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DNAWORKS looks to create a unique identity in Fort Worth and Pittsburgh



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As Pittsburgh's arts scene continues to rebuild and reshuffle, a new organization is preparing to bring a new kind of performance to the city.

[DNAWORKS](#), an arts and service organization dedicated to healing through the arts and creating a space for nuanced explorations of identity, was founded in 2006 in New York City. It has since mounted performances in 39 states and 18 countries, blending theater, music and dance to foster meaningful dialogue among performers and attendees.

Co-founders Daniel Banks and Adam McKinney were based in Fort Worth, Texas, for a time — but with McKinney [stepping into the role of artistic director at Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre](#) and with the hiring of a Pittsburgh-based executive director, the company now includes the Steel City in its list of home cities. (Banks has also relocated to Pittsburgh.)

“We have more projects in rotation and development than ever before,” Banks said. “We had been running faster than our feet could keep up with us.”

Andres Franco, a former resident conductor with the Fort Worth and Pittsburgh symphony orchestras and former executive director of City of Asylum, is stepping into the newly created executive role at DNAWORKS. He will oversee programs, operations, fundraising and finances for the organization.

“It's an amazing coincidence that the organization is based in Pittsburgh after Fort Worth,” he said. “I lived in Fort Worth for 11 years on and off... and I have been in Pittsburgh almost eight years now.”

Franco said that the company's focus on identity is part of what attracted him to the position as well. Born in Colombia, he said his heritage includes Spanish, native South American, Irish and Jewish ancestry.

Franco's position is being funded by a Fort Worth-based foundation currently with the intention that it will become self-sustaining down the road.

“The DNA of this organization has always been co-leadership and co-creation,” Banks said, noting that the company is also welcoming a trio of “co-curators” to help develop new works.

One of the organization’s shows, [“The Real James Bond... Was Dominican,”](#) shares the true story of Porfirio Rubirosa, a diplomat and spy and the original inspiration for Ian Fleming’s suave character. The production features music and immersive projections and explores Rubirosa’s background to discuss racism and colorism in Hollywood.

“We would love for that to come to Pittsburgh,” Banks said.

Many of DNAWORKS’ productions incorporate a story circle into the performance; audience members are invited to share their reactions and personal narratives to the art.

“To me, part of a successful show is the feeling that we have created a safe space where people are inspired and feel comfortable sharing,” Franco said.

Franco began working with the company in July and said that he hopes to bring a live DNAWORKS production to the city within a year.

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