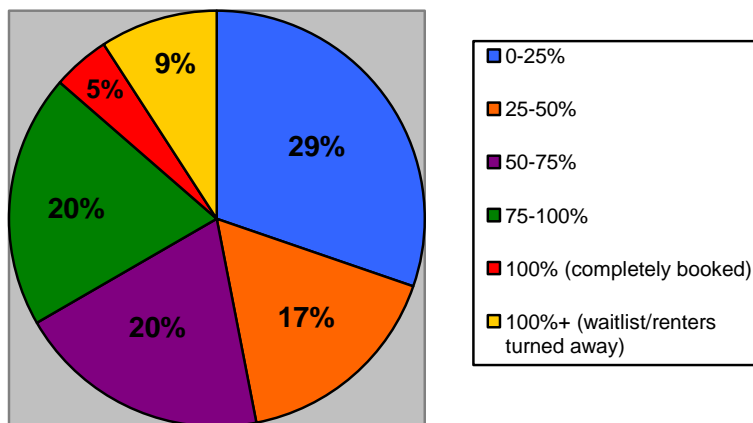
9% / 6 – No

**Do you rent your facility’s space to outside users? (67 responses)**

98.5% / 66 – Yes

1.5% / 1 – No

**In the past 12 months, what percentage of the time that your spaces were available to outside renters were your spaces booked?\* (66 responses)**



*\*Some respondents present, some have outside renters, some have resident companies and some have any combination of the above. Because of the multiplicity of arrangements in this field, percentages may reflect bookings for overall or available time.*

**How has this percentage changed from the previous year (12-24 months ago)?  
(65 responses)**

46% / 30 – Bookings have stayed about the same  
 45% / 29 – Bookings have increased  
 9% / 6 – Bookings have decreased

**Security of rental space by booking:**

Bookings	Very secure	Probably secure	Probably endangered	Endangered
Same	26%	41%	18%	15%
Increased	31%	37.5%	12.5%	19%
Decreased	25%	25%	0%	50%

***“Because spaces are losing leases, I think our business increased.”***

***“Upgrade of the theater has resulted in more bookings.”***

**Rates & Expenses**

**Have you changed your rental rates in the last 12 months? (66 responses)**

68% / 45 – No, our rates have stayed the same  
 30% / 20 – Yes, we’ve raised rates  
 2% / 1 – N/A

***“Raised rates due to our recent renovation and purchase of new equipment.”***

***“In line with our rent increases.”***

***“I can’t really charge enough compared to my rent, so I hang in there. But I’m starting to make a living.”***

**How have your expenses changed in the last 12 months? (68 responses)**

78% / 53 – We have more/greater expenses\* – Only 28.3% said they raised their rates  
 22% / 15 – Our expenses have stayed about the same – All said that their rates were the same

\*Respondents named the following expenses:

Salaries, insurance, construction, rental, utilities, renovations (architects fees, project management, labor, etc.), water, everything, payroll, repairs, staffing, security, taxes, supplies, equipment, cost of debt, delayed funding, cleaning services

***“[Our] lease is up 5/31/2011. We have no renewal clause in our lease. The current landlord is not sympathetic to the arts and doesn’t appreciate the traffic we bring into the building on daily basis (with our conservatory program during the day and renters and performances in the evening). In the event that we would be allowed to renew our lease in 2011, the rent will be doubled or tripled (which would bring it up to nearly \$1 million a year). Currently our rent is about 12% of our annual***

***operating budget. We currently have approximately 10,000 square feet of usable space.”***

**For those facilities that did not raise your rental rates but have greater expenses, why have you kept your rates the same?\***

***“To maintain consistency with our NYSCA grant obligations, and it is part of our mission to create access for other artists.”***

***“Our rates are currently under review. We have generally tried to keep from charging our artists, but as we start to incur out of pocket expenses, that may have to change.”***

***“We are trying our best to serve the community and find other ways to cover expenses. We’ll see how long we can do that.”***

***“If we raise our rates, the community we want to favor won’t be able to afford the space.”***

***“Bookings have been up.”***

***“It is our mission to provide affordable, quality space to artists. We will raise our rates when our backs are really up against the wall. In the meantime, our aggressive attention to maximizing our spaces’ potential through earned income, box office income and fundraising income can mostly keep us afloat without having to raise rates.”***

*\*This question was not included in the original survey. We added it to the city-wide version after the responses of the Council District #3 survey indicated that while the majority of the facilities had greater expenses, they had not raised their rates accordingly.*

## **Differences By Discipline**

**What is the *primary* field your renters come from? (66 responses)**

38% / 25 – Theatre

30% / 20 – Dance

12% / 8 – Music

11% / 7 – Multi-Disciplinary:

*Dance, Music, & Theatre, equally (3)*

*Dance and Theatre, equally (2)*

*Dance and Music, equally (1)*

*Multi-media/experimental performance and installation (1)*

6% / 4 – Other

3% / 2 – Film

As for ownership by field, 12% of Theatre facilities, 20% of Dance facilities, 62.5% of Music facilities, and 20% of Multi-Disciplinary facilities owned their own space.

**Security of rental space by discipline:**

<b>Discipline</b>	<b>Very secure</b>	<b>Probably secure</b>	<b>Probably endangered</b>	<b>Endangered</b>
Theatre	27%	27%	19%	27%
Dance	25%	44%	12%	19%
Music	33%	67%	0%	0%
Multi-Disciplinary	50%	25%	25%	0%

***“Apart from the high prices, it has been very difficult to find a space to rent for dance school in Manhattan because many landlords don't like this use in their buildings.”***

***“Took me over 3 years of constant looking to find the sort of space I needed - most buildings did NOT want dancers on their premises...”***

***“This is the third studio I have had in NYC. They each get more expensive and smaller. The studio houses a not for profit program. Small, independent studios like mine, with no allegiance to a particular genre of the dance world will not be able to exist in the future.”***