

# AN ANNUAL MEETING LIKE NO OTHER

By Doug Plummer

Like practically everything else in our lives these days, the 2020 CDSS Annual Board Meeting was an unprecedented event. In a typical year, the Annual Meeting would pick up where the February Executive Committee Meeting left off, continuing work begun there, and expanding it to include the full Board. But as is so often the case this season, the typical way of doing things just doesn't work right now.

To no one's surprise, we conducted the full Annual Meeting through our screens via Zoom. To everyone's surprise, it functioned really well for us. When you meet like this, you strip an agenda down to the essentials. Alas, no dance breaks, no chit chat over coffee and lunch, no attending the local dance. We put off some items of business that were going to require major discussion, like our Bylaws revision. We still started every session with a song, but, as many of you will already have discovered, singing over video chat is just not the same. But we tried, and we will keep trying new ways of building connection as we conduct business.

A good board is always learning how to be more effective. We scheduled three training opportunities during our meeting: a session on equity awareness (one of the few continuations of work from the February Exec), one on fundraising, and one on marketing. I'm impressed with the attention to ongoing board training and function that our organization has achieved during my tenure. One of the big changes during my term on this board is how well we now prepare our oncoming board members for this job. When I joined five years ago, being a new member felt like a deer-in-the-headlights moment. That won't happen again.

And, of course, we had the usual committee and task group reports and renewals. We have 14 functioning subgroups, most of them a mix of board, staff, and community members. Standing Committees are generally inward facing, attending to board and organizational functions (like Governance or Personnel); Task Groups tend to be outwardly oriented (like our Community Culture and Safety and Educators Task Groups).

A big milestone to report is the near total turnover to Salesforce as the software that runs CDSS. Every year Sarah Pilzer, CDSS's Director of Operations, updates us on the progress, and it's a treat to report that we have essentially arrived. Also, we are finally operating with a full



complement of staff, and remote work was fully functional before the pandemic. Our transition to the lockdown has been smooth, though store functions are on hold.

For me, the takeaway from this year's meeting was how well-equipped CDSS is to support our local Affiliates through this pandemic. Yes, the pandemic presents unexpected financial challenges for our organization. But we have financial reserves so that our survival is not at stake (though they will take a substantial hit and we will need to restore them before the next crisis). And we have an effective and creative staff who is rising to every challenge with grace and good spirits. This was exemplified in our ED's annual report, as Katy outlined her determination that CDSS prioritize care for freelance artists and the larger dance community during these unprecedented times.

This board meeting took place during the most challenging crisis our communities have faced in our lifetimes. But we didn't gather in a crisis mentality. We're thinking ahead. When our music and dance communities emerge from this pandemic, they will be different. And even if the underlying social needs don't change, how we fulfill them may. I can say that every board member and every staff member is preparing CDSS to be the effective leader in that transformation.

**ABOVE:** The CDSS Annual Board Meeting was fully virtual this year. Here, Board member Doug Plummer participates in the Fund Development Committee training on Friday morning. *Photo by Robin Shapiro.*