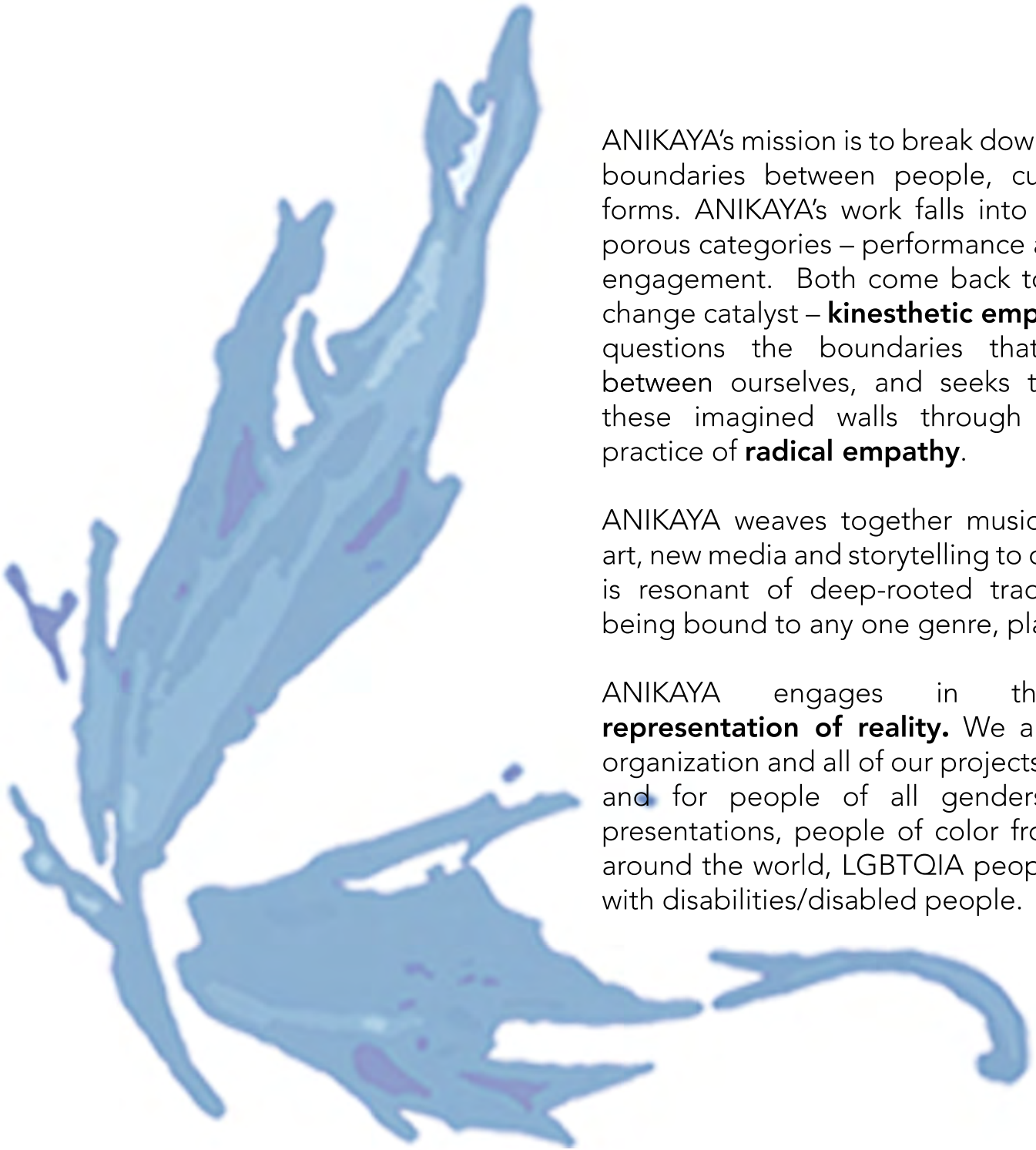


2025

annual report

Table of Contents:

	Mission	1
	ANIKAYA Dance Diplomacy global reach	2
	Conference of the Birds	3
	ANIKAYA Birds Intensives	4-5
	New Initiative: Sacred Spaces Expanded	6
	Waterfall	7
	New Project: Joy	8
	The Women Gather	9-11
	Impact	12
	Financial Statement	13
	The Birds Gala	14



ANIKAYA's mission is to break down the perceived boundaries between people, cultures and art forms. ANIKAYA's work falls into two symbiotic, porous categories – performance and community engagement. Both come back to one essential change catalyst – **kinesthetic empathy**. Our work questions the boundaries that we imagine between ourselves, and seeks to break down these imagined walls through an embodied practice of **radical empathy**.

ANIKAYA weaves together music, dance, visual art, new media and storytelling to create work that is resonant of deep-rooted traditions, without being bound to any one genre, place or practice.

ANIKAYA engages in the **authentic representation of reality.** We are an artist-run organization and all of our projects are created by and for people of all genders and gender presentations, people of color from the US and around the world, LGBTQIA people, and people with disabilities/disabled people.

ANIKAYA
Dance Diplomacy
2025



Conference of the Birds
Cambridge, MA
Karachi, Pakistan



The Women Gather
Washington, DC,
Cotonou, Benin



Birds Intensives
Cotonou, Benin
Bangalore, India



Waterfall
New York City
Boston, MA



Sacred Spaces Expanded
Boston, MA



Conference of the Birds

is an evening-length movement theater work inspired by the epic poem of Farid Ud din Attar, and embodying stories gathered from modern-day refugees and other migrants. Along with stage performances we present community workshops and workshops for professional and pre-professional performing artists, which will include site-responsive, community participation performances of a companion piece, Migrations. The Conference of the Birds cast is made up of dancers from around the world each of whom represents a unique cultural tradition. Collaborating dancers include artists from Benin, Brazil, Egypt, Indonesia, South Africa, Taiwan, Turkey and the US. Original music was composed for the work by Shaw Pong Liu (US), Eric Raynaud/Fraction (France), and Shahou Andalibi (Iran). Animated projection art was created by David Bengali (US). *The project poses the question:* ***How can we be different together?***

In 2025 we had a two-week run of Conference of the Birds at Arrow Street Theater in Cambridge, MA.

Conference of the Birds
Arrow Street Arts
Cambridge, MA

ANIKAYA Birds Intensives

In 2025 we held Birds Intensives in India and Benin with participants from across the globe - from Palestine, Benin, Germany, Nigeria, Guniea Bissau, the US, India, Kenya, Democratic Republic of Congo, France and Senegal.

ANIKAYA Birds Intensives immerse participants in the world of the Birds, ANIKAYA's Conference of the Birds ensemble – the Birds.

Participants learn the movement vocabulary and approach of four individual Birds, and experience the practices that brought these very different artists into one deeply connected flock.

The combination of the practices of the Birds who teach in the Intensives address and expand our relationship to space, time and each other. The Birds guide participants on a journey through the poem Conference of the Birds by the Persian poet Farid ud-din Attar, anchoring the experience in a millennium old text that remains relevant in the modern world. Each program is hosted in a place that offers us unique insights into the history of human movement, and that, in conjunction with the poem, provokes important conversations about our constructions of identity, community, history and the present moment.





Birds Intensive - India
Play Practice Residency
Bangalore, India



Birds Intensive - Benin
Cotonou, Benin



Sacred Spaces Expanded

In June 2025 we launched a new training program - Sacred Spaces Expanded - in which participants are introduced to ANIKAYA's approach to public space performance, including outdoor, no-tech technical design.

Sacred Spaces Expanded
Boston



Waterfall - a movement workshop and outdoor participatory performance

Waterfall is a global ritual, taking place on iconic and overlooked staircases around the world. Twenty or more dancers cascade slowly together down a staircase. Waterfall is created in an intensive workshop in which dancers and other movers learn to move together as a body of water through a series of practices developed by Wendy Jehlen, Artistic Director of ANIKAYA Dance The-

Improvisation and Deep Listening.

Waterfall is an intersection between two of ANIKAYA's public dance series - Sacred Spaces and Mass Movement.

Sacred Spaces is a series of public space interventions that unveil the sacred in the urban landscape.

Mass Movement is a series of actions that call attention to urgent issues that require us to move together as a species to address. Mass Movement actions, like change, are impossible without many people moving together in solidarity. The practices that are taught in Mass Movement projects teach us to work together with care and to connect across what we imagine to be barriers.

In 2024 Waterfall was conducted in Boston and New York City.



In October 2025, Artistic Director Wendy Jehlen led a three-week residency at Centre Choreegraphique Copier Coler in Siby, Mali with ten young Deaf aspiring dancers. The residency was organized around the idea of unbridled Joy. This project was expected to continue in 2026, but due to punitive travel bans imposed by the Trump administration on countries including Mali imposed soon after the conclusion of this residency, and the reciprocal travel ban imposed on Americans by the Malian government, the project, along with other collaborations in Mali and in Burkina Faso, is on hold.



Joy Unbridled
TranSforms residency
Siby, Mali



The Women Gather
Gallaudet University
Washington, DC



The Women Gather
Festival Connexion
Multicorps
Cotonou, Benin

The Women Gather is a ritual of healing created by an international and local ensemble of women-identified artists. This ritual takes place in an environment created by the ensemble, in a soundscape of our voices and bodies and the voices of our mothers and our grandmothers. We come to this space with different stories, different cultures, different bodies. We gather to create a safe space to exist and to gather our strength for what lies ahead. All are welcome.

In 2025, The Women Gather was workshopped at Gallaudet University and re-formed in Cotonou, Benin at the Festival Connexion.



The Women Gather
Festival Connexion
Multicorps
Cotonou, Benin

2000 live audience members on 3 continents
200 workshop and intensive participants from 12 countries
16 live performances
4 intensive workshops

"This workshop was like nothing I've ever experienced. We learned to trust each other and to listen and to create the dance together. We learned a common language. We were able to communicate without sign, just with movement."

Angel (The Women Gather workshop participant at Gallaudet University)

"I feel open in new ways and reminded of what it means to be in the world, in myself, and in a community."

Nika (Birds Intensive participant from the U.S.)

"This experience is a space of transformation, reconnection, and liberation... I leave changed, with a new light within me."

Farid (Birds Intensive participant from Benin)

"Thought provoking, nuanced and delicately crafted... Within the allegorical framework of this poem, Wendy Jehlen, a Bharatanātyam trained dancer and choreographer, ingeniously interweaves the narrative of our time."

Shruti Magazine on Conference of the Birds

"The performance prompted much inner reflection for me. I could see the connection between the performers. It was palpable."

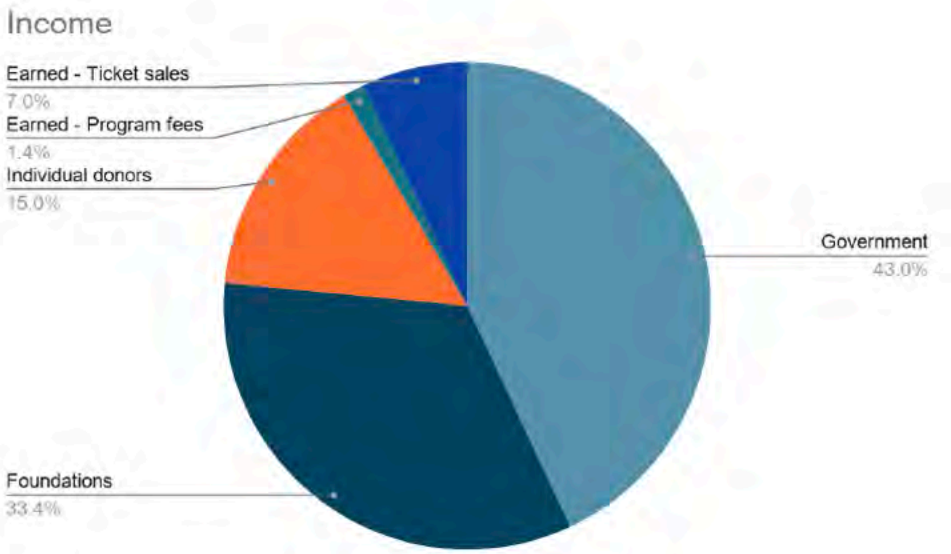
Khadijat Rashid, Provost, Gallaudet University on The Women Gather

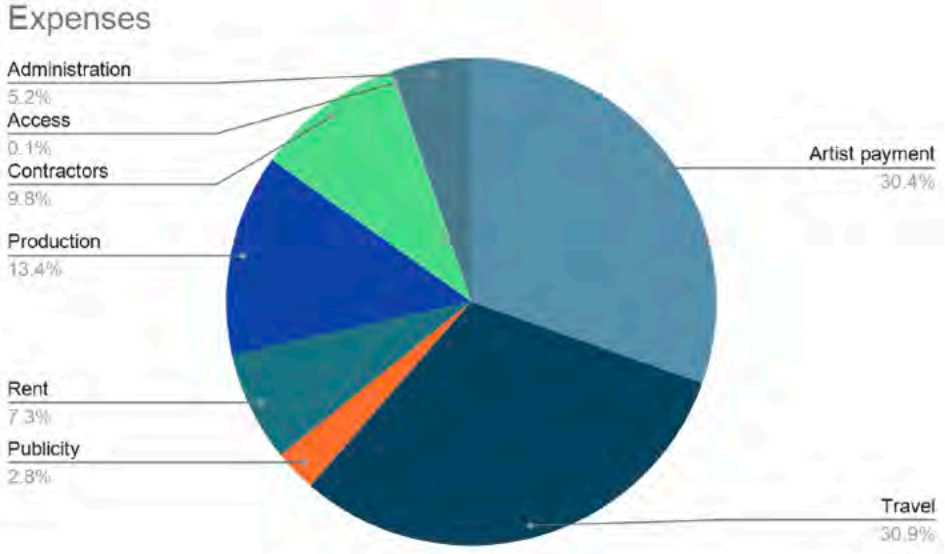
"I learned more in these 10 days than in three years of training and research."

-Nabi (Birds Intensive participant from Guinea-Conakry)

"This wasn't a performance. It wasn't a rehearsal. It was an act of shared attention—a quiet communion among strangers, rooted in the simple act of moving and pausing together."

-Anita (Tree of Life workshop participant in Boston)





Income:

Earned:	
Ticket Sales:	$14743
Program fees:	$3000
Government grants:	$90240
Foundations	$70120
Individual Donors:	$31529
Total:	**$209632**

Expenses:

Artist Payments:	$69991
Contractors:	$22483
Travel:	$71138
Production:	$30776
Access:	$300
Publicity:	$6385
Rent:	$16866
Administrative (5.2%):	$12009
Total:	**$229948**

Major funders: National Endowment for the Arts, MidAtlantic Arts, Mass Cultural Council, Boston Culltural Council, Cambridge Commiunity Foundation, One Life Foundation, Foley Hoag Foundation, Jewish Liberation Fund








The BIRDS Gala

